

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixtieth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

March 31 and April 1, 1990

THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTIETH ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 160th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, March 31, 1990 at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, March 31 and April 1, 1990. The general priesthood session was held in the Tabernacle on Saturday, March 31, 1990, at 6:00 P.M.

President Ezra Taft Benson presided at all sessions of the conference. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of some of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

The First Presidency: Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks,

M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

The Presidency of the Seventy: ¹Marion D. Hanks, Robert L. Backman, James M. Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, and Carlos E. Asay

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Joe J. Christensen, Gene R. Cook, Derek A. Cuthbert, Jacob de Jager, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goaslind, John H. Groberg, W. Eugene Hansen, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, and Robert E. Wells

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Carlos H. Amado, H. Verlan Andersen, Eduardo Ayala, Benjamin B. Banks, Monte J. Brough, Waldo P. Call, Helio da Rocha Camargo, George I. Cannon, Albert Choules, Jr., Spencer J. Condie, LeGrand R. Curtis, Clinton L. Cutler, Robert K. Dellenbach, Lloyd P. George, Francis M. Gibbons, F. Melvin Hammond, George R. Hill III, Harold G. Hillam, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, John R. Lasater, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, Douglas J. Martin, Helvécio Martins, Gerald E. Melchin, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, L. Aldin Porter, Glen L. Rudd, Gardner H. Russell, Robert E. Sackley, Douglas H. Smith, Lynn A. Sorensen, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, and Durrell A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, Henry B. Eyring, and Glenn L. Pace

¹Elder Dean L. Larsen was excused due to illness.

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included Regional Representatives, presidents of stakes and their counselors, presidents of temples, bish-

ops of wards, and presidencies and members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood quorums.

Many general, stake, and ward auxiliary officers also attended.

FIRST DAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 160th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, March 31, 1990, at 10:00 A.M. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King" without announcement.

President Monson then made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 160th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, J. Richard Clarke, and Ronald E. Poelman are seated on the stand. We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except Elder Dean L. Larsen, who is at home recovering from recent surgery. We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. This morning we extend a special welcome to distinguished government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

Particularly do we welcome in the translation section the Honorable Gunther Behncke, department head for law and economics in the government office for religious affairs in the German Democratic Republic. Herr Behncke has been most helpful to the Church in our building and our missionary work in the German Democratic Republic. So to you, Herr Behncke, danke schön. Danke schön, mein lieber Bruder. Danke schön mit meinem ganzen Herz.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened this session by singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King." The chorus will now favor us with "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Marion D. Hanks, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

Elder Marion D. Hanks offered the invocation.

President Thomas S. Monson

President Benson has suggested that I commence this conference with a brief message given in his behalf and that I convey to listeners and viewers far and near his greeting, his love, and his blessing.

Changes since last conference

The spirit of spring is very much in evidence here on historic Temple Square. The manicured lawns have discarded their drab winter color and now appear as a carpet of green accentuating the elegant flower beds with their brilliant blooms. It is a period of renewal, a time of gratitude, and a season for reflection.

The world has experienced sweeping changes since last we met. A wall in Berlin has crumbled. Families now may join together on either side and experience the joy they have long been deprived of. In Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic, the bells of freedom have sounded, heralding a new day for our time.

Serving the needs of the world

All of us remember, President Benson, that dark period following World War II when our members were near starvation and bordering on despair. Then you undertook your dramatic assignment to supervise the distribution of food, clothing, and medical supplies from the storehouse of the Church to the war-devastated families in Europe.

Your words, President, echo loud and clear: "We must 'dedicate our strength to serving the needs, rather than the fears, of the world.' . . . I believe errands of mercy, such as the distribution of food, housing, and clothing to those in need, are rendered most effectively when handled by private individuals and organizations such as the Church" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 261).

In the spirit of President Benson's counsel, we have a responsibility to ex-

tend help as well as hope to the hungry, to the homeless, and to the downtrodden both at home and abroad. Such assistance is being provided for the blessing of all. In a host of cities, where need has outdistanced help, lives have been lifted, hearts have been touched, and the frown of despair has been transformed to the smile of confidence, thanks to the generosity of the Church membership in the payment of their fast offerings as the Lord has commanded.

Counsel to the youth of the Church

To the youth of the Church—President Benson has long been your champion and advocate. On a previous occasion he summed up the feelings of all your leaders when he declared, "Beloved youth, you will have your trials and temptations through which you must pass, but there are great moments of eternity which lie ahead. You have our love and our confidence. We pray that you will be prepared for the reins of leadership. We say to you, 'Arise and shine forth' (D&C 115:5) and be a light unto the world, a standard to others" ("To 'The Rising Generation,'" *New Era*, June 1986, p. 8).

My young brothers and sisters, from the days President Benson was a Scoutmaster to the present period of presiding over the entire Church, he has not forgotten you. He rejoices in your achievements; he admires your strengths. He is your friend and your advocate.

Prayer and temple attendance

To the parents of the Church—President Benson has long urged that a good example is the best teacher. I have heard him offer sublime prayers to our Heavenly Father. Simple supplication, generous gratitude mark these petitions. Children joining parents in prayer will tend to be united with their families and found following the teachings of the Lord.

How President Benson and his beloved wife, Flora, enjoy attending the temple each week! His feeling for the temple is found in his statement: "I love the temples of God. This is the closest place to heaven on earth—the house of the Lord" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 253).

We should live in brotherhood

As this conference commences, I join President Benson, and know that I reflect the feelings of President Hinckley and all other General Authorities as well, in declaring our love for Heavenly Father's children everywhere. Perhaps never in history has the need for cooperation, understanding, and goodwill among all people—nations and individuals alike—been so urgent as today. It is not only fitting, it is imperative that we emphasize the ideal of brotherhood and the responsibility true brotherhood confers upon us all.

As Edwin Markham observed:

There is a destiny that makes us
brothers;
None goes his way alone:

All that we send into the lives of
others
Comes back into our own.

We should follow the Savior

Let us live the commandments of God. Let us follow in the footsteps of His Son and our Savior, even Jesus Christ the Lord. As we sincerely and fervently seek Him, we shall indeed find Him.

He may come to us as one unknown, without a name—as of old, by the lakeside, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words, "Follow thou me" (John 21:22), and sets us to the task which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands, and to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, and the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship; and they shall learn in their own experience who He is.

I bear to you my witness that God does live, that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer, and that we are led today by God's prophet, even President Ezra Taft Benson, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Brothers and sisters, I suppose you are as amazed as I am with the monumental world events that we see unfolding. As Latter-day Saints, we recognize the hand of God working to bring about his purposes in the earth. We know that the "stone [that] was cut out without hands" will continue to roll forth to fill the whole earth (see Daniel 2:34–35). These are exciting times to be alive.

Small and simple things shape lives

We observe vast, sweeping world events; however, we must remember that the purposes of the Lord in our personal

lives generally are fulfilled through the small and simple things and not the momentous and spectacular.

Alma, teaching his son Helaman about the importance of the record written on the plates of brass, said:

"Behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise.

"And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls" (Alma 37:6–7).

The essentials of the gospel

To illustrate, let me read from a letter written by one of our faithful sister missionaries, serving in South America, to her brother who had just received his mission call. She wrote:

"It's really interesting with the people from the country—they are so quiet, timid, shy, and embarrassed. You are never sure exactly how much they understand. They will live and die in this small town. They are so poor and so simple and so childlike. They may never see a General Authority, never attend general conference, never go to BYU. They'll never be Boy Scouts, never play basketball in a huge church gym, never drive a car to stake conference, regional basketball finals, or anywhere. Many of the things we think about when we think of the Church—and take for granted—they may never see. [Now, the point.] But they have faith, they repent, they are baptized, they receive the Holy Ghost, and they renew their baptismal covenants each week when they partake of the sacrament. They pray and read the scriptures daily. They know God lives and that Christ is our Savior. And, I believe, they are going to the celestial kingdom. I do all the things they never will, but I'm not so sure about my own salvation.

"At first glance, the Church here looks absolutely nothing like the Church in downtown Orem, Utah. I have to keep reminding myself it is the same church and we all follow the same prophet. We have a sacrament meeting in the country each week because the members there really can't afford to come into town. And as I sit there outside on a wooden chair on the plain ground, with the sun setting and the six people in attendance, as we sing hymns, pray, and partake of the sacrament, I wonder if that isn't closer to Christ's church than at home. But I guess it is really the same. The things that matter, the true elements of the gospel as Christ taught in 3 Nephi 11, are the same here as they are in Orem, Utah."

The simplicity of the Spirit

The Lord has graciously provided the means for conversion even in the most simple and humble of circumstances. Unfortunately, some of us look beyond the mark and depend too much on buildings, budgets, programs, and activities for conversion rather than on the small and simple things that are central to the gospel. We need not look beyond our own hearts to experience the sweet spiritual feelings promised to those who obey God. That is why a new member in the most humble conditions can experience the gospel as deeply as a lifetime member who was raised in the shadow of Church headquarters.

As I meet with some of these humble members, I observe that the Church is, by necessity, being established among them in the most simple way possible. The gospel is taught from the scriptures and from the *Gospel Principles* manual. The people feel the Spirit and bear testimonies as they come unto Christ and are baptized in his name. Their love for the Lord radiates from their faces. They know that faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost, service to others, and keeping the commandments are the essentials for exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

The simplicity of the Lord's work

Last month, Elder Charles Didier and I visited the Saints and missionaries in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. We dedicated each of these lands for establishing the Lord's work.

We see a vast difference between the humble circumstances in areas where the Church is still in its tender infancy and the circumstances we are accustomed to in areas where the Church is stable and mature.

When we visited Suriname, we met most of the members and learned that the missionary couple serving there, Elder and Sister Limburg, had taught them the gospel using a series of simple teaching

and learning methods. They had no momentous or spectacular events or activities, only daily spiritual experiences resulting from their sensitive response to the promptings of the Spirit.

The simplicity of the sacrament

A new missionary couple, Brother and Sister Don Rapier, arrived in Suriname one day ahead of Elder Didier and me, so they met the Saints for the first time along with us. We held four sacrament meetings in homes of the Saints on the Sunday we were there. Elder Rapier shared his feelings about blessing the sacrament in the humble home of one of our new converts. He said:

"This was the most humble circumstance that I had ever been in in my life. The house was made of mostly short pieces of lumber. No electricity, no running water. The roof was corrugated sheets. The house and the yard were clean. The place where we held our sacrament meeting was under the overhang in front of the house. The members and the Brethren sat on wooden boards that were laid on bricks. The sacrament table was a small wooden stand that was set on top of a piece of linoleum covering the dirt floor. The sacrament cloths were very simple and very clean.

"As I knelt down to bless the sacrament, I was overwhelmed with the spirit of love that I had quickly developed for this people. I thought surely our Savior was pleased that He was being remembered in such humble circumstances. I thought of our chapels at home. I could never have appreciated the sacrament there like I can now after this special experience. I also observed that it might take several years before these sweet, humble members would fully realize the significance of having two General Authorities, one an Apostle, in their home, blessing them and their family."

Brother Rapier's experience touched deeply each one of us who was there. After the fourth sacrament meeting, my mind reflected upon the words of the Lord: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-

doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33).

A box of macaroni

Another example of the importance of small things comes from Elder and Sister Jackson, missionaries serving in Guyana: "When we first arrived in the mission field in Guyana, we saw in the local Georgetown newspaper the report of the 'Teenager of the Month.' In the report he said his favorite food was macaroni. We took the newspaper clipping, a Book of Mormon, and a box of macaroni and knocked on his door. We have taught and baptized seven of the family since our first visit." This small thing resulted in a great benefit in establishing the Church in Guyana.

Simple things can also destroy

While having these tender, spiritual experiences this past month, I was sobered by how small and simple things can be negative and destructive to a person's salvation. A series of seemingly small but incorrect choices can become those little soul-destroying termites that eat away at the foundations of our testimony until, before we are aware, we may be brought near to spiritual and moral destruction.

This past month, one of the missionaries who served with Sister Ballard and me in Canada shared the details of how small things can compound into near destruction unless the course is corrected. He wrote:

"When I returned from my mission, I married and went to work in the construction industry. Over the next few years we had three children, and during this time I remained active in the Church. The demands of my business became much greater, and I became more determined to do whatever it would take to succeed financially. The effects of this were felt immediately at home; but with the support of an understanding wife, we

felt we could endure until things 'picked up.' "

He went on to say that because of financial strains, his wife began working. He began working long hours and neglected his family and Church duties. His demanding work schedule left him emotionally drained and physically exhausted. He became critical of others, including his family members and Church leaders.

His letter continues:

"As my debt continued to mount, the destruction of my peace and happiness increased. The love and tenderness we once knew as husband and wife had diminished to only memories. We found character flaws in each other and began to focus on them, wounding each other over the smallest incident. I began to blame everyone but myself, taking no responsibility for failures. A great feeling of hopelessness began to fill my heart, and I felt a cloud of darkness envelop me in my desperation.

"We knew our marriage could not endure under such conditions and began to talk in terms of divorce. I decided to get some financial counseling; after reviewing my finances, it became the joke that I was worth more dead than alive, which seemed funny and rather innocent at the time. After continuing for a few more weeks, the threat of divorce as well as the very real threat of complete financial collapse seemed only a matter of time. The innocent joke of being worth more dead than alive developed into the appearance of a very real solution. I found myself alone at home, facing the crossroads of my decision. The thought came to me to reach out to the Lord one last time. Kneeling, I wept uncontrollably as I cried to the Lord for his mercy and help in my desperate hour.

"A few minutes later, word came that my mission president was in town and wanted to see me in an hour. As I sat with you, I wanted to hide my problems as I had done from everyone else. But your questions came, asking:

"How are you?"

"Fine."

"How is your wife?"

"Doing good."

"How are the children?"

"Great."

"Then came the pause, and you looked into my eyes and asked, 'How is your business?' I began to weep as I told you my story.

"During the course of our meeting, you asked me to make you a promise: that I would read the Book of Mormon. After committing to you that I would, you blessed me, telling me to rivet myself to the gospel and to keep the commandments. I left you knowing the Lord had heard my plea for help."

Small acts can strengthen others

Can you see, brothers and sisters, how many small and simple things took their toll in the life of this fine young man? Like weak fibers that form a yarn, then a strand, and finally a rope, these small things combined together can become too strong to be broken. We must ever be aware of the power that the small and simple things can have in building spirituality. At the same time, we must be aware that Satan will use small and simple things to lead us into despair and misery.

I am grateful that the Lord answered the prayers of this young man by prompting me to do the seemingly small thing of asking to see him. I did not know of any of his problems at the time but was able to help him to once again take hold of the iron rod of the gospel to guide his life. We must never ignore or pass by the prompting of the Spirit to render service to one another.

Great and marvelous events seem to motivate us, but small things often do not hold our attention. Noting that the Liahona worked by faith, Alma stated, "Nevertheless, because those miracles were worked by small means . . . [the people of Lehi] were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey" (Alma 37:41).

Pay attention to the small things

Is our journey sometimes impeded when we forget the importance of small things? (see Alma 37:46). Do we realize that small events and choices determine the direction of our lives just as small helms determine the direction of great ships? (see James 3:4; D&C 123:16). Are we ever like Naaman, the leper, expecting some great thing before we will pay attention to prophets? (see 2 Kings 5:1-14).

May the Lord bless each one of us to follow the counsel of our prophets. We need to have family and personal prayers; study the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon; hold family home evenings; follow the admonition of the Savior to love one another; and be thoughtful, kind, and gentle within the family. Through these and other similar small and simple things, we have the promise that our lives will be filled with peace and joy.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

A "Welcome home" celebration

Several weeks ago in a neighborhood not far from my home, dozens of bright, yellow balloons were seen floating from every tree branch and light post lining a winding, three-block road. It was a beautiful sight on that hazy winter day. Senses were stirred as one drove with anticipation along that friendly, colorful street. Around each bend in the road rose the yellow balloons, waving upward to the top of the hill where a sign warmly proclaimed, "Welcome home, Brigham!" I had heard of Brigham Fordham only a few months ago when I was told of this young eighteen-year-old's tragic accident that left him paralyzed. I only now discovered that this was his home and his homecoming from the hospital.

I noticed the ramp that had been built to the front of the house and thought of other changes that would have been made in his home to accommodate the changes in his life. There will be changes in Brigham's family, too, I thought. Life

I know that Jesus Christ lives and that this is his church. I testify that his gospel will continue to fill the world as it continues to fill the hearts of the individual members of the Church, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Great King of Heaven" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Great King of Heaven."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Derek A. Cuthbert of the Seventy.

will be different for all the Fordhams—and difficult.

But, as the yellow balloons brightly signaled to Brigham and to all who had the opportunity to travel this street, his was a caring home where family love and strength would be found.

The stronghold of the family

Our Heavenly Father has organized us into families for the purpose of helping us successfully meet the trials and challenges of life. The home also exists to bless us with the joys and privileges of family associations. Our family is our safety place, our support network, our sanctuary, and our salvation.

Our homes should be "the strong place to which children can come for the anchor they need in this day of trouble and turmoil," said President Harold B. Lee (*His Servants Speak*, comp. R. Clayton Brough [Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1975], p. 154).

In his book *The Power of the Family*, Dr. Paul Pearsall declares there is a "power of loving energy that flows within every family circle during the joy of the best of times and particularly at times of the sorrow of the worst of times" ([New York: Doubleday, 1990], p. 354).

He states, "No matter what the form of your family, from single-parent household to the largest multi-generation family in your town, your work at keeping families together is the job of saving our world" (Pearsall, p. 351).

Our lives center around the home

The Lord, through His prophets, has taught us of the divine power and influence of the home.

"There is no substitute for the home," said President Joseph F. Smith. "Its foundation is as ancient as the world, and its mission has been ordained of God from the earliest times. . . .

"There can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from the home, and every effort made to sanctify and preserve its influence is uplifting to those who toil and sacrifice for its establishment. . . . There is no happiness without service, and there is no service greater than that which converts the home into a divine institution, and which promotes and preserves family life" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 300).

Surviving the hurricane

On the night of 21 September 1989, Hurricane Hugo passed with all its fury over the beautiful city of Charleston, South Carolina. My good friend Alvie Evans lived in a low-lying area near the water, where the maximum strength of the storm was headed. He gathered his family together and moved to higher ground, to the home of his mother.

Late in the night, 150-mile-per-hour winds raged around them, uprooting trees and ripping away parts of the house. The storm became so severe they began to fear they would experience physical

harm. Alvie, with his wife and children, his mother, and his brothers and sister and their families, knelt together in the entrance hall of the home and prayed humbly to the Lord, asking for protection and for safety.

The next morning they viewed the devastation. Of the fifty or more large, strong oak trees that had been growing in his mother's yard, only eight remained standing. There was damage to the house, the cars, the entire city, but the family was safe. The Lord had heard their prayers and had protected them through the storm. Alvie said, "I didn't know then if we would have a house to return to, but I knew we would always have a home, because our family was intact and secure."

We create homes through love

President David O. McKay once said, "There is nothing temporary in the home of the Latter-day Saint" (in Conference Report, June 1919, p. 77).

He also stated: "[One] may have a beautiful house with all the decorations that modern art can give or wealth bestow. [It] may have all the outward forms that will please the eye and yet not [be] a home. . . . It may be a hovel, a log hut, a tent, a wickiup, if you have the right spirit within, the true love of Christ, and love for one another—fathers and mothers for the children, children for parents, husband and wife for each other—you have the true life of the home that Latter-day Saints build and which they are striving to establish" (*Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953], pp. 480–81).

Today, evil forces are challenging the home as never before. If our homes are to endure, parents and children must dedicate themselves to the gospel ideals that ensure preservation of home and family.

Family life comes first

Dr. Pearsall expresses the opinion that families aren't failing, but we are

failing the family because we have not learned how to put family life first in our world.

"Our society is interfering with the family-first feature," he writes. "We are in familial bankruptcy and have fallen into the hands of receivers such as schools, businesses, recreational pursuits, and numerous institutional demands. The issue is not one of setting priorities; the issue is one of making difficult choices for the family. There can only be one number one," he stresses. "Is it your family?" He makes this emphatic statement: "I warn you that if your family does not come first, your family will not last" (Pearsall, p. 18).

In homes where high ideals and gospel values are maintained, it is parents, not teachers, who lay the foundation of character and faith in the hearts of their children. If the training a child should receive in the home is neglected, neither the Church nor the school can compensate for the loss.

Creating gospel-centered homes

In recent instruction from the First Presidency and the Twelve, President Thomas S. Monson pointed out that "the primary responsibility for building testimonies and providing faith-building experiences in our members, including our youth, resides in the home. The Church should continue to support the determination of the family to do this." President Monson encouraged priesthood leaders to "increase their efforts to build strong, gospel-centered homes" (*Ensign*, May 1990, p. 93).

To assist us in this vital endeavor, major changes in Church budgeting policies have been made, which Elder Boyd K. Packer said "will have the effect of returning much of the responsibility for teaching and counseling and activity to the family where it belongs. . . . There will be fewer intrusions into family schedules and in the family purses. Church activities must be replaced by family activities."

Elder Packer closed his instruction by saying, "It is a course correction; it is

an inspired move" (*Ensign*, May 1990, pp. 90-91).

Only when parents and children work together for the same high objective—to put home and family first—can the home be preserved as God intended.

Creating family togetherness

Just a few weeks ago we had a special opportunity for a family get-together. A married daughter and her husband came with their three little boys for a short stay before their move from the East Coast of the United States to the West Coast. Another married daughter and her husband came with their four children from out of town to make it possible for the entire family to be together for a weekend.

On Sunday evening all of our family gathered in our home just to celebrate being together. "All under one roof again," exclaimed my wife. She had planned a special program for the occasion, with the appropriate theme, "Making Memories." She had a recording of one of our daughters singing a song about memories. She had obtained copies of a particular book about the subject as a special gift for each son and daughter. To make the memory of that weekend really complete, there would be a family picture taken. Every detail about the evening had been meticulously planned. It would be certain to create a happy memory for each family member. Or would it?

While the beautiful song played softly in the background, the living room filled with the noise and laughter of our growing family circle. The grandchildren couldn't sit still. They giggled and teased and played happily with each other. The grown-up children enjoyed each other, too, and all talked at once, it seemed, about days gone by and about the future. They laughed with each other and laughed at the antics of their children, who by now were having tickling matches on the floor or sticking little fingers into the chocolate mint cake. It had become frustrating—and funny!

I don't know which was more frustrating or funny—the family program which ended soon after it began, with Bonnie, the would-be “memory-maker,” sighing, “Oh, what’s the use? No one’s listening!” or the photo session, with twelve frenzied adults all trying unsuccessfully to pose eleven overactive, squirming children. Was this a family celebration? Or was it a family circus? One thing I knew, this was not the way Bonnie had intended it to be. She had wanted this time of family gathering to be meaningful and memorable.

Gratitude for family members

A few days after everyone had gone and our house was again very quiet, a little book came for us. It was a picture book about families, and it was inscribed, “To my warm and loving, full-of-fun family—every one of you,” with a special note added for Mom: “Here’s to the wonderful chaos, the wonderful photos, the wonderful gathering place, the wonderful memories you so lovingly help to create each time we’re together.”

Later, this note from another daughter: “Thank you for a wonderful stay. The boys haven’t been this happy in many months. It has been so nice for them to feel so loved and to have a little extra attention and spoiling. I’m so glad we could all watch together as Clark learned to walk, and that he could start forming his special bonds with loving grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Our children couldn’t be more blessed to have such a loving, supportive family network.”

Another daughter wrote this:

If you could see my house of dreams,
No palace would it be
But just where I feel happiest—
You are that home to me.

The bulwark of family unity

Within that “wonderful chaos” of our family all is obviously not perfect. There are problems in our family, as in many families—challenges related to

serious illness, aging parents, schooling, employment, and others. However, individual burdens and concerns may be lightened by the power of a family united in mutual love and support and in prayers of faith.

Following President McKay’s well-known statement “No other success can compensate for failure in the home,” he went on to say: “The poorest shack in which love prevails over a united family is of greater value to God and future humanity than any other riches. In such a home God can work miracles and will work miracles” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, p. 5).

Our family should be our treasure

On a Sunday morning a few years ago, Donald Pinnell, now president of the Amarillo Texas Stake, was attending church in his branch in Tucumcari when suddenly someone brought him the alarming news, “Brother Pinnell, your home is on fire!”

President Pinnell quickly found his two sons, ages twelve and sixteen, and headed toward his ranch. His first thoughts were of his wife who had stayed home that day recuperating from recent surgery. He had no word about her until the driver of a returning fire truck stopped along the way to tell him she was safe.

Brother and Sister Pinnell had just built their dream home, a Spanish-style house on their ranch fifty miles out in the country. It was a very nice home and a source of great pleasure to their family.

As he and his boys approached the top of the terrain, they could see in the distance the smoke coming from their burning home. Donald Pinnell said of that moment, “We could tell that our home was completely engulfed in flames; and I just stopped the car at the top of the hill for a few minutes. I said to my sons, ‘Now look, you can spend all your life storing up treasures of the earth, and you can sit on a hill and watch them go up in flames, or you can store up the right kind of treasures and take them with you through eternity.’”

The right kind of treasures are our families and those divine attributes and qualities of character that are taught and learned in gospel-centered homes.

May we make the necessary individual and family course corrections which will put the Lord and our families first and fill our homes with these eternal treasures, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Derek A. Cuthbert

President Benson, who speaks for the Lord to all the world, has challenged us to "live by the Spirit and teach by the Spirit." How many times have we heard him say, "It's the Spirit that counts in this work"? Yes, the Lord's work is spiritual work. It relates to changing lives, developing true values, and overcoming worldly influences.

How to become more spiritual

Over the years, many people, especially youth, have asked me, "Elder Cuthbert, how can I become more spiritual?" My reply has always been the same: "You need to give more service."

Service changes people. It refines, purifies, gives a finer perspective, and brings out the best in each one of us. It gets us looking outward instead of inward. It prompts us to consider others' needs ahead of our own. Righteous service is the expression of true charity, such as the Savior showed.

How, then, does service increase our spirituality? May I share with you briefly ten aspects, from which you can choose those most applicable to your own situation?

Establish righteous values

First, service helps us establish true values and priorities by distinguishing between the worth of material things that pass and those things of lasting, even eternal, value. Our beloved prophet counsels: "If you would find yourself, learn to deny yourself for the blessing of others. Forget yourself and find someone

President Monson

Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Derek A. Cuthbert of the Seventy.

who needs your service, and you will discover the secret to the happy, fulfilled life" (Ezra Taft Benson, in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1979, p. 48; or *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 34). We have a lovely sister who is living by us who has been confined to a wheelchair for twenty-seven years; she truly forgets herself in service to others as she gives firesides and helps wherever she can with a cheerful smile and a positive attitude.

Second, service helps us establish a righteous tradition. This is so necessary, particularly among young people. Wise parents will provide service opportunities in the home for their children from an early age. Growing up with this tradition will blossom into community service and Church service. It will develop a spirit of volunteerism in a world where people more often ask, "What's in it for me?" The Lord has counseled:

"For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; . . .

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness" (D&C 58:26-27).

As I travel to stake conferences I am delighted to hear of youth service projects of various kinds such as baptismal work in the temple, community cleanup efforts, and youth missions during vacation time. This is the way we shall save the rising generation from becoming a totally selfish, indulgent generation. We shall not save them by providing fun activities which are inward-looking.

Overcome and repent from sin

Third, service helps us overcome selfishness and sin. Have you ever realized that all sin is selfish, whether it be lying, cheating, stealing, immorality, covetousness, or idleness? Sin is for one's own ends, not another's—certainly not for the Lord's ends. Service, on the other hand, is unselfish and constitutes a positive power for good.

Anciently Isaiah lamented, "We have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). In modern parlance, they "did their own thing," whatever the adverse effect upon others. Even many of those who profess to understand free agency, or moral agency, turn liberty to license, as we can see all around us.

Fourth, not only does service overcome selfishness and sin, but it helps to recompense for sin. The prophet Ezekiel explained this when he declared, "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right" (Ezekiel 33:16). Again, James taught that to "save a soul . . . shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). We can express regret and feel remorse for things done wrong, but *full* repentance should include recompense such as service gives.

Show love and gratitude

Fifth, service helps us generate love and appreciation. We come to know people by serving them—their circumstances, their challenges, their hopes and aspirations. My wife and I have the privilege of visiting some widowed sisters who have become dear friends. What a blessing for us to learn of their missions and temple service and now family record extraction service, unselfishly performed despite many trials and heartaches.

Sixth, service is the principal way of showing gratitude to the Savior. We need to fill ourselves up with gratitude for His redeeming love, His infinite atoning sacrifice, His obedience to the will of the Father. As we become full of gratitude, it

overflows into service, and "inasmuch as [we] have done it unto one of the least of these [His] brethren, [we] have done it unto [Him]" (Matthew 25:40).

Perform Christlike acts

Seventh, service channels our desires and energies into righteous activity. Every son and daughter of God is a storehouse—even a powerhouse—of desires and energies, which may be used for good or evil. This great potential needs to be harnessed to bring blessings to others. I think of a group of young people who saw a film on famine in Africa and organized a charity concert to help those in need. I think of tens of thousands of Church members who responded to the First Presidency's call for a special fast. This year's famine and destitution is expected to be even worse in Africa, and again we need to prioritize the use of our resources in the Lord's own way—not only for those in distant lands, but for the poor in our own communities.

Eighth, service helps us cleanse ourselves and become purified and sanctified. Not being perfect, are we not all sinners? Yes, we all need the redeeming and atoning blood of Christ to purge us of our sins. How is this accomplished? The way is through Christlike service, as expressed by the prayer of St. Ignatius Loyola, which I learned in my youth:

To give and not to count the cost;

To fight and not to heed the wounds; . . .

To labor and not ask for any reward
Save that of knowing that we do Thy will. ["Prayer for Generosity, 1548," in John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968), p. 180b]

Know and follow the Savior

Ninth, charitable service helps us do as the Savior did, for was not His whole ministry one of reaching out and helping, lifting and blessing, loving and caring?

Jesus declares, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27), and again, "For I will raise up unto myself a pure people, that will serve me in righteousness" (D&C 100:16). There are good people everywhere giving charitable service. Once, when we were visiting our missionaries and members in Nigeria, our vehicle broke down on a lonely road. Finally a car approached, and two young Nigerians got out. "The Lord told us to stop and help you," they said. Help us they did, for they knew what the Lord would have them do. And so it should be with us.

Tenth, service helps us to get to know the Savior, for "how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served?" (Mosiah 5:13). As we immerse ourselves in the service of others, we find our spiritual selves and come unto Him. I was impressed while visiting the California Sacramento Mission a few months ago to meet a young, blind missionary elder. He had completely immersed himself in missionary service, despite his special needs, and his spirit shone through.

In all of these ways, righteous service brings us nearer to Christ, increases our spirituality, and brings others likewise. Such service is helping to prepare a people worthy, in the Lord's due time, to redeem Zion.

Bear one another's burdens

As some of you may know, just after last October general conference it was discovered that I had been seriously stricken with cancer, which was in its last stage. May I express my love and

gratitude for the prayers and blessings and loving concern on my behalf which have brought about a miracle of recovery. As I give thanks for each new day of life, I express gratitude for the opportunities of service—past, present, and future.

The wonderful thing about service is that there is no end to it. As President Benson says, "Therefore, let us serve one another with brotherly love, never tiring of the demands upon us, being patient and persevering and generous" (*So Shall Ye Reap* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1960], pp. 173–74).

Yes, as we give Christlike service, it helps us grow spiritually. "[Put] off the natural man and [become] a saint" (Mosiah 3:19)—that is, one who is honestly trying to follow the Savior and do what He would want us to do. What a marvelous feeling it is to have the Spirit of the Lord poured out more abundantly upon us as we bear one another's burdens and share with and mourn with those in need (see Mosiah 18:8–10).

May this be our happy lot, I humbly pray, bearing my personal witness of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, His restored church, and His living prophet, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Cuthbert.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God," following which we shall hear from Elder Richard P. Lindsay of the Seventy.

The chorus and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Richard P. Lindsay

This past year has given me a new vision of the Savior's words as recorded in Matthew:

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the

least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:37-40).

Christlike love and service

In visits to more than thirty stakes of Zion during the past year, my life has been blessed and my faith has been increased as I have observed and experienced the Christlike love and the quiet, unheralded service demonstrated in the lives of countless true Latter-day Saints.

Such examples of charity, the pure love of Christ, are not restricted to geographic location, age, gender, or station in life. Such acts of kindness and love of fellowman seek no praise or reward and are often performed within the humble homes and from the loving hearts of the Lord's devoted servants.

Permit me to recount a few such examples from the lives of true followers of Christ.

A strength for missionaries

In an early stake conference assignment, Elder Paramore and I were blessed to visit the home of a dear brother who, in a tragic industrial accident on 26 August 1958, fell from a cooling tower into a hole thirty-five feet below, where he landed on his head and became paralyzed from the shoulders down. In the intervening thirty-one years he has survived as one of the longest-living quadriplegics in medical history. He was unable to attend the conference meetings, but a brief, thoughtfully prepared video of his life and testimony was presented in the Saturday evening session of conference. He lies not in a bed but suspended on a circular metal rack, where he has received devoted nursing care twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, since this accident more than thirty-one years ago.

This brother, whose home we visited following the conference, praised his nurses, his priesthood leaders, his home teachers, and many others who during those long years stood by his side and ministered to his spiritual and temporal needs. A wise stake president had called

him to be the regular correspondent to the missionaries and the servicemen from his stake. I have been inspired many times as I have read his letters sent to bolster the faith of choice young missionaries across the world.

May I quote two lines from one of these missionary letters: "Christ is the only way to heaven. All other paths are detours to doom. Commitment to Christ should go hand in hand with commitment to His church."

Love and faith in adversity

In another stake, in a Sunday morning Primary meeting of that stake conference, I met two beautiful daughters of a faithful young Latter-day Saint physician and his devoted wife. The older child was in a wheelchair, and the younger child moved with great effort. Both of these children suffer from a degenerative disease of genetic origin thought to be progressive and incurable. According to medical wisdom, their time in this life is extremely limited. Their eyes were beautiful and clear—full of faith and love of their Savior, whose presence had been made real in their lives by loving parents and grandparents and devoted Church teachers.

To fulfill a deep desire for more children, their devoted parents have adopted two other beautiful daughters from another country. Instead of cursing God as Job was encouraged by his associates to do in the face of other faith-testing burdens, this couple has reached out to these two beautiful additional daughters, who now feel the blessing of being reared in a household of faith with love from parents whose hearts and lives demonstrate the pure love of Christ.

Following a recent stake conference, Sister Lindsay and I were blessed to visit another household of faith located in rural Idaho. The young father in this home was suffering from a critical illness. A picture forever etched in my memory is of a mother and five beautiful children, together with this dear brother's priesthood quorum leaders, kneeling

around his bedside pleading with Heavenly Father for the life of this good man. He was then administered to within this circle of faith. It was our blessing recently again to meet this young couple and to hear their beautiful witnessing, their humble outpouring of spirit, of the Lord's blessing in the restoration of the husband's health.

In yet another stake conference, a dear sister confined to a wheelchair testified of the strength that she had received from feeling the Lord's love through reading the Book of Mormon. Earlier her devoted husband had been able to help her adjust to the crippling effects of her illness. Now he was bedridden, and she spoke of her gratitude that the Lord had empowered her with greater strength to be more self-reliant and better care for her own needs. She had even been given additional strength to minister to the many needs of her dear companion, who now tenderly cared for her and had done so for so many years. Loving family and Church associates had also been helpful so that the couple were able to remain in their own home with precious memories of earlier happy family associations.

We meet each other's needs

It was President Kimball who said, "The Lord answers our prayers, but it is usually through another person that he meets our needs." An incident in the latter part of President Kimball's ministry helped me to better understand his message and the way his own life witnessed to the truthfulness of his inspired counsel.

As a stake president during this period, I went to a local hospital to visit a dear sister suffering with a terminal illness. More than forty years earlier, I had attended school with both this sister and her husband, who had been childhood sweethearts. But they had not been blessed with children of their own, and they had filled this void by his serving as a Scout leader—and his loving companion as the "Scout mother"—to scores of young boys over a generation.

As I approached the hospital that day, my heart was heavy with foreboding for what lay ahead in the lives of this choice couple. For weeks this dear brother had stayed with his companion at the hospital day and night to give comfort and ease her burden and the pain of her suffering.

As I reached the door of her hospital room that day, I met my friend emerging from his wife's room into the hallway. Unlike my earlier visits, when his countenance reflected the weight of their ordeal, this time his face was radiant and his eyes were aglow. Before I could utter a word, he said, "You will never guess what just happened. As my wife and I were feeling so burdened, into our room came President Kimball"—himself a patient at the hospital, where he had recently undergone surgery. "He prayed with us and he blessed us, and it was as though the Savior himself had come to lift our burdens." Many other patients in that hospital, I might add, experienced a similar blessing from one who knew so much of pain and suffering.

Lifelong acts of charity

In my own life I have experienced much of the Savior's love through the kindness and goodness of many of the Lord's servants. With King Benjamin I acknowledge that if we were to serve the Savior with all our souls, yet we would be unprofitable servants (see Mosiah 2:21). And this because of His great love and atoning sacrifice for each of His children.

Some months ago a ninety-year-old patriarch and dear friend of my own father was quietly laid to rest in this valley. My father passed away during the height of the Great Depression in 1932, and ten days later my oldest brother, age fourteen, died. During forty-seven years of my mother's widowhood, this gentle man frequently visited our fatherless family to give wise counsel and encouragement and priesthood blessings. His example and personal concern, coupled with the goodness of many other priesthood lead-

ers and loving neighbors, helped my mother and her five remaining children face the problems of economic depression and wars and the many worldly influences and daily challenges with which each of us must cope. His life in many ways touched scores of others in similar circumstances.

To me he was the epitome of the "pure religion" described in the epistle of James: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

In these challenging times, dear brothers and sisters, the need to "minister unto the least of these" of our Father's children is so great (see Matthew 25:40). How much we need the gifts of discernment and wisdom and charity to know how to really reach down and lift up our brothers and sisters to higher ground.

I pray that day by day we will strive more diligently to be about our Father's business (see Luke 2:49); to love and serve our fellowmen by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and comforting those that mourn (see Matthew 25:37-39); to hold up the hands that hang down and strengthen the feeble knees (see D&C 81:5); to believe and live the Savior's doctrine; and to follow after Him and put first in our lives the things of His kingdom. And for this I humbly pray, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Richard P. Lindsay of the Seventy has spoken to us.

It will now be our opportunity to hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Today I would like to speak about a name. We are all pleased when our names are pronounced and spelled correctly. Sometimes a nickname is used instead of the real name. But a nickname may offend either the one named or the parents who gave the name.

The name of which I shall speak is not a personal name, yet the same principles apply. I refer to a name given by the Lord:

"Thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (D&C 115:4).

Note carefully the language of the Lord. He did not say, "Thus shall my church be *named*." He said, "Thus shall my church be *called*." Years ago members were cautioned by the Brethren, who wrote, "We feel that some may be misled by the too frequent use of the term 'Mormon Church'." (*Member-Missionary Class, Instructor's Guide* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982], p. 2). Before any other name is considered to be a legitimate substitute, the thoughtful person

might reverently consider the feelings of the Heavenly Parent who bestowed that name.

Surely every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord is precious. So each word in this name must be important—divinely designated for a reason. If we study the key words in that name, we can better understand the name's full significance.

Saints

The last word in the title is *Saints*. I smile when I remember a comment made after my call to the Quorum of the Twelve. A doctor friend relayed a report made at a professional meeting that "Dr. Nelson was no longer practicing cardiac surgery because his church had made him 'a saint.'"

Such a comment was not only amusing but revealing. It evidenced unfamiliarity with the language of the Bible, in which the word *saint* is used much more frequently than is the term *Christian*.

The word *Christian* appears in only three verses of the King James Version

of the Bible. One verse describes the historical fact that "disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26); another quotes a sarcastic nonbeliever, King Agrippa (see Acts 26:28); and the third indicates that one known as "a Christian" must be prepared to suffer (1 Peter 4:16).

In contrast, the term *saint* (or *saints*) appears in thirty-six verses of the Old Testament and in sixty-two verses of the New Testament.

Paul addressed an epistle "to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1).

To recent converts there he said, "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19; see also Ephesians 3:17-19).

In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul used the word *saint* at least once in every chapter.

Despite its use in ninety-eight verses of the Bible, the term *saint* is still not well understood. Some mistakenly think that it implies beatification or perfection. Not so! A saint is a believer in Christ and knows of His perfect love. The giving saint shares in a true spirit of that love, and the receiving saint accepts in a true spirit of gratitude. A saint serves others, knowing that the more one serves, the greater the opportunity for the Spirit to sanctify and purify.

A saint is tolerant and is attentive to the pleadings of other human beings, not only to spoken messages but to unspoken messages as well. A saint is different from an individual whose response to a concern might be a selfish "What do I care" attitude. A real saint responds, "What? I *do* care!" *Do* is an action verb, and it becomes the driving force in the reply of one who will care for another in need (see 1 Corinthians 12:25-27; 2 Corinthians 7:12).

A saint "refrain[s] from idleness" (Alma 38:12) and seeks learning by study and also by faith. Education not only helps in communication with others, it enables one to discern truth from error,

particularly through studying the scriptures (see D&C 88:118).

A saint is honest and kind, paying financial obligations promptly and fully, treating others as she or he would want to be treated (see Matthew 7:12; 3 Nephi 14:12; D&C 112:11).

A saint is an honorable citizen, knowing that the very country which provides opportunity and protection deserves support, including prompt payment of taxes and personal participation in its legal political process (see D&C 134:5).

A saint resolves any differences with others honorably and peacefully and is constant in courtesy—even in traffic at the rush hour.

A saint shuns that which is unclean or degrading and avoids excess even of that which is good.

Perhaps above all, a saint is reverent. Reverence for the Lord, for the earth He created, for leaders, for the dignity of others, for the law, for the sanctity of life, and for chapels and other buildings are all evidences of saintly attitudes (see Leviticus 19:30; D&C 107:4; 134:7).

A reverent saint loves the Lord and gives highest priority to keeping His commandments. Daily prayer, periodic fasting, and payment of tithes and offerings are privileges important to a faithful saint.

Finally, a saint is one who receives the gifts of the Spirit that God has promised to all His faithful sons and daughters (see Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18).

Latter-day

The term *latter-day* is an expression especially difficult for translators who labor in languages in which there is not a good equivalent term. Some translations may suggest *last day*.

It is true that scriptures foretell the final days of the earth's temporal existence as a telestial sphere. The earth will then be renewed and receive its paradisiacal, or terrestrial, glory (see Articles of Faith 1:10). Ultimately, the earth will become celestialized (see Revelation 21:1; D&C 77:1; 88:25-26). But its *last* days must be preceded by its *latter* days!

We live in those latter days, and they are really remarkable. The Lord's Spirit is being poured out upon all inhabitants of the earth, precisely as the Prophet Joel foretold. His prophecy was of such significance that the angel Moroni reaffirmed it to the Prophet Joseph Smith (see Joel 2:28-32; Joseph Smith—History 1:41).

For millennia, methods of farming, travel, and communication were largely unchanged from ancient techniques. Developments since the birth of Joseph Smith, however, have risen in remarkable contrast.

Joseph Smith had long been foreordained as God's prophet for the restoration of the gospel in the fulness of times (see 2 Nephi 3:7-15). Twenty-five years after his birth, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially organized.

Later in that same century, the telegraph was developed, the Atlantic Ocean was first crossed by a steamship, and the telephone, the automobile, and motion pictures were invented.

The twentieth century has been even more extraordinary. Farming has become mechanized.

Modern transportation allows travel to nearly any destination in the world within a day or two.

Computers have been developed that allow the Church to serve living members and to organize information relative to progenitors who live on the other side of the veil. People throughout the world, once little concerned with family history, now search for roots of their ancestral heritage using technologies unavailable a century ago.

Long-distance telephone, telefax, radio, television, and satellite communications have become routine. In these latter days it is possible for the word of the Lord to be broadcast from world headquarters of His Church and heard in the most remote areas of the globe.

The divine promise is being fulfilled that this restored gospel "shall be preached unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (D&C 133:37).

Political changes have occurred recently in many countries. Previous restrictions of personal liberties have been relieved. The shell of spiritual confinement has been shattered. Swelling shouts of freedom fill the air. Surely the hand of the Lord is apparent. He said, "I will hasten my work in its time" (D&C 88:73), and that time of hastening is now.

Jesus Christ

By divine directive, the title of the Church bears the sacred name of Jesus Christ, whose church this is (see D&C 115:3-4). He so decreed more than once. Nearly two thousand years ago, the Lord said,

"Ye shall *call* the church in my name; . . .

"And how be it my church save it be *called* in my name?" (3 Nephi 27:7-8; italics added).

We worship God the Eternal Father in the name of His Son by the power of the Holy Ghost. We know the premortal Jesus to be Jehovah, God of the Old Testament. We know Him to be "the chief corner stone" upon which the organization of His church is based (Ephesians 2:20). We know Him to be the Rock from whom revelation comes to His authorized agents (see 1 Corinthians 10:4; Helaman 5:12) and to all who worthily seek Him (see D&C 88:63).

We know that He came into the world to do the will of His Father, who sent Him (see 3 Nephi 27:13). His divine mission was to effect the Atonement, which was to break the bands of death and enable us to receive immortality and eternal life.

The living Lord's divine mission still continues. One day we will stand before Him in judgment. He has foretold that event:

"Whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world" (27:16).

We revere the name of Jesus Christ. He is our risen Redeemer.

The Church

The first two words of the name the Lord chose for His earthly organization are *The Church*.

Note that the article *The* begins with a capital letter. This is an important part of the title, for the Church is the official organization of baptized believers who have taken upon themselves the name of Christ (see D&C 10:67-69; 18:21-25).

The foundation of the Church is the reality that God is our Father and that His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, is the Savior of the world. The witness and inspiration of the Holy Ghost confirm those realities.

The Church is the way by which the Master accomplishes His work and bestows His glory. Its ordinances and related covenants are the crowning rewards of our membership. While many organizations can offer fellowship and fine instruction, only His church can provide baptism, confirmation, ordination, the sacrament, patriarchal blessings, and the ordinances of the temple—all bestowed by authorized priesthood power. That power is destined to bless *all* children of our Heavenly Father, regardless of their nationality:

"The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth" (D&C 65:2; see also Daniel 2:37-45; D&C 109:72).

Admission into His church is by baptism. This sacred ordinance is reserved only for children after they reach the age of accountability and for adults who are truly converted, prepared, and worthy to pass this scriptural test:

"Ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

"Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and

in all things, and in all places that ye may be in" (Mosiah 18:8-9).

Through the ordinance of baptism, we take upon ourselves the name of the Lord and covenant to be saints in these latter days. We covenant to live by the doctrines of the Church as recorded in sacred scriptures and as revealed to prophets, ancient and modern.

"We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Articles of Faith 1:9).

These revelations include fundamental truths essential to our everlasting happiness and joy. They teach of priorities with eternal potential such as love of God, family, mother, father, children, and home; self-mastery; care of the poor and needy; service; and thoughtful consideration for others.

This church, established under the direction of Almighty God, fulfills promises made in biblical times. It is part of the "restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). It has been restored and given a name by the Lord Himself.

He issued this solemn warning: "Let all men beware how they take my name in their lips" (D&C 63:61). "Remember," He added, "that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care" (D&C 63:64). Therefore, just as we revere His holy name, we likewise revere the name that He decreed for His church.

As members of His church, we are privileged to participate in its divine destiny. May we so honor Him who declared, "Thus shall my church be called . . . The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "O Divine Redeemer" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson has addressed us, followed by the choir's singing "O Divine Redeemer," a favorite

number of our prophet and of many of us.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Thank you, Brother Bowden, for that beautiful number. That's a difficult one to follow.

Freedom is a spiritual need

The prophets have taught us that before the world was, there was a council in heaven. President Brigham Young instructed the Saints:

"The Council . . . said, 'Let there be an earth, and let there be a firmament above and beneath it,' and it was so. They said, 'Let there be heat and cold,' and it was so. They said, 'Let there be spring and summer, autumn and winter,' and it was so.

" 'Who will redeem the earth, who will go forth and make the sacrifice for the earth and all things it contains?' The Eldest Son said: 'Here am I'; and then he added, 'Send me.' But the second one, which was 'Lucifer, [a] Son of the Morning,' said, 'Lord, here am I, send me, I will redeem every son and daughter of Adam and Eve that lives on the earth, or that ever goes on the earth.' 'But,' says the Father, 'that will not answer at all. I give [unto] each and every individual his agency; all must use that in order to gain exaltation in my kingdom; inasmuch as they have the power of choice they must exercise that power. They are my children; the attributes which you see in me are in my children and they must use their agency. If you undertake to save all, you must save them in unrighteousness and corruption'" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], pp. 53-54).

As these spirits have come forth from the council in heaven to take their "turn on earth," they are still desiring

their free agency, and, in fact, they are willing to sacrifice for that freedom. We are witnessing today remarkable events occurring throughout the world: evidence of the strength of man's desire for freedom. The history of man's mortal experience would indicate that the desire to be free has spiritual roots.

There is an innate, overwhelming, compelling desire to be free. This desire seems to be more precious than life itself.

The Lord tells us how to be free

Another desire we carry from the preexistence is to know who we are and where we came from and what our opportunities are in this great eternal plan. Answers to these questions can really only be found in the gospel of our Lord and Savior.

As we hear the cries for help from those who are just now trying to deal with their newly found freedom, trying to use it and understand it, we can turn to the scriptures and read how the Lord prepared another nation for their freedom.

The scriptures record that Israel had lived in the land of Egypt for 430 years. For a time they had prospered under the leadership of Joseph. The account reads:

"And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.

"And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

"And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:

"Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land" (Exodus 1:6-10).

Then the narrative continues to tell how the Israelites were placed in bondage and became slaves to the Egyptians. Moses was raised up, trained, and charged with the responsibility of freeing them from bondage and leading them to their own promised land. His task was difficult, for Israel had lived about two centuries in slavery; they had been taught many of the idolatrous practices prominent in the land in that day. It would have been impossible for Moses to lead his people without the direction of the Lord.

The Israelites built a tabernacle

As a way of rebuilding their faith and reminding them who was their true God, Moses was instructed to establish certain principles and practices with them to help them return to the true doctrine. First, the Lord directed them to construct a tabernacle, which would be moved about with them from place to place as they journeyed towards their promised land. This was to be a house of worship, where their sacred observances could be held. It was to be used by those who were willing to abide by the Lord's law.

When the children of Israel were disobedient, the privilege of enjoying the blessings of having the tabernacle in their midst was removed from them. We read:

"And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp" (Exodus 33:7).

When the children of Israel again found favor in the sight of the Lord, the tabernacle was moved with them from

place to place as they went about their quest for the promised land. It led them by day and was their security by night.

Later, when they reached their homeland, King Solomon built a magnificent temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem where they could continue to enjoy an official house of worship. Israel worshipped in Solomon's Temple for 350 years. But they failed to be faithful, and dissension caused conflict in the tribes. This so weakened Israel that when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, made war on them, he was able to defeat them and looted the temple and destroyed it. Israel lost not only their place of worship but many also lost their homes when Nebuchadnezzar carried the people to Babylonia as his captives.

Ways Israel kept close to God

In addition to the tabernacle as a place of worship, the Lord gave Israel His written law contained on tablets of stone. These commandments were written by the finger of the Lord. They were kept for guidance and direction. The Ten Commandments were the basis of Hebrew law. Four of them have to do with our attitude toward God; the remaining six with our attitude toward our fellowman. Reverence for God was a basis for the Ten Commandments. Here was a foundation on which to build a society of law and order.

The Lord had another way of reminding Israel of the blessings He had given them. He had them establish religious customs, which became a part of their everyday life, to signify the ways through which they could express their faith in God. Israel refused to abandon these practices even after being taken into captivity. They conceived that God's dominion was not limited by national or political boundaries, and they would not give up their faith even though they struggled in a strange land. Deprived of their temple, they still had their law and their religious customs to worship their God.

We must be examples of freedom

Now, most of us will not be called to help nations organize newly found freedoms, but all of us can be involved by making certain the light of freedom burns brightly within our own souls. We can be certain that, by our actions, we are examples of how freedom should be enjoyed.

Following the pattern that He established for ancient Israel, the Lord has commanded us to build houses of worship for the purpose of having a place where the gospel can be taught. After understanding is achieved, we can enter into covenants with Him to be obedient to His will and, in turn, receive His promised blessings as a result of our faithfulness. We have temples—they now dot the maps of nations—where the worthy can enter, worship, be taught, and make covenants to serve God and abide by His law.

Freedom comes from obeying laws

From the very beginning of man's existence on earth, he has been taught that he must be obedient to law:

"There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

"And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:20–21).

Prophets through the ages have taught us to be obedient to the laws of the Lord. These laws are the foundation of our existence here and will bring order out of chaos.

President Wilford Woodruff once taught us:

"The God of heaven, who created this earth and placed his children upon it, gave unto them a law whereby they might be exalted and saved in a kingdom of glory. For there is a law given unto all kingdoms, and all things are governed by law throughout the whole universe. Whatever law anyone keeps, he is pre-

served by that law, and he receives whatever reward that law guarantees unto him. It is the will of God that all his children should obey the highest law, that they may receive the highest glory that is ordained for all immortal beings. But God has given all his children an agency, to choose what law they will keep" (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946], p. 10).

We should create our own traditions

The Lord has not been so explicit in providing us religious customs along the order of feasts and festivals to remind us of the blessings we receive from Him today. However, the practice of having traditions to keep us close to the great heritage which is ours to enjoy should be something every family should try to keep alive.

Daily we should kneel in family prayer and study the scriptures together. Weekly we should observe the Sabbath day by attending our meetings, especially sacrament meeting, and behaving appropriately in activities that are proper for the Lord's day. We should also gather our families together in weekly family home evenings. Perhaps it would also be appropriate to have a date with our wives each week to remind us of the great blessing they are in our lives. Monthly we should fast and pay our tithes and offerings to the Lord. Semiannually we should make listening to the messages delivered at general conference a family tradition. We should organize, annually, family reunions to keep alive our great gospel heritage.

Other traditions which should continually be part of our lives are receiving father's blessings and patriarchal blessings, missionary preparation, temple preparation and regular temple attendance where possible, and being together as family units on those occasions when sacred ordinances are performed in behalf of a family member.

If we will build righteous traditions in our families, the light of the gospel

can grow ever brighter in the lives of our children from generation to generation. We can look forward to that glorious day when we will all be united together as eternal family units to reap the everlasting joy promised by our Eternal Father to His righteous children.

Our family activities and traditions can be a beacon to the rest of the world as an example of how we should live to merit His choice blessings and live in peace and harmony until the day that He returns to rule and reign over us.

This is the Lord's work in which we are engaged. God lives! Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, is my solemn witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

We are grateful to the owners and the operators of the many television and radio stations and cable and satellite systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The chorus will now sing "Come, Rejoice," and the benediction will be given by Elder Douglas H. Smith of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "Come, Rejoice."

Elder Douglas H. Smith offered the benediction.

FIRST DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 160th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, March 31, 1990, at 2:00 P.M. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a Primary children's choir from the Granger Utah Region. Glenda C. Nordfelt conducted, and Clay Christiansen was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Hinckley made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we greet you in this the second general session of the 160th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We welcome all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio and many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission. We express appreciation to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems for their cooperation and generosity in making these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Hartman Rector, Jr., and F. Burton Howard are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

The music for this session will be provided by a Primary children's choir from the Granger Utah Region under the direction of Sister Glenda C. Nordfelt, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir will open this meeting by singing "A Child's Prayer." The invocation will be offered by Elder James M. Paramore of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

The choir sang "A Child's Prayer."

Elder James M. Paramore offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

It is a beautiful spring day here in the valleys of the mountains, and it is beautiful on Temple Square with a great

array of flowers as we go forward with this conference.

The children's choir will now sing "On a Golden Springtime" followed by "Love One Another." We shall ask then that President Monson present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "On a Golden Springtime" and "Love One Another."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

As requested by President Benson and announced by President Hinckley, I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities of the Church as presently constituted with the following additional brethren as new members

of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Clinton L. Cutler, Robert K. Dellenbach, Harold G. Hillam, Kenneth Johnson, Helvécio Martins, Lynn A. Mickelsen, J. Ballard Washburn, and Durrell A. Woolsey. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

We release with our heartfelt thanks Brother David M. Kennedy, who has served as special representative of the First Presidency since 1974, and Brother Blaine C. Tueller, who has served as his assistant. Those who wish to join us in this expression of appreciation, please manifest it.

Sister Barbara W. Winder has accepted a call to accompany her husband, Richard, to his assignment as president of the Czechoslovakia Prague Mission. It is therefore necessary to release her as general president of the Relief Society. We also release her counselors, Joy F. Evans and Joanne B. Doxey, and all members of the Relief Society general board. In addition, we release Sister Elaine L. Jack as second counselor in the Young Women General Presidency. All who wish to join in an expression of appreciation to these sisters for their excellent service may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain Sister Elaine Low Jack as general president of the Relief Society with Chieko N. Okazaki as first counselor and Aileen H. Clyde as second counselor. Those in

favor please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain as second counselor in the Young Women General Presidency Sister Janette C. Hales. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other general officers of the Church as presently constituted. Those in favor please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

President Benson, it appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative.

We invite the newly called members of the Seventy and general women's

presidencies to take their places on the stand at this time.

President Hinckley

While these brothers and sisters are coming up, may I say that all of this is indicative of the tremendous vitality and growth of the Church across the world.

Brother Wilford G. Edling will now read the auditor's report, following which Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1989.

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1989

Wilford G. Edling

For the purpose of evaluating the adequacy of controls over receipts and expenditures of the general funds of the Church and its controlled organizations, we have reviewed the system of budgeting, accounting, and auditing, and the related financial statements of the Church for the year ended December 31, 1989, and the manner in which funds are received and expenditures are controlled.

Expenditures of general Church funds for the year were authorized by the Council on Disposition of Tithes, composed of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation of the Lord. The Appropriations Committee, in weekly meetings, administers major expenditures under the budget.

The general fund accounts of the Church are maintained by its Finance and Records Department, which uses modern accounting technology and equipment to keep abreast of the rapidly expanding and varied activities of the Church.

The Auditing Department, which is composed of a staff of certified public accountants and similarly qualified auditors, is independent of all other departments and performs financial audits,

operational audits, and audits of the computer systems employed by the Church. These auditing services are performed on a continuing basis for the Church departments and other controlled organizations of the Church engaged in worldwide operations, including missions, schools, administrative offices, and departmental activities.

The audits of local funds of wards and stakes are performed by stake auditors. The audit procedures are established and the audit reports are reviewed by the Church Auditing Department. Incorporated businesses owned or controlled by the Church for which accounts are not maintained in the Finance and Records Department are audited by the Church's internal auditors, independent professional auditing firms, or government regulatory agencies.

Based on our review of the system of financial controls within the Church, together with continuing discussions with personnel of the Finance and Records and the Auditing departments, we are of the opinion that budgeting, accounting, and auditing controls are adequate for Church needs and purposes, and that in all material respects the general funds of the Church received and expended during the year ended December 31, 1989, have

been controlled and accounted for in accordance with established Church policy and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,
Church Audit Committee

Wilford G. Edling
David M. Kennedy
Warren E. Pugh
Merrill J. Bateman
Ted E. Davis

The Church Statistical Report for 1989

F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 1989. (Membership figures include estimates based on 1989 reports available prior to conference.)

Church units

Number of stakes	1,739
Number of districts	432
Number of missions	228
Number of wards	11,536
Number of branches	5,769
Number of nations and territories with organized wards or branches	128

(These statistics reflect an increase of 32 stakes and 747 wards and branches during 1989.)

Church membership

Total membership at the close of 1989	7,300,000
------------------------------------------------	-----------

Children of record baptized.....	75,000
Converts baptized.....	318,940

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	39,739
------------------------------	--------

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Theodore M. Burton, Emeritus General Authority; Sister Lois A. Kjar Brown, wife of Elder Victor L. Brown, Emeritus General Authority; Marianne Clark Sharp, former counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Edling and Brother Watson, for that significant information. Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session, and he will be followed by Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy.

Elder David B. Haight

We have just had the privilege of sustaining, with our uplifted hands and deep affection, Ezra Taft Benson as God's living prophet; his inspired counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators; and the other General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And, of course, we acknowledge those other changes made in the auxiliary organizations. We have

heard the statistical report indicating a continuing worldwide growth of the Church, with its stabilizing influence, which is the product of the inspired doctrine and policies of the Church.

The growth of God's work

In a recent article, a non-Latter-day Saint scholar gave a fresh and most interesting review of this Church and its un-

predicted growth since its restoration 160 years ago. He described its growth as a "miracle" and an "incredibly rare event" (Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research*, Sept. 1984, p. 18).

In 1842 the Prophet Joseph Smith, in answer to an inquiry from the editor of a Chicago newspaper, made the prophetic declaration that "the truth of God will go forth boldly, . . . till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

God's hand in Eastern Europe

During a brief period of weeks, we have witnessed some phenomenal changes in the world, particularly in the Eastern Bloc countries, changes which God-fearing men attribute to the hand of the Almighty in bringing about His glorious purposes to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord. Walls have come down, gates have opened, and millions of voices have chorused the song of freedom! We rejoice in the dawning of a brighter day.

The news media have made the events in Eastern Europe appear as a purely political revolution even though many of the oppressed have recognized it as a "religious renaissance" and have acknowledged the influence of divine intervention (*USA Today*, 16 Mar. 1990, p. 13A).

A prominent national magazine has editorialized on the reasons for this sudden, dramatic change. It was "an idea . . . democracy—and its phenomenally successful application in America [and some other parts of the world]."

The article concludes, "America's contribution to the world will continue to be in the realm of ideas and ideals" ("An American Vision for the 1990s," *Fortune*, 26 Mar. 1990, p. 14).

The peoples in Eastern Europe have slowly but effectively been exposed to ideals of truth and basic rights through

messages by satellite, radio, printed materials, even programs and recordings by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir; word of mouth; heart-to-heart contacts; and the light of Christ encouraging seeds of truth to seep into their consciousness—a precept here and a precept there—and when the opportunity arrived, they confidently seized upon it.

The transformation of once-mighty man-made empires with such speed and determination has released new springs of faith and hope in the hearts of hundreds of millions of oppressed souls. Where there was despair, now the bright light of freedom shines forth. This only could have happened in such a miraculous way by the intervening hand of the Almighty! "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14).

God's works for His people

Just after the Israelites had walked across the Jordan River from Moab into Canaan, Joshua instructed twelve men, one from each tribe, to each take a stone from the dry riverbed of the Jordan to build a memorial unto the children of Israel forever. Joshua said: "When your children ask you what these stones mean, you will tell them about the time when Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground. Tell them that the Lord your God dried up the water of the Jordan for you until you had crossed, just as He dried up the Red Sea for us. Because of this, everyone on earth will know how great the Lord's power is, and you will honor the Lord your God forever" (see Joshua 4:21–24).

The Bible is replete with admonitions to remember the mighty acts of God as He has intervened in history for His people. We are witnesses of His mighty, intervening hand in the world even today.

God is our Father. He is concerned about the welfare of His children everywhere. But even a patient, loving Heavenly Father must weary of tolerating ungodliness as evidenced when "the Lord rained upon Sodom and . . . Gomorrah brimstone and fire from . . . out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24).

We need divine direction

Julia Ward Howe felt impressed to share her deep personal feelings for the need of divine direction in the struggle between the states in America. During the night, these eloquent words came into her mind and she quickly wrote them down:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the
coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where
the grapes of wrath are stored.
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of
his terrible, swift sword;
His truth is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that
shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men
before his judgment seat.
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer
him; be jubilant my feet!
Our God is marching on. ["Battle
Hymn of the Republic," *Hymns*, no.
60]

God's work to restore the gospel

President Joseph F. Smith declared, "The Almighty raised up [this nation] by the power of his omnipotent hand, that it might be possible in the latter days for the kingdom of God to be established in the earth" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 409).

President Smith continued, "His hand has been over this nation, and it is his purpose and design to enlarge it, make it glorious . . . to the end that those who are kept in bondage and serfdom may be brought to the enjoyment of the fullest freedom and liberty of conscience possible for intelligent men to exercise in the earth" (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 409).

The religious freedom established in America made possible the coming forth of the plain and precious truths of the Book of Mormon "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations" (preface to the

Book of Mormon). These writings are to come unto the Gentiles that they may "know the decrees of God" and repent (Ether 2:11).

Religious freedom and opportunities

It is incumbent upon the members of the Church who have had the gift of religious freedom to share this knowledge and testimony with the peoples of the world. Do not underestimate the profound influence—politically and socially—of the principles of the restored gospel upon all of mankind.

"Our mission [is] to save men," wrote Joseph F. Smith. "We have been laboring all these . . . years . . . to bring men to a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to bring them to repentance, to obedience to . . . God's law . . . to save [them] from error, . . . to turn away from evil and to learn to do good" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], pp. 72-73).

The opportunity for meaningful service to others is expanding rapidly. To some of us, it's just across the street; to others, across the ocean. The destiny of many nations is now being decided. Every generation is crucial. We may not be responsible for past generations, but we cannot escape the responsibility for this present one. It is beyond our comprehension to imagine the billions of souls who depend upon us to bring them—some way, somehow—this glorious message of the gospel. Of course all people will not respond, but all must be given the opportunity to hear and respond after being taught by the Spirit of Christ.

Being connected to inward power

Several years ago, upon entering an electrical establishment, Elder James E. Talmage saw an impressive array of lamps, door chimes, and other electrical items. And "having chosen a lamp, [he] turned the switch to test the . . . light; but lo, there was no light. The attendant told [him] that the lamps were there as an exhibit only, but were not connected up."

He reported, "I turned to the bells, but when I pressed a button I listened in vain for [a] responsive tinkle. And so with everything [else] in the shop—pleasing to look upon, some pieces artistic, all suggestive of usefulness, but, as displayed, they were [only] ornaments and nothing more, for they were not connected up."

Upon leaving the shop Elder Talmage thought, "A burning candle . . . is worth more in terms of utility than the most elaborate of electrolights without the current." Then a fitting parallel came to his mind of the "scriptural description of minds and souls darkened and deceived by outward appearances while devoid of spirituality: '*Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*' (2 Timothy 3:5)" (*Handbook of the Restoration* [Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1944], pp. 389–90).

A few years ago I had an interesting view of the tallest spire in Reykjavik, Iceland, as we were landing at the airport. We were told that this tall building was a church, and after greeting our Saints and inspecting our church building which I was to dedicate, I was curious to visit this other building we had seen from the air with the tall, stately spire. It was very impressive from a distance. However, as we approached the building we discovered that the front door was made of plywood and padlocked. A sign directed us to the back door. This large church building with such an impressive front and its high steeple, we discovered, was only a shell of a building. Though under construction for forty years, the weather-beaten framework was still in place—a reminder of ambitious plans on a grand scale but lacking the faith and foresight for its completion.

Continuing with Elder Talmage, he said: "Men may . . . erect church buildings—from humble chapel[s] to stately cathedral[s]—but [they are only] elaborate externals if they are not connected up with the source of divine wisdom and authority through the [current] of the holy priesthood . . . [and the] vitalizing

power of the Holy Ghost" (*Handbook of the Restoration*, p. 390).

Later, as we met in our smaller but adequate building in Reykjavik, it was comforting to know that it was not just a shell, but had the vitalizing power and Spirit of God in that little building.

Preparing nations to accept truth

We declare in all solemnity that the Lord is now preparing the nations of the earth to receive the truth He desires them to have. But in order for a person to accept the truth, he must prepare himself by exercising faith in the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Such faith accepts the existence of God our Father, the teachings of Jesus concerning man's dealings with his fellowmen, and the teachings concerning Christ's relationship to God as His Son. Once a person has prepared himself to receive and accept truth, it is then sealed upon his heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, who is the Testifier of Truth. It is then incumbent upon the person to conform his life to those standards of truth. This may require fundamental changes in life-style and the seeking of repentance for sins committed.

The Lord's power is at hand and evident. True believers will have unusual opportunities to be of service. I am convinced that those who labor unselfishly in behalf of others, with no thought of remuneration, will be physically and spiritually refreshed and renewed. We must prove ourselves, have the desire, and be found worthy to assist the Lord in accomplishing His purposes with men on earth.

I testify that the name of Jesus Christ is the only name under heaven whereby men may be saved and that all men, everywhere, must be brought to a knowledge of this truth if they are to receive the great, eternal exaltation provided by a gracious and loving Father.

The Lord instructed the young prophet Joseph in October of 1831:

"The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll

forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2).

I testify we are witnessing the fulfillment of this promise, and that this work, given by Almighty God to His Son to proclaim, to teach, and finally to judge, will be done with eternal love, in

the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy will now address us.

Elder Hans B. Ringger

What shall we do?

After the resurrection of Christ, the Twelve Apostles preached the gospel in the city of Jerusalem. Their message touched the hearts of many people, and, upon testifying of the truthfulness of the Resurrection, they were asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

Ever since, this very question has been asked by people all over the world, by people like you and me. Daily we are confronted with decisions concerning the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of those around us. Our decisions are based upon our understanding of what is good and right for us, and we try to avoid pitfalls and mistakes. We hope for happiness, and we wish for comfort.

In my own life, this hope and wish for a happier and more meaningful life causes me to evaluate my daily decisions more carefully. And never do I feel the need for some guiding principle more than when I come to a crossroad, for without some direction I feel incapable of pursuing my course consistently.

Act by the gospel of Jesus Christ

But it is one thing to know the way and another to take it. Some of us probably struggle to find guiding principles, some sort of foundation on which to build, and others have designed the perfect plan but never find the motivation, time, or courage to use it. In one way or another, we are paralyzed by the lack of understanding that true happiness comes

from realizing our plans, beliefs, and hopes.

I believe that the foundation and guiding light for all our decisions is the gospel of Jesus Christ and His message to the world. The teachings of Christ must be embedded in our desire to choose the right and in our wish to find happiness. His righteous life must be reflected in our own actions. The Lord not only teaches love, He *is* love. He not only preached the importance of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, He *lived* accordingly. His life reflected the gospel that He preached. There was and is total harmony between His thoughts and His actions.

I believe that if we want to be true Christians, our lives must be founded on true principles and our actions must reflect that. But I do not believe that we can pick and choose which principles are the most convenient ones. Today, however, I would like to mention those that are true to my heart and that have helped me in my quest to take the Christian course.

Love is the essence of our lives

When a man asked Christ what he should do to inherit eternal life, He answered, "Love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27). Love is the essence of the gospel and the guiding light for a Christlike life. It not only teaches us to look upward but also to look around us. Our heart, might, and mind must be dedicated to the Lord and to our fellow men, women, and children.

But what does that really mean? It means that we follow the admonition of the scripture, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). It means that we live the example of the good Samaritan, who was free of prejudice and excuses and therefore truly loved his neighbor. He went the second mile and gave of what he had despite all the odds. His life was one of single-minded service.

By contrast, the Apostle James observed that "a double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). An old Swiss saying describes such indecision in the following words:

With one foot in,
With one foot out,
You can't be in,
You can't be out—
Not warm, not cold,
Not square, not round,
More poor than poor
And always poor.
For such a man
Will never know
Where to begin
Or where to go.

No compromise in dedication

The Christian course knows no compromise.

We are promised by the Lord if we choose His way, we will be blessed beyond our comprehension and in ways that are not measurable.

A Christian life demands decision and dedication. It is a dedication that is free of fanaticism but full of understanding and love. It is a dedication that knows no selfishness but yet knows of our personal needs. It is a dedication that embraces all mankind and yet keeps an eye single to the Lord. And it is a dedication that brings joy but is seldom free of hardship, disappointment, and discomfort.

It is not always easy to make the right decision, and some of us struggle a life long to find the right course. Remember, it is not for us to judge those who might be confused or who have not

the strength to change. What they need is our understanding and support.

We should give of our wealth

When Jesus came to the coast of Judea, a young man said to him, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" (Matthew 19:20). The answer Christ gave was simple but powerful: "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (19:21).

Christ speaks to all of us, not only to the young rich man who went away sorrowful. He commands us to give of our wealth, whatever it might be. For some it is material possessions, for others time or a talent. For those of us who have worldly riches, it does not mean that we cannot enjoy the commodities of life for which we work. But it means that we use them to do good and that we share them with those in need. Our hearts should be set upon helping those in need.

But money alone does not lift the burdens of our fellowmen, and many of us live in a time and place where there is little to spare. The world is in need of time, and if we have but one hour to spare, we are wealthy. It takes time to listen and to comfort, it takes time to teach and to encourage, and it takes time to feed and to clothe. We all have the gift to lift each other's burdens and to make a difference in somebody's life.

Let us decide to serve now

The needy are all around us. Too often, however, we are blind to those needs or fear those people whose company makes us feel uncomfortable. Yes, we admire people and organizations for the numerous services they render; and yes, we rejoice in the tremendous social changes many countries experienced during the last few months. But our admiration and interest are not enough. People at home and abroad need our help. Let us decide to serve now, even if that means leaving the comfort of our homes temporarily.

Most of the time we do not even have to go too far; within our own communities there are people of all ages who are homeless, terminally ill, or lonely. We cannot hope for a better world, for more perfect governments and societies, if we are not willing to do our share.

We need to look around us, and if we cannot see poverty, illness, and despair in our own neighborhood or ward, then we have to look harder. And remember, we cannot be afraid to go beyond our own social and cultural circles. We have to rid ourselves of religious, racial, or social prejudices and expand the boundaries of our service. Service should never discriminate and is hardly ever easy. Did not Jesus Himself mingle with those who were branded unfit by the self-righteous Pharisees? And were not those people the ones who needed Him the most?

I understand that the needs of this world can overwhelm us and that the injustices of life and the ills of society can paralyze us. But I believe that no good cause is in vain, and if we can only touch one life, the world is a better place. Choose your service today, and choose it wisely. Prepare yourself to be of help to others. There are many good causes inside and outside the Church. There is a need for volunteers who share their time and talents with those who are less fortunate.

We should love and care for others

To love and care for others is a decision. It is the answer to the Lord's

exhortation, "Come, follow me." It is the answer the Apostles gave to those who asked, "What shall we do?" To say "I cannot" is a decision for *no*. It is a decision that will rob us of the very happiness we are seeking. And most of all, it is a decision against a Christlike life.

I testify to you that we can only be in the service of our God if we are in the service of our fellowmen (see Mosiah 2:17). I hope that we all have the wisdom and determination to decide today whom we want to serve. And I pray that we will decide together with the prophet Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just heard from Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy. Brother Ringger is a citizen of Switzerland and presently serves as President of the Europe Area of the Church. You may be interested to know that among those newly sustained this afternoon are citizens of Chile, England, and Brazil, as well as of the United States.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Called to Serve."

Elders Spencer J. Condie and F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy will speak to us following the singing.

The choir and congregation sang "Called to Serve."

Elder Spencer J. Condie

I wish to extend a warm welcome to the new members of the Church who "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

Visions from the mountaintops

Inasmuch as many of you newly baptized members will soon be called to

serve as leaders at different times in various Church callings, I would like to share some short scriptural lessons on leadership.

In the Pearl of Great Price we learn that as Moses was called to become a prophet of God, he was taken to a mountaintop, where he beheld a panoramic view of all of God's wondrous creations.

Jehovah gave him a vision of his immediate goal, which was to "deliver my people from bondage" (Moses 1:26). The Lord then explained his long-term goal: "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (1:39).

From the Book of Mormon we read of the young prophet Nephi who also beheld a vision on a mountain (see 1 Nephi 11:1). Once he had envisioned the promised land, he could not be dissuaded from building a ship that would take him there (see 1 Nephi 17–18). Once parents have a vision of a son dressed in a missionary suit or of a daughter in the temple dressed in white, then family home evening, family prayer, and scripture study assume their proper place in every home. From Moses and Nephi we learn that *a leader must have a vision of the work which lies ahead.*

Lessons from the kings of Israel

Following the Great Exodus from Egypt to the land of promise, the children of Israel were governed by judges for a period of more than three centuries (1429 to 1095 B.C.). These judges were then succeeded by a series of kings, the first of whom was Saul, anointed by the prophet Samuel (see 1 Samuel 8–10). For decades Saul enjoyed the adulation and support of the people. But then, lifted up in the pride of his heart, he disregarded the counsel of the Lord's prophet. At that point Samuel reminded him of the time when he was little in his own sight (see 1 Samuel 15:17) and taught him that immortal lesson: "To obey is better than sacrifice" (15:22). From Saul's life we learn that *a leader must be humble and obedient.*

Saul was succeeded by King David, whose forty-year reign is considered by many to be the golden age of Israelite history. Indeed, Jerusalem became known as the City of David. But notwithstanding his great leadership abilities, he was tempted to commit a very grievous

sin, which he then compounded with an even greater sin. From King David's life we learn that even kings must be careful. *Leadership positions do not totally protect us from temptation.*

Following the death of David, his son Solomon ascended to the throne. At the beginning of his reign, Solomon prayed in deep humility: "O Lord my God, . . . I am but a little child. . . . Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people." And God *did* give him "a wise and an understanding heart" (1 Kings 3:7, 9, 12).

Armed with the Spirit of the Lord, Solomon became God's instrument in building the holy temple for which Israel had hoped and prayed for many generations. But with the passage of time Solomon took him wives outside of Israel "and his wives turned away his heart" and he "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 11:3, 6). From Solomon we can learn that *knowledge and wisdom alone do not qualify people to lead.* Perhaps Jacob said it best: "To be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:29).

After Solomon's forty-year reign, his son Rehoboam went to Shechem to be made the king. He sought the counsel of the elders regarding how he should rule. "And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve *them*, and answer *them*, and speak good words to *them*, then *they* will be *thy* servants for ever" (1 Kings 12:7; italics added). The Savior gave his disciples similar counsel when he taught them, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). Within the kingdom of God, *to lead is to serve.*

But Rehoboam rejected the counsel which required him to humble himself and to serve others. Instead, he chose to reign over Israel with a very heavy hand, thus causing the great division into the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah (see 1 Kings 12:20).

Hezekiah led Israel righteously

For the next 220 years the people generally set aside their sacred covenants, thus wandering in the ways of the world. Then a young man named Hezekiah began to reign in Judah. "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," and "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel" (2 Kings 18:3, 5).

Hezekiah gathered together the priesthood bearers of the day and said, "Hear me ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place" (2 Chronicles 29:5). "Be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God . . . but yield yourselves unto the Lord, . . . and serve the Lord your God" (30:7-8).

In response to this assertive leader, who was supported by the prophet Isaiah, "the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people" (30:20), and "in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness" (31:18).

From King Hezekiah, as from King Benjamin (see Mosiah 2-5), we can learn a very positive lesson on leadership: circumstances do not always need to remain the same. Leaders *can* make a difference! *Faith in the Lord and high expectations can bring about a mighty change of heart* among an entire people.

The leadership of the prophets

One of the great teachers and prophet-leaders in Israel was Ezra, who "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10). As Saints of the latter days, we are grateful for a modern-day Ezra, even our beloved prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, who, like Ezra of old, has prepared himself to receive the word of the Lord and is prepared to do the Lord's will. I bear you my witness that there is a living prophet in Israel today.

Another great leader who continually sought the will of the Lord was the Prophet Joseph Smith. His very life exemplified Paul's admonition to live the gospel that we preach (see 1 Corinthians 9:14). A great strength of the Prophet was his ability to delegate and develop leadership skills in those around him. The expedition of Zion's Camp is but one example of Joseph's leadership based upon the principle "Come, follow me" (see Luke 18:22). At the conclusion of Zion's Camp, the Prophet gave the newly organized high council detailed instructions regarding their callings and then told them, "If I should now be taken away, I [have] accomplished the great work the Lord [has] laid before me" (*History of the Church*, 2:124). Long before his martyrdom the Prophet Joseph was diligently training those who would continue to lead the kingdom after he was gone. Here is another important lesson of leadership: *Leaders are duty-bound and obligated to prepare others to take their place* at some future time. Brothers and sisters, the cemeteries are filled with leaders who thought they were indispensable.

Among the most righteous and effective leaders to ever walk the earth was Enoch, who persistently sought to save every single soul.

"And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness. . .

"And lo, Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven" (Moses 7:18, 21).

Note the reference to the "process of time." A great leader must have high expectations, tempered with patience. In section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants we learn that Enoch was "four hundred and thirty years old when he was translated" (v. 49). Brothers and sisters, I rest my case: *perfection takes a long, long time*. But still, we are commanded to become perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect (see Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48).

The leadership example of Christ

From the most exemplary life of all, even that of the Savior Jesus Christ, we learn perhaps the most important lesson of all. As the Savior was in the depths of suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed that the bitter cup might pass from him, adding in meekness and lowliness of heart, "Nevertheless not *my* will, but *thine*, be done" (Luke 22:42; italics added). *A leader in the Lord's kingdom must be meek and lowly of heart* (see Alma 37:34).

May each of us engaged in the work of the Lord perform *His* work in *His* way, "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, . . .

"Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love" (D&C 121:41-43).

I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder F. Melvin Hammond

My beloved brothers and sisters, today I am happy to express to you the genuine love of the members of the Church in the South America North Area and of your wonderful missionary sons and daughters, young and old, who constantly say to me, "Elder Hammond, when you see our dear prophet, please tell him that we love him. And when you speak in a general conference of the Church, please tell the Saints that our love of the Savior is united firmly with theirs." They are all so wonderful, and I am pleased to comply with their loving request.

The understanding of young people

On this occasion I would like to speak especially to the young people the world over. Somehow, I believe that they have a special ability to understand important things. May I illustrate with this little story?

Many years ago we sat as a family in our weekly home evening discussing the principle of the Resurrection. Attempting to explain in simple terms what is involved, I noticed our small children looking at me with puzzled expressions on their tiny faces. Apologetically, I mumbled something about it being very difficult to understand such things. Whereupon, Lezlee, our then five-year-old, with a look of loving concern for my

discomfort, said, "Don't feel badly, Daddy; I understand you." And then she proceeded to demonstrate her new gospel knowledge. Lying down on the floor, straight and stiff, with her arms outstretched, she slowly raised herself and said, "It's simple; you just sink up."

So I want to talk to you about the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ, because on Easter Sunday we will celebrate His rising from the dead and all of us *should* know the wonderful story of that remarkable event.

The first Easter morning

It was early on Sunday morning. Deep darkness still hung over the holy city, Jerusalem. Mary of Magdala entered the garden and approached the tomb where the body of Jesus of Nazareth recently had been laid.

Just two days before, the humble Christ, hanging from a wooden cross, had given up the ghost, and mortality had ended for the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh.

Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin but a loving disciple of Jesus, had gone to the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, and had asked that he be allowed to remove the body from the cross. Permission was granted. The body was taken from the cross, and Joseph, with the assistance of Nicodemus, who

earlier had come to question Jesus by night, gently prepared the body for burial after the manner of the Jews. The kind, loving men placed the body of the deceased in a newly hewn tomb belonging to Joseph. Then a great stone was rolled across the entrance, and a Roman seal was placed upon it, "lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead" (Matthew 27:64).

Now Mary Magdalene approached the tomb, but to her utter amazement the huge stone had been rolled away. The body of her beloved Jesus was gone. Quickly she ran to advise the Apostles of this new tragedy, saying, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him" (John 20:2).

Peter, the chief Apostle, and John, the beloved Apostle, hurried to the place of burial. The account of Mary was confirmed. The tomb was indeed empty, except for the linens which had been used to wrap the body. Saddened, the two Apostles went away to their own homes.

"But Mary," who had followed Peter and John back to the garden, "stood without at the sepulchre weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre" (20:11). Two angels dressed in white sat within the tomb. Seeing her great grief they asked, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Sorrowfully, she answered them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (20:13).

Still weeping, Mary turned from the tomb, and through her misty eyes she noticed someone standing close by. The person spoke to her, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" Thinking that perhaps it was the gardener who addressed her, she replied, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away" (20:15).

In a voice tinged with pure love and the sweetest tenderness, he simply uttered one word, "Mary." There was no mistaking the voice; it was Jesus Christ. And thrilled beyond any comprehension,

the dear woman could only say, "Rabboni," which means Master (see John 20:16).

There He stood—alive! Raised from the dead! Never to die again! His perfect body forever united with the spirit. The eternal Christ!

To the credit of gentle, loving women everywhere, our Redeemer chose as the first mortal witness of His resurrection from the dead a woman, Mary Magdalene.

Concentrate on life, not death

As we contemplate the events leading to the death of Jesus Christ, we tend to grieve for the awful sufferings which He experienced at the hands of wicked men—the terrible rending by the lash, the dreadful nails placed in His hands and feet, the prolonged agony of the cross, and finally His tender heart breaking for the sins of all men.

But stop! He is not dead! He is risen! He is the first fruit of the resurrection. Without Him, life for all men would end at death. All would be consigned to the grave, their bodies to molder in the dust forever. But because of Him, our Savior, even Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, we, everyone of us, will live again—freed from the everlasting chains of death.

To you sweet parents who have placed the mortal body of a dear son or a beautiful daughter in the grave, or to all who have lost a mother or father, husband or wife, to the relentless hand of death, I say, have hope. For if we ourselves are faithful to the end, they will not be lost to us save for a moment. And then, oh, the sweetness of that joyous reunion, for the tender mercy of the Lord will bring them forth triumphant from the grave.

And so, my wonderful young people everywhere, as we come to celebrate Easter, will you remember the story of Jesus coming out of the grave a perfect, glorified being? Will you remember that He made it possible for all of us to someday be resurrected and to come back and

live with Him in the celestial kingdom of God throughout all eternity? Then if you will remember, you will understand His love for all of us, and your love for Him will grow deeper and deeper forever.

Such is my humble testimony of the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, which I proclaim to you along with my profound love for Him and each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elders Spencer J. Condie and F. Melvin Hammond, who have addressed us.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker, and he will be followed by Elder Neal A. Maxwell, also of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

In a revelation the Lord said, "Blessed is my servant Hyrum Smith; for I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right" (D&C 124:15). I personally know of no higher praise that any man could receive.

A definition of integrity

I have felt impressed to speak today about the need for integrity: old-fashioned, personal, practical integrity. To me, integrity means always doing what is right and good, regardless of the immediate consequences. It means being righteous from the very depth of our soul, not only in our actions but, more important, in our thoughts and in our hearts. Personal integrity implies such trustworthiness and incorruptibility that we are incapable of being false to a trust or covenant.

We all have within us the ability to know what is right and good. Speaking to the "peaceable followers of Christ" (Moroni 7:3), the prophet Mormon said:

"It is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

"For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by

the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

"But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him" (Moroni 7:15-17).

How much do we value our integrity?

Having received the Spirit of Christ to know good from evil, we should always choose the good. We need not be misled, even though fraud, deception, deceit, and duplicity often seem to be acceptable in our world. Lying, stealing, and cheating are commonplace. Integrity, a firm adherence to the highest moral and ethical standards, is essential to the life of a true Latter-day Saint.

Like Job of old, we need to say, "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me" (Job 27:5). Though he had lost almost everything he valued—his family, his friends, his health, his wealth—he refused to give up his integrity. In sharp contrast, many today trade away their integrity for a very small price tag. A person who shoplifts for a candy bar, makeup, or jewelry trades priceless integrity for a meager gain. A person who falsifies a tax return by not reporting

income or claiming invalid deductions compromises valued integrity for a pittance of unpaid income tax. One who avoids paying bills promptly for goods or services received exchanges cherished integrity for a perceived temporary advantage. Husbands or wives who are unfaithful to their spouses trade their prized integrity for a fleeting moment of mirth. Integrity is so precious that it is beyond price; it is invaluable.

The value of Joseph's integrity

Joseph, the son of Jacob, was a model of integrity. No doubt many of you have been reminded of him recently in a Sunday School class. Joseph's integrity placed him among the greatest of our Heavenly Father's sons. He did what was right and good; he was trustworthy and incorruptible, self-disciplined never to violate a trust.

Because of his integrity and righteousness, Joseph was favored and blessed of the Lord in every circumstance. His life is evidence that "all things work together for good to [those who] love God" (Romans 8:28). His example is especially pertinent to us because most members of the Church have descended from his loins.

His father, Jacob, loved Joseph even from his youth. The Lord revealed future events to Joseph in dreams. However, his brothers hated him, plotted to take his life, and then sold him as a slave. When he was carried captive to Egypt, the Lord was with him there. Joseph became overseer of the house of Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard. When approached by Potiphar's wife, Joseph refused and fled from her improper advances because of his personal righteousness and because he would not violate Potiphar's trust.

This refusal and the accusations it prompted caused Joseph to be imprisoned. Again the Lord was with him. Joseph became overseer of the prison. The Lord enabled him to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker and, later, Pharaoh's dreams of seven fat and lean cows and of seven full and thin

ears of corn. Subsequently, Joseph became ruler over all Egypt, second in rank only to Pharaoh. He directed the storage of food during the years of plenty and the dispensing of it during the years of famine.

During the famine, Joseph's brothers, who had sold him as a slave twenty-two years earlier, came to Egypt to obtain food. Not recognizing him, they bowed down to him because of his high office.

In a tender, touching scene, Joseph identified himself to his brothers and forgave them. I suppose he could have retaliated for their mistreatment of him by making them slaves, having them imprisoned, or even having them put to death. But he did what was right and good. He said:

"I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither. . . .

"And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity . . . and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

"So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Genesis 45:4-5, 7-8).

Through Joseph, the Lord preserved the children of Israel and provided a place in Egypt for them to flourish and increase.

This story is well known, but I urge you to read it again, focusing your attention on the integrity of Joseph and on the blessings it brought to him. He became the birthright son in the house of Israel and received an inheritance in the lands of the Americas (see Ether 13:8). The Lord permitted him to prophesy of Moses, who would deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt (see JST, Genesis 50:27-29), and of Joseph Smith, the prophet of the restoration of the gospel in the latter days (see JST, Genesis 50:30-33; 2 Nephi 3:6-21).

The integrity of great leaders

A more modern life of integrity is exemplified by George Washington, first

president of the United States of America. His integrity and character, more than the brilliance of his intellect, made him the choice of his countrymen as their leader. He loved the peace and tranquility of his Mount Vernon estate but responded when duty called him into the turmoil of public life. He refused any compensation, expecting the government to pay only his expenses, of which he kept an exact account. He gave forty-five years of his life in the service of his country (see David O. McKay, *Secrets of a Happy Life* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967], pp. 142-44). As I visited the Mount Vernon stake two weeks ago, I felt the spirit of George Washington, the father of his country. The noble deeds of this great man passed through my mind.

The Prophet Joseph Smith is another great example of integrity. He did not waver from doing as the Lord directed, even at the peril of his life. He "did not shirk life, nor did he try to avoid its experiences. . . . He marched, built, sawed, hewed, plowed, planted with everyone else. His muscular body was a result of physical exertion. His mind was 'an IDEAL' of unrelenting seeking" (Leon R. Hartshorn, *Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970], p. 67). "His greatness did not lie alone in prophesying, . . . speaking, or writing, but in what he was" (Hartshorn, p. 38).

President Ezra Taft Benson, our prophet, seer, and revelator, is an example of sublime integrity. His assignment to Europe by the First Presidency to relieve the sufferings of our Saints after World War II exemplified the nobility of his character.

"A man's true greatness is not in what he says he is, nor in what people say he is; his greatness lies in what he really is" (Hartshorn, p. 38). Our integrity determines what we really are.

Those with integrity are saved

The Lord expects us to live lives of integrity and to be obedient to his commandments. He said, "And why call ye

me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). On another occasion, he said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

A little lying, a little cheating, or taking a little unfair advantage is not acceptable to the Lord (see 2 Nephi 28:8-9). The scriptures warn that these are Satan's ways to lead us "carefully down to [destruction]" (28:21).

To Saints of the Restoration, the Savior said, "For of him unto whom much is given much is required" (D&C 82:3). Church members have been given much, indeed: the gospel of Jesus Christ. That blessing carries a risk. We have been warned, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Deal righteously with neighbors

The world desperately needs men and women of integrity. Nearly every day we hear of fraud, misapplication of funds, false advertising, or other dealings designed to obtain gain by cheating or deception. The Lord abhors such practices. A proverb states, "A false balance [that is, a deceptive scale] is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight" (Proverbs 11:1). The Lord commanded, "If thou borrowest . . . thou shalt restore that which thou hast borrowed" (D&C 136:25). He commanded the ancient Israelites:

"Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. . . .

"Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him. . . .

"Ye shall do no [injustice] in judgment, . . . in weight, or in measure.

"Just balances, just weights . . . shall ye have" (Leviticus 19:11, 13, 35-36).

Integrity overcomes selfishness

The Lord commanded the Israelites to be more than honest. If they came

upon a lost ox, they were to search out the owner so they could return the animal. Today, our intentions and dealings must be similarly pure and sound before the Lord. We must be fair with suppliers, customers, and employees; repay obligations and keep agreements; and never deceive by failing to disclose all the facts about an investment or business venture. If our selfish hearts "are set so much upon the things of this world" (D&C 121:35), we can easily lose our integrity. We must remember that "we believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell stated, "Oh, how we wish for more honesty and less corruption, more goodness instead of so much cleverness, and more wisdom in lieu of unanchored brilliance."

We must be honest with the Lord as we pay our tithes. Faithful Saints have learned that he will "open . . . the windows of heaven, and pour . . . out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). The payment of tithing has less to do with money, but more to do with faith. Let us return one-tenth of our income to the Lord (see D&C 119:4) and never be guilty of robbing him by failing to pay our tithes. Then, we also should remember those in need and contribute generous fast-offerings for their assistance.

Service is an act of integrity

We show our integrity by caring for and serving others. Let me cite an instance where family members, a Christ-like bishop, home teachers, visiting teachers, and ward members so lived.

A young mother of eight children was left without a husband. The oldest child was twelve, the youngest barely one, and one daughter was confined to a wheelchair. This mother moved to a ward that was close to her family and friends. Being single and divorced, she feared that she might be ignored or shunned. However, as she was moving in, ward members streamed in to welcome her, bring food, and offer assis-

tance. She hardly had time to direct those who were unloading the moving van.

After getting settled, she and her family received innumerable expressions of service and love. Her home teachers repaired her appliances and other household items. Her visiting teachers kept very close and made sure she never had to go alone to a Church activity. At Christmastime, she found money left anonymously on her porch or had it given to her in a handshake. She received hundreds of dollars toward the purchase of a wheelchair lift for her van. After being out of town briefly, she returned home and found that ward members had renovated her kitchen.

Her parents, brother, and sisters provided financial and emotional support. They helped take care of her children, accompanied her to the emergency room with a daughter who was very ill, built a ramp to the front door for the wheelchair, built shelves for food storage, and helped with yard work.

All of this kindness lifted her spirits and gave her courage to meet the trials and hardships of each day. Those who looked after this young mother practiced "pure religion" (James 1:27) because of their integrity. Let us "go, and do . . . likewise" (Luke 10:37), as the Savior taught in the parable of the good Samaritan.

The rewards of integrity

The rewards of integrity are immeasurable. One is the indescribable inner peace and serenity that come from knowing we are doing what is right; another is an absence of the guilt and anxiety that accompany sin.

Another reward of integrity is the confidence it can give us in approaching God. When virtue garnishes our thoughts unceasingly, our confidence is strong in the presence of God (see D&C 121:45). When we are doing what is right, we will not feel timid and hesitant about seeking divine direction. We will know the Lord will answer our prayers and help us in our need.

The consummate reward of integrity is the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 121:46). The Holy Ghost does not attend us when we do evil. But when we do what is right, he can dwell with us and guide us in all we do.

My brothers and sisters, let us live true to the trust the Lord has placed in us. Let us strive for personal, practical integrity in every endeavor, regardless of how mundane or inconsequential it may seem. The small matters accumulate to shape the direction of our lives.

I bear my witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and is our Lord

and Savior. This is his church. Joseph Smith is a true prophet of God, as is President Ezra Taft Benson. I bear this testimony humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, also of the Council of the Twelve, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

May I add my personal welcome to those brethren and sisters newly sustained today. What has happened today would not have occurred had you not married so well spiritually so many years ago.

We must endure our mortal tests

On one of those rare occasions when His very voice was heard, the Father testified, "Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (2 Nephi 31:15). Of all that the Father might have said, He stressed endurance. Why?

First, because God has repeatedly said He would structure mortality to be a proving and testing experience (see Abraham 3:25; Mosiah 23:21). Brothers and sisters, he has certainly kept His promise. He has carried out His divine intent, hasn't He? Thus, even our fiery trials, said Peter, should not be thought of as "some strange thing" (1 Peter 4:12). Hence, enduring is vital, and those who so last will be first spiritually!

By taking Jesus' yoke upon us and enduring, we learn most deeply of Him and especially how to be like Him (see Matthew 11:29). Even though our experiences are micro compared to His, the process is the same.

There are so many things to be endured: illness, injustice, insensitivity, poverty, aloneness, unresponsiveness,

being misrepresented and misunderstood, and, sometimes, even enemies. Paul reminds us that meek and lowly Jesus, though the Lord of the universe, "endured . . . contradiction of sinners against himself" (Hebrews 12:3). Smaller variations of these contradictions or hostilities will be felt by His disciples.

God is long-suffering with us

We tend to think only in terms of our endurance, but it is God's patient long-suffering which provides us with our chances to improve, affording us urgently needed developmental space or time (see Alma 42:4-5).

Paul observed, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11). Such "peaceable fruit" comes only in the appointed season thereof, after the blossoms and the buds.

Otherwise, if certain mortal experiences were cut short, it would be like pulling up a flower to see how the roots are doing. Put another way, too many anxious openings of the oven door, and the cake falls instead of rising. Moreover, enforced change usually does not last, while productive enduring can in-grain permanent change (see Alma 32:13-16).

As we endure, we act for ourselves

Patient endurance is to be distinguished from merely being “acted upon.” Endurance is more than pacing up and down within the cell of our circumstance; it is not only to accept the things allotted to us, it is to “act for ourselves” by magnifying what is allotted to us (see Alma 29:3, 6).

If, for instance, we are always taking our temperature to see if we are happy, we will not be. If we are constantly comparing to see if things are fair, we are not only being unrealistic, we are being unfair to ourselves.

Therefore, true enduring represents not merely the passage of time, but the passage of the soul—and not merely from A to B, but sometimes all the way from A to Z. To endure in faith and do God’s will (see D&C 63:20; 101:35) therefore involves much more than putting up with a circumstance.

Endurance requires many things

Rather than shoulder-shrugging, true enduring is soul-trembling. Jesus bled not at a few but “at every pore” (D&C 19:18).

Sometimes spiritual obedience requires us to “hold on” lovingly, such as to a rebellious child, while others cry, “Let go!” Enduring may likewise mean, however, “letting go,” when everything within us wants to “hold on,” such as to a loved one “appointed unto death” (D&C 42:48).

Patient endurance permits us to cling to our faith in the Lord and our faith in His timing when we are being tossed about by the surf of circumstance. Even when a seeming undertow grasps us, somehow, in the tumbling, we are being carried forward, though battered and bruised.

Enduring temptation is one of the greatest challenges. Jesus endured temptation and yielded not (see Mosiah 15:5). Christ withstood because He “gave no heed” to temptations (D&C 20:22). You and I tend to dally over and dabble in

temptations, entertaining them for a while, even if we later evict them. However, to give temptations any heed can set the stage for later succumbing.

Our love for others who endure

The customized challenges are often the toughest and the most ironical. For instance, King Mosiah was venerated of his people, yet, ironically, his sons became damaging enemies of the Church for a season. Nevertheless, his discerning people still esteemed Mosiah.

Will we have that same perceptive tolerance for those being wrenched by a cruel irony? When, for the moment, we ourselves are not being stretched on a particular cross, we ought to be at the foot of someone else’s—full of empathy and proffering spiritual refreshment. On the straight, narrow path, which leads to our little Calvaries, one does not hear a serious traveler exclaiming, “Look, no hands!” (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

With enduring comes a willingness, therefore, to “press forward” even when we are bone weary and would much rather pull off to the side of the road (see 2 Nephi 31:20). Hence, one prophet was especially commended by the Lord for his unwearyingness (see Helaman 10:4; see also 15:6).

Patience shows submission to God

Paul wrote of how, even after faithful disciples had “done the will of God,” they “[had] need of patience” (Hebrews 10:36). How many times have good individuals done the right thing initially only to break under subsequent stress? Sustaining correct conduct for a difficult moment under extraordinary stress is very commendable, but so is coping with sustained stress subtly present in seeming routineness. Either way, however, we are to “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1), and it is a marathon, not a dash.

When you and I are unduly impatient, we are suggesting that we like our timetable better than God’s. And thus,

while the scriptural phrase "in process of time" means "eventually," it also denotes an entire spiritual process:

"The Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth; and he beheld, and lo, Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven" (Moses 7:21; see also D&C 38:13; Genesis 4:3; 38:12; Exodus 2:23; Judges 11:4; 2 Chronicles 21:19).

Experience brings spirituality

By itself, of course, the passage of time does not bring an automatic advance. Yet, like the prodigal son, we often need the "process of time" in order to come to our spiritual senses (Luke 15:17). The touching reunion of Jacob and Esau in the desert, so many years after their sibling rivalry, is a classic example. Generosity can replace animosity. Reflection can bring perception. But reflection and introspection require time. So many spiritual outcomes require saving truths to be mixed with time, forming the elixir of experience, that sovereign remedy for so many things.

We find that experience can produce a high spiritual yield (see D&C 122:7). Laban, for instance, was reluctant for Jacob to leave his employ, "for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake" (Genesis 30:27). The modern Church even today is instructed to "wait for a little season" to build up central Zion. Why? So that we "may be prepared . . . and have experience" (D&C 105:9-10). We gain knowledge through particular experiences, but only incrementally, "in that thing" (Alma 32:34). Hence the ongoingness of it all, and perhaps we can be forgiven for wondering, "Is there no other way?" Personal, spiritual symmetry emerges only from the shaping of prolonged obedience. Twigs are bent, not snapped, into shape.

The benefits of endurance

Without patient and meek endurance we will learn less, see less, feel less, and

hear less. We who are egocentric and impatient shut down so much of our receiving capacity.

In any case, brothers and sisters, how could there be refining fires without enduring some heat? Or greater patience without enduring some instructive waiting? Or more empathy without bearing one another's burdens—not only that others' burdens may be lightened, but that we may be enlightened through greater empathy? How can there be later magnification without enduring some present deprivation?

The enlarging of the soul requires not only some remodeling, but some excavating. Hypocrisy, guile, and other imbedded traits do not go gladly or easily, but if we "endure it well" (D&C 121:8), we will not grow testy while being tested.

Moreover, we find that sorrow can actually enlarge the mind and heart in order to "give place," expanded space for later joy.

Develop qualities through endurance

Thus, enduring is one of the cardinal attributes; it simply cannot be developed without the laboratory time in this second estate. Even the best lectures about the theory of enduring are not enough. All the other cardinal virtues—love, patience, humility, mercy, purity, submissiveness, justice—require endurance for their full development.

Puzzlement, for instance, is often the knob on the door of insight. The knob must be firmly grasped and deliberately turned with faith. The harrowing of the soul can be like the harrowing of the soil to increase the yield with things being turned upside down. Moses experienced such topsy-turvy change. A lesser individual couldn't have forsaken Egypt's treasures and privileged status only to be hunted and later resented as a prophetic presence in the royal courts which he had doubtless known earlier, but as an insider. Yet we are told Moses endured by faith (see Hebrews 11:24-29).

George Macdonald has said that God is easily pleased but hard to satisfy. As a Father, God is delighted with our first and further steps, but He knows how straight, how narrow, and how long the ensuing path is. Again, how vital endurance!

The blessings of eternal life

Happily, while the Lord has promised us a tutoring mortality, He has also promised us glorious things as well!

"And all they who . . . endure in faith . . . shall . . . partake of all this glory" (D&C 101:35).

Eternal life brings to us, brothers and sisters, the full bestowal of all the specific promises made in connection with all the temple's holy ordinances. John declared that the "called, and chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14) shall "inherit all things" (21:7). Modern scriptures confirm that these special souls will eventually receive "all that [the] Father hath" (D&C 84:38). "All"! You and I cannot even imagine such bounteous blessings.

Meanwhile, with spiritual endurance there can be felicity amid poverty, gratitude without plentitude. There can even be meekness amid injustice. One never sees the "root of bitterness springing up" in the enduring meek (Hebrews 12:15).

While in the midst of all these things, if we are wise like Job, we will avoid charging God foolishly (see Job 1:22).

Jesus shows us the way

As with every virtue, Jesus is the Exemplar. While shouldering Jesus' yoke, we, too, can better come to "know according to the flesh how to succor [each other]" (Alma 7:12).

Likewise, by seeing life's experiences through to the end, on our small scale, we can finally say, as Jesus did on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). We, too, can then have "finished [our] preparations," having done the particular work God has given each of us to do

(D&C 19:19; see also John 17:4). However, our tiny cup cannot be taken from us either. For this reason have we come unto the world (see John 12:26-27).

In a small but nevertheless sufficient way, we will experience what it is to suffer "both body and spirit" (see D&C 19:18). Some afflictions are physical, others mental, or so begin. Often, however, they are interactive, forming a special pain.

Therefore, one of the most powerful and searching questions ever asked of all of us in our sufferings hangs in time and space before us: "The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (D&C 122:8). Jesus plumbed the depths and scaled the heights in order to comprehend all things (see D&C 88:6). Jesus, therefore, is not only a fully atoning but also a fully comprehending Savior!

Endurance brings peace

Jesus' few dozen words describing the agonies of the Atonement reveal that He was determined that He "not drink the bitter cup, and shrink" (D&C 19:18) or pull back. Instead, submissive Christ reminded us that He both "partook" and "finished" (see D&C 19:19). Each act was so essential! No wonder Paul called Jesus the "finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

After describing the agonies of the Atonement, Jesus urged us to "walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23). This is the only way, brothers and sisters, that you and I can avoid shrinking while achieving that peace which "passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

You and I see in those who "endure it well" a quiet, peaceful majesty, an unspoken, inner awareness that, like Paul, they have "kept the faith." And they know it, though they do not speak of it.

Now, as this lovely Primary chorus will sing, our task is "trying to be like Jesus" and remembering the "lessons he taught" ("I'm Trying to Be like Jesus," *Children's Songbook* [1989], p. 78).

For the eloquence and for the exquisiteness and the elegance of Christ's everlasting example of enduring, I express again my public gratitude, my undying gratitude to the Father for the gift of His Son, and I so express it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We bring to the attention of all of you the fact that at 2:00 A.M. in the morning (tomorrow morning, that is), we change to daylight saving time. You should move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire so you will be here at the right time tomorrow.

We express gratitude to this Primary children's choir from the Granger Utah Region. They have given us beautiful music which we so much have appreciated. They will sing in closing "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."

Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder George R. Hill III of the Seventy, and this session will be adjourned.

The choir sang "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."

Elder George R. Hill III offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 160th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, March 31, 1990. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was provided by a combined men's choir from the Ephraim, Orem, Salt Lake, Salt Lake Community College, Ogden, and Logan institutes under the direction of Brother Douglas Brenchley, with Brother Robert Cundick at the organ.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this general priesthood session. We extend our love

and best wishes to all of the brethren participating in this session.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world. We note that Elders M. Russell Ballard, Hugh W. Pinnock, and Ted E. Brewerton are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders John H. Groberg and Yoshihiko Kikuchi are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of the brethren in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon the following brethren were called as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Clinton L. Cutler, Robert K. Dellenbach, Harold G. Hillam, Kenneth Johnson, Helvécio Martins, Lynn A. Mickelsen, J Ballard Washburn, and Durrell A. Woolsey.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir

from the Ephraim, Orem, Salt Lake, Salt Lake Community College, Ogden, and Logan institutes under the direction of Brother Douglas Brenchley, with Brother Robert Cundick at the organ.

We shall begin by the choir singing "Be Still, My Soul," and following the singing, Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Be Still, My Soul."

Elder Gene R. Cook offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now favor us with the hymn "Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice," and following the choir number Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

The choir sang "Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice."

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Brethren, it is an awesome responsibility to speak to you young men who hold the Aaronic, or the preparatory priesthood, and to you our brethren who hold the higher priesthood—the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Priesthood after the Holiest Order of God, or the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God, as the scriptures describe it. I hope to call to your attention some things that we take for granted—some sacred things.

We tend to measure our progress by visible things we can count: convert baptisms, missionaries, wards and stakes, chapels. These are symbolic perhaps of the body of the Church.

There are other measures which symbolize more than the spirit of the Church—things not so easy to see or count. Let me report some of them.

The new editions of the scriptures

Early in the eighties, after ten years of intense work by a veritable army of volunteers, the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Bible was published. This was followed by new editions of the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Early manuscripts had become available, making possible the correction of many printer errors.

The subtitle "Another Testament of Jesus Christ" was added to the Book of

Mormon. Two revelations were added to the Doctrine and Covenants, the book that will never be closed.

The text of the King James Bible was not altered. An innovative system of cross-referencing all the standard works, containing tens of thousands of footnotes which open hundreds of thousands of possible combinations of information, was added.

Bound in with it were a combined topical guide, with concordance and index, Bible dictionary, and maps. All chapters were given new headings.

The subject "Jesus Christ" in the topical guide takes eighteen pages of small print just to list the references. It is the most comprehensive compilation of scriptural information on the mission and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ that has ever been assembled in the history of the world.

An index of over four hundred pages was added to the triple combination, together with Church history maps. It was the first time in nearly a hundred years that substantive attention had been given to making the content of the scriptures more accessible to members of the Church.

The revelation on the priesthood came just in time to be bound into the new editions of the scriptures, evidence of direction from beyond the veil.

In all, 1,268 pages of helps were added to the standard works. The scriptures—comprising 86 books, 138 sections, 2 declarations, 2,540 pages, over 42,000 verses—are the library of the Lord.

Translation of the standard works into American Sign Language for the deaf is under way. A new edition of the Book of Mormon in braille is now complete. A new braille edition of the Doctrine and Covenants is finished, and the Pearl of Great Price will soon be ready. Footnotes for these braille editions are in process.

We now own a press capable of printing braille on both sides of a page; that reduces the volume by half. By computer control we can print copies on demand.

All of this is in English.

Translation of the scriptures

From the beginning of the Church, in 1830, through 1988, the standard works had been translated into thirty-five languages, with seven other languages in process. During the last year, approval has been given and budgets established to translate and publish the standard works in fifty-one additional languages.

Years of tedious work lie ahead, for each translation must be done as though it alone is important.

When completed, these translations will extend the number of people who can read the scriptures in their native tongue by an additional 2,254,000,000—half the world population. And other translations will follow.

A prototype concordance and topical guide to the scriptures with footnotes, cross-references, and the other helps has been developed for other languages. The triple combination in Spanish is nearing completion, and other languages will follow.

Audiotapes of the scriptures

Tape recordings of the standard works are available in English. One can

listen to the scriptures while working at home or driving about.

The LDSView computer software

Several years ago Monte F. Shelley and James S. Rosenvall, both professors at Brigham Young University, conceived of a way to input the scriptures into a computer data base and program them so that any word or combination of words may be called up instantly.

A logical reaction to such a proposal might have been, "Better be careful; you do not know what might come of this kind of analysis of the scriptures. We might open a Pandora's box that might never be closed. Don't do it."

That did *not* happen. We have *no* doubt about the scriptures. These brethren were urged to proceed. The result is LDSView, computerized scripture software. It is simple to operate and is capable of infinite ways of searching through, comparing, and analyzing this sacred library of the Lord. It did not open a Pandora's box; it opened the scriptures to analysis beyond anything that had been imagined.

For instance, you may key in the word *faith*. Instantly you see that it appears 696 times in the standard works. Press a key, and the verses appear before you.

Add the word *hope*. You will see that it appears forty-six times. Then add the word *charity*. It appears seventy-five times. Push a key, and you will see that *faith*, *hope*, and *charity* appear together in the same verse nineteen times. All of that has taken less than three and one-half seconds.

Select a verse, and it appears in its chapter setting. You may scroll back and forth from Genesis to the last verse in the Pearl of Great Price and, with a touch of a key, print a copy.

This does not replace the printed page. While every member may not have need for this computer program, it is a research instrument of profound importance.

And work is well underway to provide this software in Spanish, German, and other languages.

Curriculum keyed to the scriptures

Concurrent with these projects, the entire curriculum of the Church was restructured. All courses of study were revised to center on the scriptures, on Jesus Christ. Again, a veritable army of volunteers worked for more than twenty years to complete it.

Now the scriptures are the text, and, with excellent study guides, the gospel may better be taught in priesthood quorums, in the auxiliaries, in Sunday School, and preached in sacrament meetings and conferences.

The teacher development program

Good teaching is a key to this library of the Lord. Teaching skills can be learned. An excellent teacher development course was produced and is available for use in the wards. But it suffers from some neglect. Teacher development should not be neglected!

In seminary and institutes of religion, absolutely marvelous study guides have been published for students and for teachers. They adapt to both classroom and individual home study. They open the scriptures for our youth.

We live in a new age, where a third grader can demonstrate how a computer operates to his father and grandfather. Likewise, our youth now can demonstrate a facility with the scriptures, using resources we never had. This is a true measure of our progress.

Seminaries now enroll 270,000 students in more than 90 countries. Institutes of religion have been established adjacent to 1,711 colleges and universities across the world and now enroll 126,000.

Let me tell you what you are taught as you progress through seminary.

The Old Testament

In the Old Testament course, you learn of the creation and fall of man, the

foundation for the temple endowment. You learn what a prophet is. You become familiar with such words as *obedience*, *sacrifice*, *covenant*, *Aaronic*, *Melchizedek*, and *priesthood*.

The whole basis for Judaic-Christian law, indeed for Islam, is taught to you.

The "why" of tithes and offerings is explained. You read prophecies of the coming Messiah and of the restoration of the gospel. You see Elijah demonstrate the sealing power and hear Malachi prophesy that Elijah will be sent with the keys of the sealing authority.

In seminary you learn to know the Old Testament. Now almost abandoned by the Christian world, it remains to us a testament of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament

In the New Testament course, you learn of the birth and ministry of Jesus the Christ and His divine Sonship. You learn about ordinances, about baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.

You read of the call of the Twelve and follow their ministry. You learn of the fatherhood of God. You learn of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and personal revelation.

You relive the days of the Betrayal and the Crucifixion, and learn transcendent truths of the Atonement and the Resurrection. You learn of love and law and why a Redeemer.

From the four Gospels to the book of Revelation, the teachings of the Master and of His Apostles—the Lord Jesus Christ's gospel—are opened to you.

The Doctrine and Covenants and Church history

In the Doctrine and Covenants and Church history course, you review the Great Apostasy and witness the restoration of the gospel. You move in sequence from the sacred grove to the Church today, fitting each section of the Doctrine and Covenants into its historical setting.

You learn of translation by the gift and power of God. You learn of keys of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods

and the keys of the sealing authority restored in fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy.

You learn of opposition and apostasy and martyrdom. You learn of calls and releases. You learn of temples and redemption of the dead, missionary work, and perfection of the Saints.

The Book of Mormon

In the next course, you are carefully led through the Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ. It affirms both the Old and the New Testaments. Here, more details of the doctrines of salvation, lost from them, are revealed.

In its pages justice and mercy, the Fall and the Atonement, and mortal death and spiritual death are explained. You learn of the frailties and the consummate goodness of men and of peoples.

You are taught of the still, small voice of personal revelation.

You read of the appearance of the Lord to his other sheep. And you are promised that he will "manifest the truth of [this sacred book] unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4).

All of these courses are taught in a school setting with excellent teachers. But seminary is not all study. There are some fun and games. The scripture-mastery program is sometimes called scripture chase, and, at that age, the boy-girl chase begins.

Church colleges and universities

In the institutes of religion and at Church colleges and universities, the same scripture courses are taught on a more advanced level, together with teachings of the living prophets, missionary preparation, world religions, priesthood and Church government, and many other courses.

Student branches and wards and stakes are organized to provide opportunities for you to serve.

Institute, too, has its fun and games and a course in courtship and marriage.

Now the boy-girl chase becomes more exciting because they begin to catch one another! The percentage of temple marriages among graduates of seminaries and institutes is *more than double* the Church average. I repeat: The percentage of temple marriages among the graduates of seminaries and institutes is more than double the Church average. Do you need any better endorsement than that?

All of these courses in seminary, in institute, and at Church schools are taught by dedicated teachers. They deserve our respect, our deep gratitude, and our full support. Every parent, every Church leader, should act as an enrollment agent for seminaries and institutes. Parents and priesthood leaders check on your college students. See that they attend the institute.

Years ago, I was in Arizona with Elder Kimball. He gave a powerful endorsement of seminary and institute to the people of his home stake. Afterward I said, "I will be quoting you all over the Church." He replied, "You do that. And if you can think of anything better to say, say it and quote me."

Paul prophesied that in the last days perilous times would come (see 2 Timothy 3:1). He prophesied that men would be "unholy, without natural affection, . . . despisers of those that are good, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (3:2-7).

He said that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (3:13).

Then he gave the answer to it all:

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy *scriptures*, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

"All scripture," Paul continued, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (3:14-16; italics added).

The Lord said that when we read the revelations to one another, by His power we “can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words” (D&C 18:36).

These things are the true measure of our progress. Far more important than counting things we can *see* are those spiritual things we can *feel*. “Search the scriptures,” the Lord has told us, “for . . . they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

I reverently give thanks to the Lord for the revelations, the scriptures, the standard works which He has given to us

in our generation. These are the handbook for the priesthood. For you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and you brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, I bear witness that He lives and that they do testify of Him. And I testify of Him, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have heard from Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church, will now speak to us.

Bishop Robert D. Hales

My dear brethren, I appreciate the opportunity of speaking this evening as a bishop. I would like to talk about the Aaronic Priesthood—first, what it is not. It is not an activity, and it is not a priesthood in which we advance because of age. We are advanced in the priesthood because of worthiness.

Now let us discuss what the Aaronic Priesthood is.

We prepare now to live with God

The Aaronic Priesthood years are a preparatory period of our lives when we prepare ourselves in this earth life to be worthy to return with honor to the presence of our Heavenly Father.

We cannot remember that we once lived with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and that we probably sat in meetings much like this, where the Father’s plan for us was explained. We cannot remember that Lucifer, a son of God the Father, a brother of Jesus Christ, rebelled against God’s plan and, in his rebellion, promised he would bring us all back home. But Lucifer would have denied us our agency, the freedom to make decisions. We cannot remember that his plan was not accepted by us because, without choice, there would not have been a pur-

pose for coming to this mortal probation. We would not have had opposition or repentance. We would not have learned obedience.

So we chose not to go with Lucifer because if we had, we never would have been able to progress in earth life with our objective of returning back into the presence of our Heavenly Father.

All of us on earth are winners because we chose to come to this mortal probation, which Alma described as a preparatory state (see Alma 12:24, 26; 34:32; 42:10, 13).

Understanding these concepts will give us eternal perspective when we have important choices to make.

“Return with Honor”

As a young man, I had an opportunity to serve in the U.S. Air Force as a jet-fighter pilot. Each unit in our squadron had a motto that would inspire its efforts. Our unit motto—displayed on the side of our aircraft—was “Return with Honor.” This motto was a constant reminder to us of our determination to return to our home base with honor only after having expended all of our efforts to successfully complete every aspect of our mission.

This same motto, "Return with Honor," can be applied to each of us in our eternal plan of progression. Having lived with our Heavenly Father and having come to earth life, we must have determination to return with honor to our heavenly home.

How do we return to our Heavenly Father with honor?

Just as aircraft pilots must obey certain rules in order to avoid disaster, there are laws, ordinances, and covenants we must understand and obey as we go through this earthly life—this preparatory period—if we are to reach our goal of eternal life.

The preparatory gospel is that important part of the total gospel plan which gives us an opportunity to prepare ourselves for greater service, receiving the ordinances of the holy temple, and gaining eternal life.

Prepare with faith and obedience

The fourth article of faith outlines the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. They are:

"First, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a man of great faith, said, "*Faith is a gift of God bestowed as a reward for personal righteousness. . . . The greater the measure of obedience to God's laws the greater will be the endowment of [the gift of] faith*" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], p. 264).

In other words, obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel is essential to obtain faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Doctrine and Covenants stresses this very important point of obedience in a very simple way. The Lord says: "Keep my commandments continually. . . . And except thou do this, where I am you cannot come" (D&C 25:15).

The Lord tells us plainly, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Knowledge and practice beforehand

In pilot training, we spent hours in a training device that simulated real flight. There an instructor would teach us about emergencies which could occur when flying a jet-fighter at the speed of sound. For each emergency, we were taught the procedures for avoiding disaster. We would practice each procedure over and over so that when a real emergency came, we would have developed what was called an automatic, or conditioned, response. We would know exactly what to do if the fire-warning light lit up or the panel indicated some other technical failure in the airplane. We would even predetermine the safe altitude at which we would bail out if the plane were on fire or out of control.

This training process can be compared to the lessons we learn in our homes and in the quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood—the preparatory period of our lives.

We are here at priesthood meeting this evening to learn those things which are necessary to prepare us to be strong and dedicated priesthood holders. We are preparing ourselves to take on higher laws and covenants such as obedience, sacrifice, service, chastity, and consecration of our time and talents. Why do we do this? We should learn this before we go to the temple, brethren, because afterward it will help each of us to be valiant missionaries, caring eternal companions, and devoted fathers. We are preparing to return with honor to the presence of our Heavenly Father along with our entire families.

Following is an incident that illustrates what could happen if we do not use this preparatory time wisely.

Those who do not prepare

I had a dear friend, an all-American football player. His team earned the op-

portunity to play in a New Year's Day bowl game. Before 100,000 spectators and a large TV audience, his team lost by a huge score. It turned out that he and the other members of his team had not kept the training rules that their coach had tried to teach them. They paid a dear price. They had to live with the consequences of knowing they were not prepared to play the big game; they had to live with the final, very embarrassing score.

Years passed. Two members of this same football team were in my flight-training unit. One was an exemplary, well-disciplined student—a model pilot who had learned his lesson well from the failure in the bowl game.

However, the other friend had not learned to listen to those with more knowledge and more experience. When it came time for him to go to the trainer to learn emergency procedures and to precondition his mental and physical responses so that they would be automatic, even instantaneous, this all-American would put his arm around the instructor and say, "Check me off for three hours of emergency procedure." Then, instead of training, he would go to the swimming pool, pistol range, or golf course. Later in the training the instructor said to him, "What are you going to do when there is an emergency and you are not prepared?" His answer, "I am never going to bail out; I am never going to have an emergency." He never learned the emergency procedures which he should have mastered in preparatory training.

A few months later, on an evening mission, fire erupted in the quiet sky over Texas. The fire-warning light lit up. When the plane dropped to 5,000 feet in flames, the young pilot who was with him said, "Let's get out of here." And, with centrifugal force pulling against him, the young man who took his training seriously struggled to get out of the airplane and bailed out. His parachute opened at once. And he slammed to the ground. He received serious injuries but survived.

My friend who had not felt the need to train stayed with the airplane and died

in the crash. He paid the price for not having learned the lessons that could have saved his life.

The fire-warning lights in life

When fire-warning lights come on in our lives, our eternal progress may be blocked, the price we pay for neglecting the warning. If we ignore the warning lights in our lives, we may not return with honor.

Fire-warning lights of a personal nature are activated for many reasons. For example, the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs should turn on warning lights because, when we choose to use these substances, we become slaves; our agency is limited. We must be prepared with a conditioned response to reject them—they are harmful agents—or we will jeopardize our right to have the spirit guide us and direct us and our ability to return to our Heavenly Father with honor.

Choosing and being true friends

Sometimes choosing good friends is difficult, but the important choices we make in our lives are influenced by our friends. We cannot excuse our conduct because of the actions of our friends or because of the pressure they place upon us.

Do you know how to recognize a true friend? A real friend loves us and protects us.

In recognizing a true friend, we must look for two important elements in that friendship:

A true friend makes it easier for us to live the gospel by being around him.

Similarly, a true friend does not make us choose between his way and the Lord's way. A true friend will help us return with honor.

By applying these two fundamental principles to our selection of friends, we can determine what kind of friends we will have and what kind of friend we will be.

As Aaronic Priesthood holders, what kind of friend are we? Are we the type of friend who always makes sure

that those around us know it will be easier for them to live gospel principles, such as the Word of Wisdom or the law of chastity, when they are with us? Do our friends know that they will never have to choose between what we want them to do and what the Lord would have them do?

There is nothing more heartbreaking to a bishop or a parent than to have a young woman say the young man she loved and trusted most told her that if she really loved him, she would prove it by violating with him sacred laws of morality. May we this evening resolve that when fire-warning lights of this nature come on in our lives, we will have made up our minds to do the right thing—to remember who we are and to act accordingly.

Aaronic Priesthood responsibilities

Learning your Aaronic Priesthood responsibilities well is like the experience of a student pilot when he is in the trainer. The Aaronic Priesthood holder should be preconditioned with an automatic response to keep gospel standards. He will know what his response is going to be, and the adversary will not triumph over him because he will have preconditioned himself to keep the commandments even when he is under stress.

I hope that Aaronic Priesthood holders can understand the importance of preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament to the members of the Church. It is so important that we do so with clean hands and a pure heart. It is so important that the young men with whom we serve in the Aaronic Priesthood know we are doing so worthily and that every member in the congregation can look toward the sacrament table and trust that the members of the priesthood are worthy to perform the ordinances of the Lord.

The covenants of the sacrament

Each Sunday, as we participate in the sacred ordinance of the sacrament, we promise three things as the blessings

over the bread and water are given by a priest. In the prayer, the voice of the priest at the table is for all in the room so that each of us can renew our covenants.

First, we promise that we will always remember our Savior, Jesus Christ, and his atoning sacrifice for us.

Second, we take upon us once again the name of Jesus Christ, allowing us to renew our baptismal covenant.

Third, we promise that we will keep his commandments, renewing our covenants of obedience (see D&C 20:77–79).

If we keep these three promises, we are given one of the greatest blessings that can be bestowed upon us: that we will have his Spirit to be with us always, meaning that we will have the Holy Ghost in our lives to guide us and protect us and direct us each day.

The reason why we come to sacrament meeting each week is to renew these covenants so that we can have his spirit to be with us and remain on the strait and narrow path that leads us to eternal life—to return with honor (see 2 Nephi 31:17–21).

We must do all the Father asks

I have stressed the importance of obedience. However, as important as obedience is, sometimes people are deceived and choose to be selectively obedient. A young man may recognize that he must be obedient, yet selectively do only part of what he is commanded to do.

The Lord tells us in 2 Nephi the following:

“Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us.

“And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last

we shall be saved in the kingdom of God" (2 Nephi 28:7-8).

My brethren, this is deception, as the Lord has taught us. Wickedness—not even a little wickedness—never was happiness (see Alma 41:10). And it never will be. Wickedness prevents us from returning with honor to our Father in Heaven.

Remember, the Lord told us: "Keep my commandments continually, . . . And except thou do this, where I am you cannot come" (D&C 25:15).

Obedience brings great blessings

Many young men enter the mission field having made great sacrifices. They may have had to postpone athletic, artistic, scholarship, and career plans. There may be great financial sacrifice on the part of the family. They may have even left a young lady whom they loved dearly and whom they may lose to some other young man who comes home from the mission field first.

But no matter how much an individual or family may sacrifice for a mission or anything else, unless missionaries choose obedience, consecrating all of their time, talents, and resources in the service of the Lord while they are in the mission field, they cannot fully realize all the great blessings the Lord has in store for them. But it will be much more effective if they learn to be obedient before they go to the mission field.

In order to return with honor, we need the Spirit of the Holy Ghost to be with us each day. You who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, be obedient and exercise your free agency righteously. Be worthy and be prepared to perform your calling well.

As a father, I put my arms around each of my boys as they left to serve their missions and whispered in their ears, "Return with honor." I can picture our Father in Heaven putting his arms around each of us as we left his presence and whispering, "Return with honor."

That we will remember who we are and be obedient to the commandments of the Lord and return with honor into the presence of our Heavenly Father with our families is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have appreciated that excellent address by Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

It will now be our opportunity to hear first from Elder Kenneth Johnson and then from Elder Clinton L. Cutler, sustained this afternoon as members of the Seventy.

Elder Johnson calls England his home, and Brother Cutler is currently serving as the president of the Washington Seattle Mission.

Elder Kenneth Johnson

I know that this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God. I just didn't plan to be this close so early.

The invitations in our lives

As I collect my thoughts in this new assignment, they go to my peer group—the young men of the Church. I think back just a few years when I was sixteen years old and a printing apprentice. A fellow apprentice was totally engrossed in motorcycles. In those days we rode

British motorcycles, and he had an AJS-350.

One sunny summer's day, he said to me, "Would you like to come for a ride on my motorcycle?" That seemed to be a good idea. In those days we didn't wear any protective clothing, and, thus very lightly clad, I became the passenger on his motorcycle. He weaved through the streets of Norwich and then came to a long, straight road. He leaned back and said to me, "Have you ever traveled at one hundred miles an hour?"

I said, "No."

He said, "Well, you're going to."

I said, "We don't have to."

He began to rev the motorcycle, and the motorcycle roared forward. The skin on my face pulled tight, and the clothing blew as we went past ninety-eight to one hundred miles an hour. I determined that day that never again would I let somebody else control my life.

Invitations to come unto Christ

Young men, make sure that every invitation you extend and every invitation you receive is an invitation to come unto Christ.

In 1959 I received that invitation. I did not even know of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At a dance I met a young lady who was raised in the gospel. I was attracted to her. She said to me, "You know, I could never consider marrying you unless it were in the temple." I responded to that invitation and was taught the gospel. She is now my eternal companion. I will ever be grateful that was the invitation she extended to me, for it has transformed my life.

We have one child, a son. We got such a good one the first time we were not blessed with any more. And I have seen him grow through the covenants of the Lord. I walked with him through the temple. I saw him serve a mission. I

look forward to July when he takes his chosen companion to the temple. The way he has lived has caused me to come unto Christ.

Young men, you have a great power within you to do that. Let me say to you that more sacred to me than this call, and I cannot fully express how sacred it is, are the covenants that preceded it and that will extend beyond it, for they seal to me those things most precious and sacred in my life.

The British Isles are full of young men and young women who will play a significant part in the forwarding of this great work in a way that no one else could. I know that they will do this if they respond to an invitation to come unto Christ.

Like Jacob of old, having received my errand from the Lord, I will magnify my office unto him, taking upon me the responsibility, answering the sins of the people on my own head if I do not teach them the word of God in all diligence (see Jacob 1:17-19).

I know that Jesus lives, that he is the Christ, and that he leads this church. I have come to know these things because so many good people have extended to me the invitation through my life to come unto him, and this I have tried to do. I express these feelings in the sacred and holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Clinton L. Cutler

Memories from childhood

My dear brethren, these past few days I have taken a stroll down memory lane. I went back forty-seven years ago in my memory to this sacred building where, as a deacon, members of my quorum and I rode the bus from Midvale to attend general conference. In those days during the war years of World War II, we could arrive here at ten minutes to the hour and still have a seat. I remember the feelings we had in those years, as the

Brethren didn't enter the pulpit area from the rear; they would walk up the aisles. I recall one Sunday that as we stood outside, a big, tall brother entered through the little gate on the east of Temple Square. It was President George Albert Smith, then serving as President of the Quorum of the Twelve. He walked up to us and visited with us and patted us on the shoulder. I have never forgotten the feelings I had when an Apostle of the Lord took the time to talk to four deacons in from the farm.

Over those intervening years as I have taken that stroll down memory lane, I have listed the many miracles that have occurred in my life and that I have witnessed. My thoughts go out in gratitude to that loving Father, the Father of us all, who stands with arms outstretched, cheering us on, asking us to come home to him and to his beloved Son, our Savior.

I think of all those choice souls: my mother, who at eighty-one still is the pacesetter in our family as she leads the way for her children to follow; teachers; advisers; and many dear associates over those many years.

The great joy of the Lord's word

It is more apparent to me now than ever that, as Alma of old declared, the word of the Lord and the preaching of his word has a greater tendency to lead the people to do that which is just. It has a more powerful effect than even the sword or anything else (see Alma 31:5). This I have seen in the lives of those choice missionaries that I have had the privilege the past almost-three years to serve with—additional sons and daughters added to our family circle, sons and daughters that Sister Cutler and I love with all our hearts. I have seen that miracle happen over and over again as the word of the Lord is taught to his children and those of his flock who hear his voice and have a change of heart and come unto him.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is true. It is the greatest joy, the only pure joy, we

have in this life. As we embrace it and all things we hold dear—families, loved ones—all else is wrapped in that great package of love from a Father on high who loves us.

I conclude with a testimony I heard this past week from three recent converts who bore their testimonies with tears in their eyes for the knowledge they have gained in just a few short months. They testified that Heavenly Father does live, that he cares, that Jesus is the Christ and that, yes, they have a road map and a pattern to follow, and it is contained in the Book of Mormon—that blueprint given to bring them safely home. They testified that Joseph Smith is the Prophet of this dispensation and that today, standing as the mouthpiece of the Lord, is President Ezra Taft Benson. I join with them in this testimony, for I know it all to be true with all my heart because of the life and the blessings that I have been granted. I bear you this testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Kenneth Johnson and Clinton L. Cutler of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top," following which we shall hear from Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen

A year ago when I was called as a Seventy, a nonmember patient of mine asked me an interesting question. She wanted to know if a Seventy was higher or lower in the Mormon Church than a bishop. When I asked her why she would ask such a question, she replied that she was interested to know just what I'd be doing. She said she understood that in the Mormon Church, every calling from

a bishop on down was all work, and everyone from a bishop on up was all talk. This may be the reason for my wanting to *talk*, tonight, to you Aaronic Priesthood brethren.

The example of Sneaky

Many of you during your lifetime have had a pet that may have come to a

tragic end, with sad moments following. Some years ago while traveling on a family vacation, we acquired a rather unusual pet, which was a small, friendly, not-too-long water snake from the beaches of Puget Sound. My children named him Sneaky, as short for Sneaky Snake.

Early one morning while the family was off walking near the motel, Sneaky somehow got out of his cardboard box. When the room attendant entered to tidy up the room in our absence, Sneaky, seeing the open door, headed for it. She slammed the door shut in absolute terror, and since Sneaky got caught in the door, we might say he came all apart.

It was the end of Sneaky, the beginning of a nervous breakdown for the girl attendant, and a time of weeping and disappointment on the part of our children.

Now there is a lesson here. The attendant had erroneously perceived Sneaky as something less than the friend he was.

Friends and the Word of Wisdom

We've heard from Bishop Hales tonight about true friends. May I add a thought or two about them? All of us may have been at one time or other confused as to just who our true friends are. Let me give you an example of what I mean as it relates to the Word of Wisdom.

Some years ago in my medical office I had occasion to examine a young man who was approximately the same age as you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. I was puzzled by what seemed to be his medical problem.

After several tests and x-rays, I found *myself* amazed at the diagnosis. He was an alcoholic at his young age.

He told me that he had begun having alcoholic drinks at a very early age due to the encouragement of his so-called friends.

I wondered to myself, Are friends that encourage us to break the Word of Wisdom really our true friends?

Phrases like "just try it once" or "everybody does it" or "who is going to

know" are all too commonly used. If they were true friends, would they pressure us that way?

Indeed, in life it may be difficult to tell at times just who our true friends are. Were my young patient's friends the kind he should strive to keep? The room attendant perceived Sneaky as a potentially harmful enemy instead of a friend, and yet the reverse was true.

A true friend of yours and mine gave us the Word of Wisdom through his Prophet Joseph Smith.

Medical research tells us that by far the majority of young people who begin using alcohol or tobacco products do so with the urging of their friends.

The Lord knows what is best for us

The Lord has told us that neither strong drinks, meaning alcoholic drinks, nor tobacco are for the body and that they are not good for man.

Let me talk to you rather plainly, my young friends. As a physician, who for forty years has witnessed firsthand the truth of those statements in the Word of Wisdom, I testify that they are true.

The beautiful scenes in magazine advertisements are not what the end results of cigarette smoking prove to be. This advertising in these magazines and newspapers is very deceptive. The end results are not nearly so pretty. They are oxygen masks and intravenous medication and literally hours of pain, misery, and gasping for breath.

Remember that approximately 5,000 people a day quit smoking, and another 1,000—every single day—die from cigarette smoking, or one in every ninety seconds, in the United States alone. This means that each day 6,000 people either kick the habit or kick the bucket. No wonder the cigarette companies spend billions to keep their unwitting customers buying their lethal wares.

I had my own comment printed and pasted on all cigarette advertising in the magazines of my medical office waiting room. It states:

"Many of the ads in this magazine are misleading, deceptive, and are a rip-off. For example, smoking does not make one glamorous, macho, or athletic. It does make one sick, poor, and dead."

How true this is.

The heavy price of little things

Smoking is indeed becoming less and less popular as the heavy smokers one by one pass on. If an industrial accident killed everyone in the entire Salt Lake Valley, the nation would be horrified. That, however, is the scale of the annual tobacco disaster. One out of every six people that die in the United States dies as a result of smoking.

Almost inevitably, the user of hard drugs begins first with alcohol or tobacco, both of which are drugs of the highly addicting kind themselves.

In addition, the real damage from the use of these things is usually even more severe to our spiritual lives than it is to our physical bodies. Now, would a true friend be one to entice you to use them? I'm sure he wouldn't.

The value of a true friend

Look closely at your friends. Cultivate good friends. They're so valuable. Remember the Savior valued his friends so highly that he would lay down his life for them. He had this to say about friends:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

And then he went on to say:

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (15:14-15).

Friendship is an extremely important part of your life. Someone has said a true friend is someone who makes it easier to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Help your friends live righteously

Many of you young men will be, at some time or another, approached by one or more of your "friends" who will entice you to do something you know you should not do—it might be something you know deep down inside will hurt your parents and your Father in Heaven. It may be violating the Word of Wisdom, for example, or committing moral transgression, which is so displeasing to the Lord.

"No one will ever know," the so-called friends will tell you. "Besides, what difference will it make?"

My young friends, you don't have to reject your friends who are on the wrong path; you don't even have to give them up necessarily. You can be their caring friend, ready to help them when they are ready to be helped. You can talk to them and lift them and bear your testimony to them. Lead them by example.

But don't ever be led into displeasing your Father in Heaven by your friends who might ask that as a condition of being your friend, you must choose between their way and the Lord's way.

If that happens, choose the Lord's way and look for new friends.

True friends stand by each other

Especially important are our friends in times of need when we may have feelings of loneliness or despair. True friends will stand by you. When the Prophet Joseph Smith was incarcerated in that terrible Liberty Jail, he was told by the Lord:

"Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

"Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job" (D&C 121:9-10).

Knowing his friends would stand by him was a great assurance to Joseph Smith during this trying experience.

Some of the most trusted and loving friends you will ever have on this earth

are your parents and family. It may be that only when you have children of your own will you fully appreciate the bonds of love that exist between parents and children.

You'll find as you grow into manhood that advice from your parents as to who should or should not be your true friends will be very reliable and valuable to you.

The Lord is our best friend

Cultivate our Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ as your friend above all. Being his friend will without exception lift your vision and bring you comfort, guidance, peace, and, yes, even the companionship of other true friends.

I know something of his love, his compassion, his mercy, and the help one may receive from him and the Holy Spirit. He has promised that by obedience to his word, you "shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (D&C 89:19).

President Thomas S. Monson

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

The Holy Bible is an inspiration to me. This sacred book has inspired the minds of men and has motivated readers to live the commandments of God and to love one another. It is printed in greater quantities, is translated into more languages, and has touched more human hearts than any other volume.

Particularly do I enjoy reading from the book of Genesis the account describing the creation of the world. Ponder the power of that culminating declaration: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them" (Genesis 1:27-28).

Joy turns to sadness as we learn of Abel's tragic death at the hands of his brother Cain. Chapters of counsel, lessons for living, guidance from God are found in one brief verse: "And the Lord

Just think! With Jesus as your friend, you may receive increased strength and testimony that will uphold you against temptations when they arise.

Choose your friends wisely. They will provide the foundation of spiritual strength that will enable you to make difficult, extremely important decisions correctly when they come in your life.

Above all, be a friend of the Savior. You, my young men, are the honored holders of a royal priesthood. If you have not done so previously, now is the time to let him know you consider him your true friend and that you will be a true friend of his.

That we may all qualify to be his disciples, his friends, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen of the Seventy has just spoken to us, and President Benson has indicated that I should now address you.

said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9).

Joseph was his brothers' keeper

These two significant questions are asked, then answered, in themes taught throughout the scriptures. One such example is found in the life of Joseph and his brothers. We will recall that Joseph was especially loved by his father, Jacob, which occasioned bitterness and jealousy on the part of his brothers. There followed the plot to slay him, which eventually placed Joseph in a pit without food and without water to sustain life. Upon the arrival of a passing caravan of merchants, Joseph's brothers determined to sell him rather than to leave him to die. Twenty pieces of silver extricated Joseph from the pit and placed him eventually in

the house of Potiphar in the land of Egypt. There Joseph prospered, for "the Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2).

After the years of plenty, there followed the years of famine. In the midst of this latter period, when the brothers of Joseph came to Egypt to buy corn, they were blessed by this favored man in Egypt—even their own brother. Joseph could have dealt harshly with his brethren for the callous and cruel treatment he had earlier received from them. However, he was kind and gracious to his brethren and won their favor and support with these words and actions:

"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . .

"And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

"So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God. . . .

"Moreover [Joseph] kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him" (Genesis 45:5, 7–8, 15).

They had found their brother. Joseph in very deed was his brothers' keeper.

Other brother's keepers

In the touching account of the good Samaritan, Jesus teaches vividly the interpretation of the lesson, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 19:19). Answered effectively is the haunting question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

An entire vista of opportunity is unfolded to our view when we contemplate the magnitude of King Benjamin's admonition, recorded in the Book of Mormon: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

Just last week the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve were provided the opportunity to view the new Church history exhibit situated in the mu-

seum just west of Temple Square. I loved the replica of the entry to the Fourth Ward—one of the original wards in the valley. I noted with keen interest the lighted map which plotted the pioneer trek from Nauvoo. However, my heart was truly touched when I gazed at an actual handcart displayed in a place of honor. The handcart communicated to me a silent yet eloquent account of its long and momentous journey.

The Martin Handcart Company

Let us for a moment join Captain Edward Martin and the handcart company he led. While we will not feel the pangs of hunger which they felt or experience the bitter cold that penetrated their weary bodies, we will emerge from our visit with a better appreciation of hardship borne, courage demonstrated, and faith fulfilled. We will witness with tear-filled eyes a dramatic answer to the question "Am I my brother's keeper?"

"The handcarts moved on November 3 and reached the river, filled with floating ice. To cross would require more courage and fortitude, it seemed, than human nature could muster. Women shrank back and men wept. Some pushed through, but others were unequal to the ordeal.

"Three eighteen-year-old boys belonging to the relief party came to the rescue; and to the astonishment of all who saw, carried nearly every member of that ill-fated handcart company across the snow-bound stream. The strain was so terrible, and the exposure so great, that in later years all the boys died from the effects of it. When President Brigham Young heard of this heroic act, he wept like a child, and later declared publicly, 'That act alone will ensure C. Allen Huntington, George W. Grant, and David P. Kimball an everlasting salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, worlds without end' " (LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* [Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1960], pp. 132–33).

The simple ways we care for others

Our service to others may not be so dramatic, but we can bolster human spirits, clothe cold bodies, feed hungry people, comfort grieving hearts, and lift to new heights precious souls.

Junius Burt of Salt Lake City, a longtime worker in the Streets Department, related a touching and inspirational experience. He declared that on a cold winter morning, the street cleaning crew of which he was a member was removing large chunks of ice from the street gutters. The regular crew was assisted by temporary laborers who desperately needed the work. One such wore only a lightweight sweater and was suffering from the cold. A slender man with a well-groomed beard stopped by the crew and asked the worker, "You need more than that sweater on a morning like this. Where is your coat?" The man replied that he had no coat to wear. The visitor then removed his own overcoat, handed it to the man and said, "This coat is yours. It is heavy wool and will keep you warm. I just work across the street." The street was South Temple. The good Samaritan who walked into the Church Administration Building to his daily work and without his coat was President George Albert Smith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His selfless act of generosity revealed his tender heart. Surely he was his brother's keeper.

The many riches we can share

In December of 1989, the beautiful and long-awaited Las Vegas temple was dedicated in inspiring sessions, which continued for three days. The messages and music in the dedicatory sessions lifted each heart heavenward and prompted the listener to keep the commandments of God and to emulate the example of righteous living taught by Jesus of Nazareth. Thoughts of self yielded to consideration for others. One sermon stressed the injunction of the Lord as recorded in Matthew:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth

corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

After the session during which this passage of scripture had been presented, a hand-written letter, carefully tucked away in a sealed envelope, was handed to me by an usher. May I share with you the contents of this touching letter:

"Dear President Monson:

"My husband and I feel the completion and dedication of this beautiful Las Vegas Nevada Temple is the finest gift we could receive during this sacred season. Temples are such a sweet gift to all the world; and as you spoke of righteous Saints who are worthy to obtain the blessings of the Lord's house but lack the financial means to attend a temple, our hearts were so touched.

"President Monson, there must be a family somewhere who needs to attend the temple, because as my dear companion and I spoke of our great joy during this special Christmas season, we both commented as to how any store-bought gift would pale in comparison to what we have received in these dedicatory services. Instead of spending our budgeted Christmas funds for some gift from a local store, we would like to give you this \$500 to help some family waiting to be endowed and sealed for all eternity. We appreciate your assisting us in our gifts to each other this year."

The letter was unsigned. The givers remain anonymous. Perhaps today this brother may be viewing this session of general conference. If so, he may be pleased to learn that this gift has made it possible for a worthy family from the Villa Real District of the Portugal Porto Mission to journey to the temple and receive their precious temple blessings. To the unknown givers of this priceless gift I extend my thanks for being your

brother's keeper. I have the inner feeling that your Christmas season was marked by joy and filled with peace.

Strangers can also be brothers

We have no way of knowing when our privilege to extend a helping hand will unfold before us. The road to Jericho each of us travels bears no name, and the weary traveler who needs our help may be one unknown. Altogether too frequently the recipient of kindness shown fails to express his feelings, and we are deprived of a glimpse of greatness and a touch of tenderness that motivates us to go and do likewise. Genuine gratitude was expressed by the writer of a letter received recently at Church headquarters. No return address was shown, but the postmark was from Portland, Oregon:

"To the Office of the First Presidency:

"Salt Lake City showed me Christian hospitality once during my wandering years.

"On a cross-country journey by bus to California, I stepped down in the terminal in Salt Lake City, sick and trembling from aggravated loss of sleep caused by a lack of necessary medication. In my headlong flight from a bad situation in Boston, I had completely forgotten my supply.

"In the Temple Square Hotel restaurant, I sat dejectedly, cheekbones propped on fists, staring at a cup of coffee I really didn't want. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a couple approach my table. 'Are you all right, young man?' the woman asked. I raised up, crying and a bit shaken, and related my story and the predicament I was in then. They listened carefully and patiently to my nearly incoherent ramblings, and then they took charge. They must have been prominent citizens. They spoke with the restaurant manager, then told me I could have all I wanted to eat there for five days. They took me next door to the hotel desk and got me a room for five days. Then they drove me to a clinic and saw that I was provided with the medications I needed —

truly my basic lifeline to sanity and comfort.

"While I was recuperating and building my strength, I made it a point to attend the daily Tabernacle organ recitals. The celestial voicing of that instrument from the faintest intonation to the mighty full organ is the most sublime sonority of my acquaintance. I have acquired albums and tapes of the Tabernacle organ and the choir which I can rely upon any time to soothe and buttress a sagging spirit.

"On my last day at the hotel, before I resumed my journey, I turned in my key; and there was a message for me from that couple: 'Repay us by showing gentle kindness to some other troubled soul along your road.' That was my habit, but I determined to be more keenly on the lookout for someone who needed a lift in life.

"I wish you well. I don't know if these are indeed the 'latter days' spoken of in the scriptures, but I do know that two members of your church were saints to me in my desperate hours of need. I just thought you might like to know."

What a touching account. There comes to mind the experience of Jesus, when ten lepers were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet. . . .

"And [Jesus] said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:15-16, 19).

Helping others requires patience

The desire to help another, the quest for the lost sheep, may not always yield success at once. On occasion progress is slow—even indiscernible. Such was the experience of my longtime friend Gil Warner. He was serving as a newly called bishop when "Douglas," a member of his ward, transgressed and was deprived of his Church membership. Father was saddened; Mother was totally devastated. Douglas soon thereafter moved

from the state. The years hurried by, but Bishop Warner, now a member of a high council, never ceased to wonder what had become of Douglas.

In 1975, I attended the stake conference of the Parleys stake and held a priesthood leadership meeting early on the Sunday morning. I spoke of the Church discipline system and the need to labor earnestly and lovingly to rescue any who had strayed. Gil Warner asked to speak and then outlined the story of Douglas. He concluded with the question, "Who has the responsibility to work with Douglas and bring him back to Church membership?" Gil advised me later that my response to his question was direct and given without hesitation: "It is your responsibility, Gil, for you were his bishop, and he knew you cared."

Unbeknownst to Gil Warner, Douglas's mother had, the previous week, fasted and prayed that a man would be raised up to help save her son. Gil discovered this when he felt prompted to call her to report his determination to be of help.

Gil began his odyssey of redemption. Douglas was contacted by him. Old times, happy times, were remembered. Testimony was expressed, love was conveyed, and confidence instilled. The pace was excruciatingly slow. Discouragement frequently entered the scene; but, step by step, Douglas made headway. At long last prayers were answered, efforts rewarded, and victory attained. Douglas was approved for baptism.

The baptismal date was set, family members gathered, and former bishop Gil Warner flew to Seattle for the occasion. Can we appreciate the supreme joy felt by Bishop Warner as he, dressed in white, stood with Douglas in water waist-deep and, raising his right arm to the square, repeated those sacred words, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (D&C 20:73).

He that was lost was found. A twenty-six-year mission, marked by love and pursued with determination, had been successfully completed. Gil Warner said to me, "This was one of the greatest days of my life. I know the joy promised by the Lord when He declared, 'And if it so be that you should labor all your days . . . and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!'" (D&C 18:15).

Were the Lord to say to Gil Warner today, as He said to Adam's son long years ago, "Where is Douglas, thy brother?" Bishop Warner could reply, "I am my brother's keeper, Lord. Behold Douglas, Thy son."

May all of us who hold the priesthood of God demonstrate by our lives that we are our brothers' keepers, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

Before President Hinckley speaks, we remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. tomorrow. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which follows must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

Listen carefully, brethren. Because daylight saving time begins at 2:00 A.M. tomorrow, we encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the combined institute men's choir for the beautiful music this evening.

Following President Hinckley's closing remarks, the choir will sing "Beautiful Savior," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Monte J. Brough of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, I commend to you that which we have heard from those who have spoken to us this evening. We have received much of counsel and inspiration, applicable to both men and boys.

On a number of occasions in years past, I have directed my remarks in these priesthood meetings to those of the Aaronic Priesthood. This evening, if they will excuse me, I have chosen to address the men, with the hope that there may be some long-term value for the young men.

A credit card with the Lord

I hold before you two credit cards. Most of you are familiar with cards such as these.

The first is a bank credit card. It permits me to secure merchandise on credit and then pay for my purchases at one time. It is a valuable thing and something to be safeguarded. If stolen and dishonestly used, it could cause me great loss and perhaps considerable embarrassment. In accepting it from my bank, I enter into a contract and become bound by obligations and agreements. In accepting the card, I agree to meet the conditions under which it was issued.

It is issued for one year only and must be reissued each year if I am to enjoy the privileges afforded by it. It is not really mine. The bank retains ownership. If I fail in my required performance, then the bank may shut off the credit and repossess the card.

The other card which I have is what we call a temple recommend. It represents a credit card with the Lord, making available to me many of His greatest gifts. The bank card is concerned with things of the world, the recommend with things of God.

Eligibility for a temple recommend

To secure a temple recommend, the receiver must also have demonstrated his eligibility, and that eligibility is based on personal worthiness. Once granted, it is

not in place forever but must be reissued each year. Furthermore, it is subject to forfeiture if the holder does anything which would disqualify him for its privileges.

Eligibility for a temple recommend is not based on financial worth. That has nothing whatever to do with it. It is based on consistent personal behavior, on the goodness of one's life. It is not concerned with money matters, but rather with things of eternity.

The bank card opens the door to financial credit. The temple recommend opens the door to the House of the Lord. It is concerned with entry into holy precincts to do sacred and divine work.

I fear that some people are granted temple recommends before they are really prepared for them. I feel that sometimes we unduly rush people to the temple. Converts and those who have recently come into activity need a substantial measure of maturity in the Church. They need understanding of the grand concepts of the eternal gospel. They need to have demonstrated over a period of time their capacity to discipline their lives in such a way as to be worthy to enter the house of the Lord, for the obligations there assumed are eternal. For this reason, many years ago the First Presidency determined that a convert to the Church should wait a year following baptism before going to the House of the Lord. It was the expectation that during that year he or she would have grown in understanding as well as in capacity to exercise that measure of self-discipline which would result in personal worthiness. In 1833 the Lord revealed the following to the Prophet Joseph:

"Verily I say unto you, that it is my will that a house should be built unto me . . . for the salvation of Zion. . . .

"And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it;

"Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God.

"But if it be defiled I will not come into it, and my glory shall not be there; for I will not come into unholy temples" (D&C 97:10, 12, 15-17).

This, I submit, is descriptive and definitive and forceful language from the Lord concerning His holy house.

"Keep His house holy!"

Each of our temples has on its face the statement, "Holiness to the Lord," to which I should like to add the injunction, "Keep His house holy!"

I submit that every man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood has an obligation to see that the house of the Lord is kept sacred and free of any defilement. This obligation rests primarily and inescapably upon the shoulders of bishops and stake presidents. They become the judges of worthiness concerning those eligible to enter the temple. Additionally, each of us has an obligation—first, as to his own personal worthiness, and second, as to the worthiness of those whom he may encourage or assist in going to the house of the Lord.

The great importance of worthiness

In earlier times, Presidents of the Church felt so strongly about this matter that they required that the President of the Church himself personally sign each recommend. With the growth of the Church, that became impractical. I read to you a circular letter addressed to presidents of stakes and bishops of wards under date of November 10, 1891:

"Dear Brethren: It has been decided that it is no longer necessary for those going to the Temple to attend to ordinances therein to send their recommends to President Woodruff, to be by him endorsed. The signatures of the Bishop and Stake President will be all that is required.

"This being the decision, Bishops of Wards and Presidents of Stakes will see

the increased necessity for care, so that no unworthy person will be recommended for ordinances in the Temples.

"[Signed] Your brethren, Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, Joseph F. Smith, First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75], 3:229).

At that time, there were three operating temples in the Church—St. George, Manti, and Logan. The Salt Lake Temple had not yet been dedicated. We now have forty-three operating temples. If in 1891 it became too burdensome for the President of the Church to endorse all temple recommends, think of what the situation would be today. But regardless of the number or the circumstances, the issuance and signing of a temple recommend must never become a commonplace thing.

Temple concerns things of eternity

This small document, simple in its appearance, certifies that the bearer has met certain precise and demanding qualifications and is eligible to enter the house of the Lord and there participate in the most sacred ordinances administered anywhere on earth. These ordinances are concerned not only with the things of life, but with the things of eternity. Only in the house of the Lord is the fulness of the everlasting priesthood exercised with authority reaching beyond the veil of death.

Everything that occurs in the temple is eternal in its consequences. We there deal with matters of immortality, with things of eternity, with things of man and his relationship to his Divine Parent and his Redeemer. Hands must be clean and hearts must be pure and thoughts concerned with the solemnities of eternity when in these sacred premises.

Here is taught the great plan of man's eternal journey. Here are solemnized covenants sacred and everlasting.

Entering the temple is a privilege to be earned and not a right that automatically goes with Church membership.

How does one earn that privilege? By obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

Tithing and the Word of Wisdom

As you know, it is expected that everyone who applies for a temple recommend will be asked certain specific questions to determine his or her worthiness. It goes without saying that there must be total honesty on the part of those who are interrogated. The questions are not to cause embarrassment and should not do so. Bishops are cautioned against indiscreetly prying into highly personal and sensitive matters. But at the same time, the bishop must be assured that the applicant is worthy to enter the house of the Lord.

Some of these questions are specific in their nature. These concern such things as tithing and the Word of Wisdom.

Of course, one is expected to be a full-tithe payer. The payment of tithing is simply a faithful response to a commandment of the Lord. It is a mark of obedience to the divine will. Furthermore, long observation has shown that the faithful and honest payment of tithing is an indicator of faithfulness in other matters.

Is observance of the Word of Wisdom necessary? The Brethren have long felt that it certainly must be. Observance of the Word of Wisdom is concerned with the care of one's body, which, the Lord has assured, is of itself a temple, a tabernacle of the spirit. He has said, "Yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple" (D&C 93:35).

I recall a bishop's telling me of a woman who came to get a recommend. When asked if she observed the Word of Wisdom, she said that she occasionally drank a cup of coffee. She said, "Now, bishop, you're not going to let that keep me from going to the temple, are you?" To which he replied, "Sister, surely you

will not let a cup of coffee stand between you and the house of the Lord."

Tithing and the Word of Wisdom deal with straightforward and easily comprehended things. There are other matters, somewhat more subtle, but of even greater importance. They concern our basic honesty, our basic integrity, the degree to which we accept and live the laws of God which are incorporated in the teachings of the Church.

Sustaining Church leaders

Do we sustain our local and General Authorities? This is not concerned with an exercise in paying homage to those whom the Lord has called to preside. It is a basic question of recognition of the fact that God has called a prophet to stand at the head of His church, that he has called others to work with him on a general level, and that that which they espouse and teach comes of unitedly praying together, pondering together, seeking the will of the Lord, receiving that will, and following it.

Likewise, unless there is loyalty toward the bishop and stake president on a local level, there will be an absence of harmony, there will be suspicion and hesitation to serve with fidelity, there will be that kind of division which is always destructive of faith. Let it ever be remembered that no President of this church, no Counselor in the Presidency, no General Authority, no member of a stake presidency or of a bishopric or of an elders quorum presidency is there because he wished to be there and requested the privilege. Each is there because he was "called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof" (Articles of Faith 1:5).

Loyalty to leadership is a cardinal requirement of all who serve in the army of the Lord. A house divided against itself cannot stand (see Mark 3:25). Unity is basic and essential. Declared the Lord, "If ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). Failure to sustain those in author-

ity is incompatible with service in the temple.

Obedying the laws of the land

Honesty with others, including obedience to constitutional law, is likewise a requirement.

"We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law" (Articles of Faith 1:12).

Occasionally we receive letters from those who openly advocate opposition to the payment of taxes, complaining that their bishops and stake presidents will not give them temple recommends because of their activities. Through the years of the history of this work, there have been occasions when the Church and its members have come up against the law of the land. In such times, we have taken a stand in the courts. In those instances where the courts have ruled against us, although the ruling was difficult to bear, we have accepted it and conformed to it. Obedience to law, when that law has been declared constitutional, is incumbent upon the Latter-day Saints, and therefore becomes a standard of eligibility to enter the temples of the Church.

Our responsibilities to family

In that general context, may I say that we have taken the position that fathers who fail to provide court-mandated support for their children cannot expect the privileges of the House of the Lord. The scriptures are straightforward in their declarations concerning the responsibility of fathers with reference to their children. When divorce occurs and bitterness grows, as it usually does, some men will go to almost any end to escape provision for their care. Where such becomes a violation of that which has been ordered by a court of law, it becomes an act of contempt contrary to the doctrine and teaching of the Church.

The temple recommend which you carry, if honestly obtained, is certifica-

tion of your moral worthiness. It is inconceivable to think that a man who is a philanderer and unfaithful to his wife would consider himself eligible for the temple. It goes without saying that none such should be given a recommend.

But there is another, less obvious, group of whom I wish to speak. I have in my office a file of letters received from women who cry out over the treatment they receive from their husbands in their homes. They tell of the activity of some of these men in Church responsibilities. They even speak of men holding temple recommends. And they speak of abuse, both subtle and open. They tell of husbands who lose their tempers and shout at their wives and children. They tell of men who demand offensive intimate relations. They tell of men who demean them and put them down and of fathers who seem to know little of the meaning of patience and forbearance with reference to their children.

Brethren, when the bishop interviews you for your temple recommend, he is not likely to get into these delicate and sensitive and personal things. You must judge within your heart whether you are guilty of any practice that is unholy, impure, or in any way evil before the Lord.

A recommend certifies worthiness

What a unique and remarkable thing is a temple recommend. It is only a piece of paper with a name and signatures, but in reality it is a certificate that says the bearer is "honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous" and that he or she believes in doing good to all, that "if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy," he or she seeks after such (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Most important, and above all other qualifications, is the certain knowledge on the part of a recommend holder that God our Eternal Father lives, that Jesus Christ is the living Son of the living God, and that this is Their sacred and divine work.

Brethren, I believe that most who hold temple recommends meet all of the requirements. I regret to acknowledge, however, that there may be a few who do not and who should not enter the house of the Lord. I know it is difficult for a bishop to deny a recommend to someone who is in his ward and who may be on the borderline with reference to personal behavior. Such denial may be offensive to the applicant. But he or she should know that unless there is true worthiness, there will be no blessing gained, and condemnation will fall upon the head of him or her who unworthily crosses the threshold of the House of God.

Keep sacred things sacred

May I speak also of a matter pertinent to temples? I remind you of the absolute obligation to not discuss outside the temple that which occurs within the temple. Sacred matters deserve sacred consideration. We are under obligation, binding and serious, to not use temple language or speak of temple matters outside. I first went to the temple fifty-seven years ago. It was different from any other experience I had had in the Church. A young man of my association went about the same time. Thereafter, he was wont to use phrases from the language of the temple in a frivolous way. It was offensive. It was a betrayal of a sacred trust. I have watched him through the years. Once faithful, he has drifted from all Church activity and forsaken the faith of his fathers. I think that much of what has happened to him began with that small irreverent thing that he did in trivializing language which is not trivial.

Please, brethren, do not discuss outside of the temple that which occurs in the temple. While there, you are at liberty to do so. If you have questions, you

may speak with the temple president or one of his counselors. But when you leave the doors of the house of the Lord, be true to a sacred trust to speak not of that which is holy and sanctified.

Said the Lord, "Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit" (D&C 63:64). And again, "Trifle not with sacred things" (D&C 6:12).

In closing, I repeat that this recommend which I have and which so many of you have is a precious and wonderful thing. It makes one eligible for an exclusive and remarkable privilege—the privilege of entering that House which says on its wall, "Holiness to the Lord—the House of the Lord." Live worthy to serve in that house. Keep it holy. Do your part to keep from the Lord's house any unclean or defiling influence or person. Enjoy its beauty. Enjoy the wonder of the things that are spoken there, the beauty and the blessing of the ordinances there administered.

To young men who are here who have not yet been to the temple, may I suggest that you take advantage of the opportunity of being baptized in behalf of the dead. And then let that sacred experience become an anchor to your lives, that you so conduct yourselves at all times and in all circumstances that, at the proper time, you may secure a special and restricted credit card with the Lord, even a recommend to His holy house, there to enjoy all of its blessings and privileges. I so pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder Monte J. Brough offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 160th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 1, 1990. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

Before the session, the choir sang "Awake and Arise" without announcement.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 160th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, has asked that I conduct this meeting.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders David B. Haight, William R. Bradford, and Waldo P. Call

are seated on the stand. We extend our greetings to those of you participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations that are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and officers and members of the Church who have assembled to worship and to counsel together.

The Tabernacle Choir under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ, opened these services by singing "Awake and Arise." They will now sing "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee," following which Elder John R. Lasater of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder John R. Lasater offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson

The greatest of the kingdom

During the Galilean ministry of our Lord and Savior, the disciples came unto Him, saying:

"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as

little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:1-6).

The many faces of child abuse

Recently, as I read the daily newspaper, my thoughts turned to this passage and the firm candor of the Savior's declaration. In one column of the newspaper I read of a custody battle between the mother and father of a child. Accusations were made, threats hurled, and anger displayed as parents moved here and there on the international scene with the child spirited away from one continent to another.

A second story told of a twelve-year-old lad who was beaten and set on fire because he refused a neighborhood bully's order to take drugs. Hospitalized, his condition remains critical.

Still a third report told of a father's sexual molestation of his small child.

These are *reported* cases of child abuse. There are many more never reported but equally as serious. A physician revealed to me the large number of children who are brought to the emergency rooms of local hospitals in your city and mine. In many cases guilty parents provide fanciful accounts of the child falling from his high chair or stumbling over a toy and striking his head. Altogether too frequently it is discovered that the parent was the abuser and the innocent child the victim. Shame on the perpetrators of such vile deeds. God will hold such strictly accountable for their actions.

Children are precious to the Lord

President Ezra Taft Benson is one who exemplifies a true love for these little ones. To see the tiny tots gather at his side, extend a small hand to be held in his or to kiss his cheek, is to see the love adults should have for these children. No one in the presence of President Benson refers to a child as a "kid." His correction for such a remark is sure and to the point. A visiting ambassador from another nation errantly made this slip. He was corrected with love.

When we realize just how precious children are, we will not find it difficult

to follow the pattern of the Master in our association with them. Not long ago, a sweet scene took place at the Salt Lake Temple. Children, who had been ever so tenderly cared for by faithful workers in the temple nursery, were now leaving in the arms of their mothers and fathers. One child turned to the lovely women who had been so kind to the children and, with a wave of her arm, spoke the feelings of her heart as she exclaimed, "Goodnight, angels."

The poet described a child so recently with its Heavenly Father as "a sweet new blossom of humanity, fresh fallen from God's own home to flower on earth."

Who among us has not praised God and marveled at His powers when an infant is held in one's arms? That tiny hand, so small yet so perfect, instantly becomes the topic of conversation. No one can resist placing his little finger in the clutching hand of an infant. A smile comes to the lips, a certain glow to the eyes, and one appreciates the tender feelings which prompted the poet to pen the lines:

Our birth is but a sleep and a
forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's
star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we
come
From God, who is our home.
[William Wordsworth, "Ode:
Intimations of Immortality from
Recollections of Early Childhood"]

When the disciples of Jesus attempted to restrain the children from approaching the Lord, He declared:

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

"And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:14-16).

What a magnificent pattern for us to follow.

We can bless the lives of children

My heart burned warmly within me when the First Presidency approved the allocation of a substantial sum from your special fast-offering contributions to join with those funds from Rotary International that polio vaccine might be provided and the children living in Kenya immunized against this vicious crippler and killer of children.

I thank God for the work of our doctors who leave for a time their own private practices and journey to distant lands to minister to children. Cleft palates and other deformities which would leave a child impaired physically and damaged psychologically are skillfully repaired. Despair yields to hope. Gratitude replaces grief. These children can now look in the mirror and marvel at a miracle in their own lives.

In a recent meeting, I told of a dentist in my ward who each year visits the Philippine Islands to work his skills without compensation to provide corrective dentistry for children. Smiles are restored, spirits lifted, and futures enhanced. I did not know the daughter of this dentist was in the congregation to which I was speaking. At the conclusion of my remarks, she came forward and, with a broad smile of proper pride, said, "You have been speaking of my father. How I love him and what he is doing for children!"

In the faraway islands of the Pacific, hundreds who were near-blind now see because a missionary said to his physician brother-in-law, "Leave your wealthy clientele and the comforts of your palatial home and come to these special children of God who need your skills and need them now." The ophthalmologist responded without a backward glance. Today he comments quietly that this visit was the best service he ever rendered and

the peace which came to his heart the greatest blessing of his life.

Tears come easily to me when I read of a father who has donated one of his own kidneys in the hope that his son might have a more abundant life. I drop to my knees at night and add my prayer of faith in behalf of a mother in our community who journeyed to Chicago that she might provide part of her liver to her daughter in a delicate and potentially life-threatening surgery. She, who already had gone down into the valley of the shadow of death to bring forth this child into mortality, again put her hand in the hand of God and placed her own life in jeopardy for her child. Never a complaint, but ever a willing heart and a prayer of faith.

Elder Russell M. Nelson, upon returning from Romania, shared with us the pitiable plight of orphan children in that land—perhaps thirty thousand in the city of Bucharest alone. He visited one such orphanage and arranged that the Church might provide vaccine, medical dressings, and other urgently needed supplies. Certain couples will be identified and called to fill special missions to these children. I can think of no more Christ-like service than to hold a motherless child in one's arms or to take a fatherless boy by the hand.

We need not be called to missionary service, however, in order to bless the lives of children. Our opportunities are limitless. They are everywhere to be found—sometimes very close to home.

How children bless our lives

Last summer I received a letter from a woman who has emerged from a long period of Church inactivity. She is ever so anxious for her husband, who as yet is not a member of the Church, to share the joy she now feels.

She wrote of a trip which she, her husband, and their three sons made from the family home to Grandmother's home in Idaho. While driving through Salt Lake City, they were attracted by the message which appeared on a bill-

board. The message invited them to visit Temple Square. Bob, the nonmember husband, made the suggestion that a visit would be pleasant. The family entered the visitors' center, and Father took two sons up a ramp that one called "the ramp to heaven." Mother and three-year-old Tyler were a bit behind the others, they having paused to appreciate the beautiful paintings which adorned the walls. As they walked toward the magnificent sculpture of Thorvaldsen's *Christus*, tiny Tyler bolted from his mother and ran to the base of the *Christus*, while exclaiming, "It's Jesus! It's Jesus!" As Mother attempted to restrain her son, Tyler looked back toward her and his father and said, "Don't worry. He likes children."

After departing the center and again making their way along the freeway toward Grandmother's, Tyler moved to the front seat next to his father. Dad asked him what he liked best about their adventure on Temple Square. Tyler smiled up at him and said, "Jesus."

"How do you know that Jesus likes you, Tyler?"

Tyler, with a most serious expression on his face, looked up at his father's eyes and answered, "Dad, didn't you see his face?" Nothing else needed to be said.

As I read this account, I thought of the statement from the book of Isaiah: "And a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6).

The words of a Primary hymn express the feelings of a child's heart:

Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear,
Things I would ask him to tell me if he were here.
Scenes by the wayside, tales of the sea,
Stories of Jesus, tell them to me.
Oh, let me hear how the children stood round his knee.
I shall imagine his blessings resting on me;
Words full of kindness, deeds full of grace,
All in the lovelight of Jesus' face.
["Tell Me the Stories of Jesus,"
Children's Songbook (1989), p. 57]

Blessing the Nephite children

I know of no more touching passage in scripture than the account of the Savior blessing the children, as recorded in 3 Nephi. The Master spoke movingly to the vast multitude of men, women, and children. Then, responding to their faith and the desire that He tarry longer, He invited them to bring to Him their lame, their blind, and their sick, that He might heal them. With joy they accepted His invitation. The record reveals that "he did heal them every one" (3 Nephi 17:9). There followed His mighty prayer to His Father. The multitude bore record: "The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father" (17:16).

Concluding this magnificent event, Jesus "wept, . . . and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. . . .

"And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

"And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven . . . ; and they came down and encircled those little ones . . . ; and the angels did minister unto them" (17:21, 23-24).

Over and over in my mind I pondered the phrase, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark 10:15).

Thomas Michael Wilson

One who fulfilled in his life this admonition of the Savior was a missionary, Thomas Michael Wilson. He is the son of Willie and Julia Wilson, Route 2, Box 12, Lafayette, Alabama. Elder Wilson completed his earthly mission on January 13, 1990. When he was but a teenager, and he and his family were not yet members of the Church, he was stricken with cancer, followed by painful radiation therapy, and then blessed remission. This

illness caused his family to realize that not only is life precious but that it can also be short. The family began to look to religion to help them through this time of tribulation. Subsequently they were introduced to the Church and baptized. After accepting the gospel, young Brother Wilson yearned for the opportunity of being a missionary. A mission call came for him to serve in the Utah Salt Lake City Mission. What a privilege to represent the family and the Lord as a missionary!

Elder Wilson's missionary companions described his faith as like that of a child—unquestioning, undeviating, unyielding. He was an example to all. After eleven months, illness returned. Bone cancer now required the amputation of his arm and shoulder. Yet he persisted in his missionary labors.

Elder Wilson's courage and consuming desire to remain on his mission so touched his nonmember father that he investigated the teachings of the Church and also became a member.

An anonymous caller brought to my attention Elder Wilson's plight. She said she didn't want to leave her name and indicated she'd never before called a General Authority. However, she said, "You don't often meet someone of the caliber of Elder Wilson."

I learned that an investigator whom Elder Wilson had taught was baptized at the baptistry on Temple Square but then wanted to be confirmed by Elder Wilson, whom she respected so much. She, with a few others, journeyed to Elder Wilson's bedside in the hospital. There, with his remaining hand resting upon her head, Elder Wilson confirmed her a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elder Wilson continued month after month his precious but painful service as a missionary. Blessings were given; prayers were offered. The spirit of his fellow missionaries soared. Their hearts were full. They lived closer to God.

Elder Wilson's physical condition deteriorated. The end drew near. He was to return home. He asked to serve but one additional month. What a month this

was! Like a child trusting implicitly its parents, Elder Wilson put his trust in God. He whom Thomas Michael Wilson silently trusted opened the windows of heaven and abundantly blessed him. His parents, Willie and Julia Wilson, and his brother Tony came to Salt Lake City to help their son and brother home to Alabama. However, there was yet a prayed-for, a yearned-for, blessing to be bestowed. The family invited me to come with them to the Jordan River Temple, where those sacred ordinances which bind families for eternity, as well as for time, were performed.

I said good-bye to the Wilson family. I can see Elder Wilson yet as he thanked me for being with him and his loved ones. He said, "It doesn't matter what happens to us in this life as long as we have the gospel of Jesus Christ and live it." What courage. What confidence. What love. The Wilson family made the long trek home to Lafayette, where Elder Thomas Michael Wilson slipped from here to eternity.

President Kevin K. Meadows, Elder Wilson's branch president, presided at the funeral services. The words of his subsequent letter to me I share with you today: "On the day of the funeral, I took the family aside and expressed to them, President Monson, the sentiments you sent to me. I reminded them of what Elder Wilson had told you that day in the temple, that it did not matter whether he taught the gospel on this or the other side of the veil, so long as he could teach the gospel. I gave to them the inspiration you provided from the writings of President Joseph F. Smith—that Elder Wilson had completed his earthly mission and that he, as all 'faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead' [D&C 138:57]. The spirit bore record that this was the case. Elder Thomas Michael Wilson was buried with his missionary name tag in place."

When Elder Wilson's mother and his father visit that rural cemetery and place flowers of remembrance on the grave of their son, I feel certain they will remember the day he was born, the pride they felt, and the genuine joy that was theirs. This tiny child they will remember became the mighty man who later brought to them the opportunity to achieve celestial glory. Perhaps on these pilgrimages, when emotions are close to the surface and tears cannot be restrained, they will again thank God for their missionary son, who never lost the faith of a child, and then ponder deep within their hearts the Master's words, "And a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6).

Peace will then be their blessing. It will be our blessing, also, as we remem-

ber and follow the Prince of Peace. That we may do so is my sincere prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee" without announcement.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee."

President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

President Howard W. Hunter

God requires personal commitment

As I think of the blessings God has given us and the many beauties of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I am aware that along the way we are asked to make certain contributions in return, contributions of time or of money or of other resources. These are all valued and all necessary, but they do not constitute our full offering to God. Ultimately, what our Father in Heaven will require of us is more than a contribution; it is a total commitment, a complete devotion, all that we are and all that we can be.

Please understand that I do not speak only of a commitment to the Church and its activities, although that always needs to be strengthened. No, I speak more specifically of a commitment that is shown in our individual behavior, in our personal integrity, in our loyalty to home and family and community, as well as to the Church. Of course, all of these loyalties are interrelated and closely linked because it is the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus Christ that shapes our behavior and forms our char-

acter in all areas of our life—personally, within the home, in our professions and community life, as well as in our devotion to the Church that bears his name.

The Lord is the standard

If we can pattern our life after the Master, and take his teachings and example as the supreme pattern for our own, we will not find it difficult to be consistent and loyal in every walk of life, for we will be committed to a single, sacred standard of conduct and belief. Whether at home or in the marketplace, whether at school or long after school is behind us, whether we are acting totally alone or in concert with a host of other people, our course will be clear and our standards will be obvious. We will have determined, as the Prophet Alma said, "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9).

This loyalty obviously includes support of the institutional church, but one of the purposes of that church is to alter

and improve the way we live every other aspect of our lives as well, wherever we are and in whatever circumstance we find ourselves, "even until death."

Let me recall briefly just one of those magnificent examples from scripture where three relatively young people stood by their principles and held to their integrity even though it seemed apparent that to do so would cost them their lives.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego

Approximately 586 years before Christ, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, marched against the city of Jerusalem and conquered it. So impressed was he with the qualities and learning of the children of Israel that he had several of them brought to the king's court.

Trouble came to the Israelites the day Nebuchadnezzar made a golden idol and commanded all in the province of Babylon to worship it, a command that the three young Israelites—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—quietly refused. The king was full of "rage and fury" and demanded that they be brought before him (Daniel 3:13). He informed them that if they did not fall down before the golden image at the appointed moment, "ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." Then with some self-satisfaction he asked, "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (3:15).

The three young men responded courteously but without hesitation:

"If it be so," they said, "[that you threaten us with death,] our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

"But if not [if for whatever reason he chooses not to save us from the fire], be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (3:17-18).

Of course, Nebuchadnezzar was more furious than ever and ordered that one of the furnaces be heated to seven times its normal temperature. Then he

commanded that these three valiant young men be thrown fully clothed into the midst of the fire. Indeed, the king was so insistent and the flame so hot that the soldiers who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego fell dead from the heat of the furnace as they cast their captives forward.

Then transpired one of those great miracles to which the faithful are entitled according to the will of God. These three young men stood and walked about calmly in the midst of the furnace and were not burned. Indeed, when they were later called out of the furnace by the astonished king himself, their clothing was untarnished, their skin was free from any burn, not a hair of their head was singed. Not even the smell of smoke had come upon these courageous, committed young men.

"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," said the king, "who hath . . . delivered his servants that trusted in him, . . . [who] yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. . . .

"Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon" (Daniel 3:28, 30).

Living with integrity and faith

The ability to stand by one's principles, to live with integrity and faith according to one's belief—that is what matters, that is the difference between a contribution and a commitment. That devotion to true principle—in our individual lives, in our homes and families, and in all places where we meet and influence other people—that devotion is what God is ultimately requesting of us.

I recall some years ago our late and beloved colleague President Stephen L. Richards giving a university address entitled "Tried and Not Found Wanting." He spoke of people in our day, including young people in our day, who must be able to withstand the various tests of faithfulness and loyalty that life puts to all of us from time to time. None of his

examples was so dramatic as being cast into a fiery furnace, but the integrity involved was the same, and so was the need for commitment to high principle. He said:

"How do [we] feel about honor and integrity? What is [our] reaction to polite lying to facilitate easy social [relationships]? How much tolerance have [we] for either suppression or misrepresentation of facts to promote business advantage? Do [we] accept without compunction the old adage that all's fair in love and war and politics and college athletics? . . .

"How sacredly do [we] regard the good name of another? . . . [Do we pass on] spicy bits [of] entertaining conversation, . . . repeating rumors and stories which have not been submitted to the test [of truth]?" (*Where Is Wisdom?* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1955], pp. 80-81).

President Kimball's example

In the same vein, President Spencer W. Kimball wrote:

"I may not be able to eliminate pornographic trash, but my family and I need not buy or view it.

"I may not be able to close disreputable businesses, but I can stay away from areas of questioned honor and ill repute.

"I may not be able to greatly reduce the divorces of the land or save all broken homes and frustrated children, but I can keep my own home a congenial one, my marriage happy, my home a heaven, and my children well-adjusted.

"I may not be able to stop the growing claims to freedom from laws based on morals, or change all opinions regarding looseness in sex and growing perversions, but I can guarantee devotion to all high ideals and standards in my own home, and I can work toward giving my own family a happy, interdependent, spiritual life.

"I may not be able to stop all graft and dishonesty in high places, but I myself can be honest and upright, full of integrity and true honor" (*Faith Precedes*

the Miracle [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 247).

These are some of the routine but crucial tests of our day in which we must be willing to stand true and with integrity and honor. Indeed, even in polite social situations we must be willing "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9).

Commitment to home and family

Please permit me to close by stressing one place in society where that strength and commitment must be shown if we are to survive as a nation, as a people, or even as a fully successful church. We simply must have love and integrity and strong principles in our homes. We must have an abiding commitment to marriage and children and morality. We must succeed where success counts most for the next generation.

Surely that home is strongest and most beautiful in which we find each person sensitive to the feelings of others, striving to serve others, striving to live at home the principles we demonstrate in more public settings. We need to try harder to live the gospel in our family circles. Our homes deserve our most faithful commitments. A child has the right to feel that in his home he is safe, that there he has a place of protection from the dangers and evils of the outside world. Family unity and integrity are necessary to supply this need. A child needs parents who are happy in their relationship to each other, who are working happily toward the fulfillment of ideal family living, who love their children with a sincere and unselfish love, and who are committed to the family's success.

President N. Eldon Tanner said: "Just imagine the reversal that would take place if full integrity were to rule in family life. There would be complete fidelity. Husbands would be faithful to wives, and wives to husbands. There would be no living in adulterous relationships in lieu of marriage. Homes would

abound in love, children and parents would have respect for one another. . . . [How else will our children come to] value honesty and integrity?" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, p. 20; or *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 16).

A successful life, the good life, the righteous Christian life requires something more than a contribution, though every contribution is valuable. Ultimately it requires commitment—whole souled, deeply held, eternally cherished commitment to the principles we know to be true in the commandments God has given. We need such loyalty to the Church, but that must immediately be interpreted as a loyalty in our personal habits and behavior, integrity in the wider community and marketplace, and—for the future's sake—devotion and character in our marriages and homes and families.

If we will be true and faithful to our principles, committed to a life of honesty and integrity, then no king or contest or fiery furnace will be able to compromise us. For the success of the kingdom of God on earth, may we stand as witnesses for him "at all times and in all things,

and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer" without announcement.

President Hinckley

We have just heard from President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, in whose recovery we have witnessed a remarkable and wonderful miracle. The Tabernacle Choir then sang "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel," following which we shall hear from Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Carlos E. Asay

A giant leap for mankind

I pray for the influence of the Holy Spirit as I discuss with you a most sacred subject—a subject that I hope will have special significance to those of you who may be investigating the Church. On July 20, 1969, astronauts landed on the moon, a planet located some 239,000 miles from the earth. Millions of people the world over witnessed this historic event on television and stared in amazement as the lunar module came to rest on the moon's surface. All were thrilled when Neil Armstrong exited the spacecraft and announced: "One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."

The press coverage of this monumental achievement was broad. It occupied headlines and was the subject of feature stories for many days. After all, the moon landing had opened new fron-

tiers of space travel, revealed new knowledge about the universe, and represented a major investment of human resources. Some reporters declared that the moon landing was the greatest event in the history of mankind since the resurrection of Christ.

I do stand in awe of the recent developments in space technology. My mind does not comprehend even a fraction of the miracles wrought by knowledgeable men of the world who have probed the universe. However, I take issue with those who believe that the placement of men upon the moon is the greatest occurrence of the last two thousand years. I do so because I know of an event wherein the Creator of the universe himself came to earth in answer to an obscure boy's humble prayer and revealed pure theology.

What constitutes greatness

Greatness is measured by men in many ways. It is generally equated with size, cost, quantity, and position. God, however, has a better way: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are [His] ways higher than [man's] ways" (Isaiah 55:9). In God's eyes, greatness is equated with light, truth, goodness, and service (see D&C 93:36; Matthew 23:11).

We are taught that eternal life is "the *greatest* of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7; italics added), and that eternal life is to know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [he has] sent" (John 17:3). Therefore, it is concluded that anyone who would introduce the only true God to mankind and unwrap the gift of eternal life, making it available to all, would be a partaker of greatness and be associated with great events.

The simplicity of Joseph Smith

The obscure young man of whom I speak, who introduced the true and living God to a benighted world, was not sponsored by an organization or trained by a group of professionals. At the time, he was no prophet, nor was he a prophet's son. But like many who have been called in times past to perform a holy work, he was a common farm boy (see Amos 7:14-16).

He was the product of a God-fearing family—a family that thirsted after righteousness and exercised a simple but deep faith in the Lord. His school was the home, his teachers were loving parents, and his textbook was the Holy Bible. Yet, at the tender age of fourteen, he demonstrated a type of faith which had power to thrust him into the presence of Deity (see Mark 9:23).

There were no cameras trained upon him when he stepped into that grove of trees in upper New York state. There were no cheering throngs or support personnel to provide him encouragement. Nor were there newspaper reporters on hand to describe his actions. He knelt

alone under the gaze of his Heavenly Father and offered up the sincere desires of his heart with perfect confidence that his voice would be heard. He was unaware of the muted applause of unseen multitudes who had waited so patiently for the dawning of a new day and the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

His investment in working the miracle was not money, machines, manpower, or even the trappings of science; his was an investment of living faith and an indomitable will.

Joseph Smith's prayer and first vision in 1820 were no small things, even though they began as "one small step for a [young] man." Over the years they have proven to be "one giant leap for mankind"; for that act of supreme faith ended a long night of spiritual darkness, opened up a flood of unadulterated truths, and ushered in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

The truths of the First Vision

We are told that the spin-off effects of the moon mission were many. Such benefits are reflected in all the materials about us. However, the consequences of Joseph Smith's first vocal prayer and his probe into the unknown are infinitely greater and should be pondered seriously by all who are interested in "things as they *really* are, and of things as they *really* will be" (Jacob 4:13; italics added).

Joseph did not emerge from the grove with lunar rocks in his pocket or with moon dust on his shoes. He emerged with a changed countenance and with a gold mine of truth lodged in his mind and heart:

1. Joseph learned that there are no winners in wars of words or tumults of opinion regarding religious matters (see Joseph Smith—History 1:12). Such contention plays into the hands of Satan because he is the "father of contention" (3 Nephi 11:29).

Moreover, Joseph verified the fact that critical issues pertaining to the Spirit cannot be settled alone by "an appeal to the Bible" so long as teachers of religion

understand the same passage of scripture so differently (see Joseph Smith—History 1:12).

2. Joseph learned of “the power of some actual being from the unseen world” which bound his tongue and enveloped him in thick darkness as he began to pray (see 1:16). This power was exerted by the evil one, who viewed Joseph Smith as a threat to his realm of sin and error.

Few men have disturbed and annoyed the adversary more than Joseph; few have felt the combined powers of darkness more than he; and few have triumphed over Satan more nobly (see 1:20).

3. Joseph learned what Moses had learned years before about Satan’s darkness and nothingness, as compared with the light and liberty associated with God (see Moses 1:10–15). Said Joseph:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

“Light and truth [do] forsake [the] evil one” (D&C 93:37). The powers of darkness do flee before the powers of light, just as the night runs from the dawn.

4. Joseph learned that he was made in the image of God, exactly as the scriptures attest. In his own words:

“When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

In a matter of only a few moments, the damning myth of an impersonal, uncaring, and incomprehensible God was dispelled. The true nature of a Father in Heaven—the father of our spirits—was revealed in company with his Beloved

Son, even Jesus Christ, he who had atoned for the sins of man (see Hebrews 12:9).

As stated by an Apostle: “One minute’s instruction from personages clothed with the glory of God coming down from the eternal worlds is worth more than all the volumes that ever were written by uninspired men” (Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:354).

5. Joseph learned that none of the churches of the day was right and that he should not join any of them. He recounts:

“My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right . . . and which I should join.

“I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong” (Joseph Smith—History 1:18–19).

This pronouncement may have troubled Joseph at first because members of his family had affiliated with a specific faith and he, himself, had leanings toward another. But God had spoken, and who was he to dispute?

6. Joseph learned why he must not align himself with an existing church. His words are:

“The Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: ‘they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof’” (1:19).

Having seen what he had seen and having heard what he had heard, how could he possibly join a sect unacceptable to the Almighty? Perhaps some of the professors were “humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they [were] led, that in many instances they [did] err because they [were] taught by the precepts of men” (2 Nephi 28:14).

Perhaps some honest efforts were being made by a few, but whatever was being done was insufficient "to teach any man the right way" (2 Nephi 25:28-29).

7. Joseph learned that "the testimony of James [was] true—that a man who lacked wisdom might ask of God, and obtain, and not be upbraided" (Joseph Smith—History 1:26).

He also learned that a soul in the early nineteenth century was just as precious unto God as a soul in Moses' time or in the meridian of time, else why would the Lord appear? (see Alma 39:17).

8. Soon thereafter, Joseph learned "that God had a work for [him] to do" and that his name should be made known among all nations, kindreds, and tongues (see Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

Such prophecy has been fulfilled as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been established and as the fulness of the gospel has been preached in all the world.

Yes, it all started so quietly, so simply, and so very wonderfully. A believing boy took "one small step" and prayed. A loving Father in Heaven listened and responded. What has resulted is rightfully referred to as "one giant leap for mankind."

The importance of the First Vision

All the towers ever built and all the spaceships ever launched pale in comparison with Joseph Smith's first vision. Though men fly higher and higher into the heavens, they will not find God or see his face unless they humble themselves, pray, and heed the truths revealed through the Prophet of the Restoration.

Some have foolishly said, "Take away Joseph Smith and his prayer in the grove and the First Vision and we can accept your message." Such people

would have us bury the treasure of saving truths already cited, and many more, and turn our backs to "the most important event that had taken place in all world history from the day of Christ's ministry to the glorious hour when it occurred" (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968], p. 285).

Joseph Smith "lived great" and "died great in the eyes of God" (D&C 135:3). He "has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it" (135:3).

His prayer was—

One small step for a [young] man,
[but]
one giant leap for mankind.
[It proved that]
There isn't a thing that man cannot
do,
[if he has faith, trusts in the Lord,
and]
If he takes one small step at a time.
[Art Harris, "One Small Step"]

Yes, "praise to the man who communed with Jehovah" (*Hymns*, no. 27) and who was instrumental in translating the Book of Mormon, restoring the holy priesthood, organizing The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and revealing the fulness of the gospel.

I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet, for the fruits of his labors are sweet and abiding, and the Holy Spirit has borne witness to my soul. I feel honored to blend my voice with the chorus of millions who testify of his greatness and divine calling. I also know that "the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls" (Alma 37:7). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

When I was a boy, I liked to hear about King Arthur. In the story of King Arthur, Queen Guinevere gives this advice to Lancelot, the bravest of the Knights of the Round Table: "For I would not have you declare yourself to the world until you have proved your worthiness. Wherefore do not yourself proclaim your name, but wait until the world proclaimeth it."

Let the world see our good works

How much more effective it is in our day also to let the world see our good works rather than hear us dwell on our own accomplishments or point out impressive achievements.

We should remember to avoid the damaging effects that can come when we appear to be boasting about increased numbers or growth. How much better it is to let others measure our achievements rather than misunderstand as we recite on a continuing basis our percentages, progress, or family performances.

Boasting is to glorify oneself, to talk in a vain or bragging manner, or to talk especially about one's deeds. Boasting is to speak with pride and to take pride in, to brag about, to be proud to possess.

Oftentimes, boastful people are starving for attention. Boastful people may not be aware of the consequences caused by their method of presentation.

Ammon boasts of God

Ammon gives us excellent guidelines for putting our success in proper perspective.

"And it came to pass that when Ammon had said these words, his brother Aaron rebuked him, saying: Ammon, I

fear that thy joy doth carry thee away unto boasting.

"But Ammon said unto him: I do not boast in my own strength, nor in my own wisdom; but behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God.

"Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever" (Alma 26:10-12).

In our conversations and conduct we can be much more effective if we avoid the demeaning effect of that which could be classified as boasting. We should wisely let others become aware of accomplishments by observations rather than to have us appear to flaunt them before the world. Boasting diminishes credibility and too often alienates friends, co-workers, family members, and even those who may observe us from a distance.

Grateful but not proud

We are humbly grateful for the increased number of conversions, for the many missionaries in the field, and for the evidence of improved commitments to and in the Church.

We recall the response of one of our prophets, Spencer W. Kimball, years ago when he was told of the great numbers of missionaries serving in the field. He said, "I am thankful, but not impressed." Gratitude was expressed, but he urged Church members to refrain from basking in their glory and to move on to higher levels and new horizons.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, to whose Church we belong, would be disap-

pointed if we ever created the impression that the efforts and the hard work put forth to build his kingdom were based only on the wisdom and power of man.

Success comes through the Lord

Recently during a special women's conference, a speaker told about how he'd been quite successful in land development and how everything he'd touched had turned to gold. He'd also tried to live a faithful life and had been a very active servant in the gospel. Then he'd been called as a mission president. He had apparently been a very effective mission president and had subsequently returned to his home state. Throughout his life he'd experienced one success after another—he was a recognized leader in his community, had built a prosperous business. Being called as a mission president had sort of cemented in his mind that he'd "made it"—that he was an all-around success.

When he returned from his mission, a combination of changing interest rates and other business factors caused his once-prosperous business to plummet. In fact, he'd lost nearly everything. Telling the story, this man said, "I realized that I'd become quite boastful—that while I felt I had a testimony of Jesus Christ, in my mind I had brought about all of these wonderful things through my hard work, intelligence, and so forth. But when hard times hit, I began to realize how offensive I must have been to others and to my Heavenly Father to assume that I had brought all of these good things on my own. I felt like I'd lived a life of arrogance and boasting."

Helaman's advice to his sons, Nephi and Lehi, can give us strength today:

"Therefore, my sons, I would that ye should do that which is good. . . .

"And now my sons, behold I have somewhat more to desire of you, which desire is, that ye may not do these things that ye may boast, but that ye may do these things to lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, yea, which is eternal" (Helaman 5:7-8).

Helaman wanted his sons to do good for the right reasons—not to boast, but to lay up treasures in heaven.

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" is counsel often stated (Matthew 6:3). This is especially true when we have had the opportunity to comfort, console, or counsel any fellowmen who are confused, troubled, or weary. Whatever success we might have had as we have tried to help should usually not be discussed, let alone boasted about. Humble, quiet, compassionate service is so soul-rewarding; who would need to point out the subject or location of kindly deeds?

"For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him" (D&C 3:4).

How easy it is for man to believe that temporal success has been achieved by his own skills and labor. Everything good comes from the Lord.

Consideration for others

Consideration for the feelings of others should always be important to worthy Latter-day Saints. Rightfully we may be happy about the number of children with which we have been blessed, the missionaries who have served, the temple marriages of our offspring, and the accomplishments of family members; but others who are not so fortunate may have feelings of guilt or inadequacy. They may have been praying long and hard for the same blessings about which we are boasting. These people may feel that they are out of favor with God.

For this reason our appreciation should be sincerely felt and gratitude expressed frequently to our Father in Heaven—but not too vocally to the world.

May we all be gratefully aware of the source of our blessings and strengths

and refrain from taking undue credit for personal accomplishments.

Oftentimes when we dwell on where we have been and where we are now, and what we have now spiritually or financially, we can create resentment rather than respect.

Boasting, whether it be done innocently or otherwise, is not good. Too frequently it creates an impression of more interest in self than in others.

We never accomplish things alone

It has been my experience over the years as a participant in team athletics that the star performer who boasts of his achievements and records asks for trouble. Those who have records that continue to impress are those who point out and who truly acknowledge the strengths of teammates, coaches, and managers and thank God himself for extra talents and abilities.

Opponents in athletic competitions seem to lie in wait to clobber those who boast in their own strength. Unusual satisfaction must have been David's when he was able to slay Goliath, a boastful, defiant giant.

It pleases God to have us humbly recognize his powers and his influence in our accomplishments rather than to indicate by words or innuendo that we have been responsible for remarkable achievements.

We learn from James 3:5 that often "the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." No thinking Latter-day Saint will permit his comments, attitudes, or expressions to be construed as boasting in his own strength. Those who persist in boasting fail to recognize the true source of personal achievement.

Humility should be our foundation

History teaches us that those who boast in their own strength cannot have lasting success. Constantly we should be reminded that we must not boast of faith nor of mighty works but instead should boast of God in his blessings and goodness to us. God will help us to under-

stand that humility must be our foundation if the goodness of the Lord is to continue to come to and from us. The boasting man will certainly fall, because in his own strength no man endures. The boasting or conceited person in life is not expected by his peers to achieve great heights because he conveys an attitude he is already there.

One of the most common of all sins among worldly people is relying on and then boasting in the arm of flesh. This is a most serious evil. It is a sin born of pride, a sin that creates a frame of mind which keeps men from turning to the Lord and accepting his saving grace. When a man knowingly or unknowingly engages in self-exultation because of his riches, his political power, his worldly learning, his physical prowess, his business ability, or even his works of righteousness, he is not in tune with the Spirit of the Lord.

We would all do well to take a lesson from the Savior, who repeatedly acknowledged and gave credit to the Father in all things. Indeed, that precedent was set in the premortal council when Jesus Christ pledged the fruits of all he might himself accomplish to go to the Father: "And the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2).

"Tell no man"

During his mortal ministry, Jesus raised Jairus's daughter to life. "And her parents were astonished," Luke says, as well they should have been, "but he charged them that they should tell no man" (Luke 8:56). Mark's account says, "He charged them straitly that no man should know it" (Mark 5:43).

This wondrous deed that turned death into life, that bore record of the divinity of the One who even now was forecasting his own future victory over the grave, that could be performed only in righteousness and only by the power of God—this mighty miracle should, as Matthew says, send His fame into all the land on its own merits (see Matthew 4:24).

Indeed, the parents could not enshroud in secrecy that which was already public knowledge; everyone in the whole area would soon know, because of the way Jesus himself had handled the successive events, that the little maid who once was dead now lived. Her death had been announced openly to the multitude. Jesus himself had replied before the multitude that, notwithstanding her death, she would "be made whole" (Luke 8:50). All the people would soon know that she now lived and could only be expected to wonder how and by what means life had come to her again.

The parents were charged to tell no man, but instead left the telling of this wondrous event to outsiders who were aware of the miracle. We as a matter of standard gospel counsel encourage that those who enjoy the gifts of the Spirit and who possess the signs which always follow those who believe are commanded not to boast of these spiritual blessings. In our day, after naming the miraculous signs that always attend those who have faith and those who believe the very truth taught by Jesus anciently, the Lord has said:

"But a commandment I give unto them, that they shall not boast themselves of these things, neither speak them before the world; for these things are given unto you for your profit and for salvation" (D&C 84:73).

Perhaps the charge to "tell no man" meant they were not to tell the account in a boastful way, lest a spirit of pride—a spirit of self-adopted superiority—should come into their souls. There were times when Jesus told the recipients of his healing power to go forth and testify of the goodness of God unto them, and other times when he limited the extent and detail of their witness.

Everything comes from God

The many admonitions in the scriptures to avoid boasting send the message that we should realize the source of all our blessings.

Everything is given by God. All talent, creativity, ability, insight, and strength comes from him. In our own strength we can do nothing, as Ammon admitted to his brother (see Alma 26:10–12). When we seek the praise of man more than the praise of God, it will become easy to fall.

Boasting will be erased when we seek the Lord's help and thank him for all we have and are.

God help us to humbly accept his blessings of strength and guidance. The wise and committed will praise his name forever and will avoid the very appearance of any attitudes or situations that feature personal accomplishments or boasting.

I leave you my special witness of the truthfulness of this great work. All of us can more effectively share our knowledge and testimonies if we boast not. This I say in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve has just addressed us.

Following my remarks the Tabernacle Choir will conclude this session by singing "God's Daily Care."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Lloyd P. George of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren and sisters, I sense the awesome burden of speaking to you in this great conference. Tens of thousands of you are listening with great expecta-

tion here in the Tabernacle, or in your homes, or in more than two thousand church buildings. May I say at the outset that I love you as my brethren and sisters

of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I love you for your faith and faithfulness. I love you for the integrity of your lives. I love you for your desire to live as the Lord would have you live and for the effort you are making to do so.

We all need mercy

I know that many of you carry very heavy burdens. I know that many of you live under extreme stress. I know that you are anxious to do the right thing and that you are prayerfully trying to do so. I know also that none of us has reached that perfection we have been admonished to seek, and therefore, with only a desire to give encouragement, I take the liberty of using a text that I feel has application for each of us. It is from the sermon which Jesus gave to the multitude who gathered on the mount: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

We live in a world where there is so much of harshness. We live in a world filled with hostility and meanness. By reason of our human natures, so many seem prone to act with unmitigated selfishness regardless of injury to others.

I spoke one day with a young mother, a single parent who had been abandoned by her husband. With only meager skills, she was trying to make a living for her children. Broken and discouraged, she said, with tears in her eyes, "It's a rough world out there. It's a jungle without mercy."

How godlike a quality is mercy. It cannot be legislated. It must come from the heart. It must be stirred up from within. It is part of the endowment each of us receives as a son or daughter of God and partaker of a divine birthright. I plead for an effort among all of us to give greater expression and wider latitude to this instinct which lies within us. I am convinced that there comes a time, possibly many times, within our lives when we might cry out for mercy on the part of others. How can we expect it unless we have been merciful ourselves?

Rich men and the oppressed

A parable of the Master comes to mind:

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

"And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

"And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: . . .

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

"And in hell he lift[ed] up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

"And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

"And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot" (Luke 16:19-26).

I plead for a stronger spirit of compassion in all of our relationships, a stronger element of mercy, for the promise is sure that if we are merciful we shall obtain mercy.

Along with you I have observed in recent months a wondrous, almost unbelievable, change in some of the nations of the earth. Dictators have fallen, and the voices of the people are heard again with a new song of freedom.

I watched on television the summary trial given one who had been a merciless despot. Now in the moment of his extremity he wished for mercy on the part of his accusers. I know nothing of the court system under which he and his wife were tried. I know only that the hearing

was short, the judgment death, and the execution quick and final. There had been no mercy shown through long years of oppression, harsh and unrelenting; and now in this hour of bitter culmination none was extended.

Examples and teachings about mercy

Mercy is of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The degree to which each of us is able to extend it becomes an expression of the reality of our discipleship under Him who is our Lord and Master.

I remind you that it was He who said, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39).

It was He who said, "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also" (5:40).

It was He who said, "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (5:41).

It was He who said, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (5:42).

It was He who said to the woman taken in sin:

"Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? . . .

"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10-11).

It was He who, while hanging on the cross in dreadful agony, cried out, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

He, the Son of the everlasting Father, was the epitome of mercy. His ministry was one of compassion toward the poor, the sick, the oppressed, the victims of injustice and man's inhumanity to man. His sacrifice on the cross was an unparalleled act of mercy in behalf of all humanity.

How great a thing is mercy. Most often it is quiet and unassuming. It receives few headlines. It is the antithesis of vengeance and hatred, of greed and

offensive egotism. As Portia says in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*:

The quality of mercy is not
strain'd,—

It droppeth as the gentle rain from
heaven

Upon the place beneath: it is twice
blest,—

It blesseth him that gives, and him
that takes:

. . . it becomes

The throned monarch better than his
crown;

His sceptre shows the force of
temporal power, . . .

But mercy is above the sceptred
sway,—

It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself.

[Act 4, scene 1, lines 184-95]

Ending wars with mercy

If cultivated among all men, it would put an end to the atrocities of war. For all too many years now we have watched the conflict that has gone on in Northern Ireland. Surely those who have been closest to it and most affected by it must be weary of it. An outpouring of mercy on both sides would overcome the corrosive hatred that has existed and festered for so long. It is time for each side to act with greater compassion toward the other. I am confident that as surely as this happens, those who are merciful will find the mercy for which they hunger.

Of all the wars that have afflicted the United States, none was so costly in suffering and death, none so filled with venom and hatred as was the American Civil War. There are few more touching scenes in history than that of April 9, 1865, at Appomattox, Virginia, when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant. General Grant wrote a brief statement of terms under which the soldiers of the South were free to return to their homes with their personal side arms, their private horses, and baggage.

There was no recrimination, no demand for reparations, no apologies re-

quired or punishment given. This has gone down in the chronicles of war as a great and magnificent act of mercy.

Society benefits from mercy

In the story of our own people there stands out the example of Brigham Young's attitude toward the Indians. His declaration that it was "better to feed them than to fight them" evidenced not only the innate mercy of his nature, but the greater wisdom inherent in a compassionate attitude toward the less fortunate.

If I may be pardoned a personal indulgence, I find expression of this attitude in the chronicles of my own family. My grandfather, Ira Nathaniel Hinckley, was called in 1867 by Brigham Young to build a fort at Cove Creek on the road to southern Utah so that travelers might be afforded protection from the Indians. But there was never Indian trouble of any consequence because of the policy of merciful treatment toward them which was followed during the years by my grandfather when he operated that lonely outpost.

There is so much of civil strife and conflict in our society that could be ameliorated by a small touch of mercy. Much of it has reached a point where the Mosaic law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth has been enlarged to require three eyes for one eye and three teeth for one tooth. Many victims, badgered and broken, cry in vain for a touch of kindness.

We see labor strife fraught with violence and untamed accusations. Were there a greater willingness on the part of each side to look with some element of mercy on the problems of the other, most of this could be avoided.

We have recently been reminded that in this land there still persists, notwithstanding the protection of the law, a merciless exploitation of children in certain industries.

And there are still those, not a few, who without compassion "grind the faces of the poor" (Isaiah 3:15).

Show more kindness to others

Our generation is afflicted with critics in the media who think they do a great and clever thing in mercilessly attacking men and women in public office and in other positions of leadership. They are prone to take a line or a paragraph out of context and pursue their prey like a swarm of killer bees. They lash out with invective and snide innuendo against those who have no effective way of fighting back or who, in the spirit of the teachings of the Master, prefer to turn the other cheek and go forward with their lives.

In many areas of the world, governments are waging a battle against illegal drugs. I do not speak negatively of the efforts of enforcement officers to curb the pernicious drug traffic. But along with this there is need for compassion toward many of the victims of drugs. Whenever we help one to find a better way, our effort becomes an act of mercy with a grateful response rather than an act of punishment followed by resentment.

The plight of the homeless is a repudiation of the greatness of our nation. I commend most warmly those who with a compelling spirit of kindness reach out to those in distress, regardless of whom they might be, to help and assist, to feed and provide for, to nurture and to bless. As these extend mercy, I am confident that the God of heaven will bless them, and their posterity after them, with His own mercy. I am satisfied that these who impart so generously will not lack in their own store, but that there will be food on their tables and a roof over their heads. One cannot be merciful to others without receiving a harvest of mercy in return.

Let mercy be taught in our homes

And this brings me to another area where there is so great a need for that mercy which speaks of forbearance, kindness, clemency, compassion. I speak of the homes of the people.

Every child, with few possible exceptions, is the product of a home, be it good, bad, or indifferent. As children grow through the years, their lives, in large measure, become an extension and a reflection of family teaching. If there is harshness, abuse, uncontrolled anger, disloyalty, the fruits will be certain and discernible, and in all likelihood they will be repeated in the generation that follows. If, on the other hand, there is forbearance, forgiveness, respect, consideration, kindness, mercy, and compassion, the fruits again will be discernible, and they will be eternally rewarding. They will be positive and sweet and wonderful. And as mercy is given and taught by parents, it will be repeated in the lives and actions of the next generation.

I speak to fathers and mothers everywhere with a plea to put harshness behind us, to bridle our anger, to lower our voices, and to deal with mercy and love and respect one toward another in our homes.

Our responsibility is to others

As Elder James E. Talmage once wrote: "Religion without morality, professions of godliness without charity, church-membership without adequate responsibility as to individual conduct in daily life, are but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. . . . 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' Honesty of purpose, integrity of soul, individual purity, [absolute] freedom of conscience, willingness to do good to all men even enemies, pure benevolence—these are some of the fruits by which the religion of Christ may be known, far exceeding in importance and value the promulgation of dogmas and the enunciation of theories" (*Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924], p. 429).

In that same vein the Lord in modern revelation has enjoined us, "Succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang

down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

And again, "Therefore, strengthen your brethren in all your conversation, in all your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings" (D&C 108:7).

We in the United States have heard much in recent months about a "kinder, gentler nation."

If there is to be such it must come of the spontaneous expression of millions of kinder, gentler human hearts.

Let us be more merciful. Let us get the arrogance out of our lives, the conceit, the egotism. Let us be more compassionate, gentler, filled with forbearance and patience and a greater measure of respect one for another. In so doing, our very example will cause others to be more merciful, and we shall have greater claim upon the mercy of God who in His love will be generous toward us.

"For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind? . . .

"And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, . . . O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another" (Mosiah 4:19, 21).

Those who show mercy obtain mercy

So spoke King Benjamin. To which I add that the power of the Master is certain and His word is sure. He will keep His promise toward those who are compassionate. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

I am confident that a time will come for each of us when, whether because of sickness or infirmity, of poverty or distress, of oppressive measures against us by man or nature, we shall wish for mercy. And if, through our lives, we have granted mercy to others, we shall obtain it for ourselves.

"For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am *merciful* and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory" (D&C 76:5-6; italics added).

Of these things I bear witness as I testify that God our Eternal Father lives, that He is a God of mercy, that His Son

gave His life in a great merciful atonement for each of us, and that we shall be the beneficiaries of that mercy as we extend it to others, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God's Daily Care."
Elder Lloyd P. George offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 160th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 1, 1990. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Robert Cundick at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began:

President Thomas S. Monson

President Ezra Taft Benson, who has presided at all sessions of this conference, has asked that I conduct this fifth and concluding session of the 160th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend a sincere welcome to all assembled in the Tabernacle and to those seated in the Assembly Hall, where Elders Russell M. Nelson and Vaughn J. Featherstone and Bishop Glenn L. Pace are seated on the stand.

We send also our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and

many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or by satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and accompanied by Robert Cundick, will begin this service by singing "Great Is the Lord."

The invocation will be offered by Elder Glen L. Rudd of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Great Is the Lord."
Elder Glen L. Rudd offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Of the Father's Love Begotten."

Following the singing, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Of the Father's Love Begotten."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Some years ago, an acquaintance of mine who was moving to Washington, D.C., went to the district offices to take

the driver's license examination. He had to fill out a form that asked for his business address and his occupation. He had

just been appointed a justice of the United States Supreme Court, so he used that as his business address. In the blank marked "occupation" he wrote the word *justice*. The person at the counter examined this answer, frowned, and said, "Justice? Justice! Well, I guess that's all right. Last week a fellow wrote *peace*."

The occupation of peace

Each of us should pursue the occupation of "peace." But what is peace, and how do we seek it?

Many think of peace as the absence of war. Everyone wants that kind of peace. Songs celebrate it, and bumper stickers proclaim it.

Many good people promote peace by opposing war. They advocate laws or treaties to abolish war, to require disarmament, or to reduce armed forces.

Those methods may reduce the likelihood or the costs of war. But opposition to war cannot ensure peace, because peace is more than the absence of war.

For over fifty years, I have heard the leaders of this church preach that peace can only come through the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am coming to understand why.

Peace is the opposite of war

The peace the gospel brings is not just the *absence* of war. It is the *opposite* of war. Gospel peace is the opposite of any conflict, armed or unarmed. It is the opposite of national or ethnic hostilities, of civil or family strife.

In the midst of World War I, President Joseph F. Smith declared:

"For years it has been held that peace comes only by preparation for war; the present conflict should prove that peace comes only by preparing for peace, through training the people in righteousness and justice, and selecting rulers who respect the righteous will of the people. . . .

"There is only one thing that can bring peace into the world. It is the adoption of the gospel of Jesus Christ, rightly

understood, obeyed and practiced by rulers and people alike" (*Improvement Era*, Sept. 1914, pp. 1074-75).

A generation later, during the savage hostilities of World War II, President David O. McKay declared:

"*Peace will come and be maintained only through the triumph of the principles of peace, and by the consequent subjection of the enemies of peace, which are hatred, envy, ill-gotten gain, the exercise of unrighteous dominion of men.* Yielding to these evils brings misery to the individual, unhappiness to the home, war among nations" (*Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1953], p. 280).

Peace comes from the Lord

Such has been the message of the prophets in all ages. Referring to the first families of the earth, Moses wrote, "And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed" (Moses 6:15).

In his own day, Moses gave the Lord's promise to the children of Israel: "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, . . . I will give peace in the land, . . . neither shall the sword go through your land" (Leviticus 26:3, 6).

Throughout the Book of Mormon, the Lord declares, "Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land" (2 Nephi 1:20).

War is rooted in wickedness

As we seek to understand the causes of wars, persecutions, and civil strife, we can see that they are almost always rooted in wickedness.

The mass-murders of the twentieth century are among the bloodiest crimes ever committed against humanity. We can hardly comprehend the magnitude of the Nazi holocaust murders of over five million Jews in Europe, Stalin's purges and labor camps that killed five to ten million in the Soviet Union, and the two to three million noncombatants who were

killed or who died of hunger in the Biafran War (see Isidor Walliman and Michael N. Dobkowski, eds., *Genocide and the Modern Age* [New York: Greenwood Press, 1987], p. 46; *The Nation*, 6 Mar. 1989, p. 294; 7/14 Aug. 1989, p. 154).

All of these slaughters, and others like them, were rooted in the ancient wickedness Satan taught—that a man could murder to get gain (see Moses 5:30–31). The mass-murderers of this century killed to acquire property and to secure power over others.

Through the prophet Moses, the Lord God of Israel commanded:

“Thou shalt not kill.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.

“Thou shalt not steal.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness. . . .

“Thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:13–17).

Obedience to these commandments, which are the bedrock moral foundation for all Christians and Jews, would have prevented the greatest tragedies of this century.

“All are alike unto God”

We still live in a time of turmoil. There are wars between some nations, armed conflicts within others, and violent controversies in most. People are killed every day in some places, and hatred is practiced in many more. Peace is a victim everywhere.

If only we could heed the call of the Lord God of Israel, “Come unto me all ye ends of the earth” (2 Nephi 26:25). As the Book of Mormon teaches, he has created all flesh, “and the one being is as precious in his sight as the other” (Jacob 2:21). He has given salvation “free for all men” (2 Nephi 26:27), and “all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” (26:28).

“And he inviteth [all men] to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen;

and all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33).

The blessings of the gospel are universal, and so is the formula for peace: keep the commandments of God. War and conflict are the result of wickedness; peace is the product of righteousness.

We are still far from peace

During the past year we have seen revolutionary changes in the governments of many nations. We are gratified that in most nations these changes have been accomplished without war or bloodshed. Nevertheless, we are far from securing peace in these nations or in any others throughout the world.

Many take comfort from the Old Testament prophecy that nations will “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks” (Micah 4:3). But this prophecy only applies to that time of peace which follows the time when the God of Jacob “will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths” (4:2).

For now, we have wars and conflicts, and everywhere they are rooted in violations of the commandments of God.

The leaders of some nations have systematically murdered their opposition.

Persons in power in some nations have stolen public and private property so they could live in luxury. At the same time, they have neglected the most basic needs of the hungry and homeless among their people.

Some private citizens have promoted poverty by stealing, by corrupting public officials, and by oppressing the poor and defenseless.

Just across the borders of some nations are the wretched camps of refugees whose suffering circumstances are also traceable to man’s inability to keep the commandments of God.

The moral climate in some nations is reminiscent of the prophet Ezekiel’s description of “the bloody city” of Jerusalem:

“Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed

blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. . . .

"The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 22:27, 29).

Peace comes through righteousness

Democracy does not ensure peace. When a nation is governed according to the voice of its people, its actions will mirror the righteousness or wickedness of its people.

We cannot have peace among nations without achieving general righteousness among the people who comprise them. Elder John A. Widtsoe said:

"The only way to build a peaceful community is to build men and women who are lovers and makers of peace. Each individual, by that doctrine of Christ and His Church, holds in his own hands the peace of the world.

"That makes me responsible for the peace of the world, and makes you individually responsible for the peace of the world. The responsibility cannot be shifted to someone else. It cannot be placed upon the shoulders of Congress or Parliament, or any other organization of men with governing authority" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1943, p. 113).

If citizens do not have a basic goodness to govern their actions toward one another, we can never achieve peace in the world. One nation's greed, hatred, or desire for power over another is simply a reflection of the greeds, hatreds, and selfish desires of individuals within that nation.

Conversely, each citizen furthers the cause of world peace when he or she keeps the commandments of God and lives at peace with family and neighbors. Such citizens are living the prayer expressed in the words of a popular song, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me" (Sy Miller and Jill Jackson, "Let There Be Peace on Earth").

The Savior and his Apostles had no program for world peace other than indi-

vidual righteousness. They mounted no opposition to the rule of Rome or to the regime of its local tyrants. They preached individual righteousness and taught that the children of God should love their enemies (see Matthew 5:44) and "live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

Recent history reminds us that people who continue to hate one another after a war will have another war, whereas the victor and vanquished who forgive one another will share peace and prosperity.

Peace comes from loving others

Our Church members demonstrated the healing and pacifying power of love in their shipment of food and clothing to relieve the suffering of the German Saints just after World War II. U.S. President Harry S. Truman was amazed when President George Albert Smith told him the supplies would not be sold. "You don't mean you are going to give it to them?" he exclaimed.

President Smith replied simply, "They are our brothers and sisters and are in distress" (in Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball, Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977], p. 222).

A few months later, Elder Ezra Taft Benson saw a German member in tears as he ran his fingers through a container of cracked wheat and whispered, "Brother Benson, it is hard for me to believe that people who have never seen us could do so much for us" (in Sheri L. Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987], p. 219).

Each person can promote peace

What can one person do to promote world peace? The answer is simple: keep God's commandments and serve his children.

A bishop who seeks to heal a troubled marriage or resolve a personal controversy is working for peace. So is a victim of abuse who is conscientiously

working on the long process of forgiving the transgressor.

Young men and women contribute to peace when they forgo the temporary pleasure of self-gratifying activities and involve themselves in service projects and other acts of kindness.

The most powerful workers for peace may be faithful mothers and fathers. Some of the most terrible crimes committed against humanity are the acts of persons who have been scarred and twisted by the sins of others—often their own parents or others who cared for them. Parents who lovingly care for their own children or shelter foster children and raise them in righteousness are working for peace. So are parents who teach their children in the way King Benjamin counseled, to forgo conflicts and “to love one another, and to serve one another” (Mosiah 4:15).

Persons who seek to reduce human suffering and persons who work to promote understanding among different peoples are also important workers for peace.

An effort of reconciliation

A personal act of kindness or reconciliation also has an impact for peace. Lincoln’s biographer described such an act. A Union officer applied to his commander-in-chief for permission to leave his regiment to attend to the burial of his wife. Lincoln gruffly refused. Another battle was imminent, and every officer was needed. The next morning President Lincoln reconsidered and granted the request. He went to the room of the grieving man, took his hand, and said:

“My dear Colonel, I was a brute last night. I have no excuse to offer. I was weary to the last extent; but I had no right to treat a man with rudeness who had offered his life for his country, much more a man who came to me in great affliction. I have had a regretful night, and come now to beg your forgiveness” (Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln, The*

War Years, 4 vols. [New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1939], 1:514).

Missionaries work for peace

Our missionaries, young men and women and older couples, are workers for world peace. So are the faithful souls who support them.

Like the church that sends them forth, our missionaries have no political agenda and no specific program for disarmament or reduction of forces. They circulate no petitions, advocate no legislation, support no candidates. They are the Lord’s servants, and his program for world peace depends on righteousness, not rhetoric. His methods involve repentance and reformation, not placards and picketing.

By preaching righteousness, our missionaries seek to treat the causes of war. They preach repentance from personal corruption, greed, and oppression because only by individual reformation can we overcome corruption and oppression by groups or nations. By inviting all to repent and come unto Christ, our missionaries are working for peace in this world by changing the hearts and behavior of individual men and women.

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we follow the formula prescribed by the prophet-king Benjamin. He taught that those who receive a remission of their sins through the atonement of Christ are filled with the love of God and the knowledge of that which is just and true. That kind of person “will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably” with all people (Mosiah 4:13).

That is our method, and salvation and peace for all mankind is our goal.

Jesus Christ is our Savior. He has taught us the way to live. If we follow him and have goodwill toward all men, we can have peace on earth.

May God bless all of us in that great effort, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall hear now from Elder Richard G. Scott, also a member of the Council of the Twelve, and he will be followed by Sister Barbara W. Winder, released yesterday as general president of the Relief Society.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Finding the life you want

The purpose of this message is to help many of you find the life you want, not the one you are living.

I speak to you who find yourselves caught in a pattern of life that you neither enjoy nor want. You may publicly profess that all is well and reject the efforts of others to help you with a comment that you know what you are doing and can handle it yourself. Yet, in quiet moments, you know you are miserable, lonely, and sometimes afraid. You avoid thinking too much about what you are doing. The walls seem to close in around you. You are driven by appetites that bring momentary physical response but are followed by periods of deep depression. Let me help you as we reason together.

I need not define your specific problem to help you overcome it. It doesn't matter what it is. If it violates the commandments of the Lord, it comes from Satan, and the Lord can overcome all of Satan's influence through your application of righteous principles.

Please understand that the way back is not as hard as it seems to you now. Satan wants you to think that it is impossible. That is not true. The Savior gave His life so that you can completely overcome the challenges you face (see 2 Nephi 2:6-8).

Change requires honesty

Do you find that when someone mentions the mistakes you're making, you are prone to lie about them, to indicate that they are much less severe than they truly are? Do you admit only to

what is publicly seen and try to hide from others how really bad conditions are? Worst of all, do you lie to yourself, pretending that things are all right when they are not? That attitude prevents you from getting the help you need. It provides an invitation to more serious problems.

When you are honest with yourself, you may feel afraid. To change will require you to take an unfamiliar path, and it is uphill and narrow. The other is so inviting, but it leads to heartache. None of your partners in error will help you onto the upward path. They think only of themselves (see D&C 10:25). You know the result of following their path—unhappiness, failure, disappointment, and greater fear. They don't love you. They want to use you. Don't listen to them.

Listen to the Lord, not Satan

Lucifer will do all in his power to keep you captive. You are familiar with his strategy. He whispers, "No one will ever know." "Just one more time." "You can't change; you have tried before and failed." "It's too late; you've gone too far." Don't let him discourage you.

When you take the path that climbs, that harder path of the Savior, there are rewards along the way. When you do something right, when you resist temptation, when you meet a goal, you will feel very good about it. It is a very different kind of feeling than you have when you violate commandments—an altogether different feeling. It brings a measure of peace and comfort and provides encouragement to press on.

As you pray for help, the Lord will place in your path priesthood leaders who will counsel and friends who will give

support if you'll let them. But remember, they can help only by your following the rules that Christ has set out for the journey. Any lasting improvement must come from your own determination to change (see Mosiah 3:17-20).

If it were possible to make your road very easy, you wouldn't grow in strength. If you were always forgiven for every mistake without effort on your part, you would never receive the blessings of repentance. If everything were done *for* you, you wouldn't learn how to work, or gain self-confidence, or acquire the power to change.

Be faithful and unselfish

Freedom from your transgression will come through sincere faith, true repentance, willing obedience, and the giving of self (see Alma 26:22).

Why the giving of self? Because selfishness is at the root of your problem. Where selfishness and transgression flourish, the Spirit of the Lord can't enter your life to bless you. To succeed, you must conquer your selfishness. When your beacon is focused on self, it does little more than blind your vision. When turned outward through acts of kindness and love, it will light your path to happiness and peace.

Your exercise of faith permits you to call upon the strength of the Lord when you need it. Obedience to His commandments allows that help to be given. The power of God will come into your life because of your faithful obedience to His commandments.

Don't live your life in despair, feeling sorry for yourself because of the mistakes you have made. Let the sunshine in by doing the right things—now (see 1 Nephi 22:26).

Unravel knots step by step

It may be difficult to begin, but pick up the scriptures and immerse yourself in them. Look for favorite passages. Lean on the Master's teachings, on His ser-

vants' testimonies. Refresh your parched soul with the word of God (see 2 Nephi 4:15-16). The scriptures will give you comfort and the strength to overcome (see Helaman 3:29-30).

If you've tangled your ordered life into a ball of knots, it has taken time to get it that way. It is unreasonable to expect to unravel it all at once. Start knot by knot, decision by decision, and be sure that while you are untying the knots, you don't let any more get put there through transgression.

This example suggests how your habit can be overcome.

Suppose a small child were to run in front of your car. What would you do? Careful analysis of each step taken will teach you how to overcome your serious habit:

- First your mind decides to stop. Nothing else can happen until that decision is made.

- Then you take your foot off the accelerator. Can you imagine stopping a car with one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brake?

- Finally you firmly apply the brake.

The same pattern is followed to overcome your entrenched habit. Decide to stop what you are doing that is wrong. Then search out everything in your life that feeds the habit, such as negative thoughts, an unwholesome environment, and your companions in mischief. Systematically eliminate or overcome everything that contributes to that negative part of your life. Then stop the negative things permanently.

Recognize that you'll go through two transition periods. The first is the most difficult. You are caging the tiger that has controlled your life. It will shake the bars, growl, threaten, and cause you some disturbance. But I promise you that this period will pass. How long it takes will depend upon the severity of your transgression, the strength of your determination, and the help you seek from the Lord. But remember, as you stand firm, it will pass.

The second period is not as intense. It is like being on "battle alert" so that you can fend off any enemy attack. That, too, will pass, and you will feel more peace and will have increased control of your life. You will become free.

Find out about the Lord's plan

Once I had a measuring tape that didn't work. I decided to fix it. I began to remove the side cover plate to find what was wrong. In a few moments, I knew I was in trouble. Suddenly, the whole mechanism exploded in my hands. There were tape and spring flying in all directions. My efforts to put it all back together were frustrating and often painful. Irritated, I just about threw the whole thing away. Then I thought, "Someone designed this tape. If I can discover the principles that make it function, I can fix it." With greater patience, I began to examine the mainspring and found that if coiled in a certain way, instead of resisting and complaining, it easily responded. Soon the spring was coiled, carefully placed in its housing, the tape joined, the cover replaced, and it worked perfectly.

So it is with you. When, through violation of God's laws, you cease to function properly, force and compulsion will not restore you. You must search out the Designer's plan. As you follow it, you will become more pliable. You can be "repaired" more easily, and you will function well again under His divine influence.

Decide now to change

The overcoming of serious transgression follows a pattern. First, and most difficult, is the internal battle, the crosscurrent of feeling, the anguish about being found out, the worry about the impact on other lives, and the fear of the unknown. This struggle is prolonged through indecision, and that means more pain and further damage. It can be cut short through decisive personal commitment to clean up your life, now. *Right now.* Once that decision is made, there

follow many individual decisions and acts, none of which is overpowering. Yet, taken together, they will kill the monster that's controlling your life.

The most difficult part about changing is to make an unwavering decision to do it and, when required, to enlist the help of your bishop. Once that beginning is made, you will find the rest of the path becomes easier than you imagined. Some days are more difficult than others, but the process becomes easier because through your use of agency, you qualify for the Lord's help, and He magnifies your efforts (see Omni 1:26).

Establish specific objectives, and move steadily toward them. A rudder won't control a drifting boat; it must be underway. Similarly, you need to be moving forward to gain control of your life.

Satan would have you rationalize—that is, twist something you know to be true into a pattern that appears to support your deviation from truth. Rationalization leads you down blind alleys in life. It drains spiritual power. It barricades the path to happiness because it distorts your understanding of truth. Overcome rationalization with truth and positive decisions. In time, they will form character resistant to the eroding influence you are striving to overcome.

Stay firm to your commitment

When you decide to change and then discover that there is a way to cheat on your promise without anyone's knowing, don't do it. That will destroy your self-confidence and will weaken others' trust in you. It will discourage them from helping you. There is simply nothing good about cheating yourself by being disobedient to trust; there is no positive element of reinforcement that would otherwise come from obedience.

To reach a goal you have never before attained, you must do things you have never before done.

Don't confront your problem armed with only your own experience, understanding, and strength. Count on the infi-

nite power of the Lord by deciding *now* to be obedient to His teachings (see 2 Nephi 31:19–21).

If loved ones seem to ignore you, it is because they don't know what to do. Their past attempts to help have been rejected; you have not wanted help. Reach out to them trustingly. Ask for support in your sincere efforts to change. Give them reason to know that this time is different because you will do it the Lord's way.

As you make progress on the way back, you will discover feelings that you haven't had for a long time—feelings of concern for others, feelings of unselfish love, feelings of a desire to be near loved ones, and of self-respect and confidence. These stirrings are evidence of progress, like a growing light at the end of a tunnel.

I wish I could replace your doubt with my certainty, but I can't give it to you. I can provide an invitation: Please, decide now to repent and change your life. I promise you, in the name of the Lord, that He will help you. He will be there in every time of need. He gave His

life so that you can change your life. I promise you that you'll feel His love, strength, and support. Trust Him completely. He is not going to make any mistakes. He knows what He is doing. Please, decide now to change your life. Be obedient to His teachings, and He will bless you. I promise you He will bless you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Sister Barbara W. Winder, released yesterday as general Relief Society president. She has been called as a missionary to accompany her husband, Richard Winder, in his appointment as president of the Czechoslovakia Prague Mission.

Sister Winder will be followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack, who was sustained yesterday as general Relief Society president.

Barbara W. Winder

My dear brothers and sisters, my heart is full to capacity. As we have been released in the normal rotation of assignments, we want to welcome those who have been newly called and to offer them our love and sincere support.

A time to gather the harvest

Luther Burbank wrote: "Like the year [at the end of summer,] I pause now, toward the end of my allotted time, to glance backward and to gather my harvest of experience and growth and friendship and . . . memory. . . ."

"[And] what has been my 'harvest. . . .'?"

—"The harvest of work accomplished and aims achieved. . . ."

—"The harvested experiences and lessons that have moulded and impressed . . . my . . . life. . . ."

—"[And] the harvest of dear friendships, happy memories. . . ."

"[And] the harvest is rich and heavy and abundant" (*The Harvest of the Years* [Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931], pp. 280–81).

The harvest of work accomplished

The work of Relief Society is focused on the pure and simple part of the gospel, to develop faith and bear testimony; to render compassionate service as we care for the needy; to strengthen our families here and in eternity; and to work with our "hearts knit together in unity and love one towards another" (Mosiah 18:21).

Our harvested experiences and lessons have been molded with many of you.

Your prayers on our behalf have been felt. We are grateful.

Your yearnings and desires shared by letter or visit have become the pleadings of our prayers.

Our assignments and invitations have brought us into your homes, families, and chapels, where we became acutely aware of how much you hunger and thirst after righteousness, for we with you, while we have been there, have been filled with the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 12:6).

We have watched your tender mercies and ministrings to one another.

We have observed priesthood leaders and sisters and auxiliary leaders working together to strengthen families and bring them home to the Savior.

The harvest of happy memories and dear friendships is perhaps the sweetest of all the blessings:

"[For] that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory" (D&C 130:2).

Gratitude for experiences

I am grateful for family support; grateful to have served with capable, committed counselors, general secretary, and board members, as well as officers and board members of our sister organizations, and our devoted, competent staff, volunteers, and hostesses. I am grateful for the support team in the Church offices.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve with our dear General Authorities, noble sons of our Heavenly Father. I have learned from them as I have observed integrity, loyalty, charity, compassion, and a stalwart devotion to Deity. How blessed I feel to have been a part.

Six years ago my husband presided over the California San Diego Mission. We were called home a year early for me to fill this assignment. And now we return to specific missionary work. This

time he will preside over the Czechoslovakia mission, where he labored as a youth.

Time for new challenges

It is humbling to look forward with my husband to yet another challenge. I desire to support him as he has supported me so steadfastly for the past six years. The spirit of missionary work is upon us, even as it was upon the sons of Mosiah:

"They fasted much and prayed much that the Lord would grant unto them . . . his Spirit to go with them, and abide with them, that they might be an instrument in the hands of God to bring . . . their brethren . . . to the knowledge of the truth" (Alma 17:9).

Recently while we were sitting in a mission presidents' training meeting, the challenges of our California mission flooded back into my mind. And I knew we would again face similar concerns, even with yet unknown problems.

In spite of these unsettled feelings, at the conclusion of the training meeting, I felt an excitement difficult to describe. I might liken it to how we may have felt in the premortal existence as we learned of the gospel plan. We knew there would be adversities in this earth life, yet we shouted for joy at the prospects of being able to come here.

Now our excitement causes us to shout for joy as we gather our resources and prepare for this new opportunity.

I will forever treasure this time in the Relief Society, filled with rich associations and experiences. Indeed, the Lord has allowed the harvest to be abundant, bursting with seed for yet another season. I am humbled and weak but I know with the help of the Lord we can be instruments to accomplish his purposes.

May we all feel his strength as we seek to serve him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Elaine L. Jack

My dear brothers and sisters, first let me affirm my belief in the words of Nephi: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way . . . that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7).

Without this belief there would be no way to accept the awesome responsibility to serve as Relief Society general president.

Gratitude for others

I acknowledge with deep gratitude the magnificent women who have preceded me in this call—women like Sister Barbara Winder. I am grateful for her influence in my life. In my prayers each day I give thanks for the influence of many good people around me—for friends, for caring neighbors, for the Young Women office staff, and for Sister Jayne Malan and the board members with whom I have a close and cherished relationship.

I feel the love and the great strength that come from my four sons and their families. I appreciate their candor and good humor. In fact, I can hear them now, on both coasts, watching this broadcast and saying, "My mother? Oh, sure!" Yesterday, I was telling our oldest son that President Monson had said that I might be called on for a few remarks today. President Monson had said, "We don't want you to preach a sermon." Dave replied, "Mom, that's what we've been telling you for years!" I am grateful that they have the desire to do what's right.

I give thanks for my sister, who is my friend. Blessed is she who has one like her and thrice blessed if more than one. Sister Ardeth Kapp is like a sister to me. I pay tribute to her as a great woman of vision, called by the Lord to lead the

Young Women around the world at a most critical time. She has tutored me, encouraged me, and allowed me to grow. I have served happily as a counselor in the Young Women organization.

I love you young women. I know that you are understanding the importance of the Young Women Values—those gospel principles which help prepare you to make and keep sacred covenants.

No one who is as committed to home and family and personal growth as I could serve in this calling without the love and support of a husband who is devoted to the gospel. Joe is devoted, and he brings great strength and stability into my life.

Testimony

I know that Ezra Taft Benson is a prophet of God. I will follow his counsel and the counsel of those Brethren who have been called to serve with him. I know that Jesus is the Christ, and that he will direct my path if I make myself worthy of his guidance.

I believe that the women of the Church have a unique contribution to make. In the words of a modern-day prophet: "Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days . . . will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree that [they] are seen as distinct and different—in happy ways—from the women of the world" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1979, pp. 103–4).

This is a joyous gospel!

My counselors and I look forward eagerly to serving. And we want to serve in a way that will help women everywhere contribute to the great forward movement of the Church. I know that in the strength of the Lord we can do all things required of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Sister Barbara W. Winder and Sister Elaine Jack.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," following which we shall be pleased to hear from Elders

Horacio A. Tenorio and Merlin R. Lybbert of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Horacio A. Tenorio

Heavenly Father's plan

Our Heavenly Father loves us dearly and watches over us in all our needs and cares, following us through life step by step.

He established the plan for us as His children to come to earth and to continue our progress which we began at His side. When we were with him, we enjoyed his teachings, his counsel, and even his reprimands, like children whose parents watch over and guide them carefully.

As his children, we attained a degree of knowledge wherein our Father decided that we needed another sphere and another means to continue progressing, exercising our free agency and making our own decisions beyond His presence.

But not having Him with us does not mean that He has left us alone. He is concerned about each of us during this probationary period. He provided us a Savior, a Redeemer, a Shepherd. He has also given us the opportunity of having a constant companion, the Holy Ghost, and the scriptures and teachings of living prophets.

Life's teachings and experiences

We are not alone. He attempts to teach us in all things. Many, many such teachings come to us from each and every creature in creation. A tiny ant teaches us about industriousness and hard work. A bee teaches us about organization and foresight. We learn additional lessons from flowers, plants, and all of nature. We only need to open up an en-

cyclopedia or a textbook and we will discover wonderful things about the great works of our Heavenly Father. All of these things will help us in one way or another to direct our lives along the proper path.

But the most important teachings, aside from the scriptures, we receive through our own lives and experiences. These are the most important because they affect us directly and they touch us personally. In fact, those which teach us the most are those which are the most difficult challenges or trials for us as individuals. This is when, if we are susceptible to the Spirit and have faith, we can see the hand of God reaching out personally to each of his children.

We learn from obstacles

Problems form an important part of our lives. They are placed in our path for us to overcome them, not to be overcome by them. We must master them, not let them master us. Every time we overcome a challenge, we grow in experience, in self-assuredness, and in faith.

In the 100-meter hurdles race, runners must jump over hurdles placed in their path. The hurdles are not there so that a runner will come to them and stop and, discouraged, go back to the starting line. They are not there to make him crash. The beauty and excitement of this race is to jump over the hurdles, to overcome the obstacles.

If we understand the importance of the obstacles in our individual lives, we begin to see them in a positive light as true challenges to overcome.

Young people on a mission learn this. I have seen many of them bear their testimonies as they leave their missions, thankful for "wonderful problems."

The purpose of challenges

Challenges are true opportunities to obtain blessings which are received by overcoming, through faith, and by discerning what the Spirit and the Savior want to teach us.

Many people complain or murmur when trials, illness, accidents, loss of employment, or death come. They say, "Why me? This isn't fair," or they become so depressed that they suffer breakdowns from which it is difficult to recover.

Another reason for our trials is taught in Doctrine and Covenants 29:39: "And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet."

Learning from hard trials

A short time ago, our family had the opportunity to be taught. It was a painful trial, but it became a sweet experience. Last December my wife and I were together with our three daughters. The oldest is married and lives in the state of Delaware. She came to visit us with her husband and three little children. The youngest of her children is David, fifteen months old, who is also the youngest of our four grandchildren. The days of their visit were beautiful and unforgettable. We enjoyed ourselves immensely as a family, and it was an opportunity to get to know David, whom we had only seen at birth. David is an extremely sweet child, the best I have ever known. He never cries, even when sick or in pain. He is independent but very loving—a special spirit.

Those days together came to an end, and my daughter's family returned home. Two days after they arrived, tragically

David had to be taken to the hospital, and four hours later he died.

My wife and I immediately left to be with our children at this difficult time. We flew all night, and it was painful for us to talk about what had happened. We spent long waking hours in thought and prayer. I didn't know how I could comfort our children. What could I say when I, myself, felt such deep pain? So I prayed a great deal, and a loving Father came to my aid. The answers came one by one at the appropriate time, fulfilling the Lord's promise: "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23).

We met our children, who were in deep mourning. They were suffering so intensely that their pain did not allow them to see the purposes and teachings. They are faithful members of the Church, but as young people they never expected anything so devastating.

My wife and I shared the answers that we had, and they, upon understanding and accepting them, began to receive further answers, additional teachings which brought peace to their hearts.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things.

"Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" (D&C 6:22–23).

The sense of pain and suffering diminished, leaving in its place sweet feelings from the Spirit.

I was amazed at the way our children went through the difficulty of the funeral with such calmness and sweetness. They showed great strength and even comforted other relatives and friends.

We can always rely on God's love

How was this wonderful change made possible?

Because we realize that God lives and, as our Father, he loves us. He

doesn't want us to suffer any harm. If David went away, it was because as a special spirit he had no need to remain longer in this life. We realize that David is needed in another place. It was a blessing to know him and to have him in our family. We have not lost him; we will be able to see him again. We should remember fondly the time that we spent with David. He taught us what it means to be pure and clean before God, and he is an example for all of us. We need to place our lives in proper perspective in order to be worthy to see him again. Because of him, we think more about life beyond the veil and have been taught to recognize what is truly important in this life and the

life to come—keeping our families united eternally.

So many blessings, so many teachings! We changed and grew during that time. How grateful we are to our Father in Heaven for this experience.

A few days after David left us, my daughter learned that she was pregnant again. So much love from our Father! Additional teachings. I testify that our teacher, our Shepherd, is Christ, our best friend, who clears up all our doubts. He heals our wounds and turns our pain into sweet experiences. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Merlin R. Lybbert

My dear brothers and sisters, there is a feeling of deep appreciation in my soul this afternoon as we worship together. On behalf of the members of the Church in Asia, where we are now serving, I extend their love to President Benson, to the other leaders that they have come to know and love, and to all of the members of the Church everywhere. It is a joy to serve among them.

I also express my love and appreciation to my family and my aging parents for their unswerving support.

How we gain eternal life

When I measure myself against the enormity of the work before us, an overwhelming sense of humility washes over me. I have come to know that the work of the salvation of mankind is beyond the capacity of any man. It is indeed the work of God.

One of the best-known parables of the Savior is the story we have come to know as the good Samaritan. As related by Luke, a certain lawyer tempted Jesus, saying, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25).

In New Testament times a lawyer was the "equivalent [of a] 'scribe,' . . .

who was by profession a student and teacher of the law, including the written law of the Pentateuch, and also 'the traditions of the elders'" (Bible Dictionary, s.v. *Lawyer*).

This learned man sought either to test the Lord concerning His knowledge of the law or to display his own. The Savior responded with a question: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26).

The scholar responded, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (10:27).

Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (10:28).

The answer to the inquiry was solicited from his own mouth through the questioning of the Lord, who then directed him to live in accordance with what he knew. However, the scholar was not satisfied with so simple a response. Luke records that the learned man, "willing to justify himself," asked a further question of the Lord, "Who is my neighbour?" (10:29). And Jesus answered by telling a story:

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among

thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee" (Luke 10:30-35).

Additional insight to the parable

Understanding of this parable is improved when we recall that the "work of ministering in the sanctuary was assigned to [the tribe of Levi]." The Levite's duty was to assist the priests in their religious services. Likewise, the essential responsibility of a priest was to serve as a "mediator between his people and God by representing them officially in worship and sacrifice" (Bible Dictionary, s.vv. *Levites* and *Priests*).

The people of Samaria consisted of a mixed population of Israelites and Gentiles. The Jews despised them. The priest and the Levite refused aid to the half-dead man who was in obvious need, and even distanced themselves from him by walking on the "other side." It was the despised Samaritan who had compassion on the wounded fellow. He tenderly bound up his wounds, administered soothing oil, disinfected his wounds, placed him upon his own beast and took him to an inn, and stayed with him overnight. He then paid the cost of his care and assured the host that whatever more was spent would be repaid.

The Savior then asked a further question of the scholar, "Which now of

these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" (Luke 10:36).

The lawyer was caught in his own cunning, but accurately answered, "He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (10:37).

This was the second time in this brief conversation the scholar of religious law was instructed by the Savior to live in accordance with his knowledge of the principles.

Our responsibilities to others

I presume that most of us have visualized this parable as requiring our aid to an injured person, even a stranger, who is in need because of an injury or sickness. The beauty of the parables of the Lord is that they have many applications, and thus their teaching value is unending. I would like to suggest an application of the principles taught in this parable to a current setting.

There are many of God's children who are wounded or sick in spirit. Many once enjoyed fellowship with the body of the Saints, but for one reason or another are now on the roadside. They are the less active among us. Generally, we know who they are and have association with them in various settings, but because they are not physically sick or injured, we too often play the part of the priest or the Levite and walk by "on the other side."

In this dramatic parable, Jesus contrasted the response of the two respected religionists with that of a despised citizen of Samaria. There is at least a scintilla of similarity here to an elders quorum president, a high priests group leader, a member of the bishopric, or a home teacher and to the less-active brother or sister who has fallen inactive by the wayside. Perhaps we do not despise them, but we sometimes ignore them or otherwise disregard them. Each of us can be a good Samaritan by dealing compassionately with these neglected brothers and sisters.

We can bind up their spiritual wounds by rendering needed service, pouring in the soothing oil of friendship and supplying the soul-healing balm of genuine brotherly and sisterly love. We can set them in our own automobiles and accompany them to our homes and places of worship, devote the necessary time and attention to warmly fellowship them. The good Samaritan spent the night with his wounded friend and stayed with him until satisfied that he was on his way to recovery. Similarly, we ought to become close enough to these less-active brothers and sisters to truly become their friends and support and sustain them while they spiritually heal.

Act out of love, not duty

This parable also teaches that a little sacrifice and investment of one's time and money may be necessary. Such healing care should not be given out of duty, but rendered out of a full heart. Indeed, even the lawyer seemed to catch the spirit of the Lord's teachings in the parable, because it was he who defined a neighbor as "he that shewed mercy" (Luke 10:37).

Most of us are acquainted with someone who is spiritually ill or wounded, lying on the roadside half dead, and who desperately needs the assistance of a good LDS brother or sister—that is, a *latter-day Samaritan*.

Our prophet has repeatedly reminded us that rescuing the less active is one of our greatest challenges of service.

I recount a simple parable, as told through an interpreter by a Sunday School president in Hong Kong:

"An enterprising turkey gathered the flock together and, following instructions and demonstrations, taught them how to fly. All afternoon they enjoyed soaring and flying and the thrill of seeing new vistas. After the meeting, all of the turkeys walked home."

It is not our understanding of the principles of the gospel that brings the blessings of heaven, but the living of them.

I pray that each of us will develop a receptive and understanding heart that will motivate us to seek out a less-active brother or sister and truly become a good latter-day Samaritan. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elders Horacio H. Tenorio and Merlin R. Lybbert of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder H. Burke Peterson of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder H. Burke Peterson

My brothers and sisters, I am mindful that there are many who are struggling with faith and testimony. Some have even laid aside celestial pursuits because of weariness in the battle. I pray that I might be guided in my efforts to help.

Build a sure foundation

Some thirty or forty years before the birth of the Savior, a wise father called

his sons together and gave them counsel. His name was Helaman. His sons were Nephi and Lehi. He said to them:

"And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, *that ye must build your foundation*; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down" (Helaman 5:12; italics added).

Simply stated, he told his sons if they would pursue the course and gain a testimony of the divinity of the Lord, Jesus Christ, there would be no test or trial come to them in life that they could not conquer.

As we pursue the building of this sure foundation, I am fearful that some of us may have lost sight of our divine responsibility to nurture each other in this process.

Prepare hearts for testimonies

It is a fact that at times we can force, coerce, or intimidate individuals into obedience. There are even times when we are somewhat successful in manipulating the human mind. We do not, however, have the capacity to force matters of the heart:

We cannot force love and respect and admiration.

We cannot force faith and testimony of truth.

Even though we cannot force those things that matter most, there are ways we can help one another. That is, *we can prepare hearts* to obtain a deep and abiding testimony that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.

This principle of first preparing hearts applies in a wide variety of personal relationships, such as between friends and neighbors and co-workers as well as husbands and wives and children. Let's look at some of the ways we can nurture a heart so that a testimony can take root and grow.

If your home is a home where family members are loved unconditionally, regardless of behavior, then your home will have a spirit of warmth that will prepare the heart to receive the testimony of truth. When children and teenagers are loved because of who they are and not for how they behave, only then can we begin to help make much-needed changes in behavior. For example, a teenager who feels accepted will be more likely to choose wholesome friends.

Look for the good in others

Now, you may think, "I would like to love my family and friends and neighbors unconditionally, but sometimes it is extremely difficult. How can I learn to feel that pure love?" Here are some guidelines:

First, look for the good in each person, and mention it in a sincere and consistent way. It is amazing how hearts can be softened, testimonies implanted, and relationships improved when we begin to give a daily portion of heartfelt appreciation. It has a marvelous effect on preparing the spirit. Even mentioning a little thing will have a positive effect. It usually isn't earth-shaking—just a simple act or attribute that will blossom and be multiplied if it is noticed. (By the way, it may take you all day to find something, but it is there.)

One day after school, one of our daughters came into a teenage son's room. It looked as if a big wind had blown through. He was sitting in the midst of it all. She felt the anger rising within, but remembered her resolution to look for the good. Searching desperately, her eye finally looked upward. "Your ceiling's really clean, Adam!" She was able to say quite honestly. He laughed; he got the message, and he cleaned up the room.

When marriage partners practice looking beyond the faults and failings of each other and peer into the deeper recesses of the heart, then we find a marvelous strengthening of marriage relationships.

Hold back judgments and criticism

Another way of preparing the heart of someone is to create an atmosphere where judging is held in reserve until anger has subsided, until the hurt has dissipated, until all sides of an issue have been explored. Criticism is a *destroyer* of self-worth and esteem. It is demeaning and cutting.

Some husbands expect perfection, and when this is not attained, their expressions turn to criticism. One wife

wrote, "Life can be such a lonely struggle for a woman in this situation—[when there is] one who reminds her continually of her failings, letting her know she is not living up to his expectations. How can a woman feel she'll ever become what our Heavenly Father expects of her when, no matter how hard she tries, she never pleases her husband?"

It is heartbreaking how criticism can wound children and diminish their self-esteem. In one family, home evenings were discontinued because members of the family became discouraged by the contention. The father, who may have been conscientious about his responsibility to help his family improve, unwisely used most of the time to find fault with family members. Even though he made some effort to praise the children, it was not enough to offset his criticism.

A feeling of censure and dislike for her roommate welled within a young college student's heart. When she made the effort to look a little further, she came to realize that the annoying habits practiced by her roommate were actually appropriate expressions of a different cultural heritage.

A kind priesthood bearer—or any individual in a position to influence another—realizes that the power to influence others for good comes through love and praise and patience. In relationships where there is forgetting and forgiving, joy and trust are nurtured.

Listen to and pray for each other

As you develop your capacity to love unconditionally, remember that listening is a part of showing love. If your home is a home where children are listened to, even when what they say doesn't seem important or you don't feel you have time, then you are preparing hearts. Can we listen openly to a shocking experience without going into a state of shock ourselves, or without an immediate verbal overreaction? We all know there is a time to talk and a time to listen. To listen with patience to a young person's reasons for getting home late will

bring you undying gratitude. Remember, you can listen to understand, not necessarily to agree. Ofttimes we do our best teaching when we listen. Husband-and-wife relationships are nourished and strengthened as we listen to each other more. Hearts are softened.

Finally, love is spoken in prayer. In your home, do children hear their parents pray for them in specific ways? For instance, when Kami is sick, she can hear the family pray she will have the Lord's healing influence. When Cameron needs a job, it will help him to hear the prayers of his family express confidence in him. If in your home children hear their parents pray for each other daily, then your home is a faith-building home. In it, hearts can be changed, and those who live there may become the children of Christ.

Covenant to do good continually

Following the marvelous words of instruction by King Benjamin, as they are recorded in the first few chapters of Mosiah, we learn that "he sent among them, desiring to know of his people, if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them" (Mosiah 5:1). At the conclusion of this marvelous two days of general conference, I would hope, if we were asked, our response to such a question would be as was theirs in that day, for they said:

"Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. . . .

"And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments" (Mosiah 5:2, 5).

And King Benjamin said unto them: "And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath

spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed *through faith on his name*; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

"And under this head ye are made free. . . . I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ . . . that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives" (Mosiah 5:7-8; italics added).

To this, brothers and sisters, I add my testimony of the divinity of the Lord

Jesus Christ. He is our Savior, and he is our Redeemer, and he lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elder H. Burke Peterson of the Seventy.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder James E. Faust

In the closing moments of this conference, I come to this pulpit to speak about gratitude as an expression of faith and as a saving principle. The Lord has said, "And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21). It is clear to me from this scripture that to "thank the Lord thy God in all things" (D&C 59:7) is more than a social courtesy; it is a binding commandment.

Gratitude for simple things

One of the advantages of having lived a long time is that you can often remember when you had it worse. I am grateful to have lived long enough to have known some of the blessings of adversity. My memory goes back to the Great Depression, when we had certain values burned into our souls. One of these values was gratitude for that which we had because we had so little. The Great Depression in the United States in the early thirties was a terrible schoolmaster. We had to learn provident living in order to survive. Rather than create in us a spirit of envy or anger for what we did not have, it developed in many a spirit of gratitude for the meager, simple things with which we were

blessed, like hot, homemade bread and oatmeal cereal and many other things.

As another example, I remember my beloved grandmother Mary Caroline Roper Finlinson making homemade soap on the farm. Her recipe for homemade soap included rendered animal fat, a small portion of lye as a cleansing agent, and wood ashes as an abrasive. The soap had a very pungent aroma and was almost as hard as a brick. There was no money to buy soft, sweet-smelling soap. On the farm, there were many dusty, sweat-laden clothes to be washed and many bodies that needed desperately a Saturday night bath. If you had to bathe with that homemade soap, you could become wonderfully clean, but you smelled worse after bathing than before. Since I use soap more now than I did as a child, I have developed a daily appreciation for mild, sweet-scented soap.

One of the evils of our time is taking for granted so many of the things we enjoy. This was spoken of by the Lord: "For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift?" (D&C 88:33). The Apostle Paul described our day to Timothy when he wrote that in the last days "men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" (2 Timothy 3:2). These sins are fellow travelers, and ingratitude makes one susceptible to all of them.

The grateful Samaritan

The story of the thankful Samaritan has great meaning. As the Savior went through Samaria and Galilee, "he entered into a certain village, [and] there met him ten men that were lepers" and who "lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Jesus told them to go show themselves unto the priest.

"And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.

"And fell down . . . at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

"And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:12-19).

Leprosy was so loathsome a disease that those afflicted were not permitted under the law to come close to Jesus. Those suffering from this terrible disease were required to agonize together, sharing their common misery (see Leviticus 13:45-46). Their forlorn cry, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" must have touched the Savior's heart. When they were healed and when they had received priestly approval that they were clean and acceptable in society, they must have been overcome with joy and amazement. Having received so great a miracle, they seemed completely satisfied. But they forgot their benefactor. It is difficult to understand why they were so lacking in gratitude. Such ingratitude is self-centered. It is a form of pride. What is the significance of the fact that the one who returned to give thanks was a Samaritan? As in the story of the good Samaritan, the point seems to be that those of lesser social or economic status often rise to a greater duty and nobility.

Gratitude for gospel blessings

In addition to personal gratitude as a

saving principle, I should like to express a feeling for the gratitude we ought to have for the many blessings we enjoy.

Those of you who have joined the Church in this generation have acquired fellowship with a people, many of whom have a great heritage of great suffering and sacrifice. Such sacrifice becomes your heritage also, for it is the inheritance of a people who have faults and imperfections but have a great nobility of purpose. That purpose is to help all mankind come to a sweet, peaceful understanding about who they are, and to foster a love for their fellowmen and a determination to keep the commandments of God. This is the gospel's holy call. It is the essence of our worship.

Without question, we need to be informed of the happenings of the world. But modern communication brings into our homes a drowning cascade of the violence and misery of the worldwide human race. There comes a time when we need to find some peaceful spiritual renewal.

I acknowledge with great gratitude the peace and contentment we can find for ourselves in the spiritual cocoons of our homes, our sacrament meetings, and our holy temples. In these peaceful environments, our souls are rested. We have the feeling of having come home.

The gratitude of a king

Some time ago, we were in the kingdom of Tonga. A family home evening, with music and spoken word, was arranged by President Muti in his stake center. The home evening was in honor of his majesty King Tupou the Fourth, the reigning monarch of Tonga. The king, his daughter, and granddaughters graciously attended, as did many of the nobles and diplomatic representatives in Tonga. Our members put on a superb program of song and verse. One of the king's granddaughters sang a little solo entitled "How Much I Love My Grandfather." Elder John Sonnenberg and I were invited to respond briefly, which we were pleased to do.

After the program was over, the king ignored the usual royal protocol and came over to graciously greet us and our wives as an expression of appreciation for the performance of his subjects who are members of the Church. Social protocol is observed in many places, but the expression of kindness is universally appropriate.

Gratitude leads to greatness

It seems as though there is a tug-of-war between opposing character traits that leaves no voids in our souls. As gratitude is absent or disappears, rebellion often enters and fills the vacuum. I do not speak of rebellion against civil oppression. I refer to rebellion against moral cleanliness, beauty, decency, honesty, reverence, and respect for parental authority.

A grateful heart is a beginning of greatness. It is an expression of humility. It is a foundation for the development of such virtues as prayer, faith, courage, contentment, happiness, love, and well-being.

But there is a truism associated with all types of human strength: "Use it or lose it." When not used, muscles weaken, skills deteriorate, and faith disappears. President Thomas S. Monson stated: "Think to thank. In these three words are the finest capsule course for a happy marriage, a formula for enduring friendship, and a pattern for personal happiness" (*Pathways to Perfection* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1973], p. 254). Said the Lord, "And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more" (D&C 78:19).

Caring for little children

I am grateful for people on the earth who love and appreciate little children. Last year I found myself late at night on an airplane bulging with passengers going north from Mexico City to Culiacan. The seats in the plane were close together, and every seat was taken, mostly

by the gracious people of Mexico. Everywhere inside the plane there were packages and carry-on luggage of all sizes.

A young woman came down the aisle with four small children, the oldest of which appeared to be about four and the youngest a newborn. She was also trying to manage a diaper bag and a stroller and some bags. The children were tired, crying, and fussing. As she found her seat in the airplane, the passengers around her, both men and women, literally sprang to her aid. Soon the children were being lovingly and tenderly comforted and cared for by the passengers. They were passed from one passenger to another all over the airplane.

The result was an airplane full of baby-sitters. The children settled down in the caring arms of those who cradled them and, before long, went to sleep. Most remarkable was that a few men who were obviously fathers and grandfathers tenderly cradled and caressed the newborn child without any false, macho pride. The mother was freed from the care of her children most of the flight.

The only thing that I felt bad about was that no one passed the baby to me! I relearned that appreciation for and thoughtfulness and kindness to little children are an expression of the Savior's love for them.

Gratitude for a pioneer heritage

How can we pay our debt of gratitude for the heritage of faith demonstrated by pioneers in many lands across the earth who struggled and sacrificed so that the gospel might take root? How is thankfulness expressed for the intrepid handcart pioneers who, by their own brute strength, pulled their meager belongings in handcarts across the scorching plains and through the snows of the high mountain passes to escape persecution and find peaceful worship in these valleys? How can the debt of gratitude possibly be paid by the descendants of the Martin and the Willie and the other handcart companies for the faith of their forebears?

One of these intrepid souls was Emma Batchelor, a young English girl traveling without family. She started out with the Willie handcart company, but by the time they reached Fort Laramie, they were ordered to lighten their loads. Emma was directed to leave the copper kettle in which she carried all of her belongings.

She refused to do this and set it by the side of the road and sat down on it. She knew that the Martin company was only a few days behind. She had been privileged to start with the Willie company, and when the Martin company caught up, she joined the Paul Gourley family.

A young son wrote many years later: "Here we were joined by Sister Emma Batchelor. We were glad to have her because she was young and strong and meant more flour for our mess." It was here that Sister Gourley gave birth to a child, and Emma acted as the midwife and loaded the mother and the child in the cart for two days, which Emma helped pull.

Those who died in the Martin company were mercifully relieved of the suffering of others with frozen feet, ears, noses, or fingers—which maimed them for the rest of their lives. Emma, age twenty-one, however, was a fortunate one. She came through the ordeal whole.

A year later, she met Brigham Young, who was surprised that she was not maimed, and she told him, "Brother Brigham, I had no one to care for me or to look out for me, so I decided I must look out for myself. I was the one who called out when Brother Savage warned us [not to go]. I was at fault in that, but I tried to make up for it. I pulled my share at the cart every day. When we came to a stream, I stopped and took off my shoes and stockings and outer skirt and put them on top of the cart. Then, after I got the cart across, I came back and carried little Paul over on my back. Then I sat down and scrubbed my feet hard with my woolen neckerchief and put on dry shoes and stockings."

The descendants of these pioneers can partially settle the account by being

true to the cause for which their ancestors suffered so much to be part of.

As with all commandments, gratitude is a description of a successful mode of living. The thankful heart opens our eyes to a multitude of blessings that continually surround us. President J. Reuben Clark said, "Hold fast to the blessings which God has provided for you. Yours is not the task to gain them, they are here; yours is the part of cherishing them" (*Church News*, 14 June 1969, p. 2). As we come to the close of this great conference, I hope that we may cultivate grateful hearts so that we may cherish the multitude of blessings that God has so graciously bestowed. May we openly express such gratitude to our Heavenly Father and our fellowmen, I pray in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Before hearing the closing remarks of President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, Primary children's choir, combined institute men's choir, and the Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music throughout this conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference, the Relief Society, the doctors and Church health unit nurses who have been on hand to render service, the ushers and interpreters, and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square where much of the lawn space has been utilized during each session.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference. We are grateful for the owners and the operators of the many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems who have given time and made facilities available

to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Come, Follow Me."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Gerald E. Melchin of the Seventy, and the conference will stand adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren and sisters, traditionally the President of the Church, at the close of the conference, has offered words of benediction. President Benson, who is now in his ninety-first year, feels that he could not stand and address us, but I wish to say that we have been greatly uplifted by his very presence, with his smile and the wave of a hand as an expression of love.

Words from President Benson

May I, in conclusion, read some of the words he has said in the past on this occasion and from this pulpit.

"I commend my Brethren . . . for the excellent addresses they have given. My humble prayer is that all of us will follow the counsel and instruction we have received.

"As we have felt the Spirit and made new and sacred resolves, may we now have the courage and fortitude to carry out those resolves" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 97; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 84).

"We should like to reaffirm to all the world that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is led by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We believe in Christ. We accept and affirm His teachings as revealed truths from God. We know Him to be the literal Son of God. We love Him as our resurrected Lord and Savior.

"We believe there is 'none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

"So we invite all men, as the Book of Mormon declares, to 'Come unto Christ, and be [redeemed] in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your [heart], mind and

strength' (Moroni 10:32)" (*Ensign*, Dec. 1985, p. 5).

The testimony of the prophet

"I bear witness to you that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world—the very Son of God.

"He was *born* the babe of Bethlehem.

"He *lived* and ministered among men.

"He was *crucified* on Calvary.

"His friends *deserted* Him.

"His closest associates did not fully *understand* his mission, and they *doubted*. One of the most trusted *denied* knowing Him. . . .

"He asked *forgiveness* for His tormentors and then willingly gave up his life.

"His body was *laid* in a borrowed tomb.

"An immense stone was placed over the opening.

"In the minds of his stunned followers over and over echoed some of his last words, ' . . . be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' [John 16:33]" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, p. 119).

Thoughts of love and blessing

Last Thursday, in a meeting in the temple of all of the General Authorities, where we bore testimonies one to another and partook of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, President Benson stood before his brethren and said with conviction and emotion, "I love you, my brethren. I bless you in your great ministry."

Every man there was deeply touched as he felt of the spirit of our great leader. As we close this conference, I am confi-

dent he would have me say to each of you in his behalf, "I love you, my brethren and sisters. I bless you in the great work which you are doing in living the gospel of Jesus Christ and in carrying out His teachings."

To these words of his I add my own testimony that God our Eternal Father lives; that Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father born in the flesh, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind, who offered His life on Calvary's cross in atonement for the sins of all mankind; that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God; and that every man who has succeeded him in the office of the Presi-

dency of this Church has been a living prophet—including Ezra Taft Benson, whom we love and for whom we pray as the Lord's anointed in our day and time. Of these things I testify and leave my blessings. May God be with you and bless you as you travel to your homes, and may His guiding light be the lodestar of your lives, I humbly ask, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Come, Follow Me."

Elder Gerald E. Melchin offered the benediction.

Summary of Conference Music

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, furnished the choral numbers for the Saturday morning session of the conference.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Primary children's choir from the Granger Utah Region, conducted by Glenda C. Nordfelt.

At the general priesthood session, music was furnished by a combined men's choir from the Ephraim, Orem, Salt Lake, Salt Lake Community College, Ogden, and Logan institutes, conducted by Douglas Brenchley.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and Sunday afternoon sessions.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by Robert Cundick, John Longhurst, and Clay Christiansen, Tabernacle organists.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the conference

INDEX

A

Asay, Elder Carlos E.	78
A giant leap for mankind; What constitutes greatness; The simplicity of Joseph Smith; The truths of the First Vision; The importance of the First Vision	
Ashton, Elder Marvin J.	82
Let the world see our good works; Ammon boasts of God; Grateful but not proud; Success comes through the Lord; Consideration for others; We never accomplish things alone; Humility should be our foundation; "Tell no man"; Everything comes from God	
Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of General	25
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell	4
Small and simple things shape lives; The essentials of the gospel; The simplicity of the Spirit; The simplicity of the Lord's work; The simplicity of the sacrament; A box of macaroni; Simple things can also destroy; Small acts can strengthen others; Pay attention to the small things	

C

Church Audit Committee Report for 1989	26
Church Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of	25
Church Statistical Report for 1989	27
Condie, Elder Spencer J.	33
Visions from the mountaintops; Lessons from the kings of Israel; Hezekiah led Israel righteously; The leadership of the prophets; The leadership example of Christ	
Conference Music, Summary of	113
Cuthbert, Elder Derek A.	12
How to become more spiritual; Establish righteous values; Overcome and repent from sin; Show love and gratitude; Perform Christlike acts; Know and follow the Savior; Bear one another's burdens	
Cutler, Elder Clinton L.	56
Memories from childhood; The great joy of the Lord's word	

F

Faust, Elder James E.	108
Gratitude for simple things; The grateful Samaritan; Gratitude for gospel blessings; The gratitude of a king; Gratitude leads to greatness; Caring for little children; Gratitude for a pioneer heritage	
Fifth Session	90
First Day, Afternoon Session	24
First Day, Morning Session	2
First Session	2
Fourth Session	70

G

General Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of	25
General Authorities Present	1
General Priesthood Session	46

H

Haight, Elder David B.	27
The growth of God's work; God's hand in Eastern Europe; God's works for His people; We need divine direction; God's work to restore the gospel; Religious freedom and opportunities; Being connected to inward power; Preparing nations to accept truth	
Hales, Bishop Robert D.	51
We prepare now to live with God; "Return with Honor"; Prepare with faith and obedience; Knowledge and practice beforehand; Those who do not prepare; The fire-warning lights in life; Choosing and being true friends; Aaronic Priesthood responsibilities; The covenants of the sacrament; We must do all the Father asks; Obedience brings great blessings	
Hammond, Elder F. Melvin	36
The understanding of young people; The first Easter morning; Concentrate on life, not death	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Fifth Session)	112
Words from President Benson; The testimony of the prophet; Thoughts of love and blessing	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Fourth Session)	85
We all need mercy; Rich men and the oppressed; Examples and teachings about mercy; Ending wars with mercy; Society benefits from mercy; Show more kindness to others; Let mercy be taught in our homes; Our responsibility is to others; Those who show mercy obtain mercy	

- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Priesthood Session)**..... 65
 A credit card with the Lord; Eligibility for a temple recommend; "Keep His house holy!"; The great importance of worthiness; Temple concerns things of eternity; Tithing and the Word of Wisdom; Sustaining Church leaders; Obeying the laws of the land; Our responsibilities to family; A recommend certifies worthiness; Keep sacred things sacred
- Hunter, President Howard W.** 75
 God requires personal commitment; The Lord is the standard; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; Living with integrity and faith; President Kimball's example; Commitment to home and family
- J**
- Jack, President Elaine L.** 100
 Gratitude for others; Testimony
- Jeppsen, Elder Malcolm S.** 57
 The example of Sneaky; Friends and the Word of Wisdom; The Lord knows what is best for us; The heavy price of little things; The value of a true friend; Help your friends live righteously; True friends stand by each other; The Lord is our best friend
- Johnson, Elder Kenneth**..... 55
 The invitations in our lives; Invitations to come unto Christ
- L**
- Lindsay, Elder Richard P.** 14
 Christlike love and service; A strength for missionaries; Love and faith in adversity; We meet each other's needs; Lifelong acts of charity
- Lybbert, Elder Merlin R.** 103
 How we gain eternal life; Additional insight to the parable; Our responsibilities to others; Act out of love, not duty
- M**
- Maxwell, Elder Neal A.** 42
 We must endure our mortal tests; God is long-suffering with us; As we endure, we act for ourselves; Endurance requires many things; Our love for others who endure; Patience shows submission to God; Experience brings spirituality; The benefits of endurance; Develop qualities through endurance; The blessings of eternal life; Jesus shows us the way; Endurance brings peace
- Monson, President Thomas S. (First Session)** 3
 Changes since last conference; Serving the needs of the world; Counsel to the youth of the Church; Prayer and temple attendance; We should live in brotherhood; We should follow the Savior

Monson, President Thomas S. (Fourth Session)	70
The greatest of the kingdom; The many faces of child abuse; Children are precious to the Lord; We can bless the lives of children; How children bless our lives; Blessing the Nephite children; Thomas Michael Wilson	
Monson, President Thomas S. (Priesthood Session)	60
"Am I my brother's keeper?"; Joseph was his brothers' keeper; Other brother's keepers; The Martin Handcart Company; The simple ways we care for others; The many riches we can share; Strangers can also be brothers; Helping others requires patience	
Music, Summary of Conference	113
N	
Nelson, Elder Russell M.	17
Saints; Latter-day; Jesus Christ; The Church	
O	
Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	90
The occupation of peace; Peace is the opposite of war; Peace comes from the Lord; War is rooted in wickedness; "All are alike unto God"; We are still far from peace; Peace comes through righteousness; Peace comes from loving others; Each person can promote peace; An effort of reconciliation; Missionaries work for peace	
Obituaries	27
P	
Packer, Elder Boyd K.	47
The new editions of the scriptures; Translation of the scriptures; Audiotapes of the scriptures; The LDSView computer software; Curriculum keyed to the scriptures; The teacher development program; The Old Testament; The New Testament; The Doctrine and Covenants and Church history; The Book of Mormon; Church colleges and universities	
Perry, Elder L. Tom	21
Freedom is a spiritual need; The Lord tells us how to be free; The Israelites built a tabernacle; Ways Israel kept close to God; We must be examples of freedom; Freedom comes from obeying laws; We should create our own traditions	
Petersen, Elder H. Burke	105
Build a sure foundation; Prepare hearts for testimonies; Look for the good in others; Hold back judgments and criticism; Listen to and pray for each other; Covenant to do good continually	

Pinegar, Elder Rex D.	8
A “Welcome home” celebration; The stronghold of the family; Our lives center around the home; Surviving the hurricane; We create homes through love; Family life comes first; Creating gospel-centered homes; Creating family togetherness; Gratitude for family members; The bulwark of family unity; Our family should be our treasure	
Priesthood Session, General	46
R	
Ringger, Elder Hans B.	31
What shall we do?; Act by the gospel of Jesus Christ; Love is the essence of our lives; No compromise in dedication; We should give of our wealth; Let us decide to serve now; We should love and care for others	
S	
Scott, Elder Richard G.	95
Finding the life you want; Change requires honesty; Listen to the Lord, not Satan; Be faithful and unselfish; Unravel knots step by step; Find out about the Lord’s plan; Decide now to change; Stay firm to your commitment	
Second Day, Afternoon Session	90
Second Day, Morning Session	70
Second Session	24
Summary of Conference Music	113
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	25
T	
Tenorio, Elder Horacio A.	101
Heavenly Father’s plan; Life’s teachings and experiences; We learn from obstacles; The purpose of challenges; Learning from hard trials; We can always rely on God’s love	
Third Session	46
W	
Winder, Sister Barbara W.	98
A time to gather the harvest; The harvest of work accomplished; Gratitude for experiences; Time for new challenges	
Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	38
A definition of integrity; How much do we value our integrity?; The value of Joseph’s integrity; The integrity of great leaders; Those with integrity are saved; Deal righteously with neighbors; Integrity overcomes selfishness; Service is an act of integrity; The rewards of integrity	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixtieth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 6 and 7, 1990

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixtieth
Semiannual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
October 6 and 7, 1990

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Copyright © 1991 Corporation of the President
of
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

All Rights Reserved
Printed in the United States of America

THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTIETH SEMIANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 160th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 1990, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 6 and 7, 1990. The general priesthood session was held in the Tabernacle on Saturday, October 6, 1990, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of some of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

The First Presidency: ¹Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

The Presidency of the Seventy: Dean L. Larsen, Marion D. Hanks,

Robert L. Backman, James M. Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, and Carlos E. Asay

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, Joe J. Christensen, Gene R. Cook,¹ Jacob de Jager, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goaslind, John H. Groberg, W. Eugene Hansen, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, and Robert E. Wells

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Carlos H. Amado, H. Verlan Andersen, Eduardo Ayala, Benjamin B. Banks, Monte J. Brough, Waldo P. Call, Helio da Rocha Camargo, George I. Cannon, Albert Choules, Jr., Spencer J. Condie, LeGrand R. Curtis,¹ Robert K. Dellenbach, Lloyd P. George, Francis M. Gibbons, F. Melvin Hammond, George R. Hill III, Harold G. Hillam, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, John R. Lasater, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, Douglas J. Martin, Helvécio Martins, Gerald E. Melchin, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, L. Aldin Porter, Glen L. Rudd, Gardner H. Russell, Robert E. Sackley, Douglas H. Smith, Lynn A. Sorensen, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, Henry B. Eyring, and Glenn L. Pace

¹President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Clinton L. Cutler were excused due to illness.

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included Regional Representatives, presidents of stakes and their counselors, presidents of temples, bish-

ops of wards, and presidencies and members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood quorums.

Many general, stake, and ward auxiliary officers also attended.

FIRST DAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 1990, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "The Morning Breaks" without announcement. President Hinckley then made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 160th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, continues to recover from recent surgery but will be unable to attend the sessions of this conference. He will enjoy them by means of television in his room in the hospital. He has asked me to express his gratitude to the members of the Church worldwide for your faith and prayers in his behalf.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled

in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Russell M. Nelson, Jacob de Jager, and W. Eugene Hansen are seated on the stand. We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except President Benson and Elders Derek A. Cuthbert and Clinton L. Cutler, who are excused because of illness. We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks." They will now favor us with "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Robert L. Backman, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Robert L. Backman offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren and sisters, it has been customary for the President of the Church to speak at the opening of the conference. President Benson has asked that I say a few words on his behalf. In doing so, I quote his own language.

This work will go forward

Said he: "I love this great work, the greatest work in all the world. I love my brethren and sisters wherever you may reside, and I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you."

"If you will follow the admonitions of the Lord and heed the counsel of His chosen servants in their callings as prophets, seers, and revelators, I promise you that love at home and obedience to parents will increase; faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel and they will gain power and strength to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them. Each of our homes may veritably become a little heaven on earth" ("Foundations for Family Solidarity," *Children's Friend*, Apr. 1957, p. 26).

"With all my soul I testify that this work will go forward till every land and people have had opportunity to accept our message. Barriers will come down for us to accomplish this mission, and some of us will see this done. Our Heav-

enly Father will cause conditions in the world to change so that His gospel can penetrate every border" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 174).

"As we live the commandments of God, we can look forward with joyful anticipation to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and know that through our efforts we are worthy, with our loved ones, to dwell in his presence for all eternity. Surely nothing is too hard to gain this great goal. We cannot let down for a moment. We must prove, every day of our lives, that we are willing to do the will of the Lord—to spread the restored gospel, to bear testimony to the world, to share the gospel with others" (in Conference Report, Tokyo Japan Area Conference 1975, p. 57).

"God bless you, my beloved brethren and sisters, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen."

Such are the words of our beloved leader Ezra Taft Benson. I am confident that I speak for every member of the Church within the sound of my voice when I say to him, "Our dear friend and leader, our President and prophet, we love you. May the blessings of the Lord rest upon you to give you strength according to your need."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Ordinance work for the dead

One hundred and fifty years ago this week, the Lord revealed to His prophet Joseph Smith sublime doctrine concerning the sacred ordinance of baptism. That light came when other Christian churches taught that death irrevocably, eternally, determined the destiny of the soul. The baptized were rewarded with endless joy. All others faced eternal torment, without hope

of redemption. The Lord's revelation that baptism could be performed vicariously for the dead, through proper priesthood authority, preserved the justice of His statement, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Vicarious baptism also mercifully provides this ordinance for all worthy deceased who have not received it through proper priesthood authority.

This glorious doctrine is another witness of the all-encompassing nature of the atonement of Jesus Christ. He has made salvation available to every repentant soul. His was a vicarious atonement that conquered death. He permits the worthy deceased to receive all ordinances of salvation vicariously.

In that epistle, written one hundred and fifty years ago, Joseph Smith stated: "The Saints have the privilege of being baptized for . . . their relatives who are dead . . . who have received the Gospel in the spirit, through . . . those who have been commissioned to preach to them. . . . Those saints who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, *do it at the peril of their own salvation*" (*History of the Church*, 4:231, 426; italics added).

The prophet Elijah committed the keys for vicarious work to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 110:13-16) to fulfill the Lord's promise that "he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers" (D&C 2:2).

Through further revelation to Joseph Smith and subsequent prophets, there has come an understanding of and provision for temple work and the family history effort that supports it. Every prophet since Joseph Smith has emphasized the imperative need to provide all ordinances for ourselves and our deceased ancestors.

This inspired counsel can be simply summarized:

We are to—

- Turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to their fathers.
- Insure that ordinances are performed for ourselves and our ancestors.
- Seal individuals into eternal family relationships.

Simplified procedures and regulations

Many members of the Church recognize the vital importance of these

commandments but feel overwhelmed at the task of identifying their own ancestors. To overcome this feeling, the Church has greatly simplified finding our ancestors and clearing their names for temple work. For example, with the generous cooperation of the original record holders, we have gathered information on approximately two billion of the estimated seven billion individuals for whom records are thought to exist. That resource increases by many millions of names each year.

Also, fifteen hundred family history centers operate worldwide to permit access to our vast record resources. You will find them staffed with sensitive, understanding volunteers who want to help. Through research guides, telefax, and correspondence, these centers are fortified by the impressive capabilities of the Salt Lake City Family History Library.

Modern technology has greatly simplified the prior complex rules and regulations for this work. These streamlined steps are clearly explained in the pamphlet *Come unto Christ through Temple Ordinances and Covenants*. It is available in the principal languages from priesthood leaders throughout the world. This booklet provides a summary of the doctrinal basis for family history and temple service.

Also, where they have been called, ward or branch family history consultants are available to help you succeed.

Computer resources

Many brilliant minds and sensitive hearts have harnessed advanced technology to provide personal computer helps to simplify family history work. Under the descriptive title of **Family Search**,™ these powerful computer-aided resources are now available in family history centers in the United States and Canada. (Request them if they are not there. They are within policy.) In due course, these resources will be made available elsewhere in the world.

FamilySearch provides members easy access to the Church's central genealogy computer files. It greatly simplifies research and enables members to more efficiently find information in the Church's vast storehouse of microfilmed records. The computer provides direct, rapid search of a large compilation of valuable information on compact discs without time or error of searching traditional microfilm or microfiche. **FamilySearch** provides these five specific types of helps that are as easy to use as a telephone:

Ancestral File™ is a computer resource of seven million names linked into family relationships. This resource is the heart of our effort to collect the genealogy of mankind and make that information readily available to others, to simplify their family history research, and permanently preserve family relationships.

Ancestral File comprises the "four generation" submittals from members and friends. These data have been carefully matched and coupled one with another, providing a powerfully rich source of family-linked information that simplifies research and reduces duplication. It contains names and addresses, enabling coordination of research with other submitters. Means now exist that permit you or family organizations to enter all of your family-linked information for permanent preservation and use by others.

Recently a friend of the Church, tenderly holding a five-inch-high stack of information, said with obvious gratitude, "The Church placed my life's work in a computer where it will be permanently recorded and available for others to use." That spirit is spreading throughout the world, where friends who wish to show their gratitude for using Church resources are now generously donating their laboriously compiled family history information to share with others.

Another help is the **Family History Library Catalog™**. It contains the

description of virtually every family history record of the Church, permitting a rapid, automatic, precise name or locality search of the detailed catalog descriptions.

The automated **International Genealogical Index™** replaces 10,000 microfiche, providing computer research of data on 147 million deceased individuals and allowing limited linking of family members.

Shortly, an automated 39-million-name **Social Security Death Index** will be distributed.

Within two or three years, other organized data will be readily available on hundreds of millions of deceased individuals. (For data privacy reasons, we do not provide computerized data on living persons.)

For example, a large group of members is organizing the 50-million-name 1880 U.S. Census. Five thousand nonmembers and seventy-seven missionaries are organizing the 27-million-name English 1881 Census. A 5-million-name record of Australian births, marriages, and deaths from 1788 to 1888 is near completion. These helps will permit automatic nationwide search for an ancestor without specifying locality.

Yet another help, the **Personal Ancestral File™**, is a powerful, inexpensive, easy-to-use resource available for home use that helps organize, analyze, and print your family history. It reports what ordinance work is lacking and allows electronic sharing of data.

But for me, the most thrilling resource will eliminate the delay in clearing names for temple work. Beginning next fall, you will be able to clear ancestors' names for temple ordinances in your own meetinghouse yourself, without the need to request headquarters approval. When you verify that no previous ordinance has been performed, you can go immediately to the temple to perform these ordinances.

Yes, the Lord is accelerating His work.

Loving ancestors through temple work

It was hard to get excited about genealogy work, with its many rules and regulations about commas, periods, and capitalization. The new family history service is quite another matter. It deals with loving, caring, feeling ancestors beyond the veil.

Now, Richard Talbot, John Dunkerson, and Abraham Salee are not just names on a slip of paper for me to receive their temple ordinances. These are ancestors I love through temple work. They, in turn, have influenced my life. I find traits displayed in their purposeful lives woven into the fabric of my own character. Begin this work, and you will know why the Lord said, "The hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers" (D&C 2:2). Learn why this glorious doctrine has been restored to the earth.

Once I listened as a humble sister, blind except for a small window of vision in one eye, bore witness of deeply spiritual experiences she enjoyed with her husband identifying individuals for temple work. She explained that internal bleeding had recently taken the last vestige of sight. Her testimony was sweet, her prayer that she might see enough to serve. Miraculously she was given even greater sight.

One choice source on my ancestors was prepared by a remarkable woman in 1888. She labored without any doctrinal understanding or the abundant resources we have. Following impressions of the heart, her persistence and extensive correspondence produced a 16,000-name lineage-linked treasury of information about our Talbot family. My mother obtained this record. A descendant, Cathy Frost, with two preschool children and expecting another, is computerizing those names. My wife, Jeanene, and I will personally clear them for temple work using the simplified helps I've described today. Our family will go to the temple for these ancestors.

The Lord will bless your efforts

At present you may find it difficult to go to the temple personally, but you can submit ancestors' names for temple work. You may live where resources are very limited. Begin with ancestors that are closest to you. Search beyond your surname, following all lines of ancestry. Following the simple guidelines, prepare requests for temple work. Resolve to bless the lives of those who are dependent upon you—and in so doing, bless your own life profoundly.

I don't need to tell you the details of where to go and who to see. When you determine you are going to succeed, you will find a way. You will discover those who can help you. I promise you the Lord will bless you in your efforts, for this is His work, and He will guide your prayerful efforts to bring the ordinances and covenants to your ancestors.

I have tasted enough of the fruits of this sublime work to know that the keys Elijah restored to Joseph Smith permit our hearts to be bound and each of us linked to those of our ancestors who are waiting for our help. Through our efforts in holy temples here on earth using the authority delegated by the Savior, our progenitors receive the saving ordinances that allow them to enjoy eternal happiness.

A monumental effort of cooperation

In the past, motivated by a deep conviction of the sanctity of the work, individuals have valiantly faced a challenge that seemed like singlehandedly endeavoring to harvest all the grain in Nebraska. Now, many mighty combines are at work. *Together we will accomplish the work.*

How fitting that for the 150th anniversary of the declaration by Joseph Smith of vicarious work for the dead, the Brethren have announced greatly simplified means to identify ancestors and permit temple ordinances to be performed for them.

I testify that the spirit of Elijah is touching the hearts of many of Father's children throughout the world, causing the work for the dead to accelerate at an unprecedented pace.

But what about you? Have you prayed about your own ancestors' work? Set aside those things that don't really matter in your life. Decide to do something that will have eternal consequences. Perhaps you have been prompted to look for ancestors but feel that you are not a genealogist. Can you see that you don't have to be anymore? It all begins with love and a sincere desire to help those who can't help themselves.

This is a spiritual work, a monumental effort of cooperation on both sides of the veil where help is given in both directions. It begins with love. Anywhere you are in the world, with prayer, faith, determination, diligence, and some sacrifice, you can make a

powerful contribution. Begin now. I promise you that the Lord will help you find a way. And it will make you feel wonderful.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold."

Bishop Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Eduardo Ayala, who was sustained last April as a member of the Seventy.

Bishop Glenn L. Pace

I've told you a thousand times

How many of you parents have had an experience similar to this: You are relaxing for the first time at the end of a long day. Suddenly, the silence and serenity of the moment are shattered by the piercing scream of one of your children. You bolt out of your comfortable chair and meet your child who is running hysterically up the front steps. It is obvious there is a cut that will require stitches. In a fraction of a second you form an opinion of what took place. Consequently, the first words out of your mouth, rather than words of sympathy and comfort, are, "Oh, son, why can't you be more careful? When are you going to learn to mind me? I've told you a thousand times not to play on the garage roof!" Our children will testify that none of us ever claims to have told them two, three, nine, or fifteen times.

We always claim to have told them a thousand times.

The Lord's warnings

Just as earthly parents have issued warnings, the Lord has warned His children. "And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days" (D&C 1:4).

And after their testimonies "cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of [the earth]. . . .

"And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, . . . lightnings, . . . tempests, and . . . waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds" (D&C 88:89-90).

"And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars. . . .

"And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound" (D&C 45:26-27).

"And plagues shall go forth" (D&C 84:97).

"And the whole earth shall be in commotion" (D&C 45:26).

It may be an understatement to say the Lord's warnings have begun. How are we responding to the cries for help from God's children? Do we ask, "Why don't you be more careful?" "Why don't you mind the Lord?" "Our Church leaders have told you a thousand times to change your behavior."

Overcome fatalism

Prior to discussing how we should respond, I would like to suggest, in today's vernacular, two attitude adjustments. First, we need to overcome fatalism. We know the prophecies of the future. We know the final outcome. We know the world collectively will not repent, and, consequently, the last days will be filled with much pain and suffering. Therefore, we could throw up our hands and do nothing but pray for the end to come so the millennial reign could begin. To do so would forfeit our right to participate in the grand event we are all awaiting. We must all become players in the winding-up scene, not spectators. We must do all we can to prevent calamities and then do everything possible to assist and comfort the victims of tragedies that do occur.

Lehi set an excellent example for us in the way he handled his knowledge relative to the future of Laman and Lemuel. Early in their lives, Lehi had a vision that disclosed Laman and Lemuel would not partake of the fruit of the tree of life. Immediately after the vision, however, "he did exhort them . . . with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them" (1 Nephi 8:37). During the remainder of Lehi's life, Laman and Lemuel's actions gave him little hope that they would repent. However, he never gave up but labored with them and loved them even with his dying breath (see 2 Nephi 1:21).

The great prophet Mormon set another example worthy of emulation. He lived at a time that was hopeless. Imagine this: "There were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief" (Mormon 1:14).

In spite of this hopeless situation, Mormon led their armies, for, in his words, "Notwithstanding their wickedness I . . . loved them, according to the love of God which was in me, with all my heart; and my soul had been poured out in prayer unto my God all the day long for them" (Mormon 3:12).

This prophet had Christlike love for a fallen people. Can we be content with loving less? We must press forward with the pure love of Christ to spread the good news of the gospel. As we do so and fight the war of good against evil, light against darkness, and truth against falsehood, we must not neglect our responsibility of dressing the wounds of those who have fallen in battle. There is no room in the kingdom for fatalism.

Do not rejoice when the wicked suffer

The second attitude adjustment is to not allow ourselves to find satisfaction in calamities of the last days. Sometimes we tend to take joy in seeing the natural consequences of sin unfold. We might feel some vindication for being ignored by most of the world and persecuted and berated by others. When we see earthquakes, wars, famines, disease, poverty, and heartbreak, we may be tempted to say, "Well, we warned them. We told them a thousand times not to engage in those activities."

We should take these proverbs to heart:

"He that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished" (Proverbs 17:5).

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth" (Proverbs 24:17).

On this subject Job said:

"For I should have denied the God that is above.

"If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him" (Job 31:28-29).

King Benjamin addressed the sin of judging a person in need very clearly:

"Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just—

"But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent" (Mosiah 4:17-18).

We know many wounds are self-inflicted and could have been avoided simply by obeying gospel principles. However, to shrug it off as "their problem" is not acceptable to the Lord. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Although He does not condone sin, His arms are always open to the repentant sinner. In modern revelation the Lord has asked us to go one step further: "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:10).

Our forgiveness must be manifest by reaching out to help mend wounds even when they are the result of transgression. To react in any other way would be akin to setting up a lung cancer clinic for nonsmokers only. Whether the pain has come to someone who is completely innocent or is something of his own making is irrelevant. When a person has been hit by a truck, we don't withhold our help even when it is obvious he didn't stay in the pedestrian lane.

While some of the world's suffering can be traced to an individual's disobedience or lack of judgment, there is wholesale suffering taking place that is not the result of anyone's own mistakes. Millions of people around the world go to sleep hungry. In their waking hours, they are racked with disease and other afflictions. The causes are many, varied, and complex. Also, natural disasters fall on the righteous as well as the wicked.

Responding to suffering

Now that we have discussed some attitude adjustments concerning fatalism and having any joy in calamities, what action should we take? What should we be doing as a church and as individuals in response to the mammoth need in the world?

Our numbers are few. For every member of the Church in the world, there are approximately a thousand who are not. Our resources are limited, and the needs of the world are vast. We cannot do everything, but we must do everything we can.

The Brethren closely monitor the multitude of crises throughout the world and give assistance to a wide range of countries. The assistance is given where the need seems to be the greatest, without consideration to the political or religious ideologies that exist in each country.

On this subject, Joseph Smith, in response to the question "What is required to constitute good [Church] membership?" said, among other things, "He is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever he finds them" (*Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, p. 732).

More recently President Hinckley said, "Where there is stark hunger, regardless of the cause, I will not let political considerations dull my sense of mercy or thwart my responsibility to the sons and daughters of God, wherever they may be or whatever their circumstances" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, p. 72; or *Ensign*, May 1985, p. 54).

As Church members read accounts or see graphic pictures of human suffering, they are touched and ask, "What can we do?" Most of us will not be in a position to help on a person-to-person basis when the need is many miles away. However, every member of the Church can pray for peace throughout the world and for the well-being of all its inhabitants. Also, members may fast

and increase their fast offerings when they are able and thus enable the Church to do more.

Reach beyond the Church

As far as person-to-person assistance is concerned, the greatest compassionate service each of us can give may be in our own neighborhoods and communities. Wherever we live in the world there is pain and sorrow all around us. We need to take more initiative as individuals in deciding how we can best be of service.

The fact that a particular activity is not sponsored by the Church does not mean it is not worthy of a Church member's support. As individuals, we should become knowledgeable of the opportunities around us. I fear some members suffer from action paralysis, waiting for the Church to put its stamp of approval on one organization or another. The Church teaches principles. Use those principles and the Spirit to decide which organizations you would like to support.

The Lord said, "Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will" (D&C 58:27). Good things can be done through the Church organization, community organizations, and very often through no formal organization at all.

We must reach out beyond the walls of our own church. In humanitar-

ian work, as in other areas of the gospel, we cannot become the salt of the earth if we stay in one lump in the cultural halls of our beautiful meetinghouses. We need not wait for a call or an assignment from a Church leader before we become involved in activities that are best carried out on a community or individual basis.

When we get emotionally and spiritually involved in helping a person who is in pain, a compassion enters our heart. It hurts, but the process lifts some of the pain from another. We get from the experience a finite look into the Savior's pain as He performed the infinite atonement. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, a sanctification takes place within our souls and we become more like our Savior. We gain a better understanding of what was meant when He said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

As the last days unfold, we will see all the prophecies fulfilled. We will see today's problems compounded, and we will see new challenges scarcely imaginable at this time. We must reach out to those who are suffering from these events. We must not become fatalistic or judgmental—even if we warn the people in the world of something a thousand times and they heed us not. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Eduardo Ayala

Dear brothers and sisters, throughout my life I have known men and women who keep the commandments of the Lord with diligence and joy and who have, through their examples, edified and blessed the lives of those around them. Some of them now occupy prominent, challenging positions in their personal and professional lives. In the midst of their success, they are not afraid of recognizing that they are

where they are because of the blessings of the Lord.

A faithful physician

Allow me to share the experience of a faithful member of the Church who occupies a prominent position among the world's microneurosurgeons. This is a position he has obtained, according to his own testimony, with the help of the Lord and through obedience to the Word of Wisdom. He joined the Church

at an early age and promised himself to faithfully live the commandments. As the years went by, he had the opportunity of fulfilling two of his great goals—the opportunity to pursue a university education and to marry the woman of his dreams.

During this period of time something happened that totally changed the course of his life. One of his daughters became seriously ill with a brain disease which ultimately took her life. None of the efforts made in her behalf was sufficient to save her. During this frustrating and painful experience, which happened while he was a medical student at the university, he set a new and challenging goal, that of becoming a neurosurgeon. The fact that his daughter had suffered and died through a brain disease awakened in him the desire to study microneurosurgery, schooling that would be long and difficult.

Microneurosurgery requires, among other things, a great deal of physical discipline and dexterity. At this point in his life, while he was pursuing his studies, he discovered the blessings that come through obedience to the Word of Wisdom. He asked the Lord in humility and love that the promises contained in section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants would be made manifest in him so he could bless the lives of those who would depend on his skill.

During those difficult learning years, he worked untiringly to become the best in his area of specialization. As the years went by, he gained great dexterity in his hands and mastered the art and the skill necessary to work on the human brain. As we can imagine, any physical slip or unsteadiness in his hands could cause damage to his patients, perhaps injuring them for life.

Blessings of the Word of Wisdom

As he studied section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, he obtained a strong testimony that when we refrain from taking into our bodies substances that are harmful to it, we are blessed

with intelligence and a healthy and strong body. As a doctor, he knew that these promises were there, within his reach, and he had earnestly sought them in his own behalf.

As the time arrived for his proficiency exam, the final exam in his chosen career, he prepared himself with great care in order to perform to his very best and to demonstrate to the examining doctors the skills he had acquired. The day prior to the examination, he noticed some heavy trembling in his normally skillful hands, and in humility he prayed to the Lord, asking Him to make his hands firm and sure as they had always been to this point. The following day, he discovered with great alarm that there were unsure movements in his hands. He went off to a solitary spot, and, in deep meditation, he mentally searched for any sin he may have committed that would cause him to experience this problem. But in his search, he found nothing that might be contrary to the Word of Wisdom. Then he thought, I need these promises to come to me now, and he prayed to our Father in Heaven with all his heart that His guidance and protection would be with him.

The time came to perform brain surgery on his patient, and when the doctor saw his hands through the microscope, he noted with great emotion that his prayer had been heard and that his hands were steadier than they had ever been.

He felt a great surge of gratitude, and his sure and skillful hands flew in their activity, healing the damaged brain of his patient. The blessings and the promises of the Word of Wisdom were with him, and he was able to carry out this difficult surgery in an hour less than the normal expectation. It was a complete success, and he humbly accepted congratulations from the examining physicians. With gratitude in his heart for the success he had achieved, he returned to his home, and there, with his family, he reviewed the promises of the Lord that “all saints who remember

to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint" (D&C 89:18-20).

Today as he visits some of the famous clinics and hospitals, and his colleagues have the opportunity of listening to him, he expresses to them and to members of the press, "First, I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and then I am a microneurosurgeon." Not all prominent men achieve the humility to be able to recognize the blessings of the Lord in their lives, which are the result of obedience to the commandments, as this good member of the Church has done.

A commandment for today

Without question, the Word of Wisdom is one of the commandments which we most need to obey in these days, due to the great quantity of stimulants and drugs that have weakened the lives of those individuals who ignore the marvelous promises that the Lord has made to men if they will avoid using these harmful substances.

This commandment is very important today. As an example of the power of the Word of Wisdom, I quote another verse from section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord said, "And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man" (D&C 89:8). The Prophet Joseph Smith received this revelation in February of 1833, and it has been the cause of many controversies. Perhaps in that early period it was only significant to the faithful members of the Church, but now medical doctors have come to recognize that tobacco, in addition to being addictive, also kills those who use it. Used to any degree, tobacco has been

the cause of so much damage among mankind that the need to carry out great campaigns against its use cannot be avoided.

How I wish that each of us could have a strong testimony of the Word of Wisdom and that we could share with others the results of its sacred promises so that our future generations can be healthy and intelligent, and so our families and nations can be strengthened. In this way, we can become worthy of the final promise of the Lord as contained in this section of the Doctrine and Covenants: "And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:21). When we humbly recognize and fully accept the counsel of the Lord, nothing will be able to hold back man's intelligence.

The living prophets constantly teach us about these sacred principles, but men seem to mock them even as they are being undermined and destroyed by those harmful substances which not only destroy the body and the mind, but also the spirit. Our clinics and hospitals are full of these people, and yet men still resist the word of the Lord and refuse to recognize the wisdom that lies therein.

I pray for those who can still be saved and for those who have now accepted the counsels of the Lord and have separated themselves from those things that could cause their destruction.

I earnestly desire that we will accept the wisdom of this word of warning, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Bishop Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, and Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy have spoken to us. I may say that Brother Ayala has been a true and valiant and tremendous servant of the Lord in South America. I wish I could

speak Spanish as well as he speaks English.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God," following which we shall hear from Elder LeGrand R. Curtis, who was also

sustained in April conference as a member of the Seventy.

The chorus and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis

The ideal home

A month ago we experienced an important event in our lives. Our oldest grandchild was married for time and eternity in the Salt Lake Temple. As that beautiful young lady knelt in the temple with a fine young man, many hopes and blessings were realized—for that young couple, the realization of the tremendous blessings of the temple ordinances; and for their parents, the fulfillment of years of teaching and loving. My wife, Patricia, and I felt many blessings as that group assembled, which included our eight children and their spouses.

Since that day, we have reminisced and reviewed many teachings about what we see as the ideal home and family—which home and family, as to location, size, and makeup, are as diversified as our members. But these factors do not lessen the desire each of us has to achieve that ideal. President David O. McKay said, "It is possible to make home a bit of heaven; indeed, I picture heaven to be a continuation of the ideal home" (*Improvement Era*, Oct. 1948, p. 618). We hope that our children experience some of the following things in our home.

Perhaps the best gift parents can give their children is to love each other, to enjoy each other, and even to hold hands and demonstrate their love by the manner in which they talk to each other.

Home should be a happy place because all work to keep it that way. It is said that happiness is homemade, and we should endeavor to make our homes happy and pleasant places for us and our children. A happy home is one

centered around the teachings of the gospel. This takes constant, careful effort by all concerned.

In the ideal home, each child would be given every possible opportunity to develop his own personality without too much domination. Discipline is organized love, and children develop properly in an atmosphere of love, with adequate guidelines to shape their lives and their habits. More children are punished for mimicking their parents than ever for disobeying them. We should *be* what we want to *see*.

A house of God

We find in Doctrine and Covenants 88:119 the verse that describes the kind of homes we should strive to create: "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God."

We know that the world is flooded with books and magazines of negative value for us and for our children. The books in our homes are to be read, and there should be no shelves under lock and key because they hold books of questionable content.

Absolute truth should abide in our homes, and we should sincerely try to answer any question in honesty. Honesty is the companion of truth, and dishonesty of falsehood. We should expect complete honesty from our children as well as from us as parents.

In our homes, we should exhibit hospitality, and friends should feel

welcome. In our home, we preferred that our children search our refrigerator and use our kitchen rather than search the many dark places in the world. Ice cream is better bought early than wished for later.

In the ideal home, Sunday would be the happiest day of the week. We should look forward to its coming because it is the day we go to church together and then come home and discuss together what we learned in our various church meetings. Around the kitchen table at dinnertime would be an excellent opportunity to have parents and children tell about what they learned in their Sunday School classes and other meetings. How we observe the Sabbath indicates our feelings toward our Father in Heaven.

Although Father and Mother work hard, they should find time to keep informed on current events and to read good books, to discuss the *Ensign*, the *New Era*, and the *Friend* with each other and with their children. These magazines can add a wonderful dimension to our lives if we make them part of our homes and discuss them with our families. This is an ongoing challenge for all of us, but it is worth the effort.

The family should kneel together daily in family prayer. Alma 58:10 tells us, "Therefore we did pour out our souls in prayer to God, that he would strengthen us and deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, yea, and also give us strength that we might retain our cities, and our lands, and our possessions, for the support of our people." Our family has always needed to be strengthened—and still does—and kneeling in prayer daily certainly helps. Children need to be constantly taught how they should act when they mature and have their own families.

Mothers and daughters should be ladies and be modest in all ways. Mothers and daughters should be active in Relief Society, Young Women, or Primary. Sister Curtis and I often reminisce about attending Relief Society at

the side of our mothers when we were children.

Fathers and sons should act gentlemanly and kind. They should honor their priesthood, fill missions, and serve the Lord.

Families need to observe the Word of Wisdom in all ways, never compromising the dos and don'ts of this sacred commandment.

Mothers and fathers and children need the experience of bearing their testimonies and expressing their love for our Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ. Testimony bearing is not restricted to the chapel. The family room can be the ideal setting for some very sensitive spiritual experiences. Happy memories are made by appointment, and parents need to plan special spiritual events to create spiritual memories in their homes.

Parents need to care enough to wait up for the children as they return from their dates, or go and find them if they are out too late. I remember reading many pages of scriptures as I sat at the kitchen table waiting for the teenagers to return.

The kitchen table can provide a place for many valuable lessons and warm communications. We should partake not only of good food, but of love and friendship. Scriptures could be read around the kitchen table, and mothers and fathers could explain the teachings of the prophets. Nephi said, "For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children" (2 Nephi 4:15). As we reflect on our years of rearing children, we can see how we and our loved ones have always needed the scriptures. What better could we discuss with our children than the scriptures and our love for them?

Children need to know that their parents love them enough to teach them the gospel. Monday evenings can be made special by family home evening—by the love present and by music, games, and valuable learning moments. We have found that the child who is

rolling on the floor during family home evening listens and learns more than we think possible.

As parents, Sister Curtis and I now watch as our eight children have their own homes. We ponder deeply as we watch them teach their children, who are our grandchildren, about the principles of the gospel. We know it's not easy, but we also know that we all must try.

The things I have talked about today are some of the ideals, some of the things that all of us may work toward. Very few of us have reached that point, but President McKay said it is possible, and knowing that certainly makes the trying worthwhile.

I testify that I know the gospel of Jesus Christ and all that it gives us is meant for our happiness and for the happiness of those we love. Jesus Christ is the center of our lives. I know that he is close to his servants on this

earth this day. He loves each of us, and we can honestly sing and proclaim, "I am a child of God" and mean it (*Hymns*, no. 301).

I testify that Jesus is the Christ. I love him; my wife loves him; and we deeply desire that our children and grandchildren will love and obey our Lord and Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "All Things Bright and Beautiful" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis of the Seventy has spoken to us, following which the chorus sang "All Things Bright and Beautiful."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

The dangers of selfishness

So many times prophets warn about the dangers of selfishness—the inordinate and excessive concern with self. The distance between constant self-pleasing and self-worship is shorter than we think. Stubborn selfishness is actually rebellion against God, because, warned Samuel, "stubbornness is as . . . idolatry" (1 Samuel 15:23).

Selfishness is much more than an ordinary problem because it activates all the cardinal sins! It is the detonator in the breaking of the Ten Commandments.

By focusing on oneself, it is naturally easier to bear false witness if it serves one's purpose. It is easier to ignore one's parents instead of honoring them. It is easier to steal, because what one wants prevails. It is easier to covet, since the selfish conclude that nothing should be denied them.

It is easier to commit sexual sins, because to please oneself is the name of

that deadly game in which others are often cruelly used. The Sabbath day is easily neglected, since one day soon becomes just like another. If selfish, it is easier to lie, because the truth is conveniently subordinated.

The selfish individual thus seeks to please not God, but himself. He will even break a covenant in order to fix an appetite.

Selfishness has little time to regard the sufferings of others seriously; hence the love of many waxes cold (see Matthew 24:12; D&C 45:27; Moses 6:27).

The last days will be rampant with the cardinal sins, just "as in the days of Noah." Society in the days of Noah, scriptures advise, "was corrupt before God" and "filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11; Moses 8:28). Corruption and violence—sound familiar? Both of these awful conditions crest because of surging individual selfishness. When

thus engulfed, no wonder men's hearts in our day will fail them because of fear (see Luke 21:26; D&C 45:26). Even the faithful can expect a few fibrillations.

Some selfishness exists even in good people. Jane Austen's character Elizabeth mused, "I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle" (*Pride and Prejudice* [New York: Airmont Books, 1962], p. 58). The selfish individual has a passion for the vertical pronoun *I*. Significantly, the vertical pronoun *I* has no knees to bend, while the first letter in the pronoun *we* does.

Selfishness, in its preoccupation with self, withholds from others deserved, needed praise, causing a deprivation instead of giving a commendation.

We see in ourselves other familiar forms of selfishness: accepting or claiming undeserved credit; puffing deserved credit; being glad when others go wrong; resenting the genuine successes of others; preferring public vindication to private reconciliation; and taking "advantage of one because of his words" (2 Nephi 28:8). All things are thus viewed selfishly—what are their implications for "me," much like the mattress on the highway which delayed traffic. When frustrated motorists finally got around the mattress, none stopped to remove it because now there was nothing in it for him.

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, "Mankind [is] naturally selfish, ambitious, and striving to excel one above another" (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, comp. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980], p. 201).

Saul, swollen with selfishness, was reminded about an earlier time "when thou wast little in thine own sight" (1 Samuel 15:17).

Jesus' example of meekness

Selfishness is often expressed in stubbornness of mind. Having a "mind

hardened in pride" often afflicts the brightest who could also be the best (Daniel 5:20). "One thing" the brightest often lack: meekness! Instead of having "a willing mind" which seeks to emulate the "mind of Christ," a "mind hardened in pride" is impervious to counsel and often seeks ascendancy (1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Corinthians 2:16; D&C 64:34). Jesus, who was and is "more intelligent than they all," is also more meek than they all (Abraham 3:19).

Jesus put everything on the altar without fanfare or bargaining. Both before and after His astonishing atonement, He declared, "Glory be to the Father" (D&C 19:19; see also Moses 4:2). Jesus, stunningly brilliant, nevertheless allowed His will to be "swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7; see also John 6:38). Those with pride-hardened minds are simply unable to do this.

Put off the natural man

Stubborn selfishness leads otherwise good people to fight over herds, patches of sand, and strippings of milk. All this results from what the Lord calls coveting "the drop," while neglecting "the more weighty matters" (D&C 117:8). Myopic selfishness magnifies a mess of pottage and makes thirty pieces of silver look like a treasure trove. In our intense acquisitiveness, we forget Him who once said, "What is property unto me?" (D&C 117:4).

Such is the scope of putting off the burdensome natural man, who is naturally selfish (see Mosiah 3:19). So much of our fatigue, brothers and sisters, in fact, comes from carrying that needless load. This heaviness of the natural man prevents us from doing our Christian calisthenics; so we end up too swollen with selfishness to pass through the narrow needle's eye.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote of the need to "shed my Martha-like anxiety about many things, . . . shedding pride, . . . shedding hypocrisy in human

relationships. What a rest that will be! The most exhausting thing in life, I have discovered," she said, "is being insincere. That is why so much of social life is exhausting" (*Gift from the Sea* [New York: Vintage Books, 1978], p. 32).

Unchecked selfishness thus stubbornly blocks the way for developing all of the divine qualities: love, mercy, patience, long-suffering, kindness, graciousness, goodness, and gentleness. Any tender sprouts from these virtues are sheared off by sharp selfishness. Contrariwise, brothers and sisters, I cannot think of a single gospel covenant the keeping of which does not shear off selfishness from us!

But what a battle for some of us! We are all afflicted in different degrees. The question is, How goes the battle? Is our selfishness being put off—even if only gradually? Or is the natural man like "the man who came to dinner"? Divine tutoring is given largely in order to help us shed our selfishness, "for what son [or daughter] is [there] whom the father chasteneth not?" (Hebrews 12:7).

Important spiritual perspectives

Restoration scriptures tell us much more about how we can really be forgiven through the atonement of Christ by means of which, finally, "mercy . . . overpowereth justice" (Alma 34:15). We can have real and justified hope for the future—enough hope to develop the faith necessary both to put off the natural man and to strive to become more saintly.

Furthermore, because the centerpiece of the Atonement is already in place, we know that everything else in God's plan will likewise finally succeed. God is surely able to do His own work! (See 2 Nephi 27:20–21.) In His plans for the human family, long ago God made ample provision for all mortal mistakes. His purposes will all triumph and without abrogating man's moral agency. Moreover, all His purposes will come to pass in their time (see D&C 64:32).

However, without these later and other spiritual perspectives, see how differently we behave. Take away an acknowledgment of divine design, and then watch the selfish scurrying to redesign political and economic systems to make life pain-free and pleasure-filled. Misguided governments mean to live, even if they live beyond their means, thereby mortgaging future generations.

Take away regard for the divinity in one's neighbor, and watch the decline in our regard for his property.

Take away basic moral standards, and observe how quickly tolerance changes into permissiveness.

Take away the sacred sense of belonging to a family or community, and observe how quickly citizens cease to care for big cities.

Take away regard for the seventh commandment, and behold the current celebration of sex, the secular religion with its own liturgy of lust and supporting music. Its theology focuses on "self." Its hereafter is "now." Its chief ritual is "sensation"—though, ironically, it finally desensitizes its obsessed adherents, who become "past feeling" (Ephesians 4:19; Moroni 9:20).

Thus, in all its various expressions, selfishness is really self-destruction in slow motion!

Each spasm of selfishness narrows the universe that much more by shutting down our awareness of others and by making us more and more alone. Sensations are then desperately sought precisely in order to verify that one really exists. A variation occurs when one is full of self-pity over affectional deprivation. He ends up in transgression.

Surging selfishness presents us with a sobering scene as the natural man acts out his wants. Many assert their needs—but where have we lodged the corresponding obligations? So many have become demanders, but where are all the providers? There are many more people with things to say than there are listeners. There are more neglected and aging parents than there are attentive sons and daughters—

though, numerically, clearly it should not be so!

Come off conqueror

Just as Jesus warned that some evil spirits would *come out* only with “prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21), the “natural man” does not *come off* without difficulty either.

Of this personal battle, the Lord has urged us to so live that we would “come off conqueror” (D&C 10:5). But we cannot “come off conqueror,” except we first “put off” the selfish, natural man!

The natural man is truly God’s enemy, because the natural man will keep God’s precious children from true and everlasting happiness. Our full happiness requires our becoming the men and women of Christ.

Men and women of Christ

The meek men and women of Christ are quick to praise, but are also able to restrain themselves. They understand that on occasion the biting of the tongue can be as important as the gift of tongues.

The man and woman of Christ are easily entreated, but the selfish person is not. Christ never brushed aside those in need because He had bigger things to do! Furthermore, the men and women of Christ are constant, being the same in private as in public. We cannot keep two sets of books while heaven has but one.

The men and women of Christ magnify their callings without magnifying themselves. Whereas the natural man says “Worship me” and “Give me thine power,” the men and women of Christ seek to exercise power by long-suffering and unfeigned love (see Moses 1:12; 4:3; D&C 121:41).

Whereas the natural man vents his anger, the men and women of Christ are “not easily provoked” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Whereas the natural man is filled with greed, the men and women of Christ “seeketh not [their] own” (1 Cor-

inthians 13:5). Whereas the natural man seldom denies himself worldly pleasures, the men and women of Christ seek to bridle all their passions (see Alma 38:12).

Whereas the natural man covets praise and riches, the men and women of Christ know such things are but the “drop” (D&C 117:8). Human history’s happiest irony will be that the covenant-keeping, unselfish individuals will finally receive “all that [the] Father hath”! (D&C 84:38).

We do not own ourselves

One of the last, subtle strongholds of selfishness is the natural feeling that we “own” ourselves. Of course we are free to choose and are personally accountable. Yes, we have individuality. But those who have chosen to “come unto Christ” soon realize that they do not “own” themselves. Instead, they belong to Him. We are to become consecrated along with our gifts, our appointed days, and our very selves. Hence, there is a stark difference between stubbornly “owning” oneself and submissively belonging to God. Clinging to the old self is not a mark of independence, but of indulgence!

Blessings of shedding selfishness

The Prophet Joseph promised that when selfishness is annihilated, we “may comprehend all things, present, past, and future” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984], p. 485). Even now, however, in gospel glimpses we can see “things as they really are” (Jacob 4:13).

Indeed, the gospel brings glorious illumination as to our possibilities. Scales fall from our eyes with the shedding of selfishness. Then we see our luminous and true identity:

On a clear day, rise and look around you,

And you’ll see who you are.

On a clear day, how it will astound you—

That the glow of your being out-
shines every star . . .
And on a clear day . . .
You can see forever and ever
more.

[Alan Jay Lerner, "On a Clear
Day" (Chappell and Co., 1965)]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

The chorus sang "Come, Ye
Thankful People" without announce-
ment.

President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the
Council of the Twelve has just
addressed us, following which the
Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Come,
Ye Thankful People."

President Howard W. Hunter,
President of the Council of the Twelve
Apostles, will be our concluding
speaker for this session.

President Howard W. Hunter

Is not this Joseph's son?

In his beloved Galilee, that famil-
iar, favored home region of Jesus, the
Son of God performed not only his first
recorded miracle but went on to per-
form many great miracles that surely
must have astonished and awed the
people of Galilee who saw them. He
healed a leper, cured the servant of a
centurion, stilled a tempest, cast out
devils, healed a paralytic, opened the
eyes of the blind, and restored a young
woman to life who had died.

Most of the people of his home
region would not truly believe. "Is not
this Joseph's son?" they asked of Jesus,
refusing to acknowledge his divine heri-
tage (Luke 4:22). Jesus wept over these
people who should have known better.
Because of their skepticism and unbe-
lief and refusal to repent, he upbraided
the cities where most of his mighty
works had been done. In severely criti-
cizing and finding fault with the wicked
cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and
Capernaum, he said:

"For if the mighty works, which
have been done in thee, had been done
in Sodom, it would have remained until
this day.

"But I say unto you, That it shall be
more tolerable for the land of Sodom in
the day of judgment, than for thee"
(Matthew 11:23-24).

Come unto me

While anguishing over the wicked-
ness and lack of faith among so many in
his home area, the Savior voiced his
prayer of gratitude for the humble and
plain people who did hear his teachings
and did believe. These lowly learners
needed him, and they needed his
message. They demonstrated that the
humble, the needy, and the sorrowing
would hear the word of God and cherish
it. With reassurance to these new be-
lievers and concern for those not choos-
ing to follow him, Christ issued a
profound invitation in what Elder
James E. Talmage has appropriately
called "one of the grandest outpourings
of spiritual emotion known to man"
(*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City:
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-
day Saints, 1916], p. 258). These are the
words of the Master used in making this
appeal:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour
and are heavy laden, and I will give you
rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn
of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my bur-
den is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

This invitation and promise is one
of the most oft-quoted of all scripture

and has been of untold comfort and reassurance to millions. Yet there were those among his hearers that day whose vision was so limited that they could see only a carpenter's son speaking of a wooden yoke—a yoke which, from time to time, he had undoubtedly hewn and shaped from heavy wooden timbers for the oxen of these same men who were listening.

Elder Talmage added, "He invited them from drudgery to pleasant service; from the well-nigh unbearable burdens of ecclesiastical exactions and traditional formalism, to the liberty of truly spiritual worship; from slavery to freedom; but they would not" (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 259).

Here was a prophetic appeal and magnificent promise to a troubled people facing great peril, but they could not understand it. He knew what lay ahead for them even if they did not, and he was inviting them to come unto him to find rest and safety for their troubled souls. Had he not already shown them that he could give rest to those who labored with profound illness and disease? Had he not already relieved the burden of those who were heavily laden with sin and the cares of the world? Had he not already raised one from the dead, proving that he possessed the divine power to relieve even that greatest of all universal burdens? And yet most would still not "come unto [him]."

Jesus can ease our burdens

Unfortunately, a refusal to accept his miracles and his glorious invitation is still seen today. This marvelous offer of assistance extended by the Son of God himself was not restricted to the Galileans of his day. This call to shoulder his easy yoke and accept his light burden is not limited to bygone generations. It was and is a universal appeal to all people, to all cities and nations, to every man, woman, and child everywhere.

In our own great times of need we must not leave unrecognized this un-

failing answer to the cares and worries of our world. Here is the promise of personal peace and protection. Here is the power to remit sin in all periods of time. We, too, must believe that Jesus Christ possesses the power to ease our burdens and lighten our loads. We, too, must come unto him and there receive rest from our labors.

Of course, obligations go with such promises. "Take my yoke upon you," he pleads. In biblical times the yoke was a device of great assistance to those who tilled the field. It allowed the strength of a second animal to be linked and coupled with the effort of a single animal, sharing and reducing the heavy labor of the plow or wagon. A burden that was overwhelming or perhaps impossible for one to bear could be equitably and comfortably borne by two bound together with a common yoke. His yoke requires a great and earnest effort, but for those who truly are converted, the yoke is easy and the burden becomes light.

Why face life's burdens alone, Christ asks, or why face them with temporal support that will quickly falter? To the heavy laden it is Christ's yoke, it is the power and peace of standing side by side with a God that will provide the support, balance, and strength to meet our challenges and endure our tasks here in the hardpan field of mortality.

Obviously, the personal burdens of life vary from person to person, but every one of us has them. Furthermore, each trial in life is tailored to the individual's capacities and needs as known by a loving Father in Heaven. Of course, some sorrows are brought on by the sins of a world not following the counsel of that Father in Heaven. Whatever the reason, none of us seems to be completely free from life's challenges. To one and all, Christ said, in effect: As long as we all must bear some burden and shoulder some yoke, why not let it be mine? My promise to you is that my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (see Matthew 11:28-30).

Learning to be like Jesus

"Learn of me," he continued, "for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Surely the lessons of history ought to teach us that pride, haughtiness, self-adulation, conceit, and vanity contain all of the seeds of self-destruction for individuals, cities, or nations. The ashes and rubble of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum are the silent witnesses of the Savior's unheeded warnings to that generation. Once majestic and powerful cities, they no longer exist. Would we add our names or the names of our families to such a list? No, of course not; but if we would not, we must be truly meek and lowly. By taking the yoke of Jesus upon us and feeling what he felt for the sins of the world, we learn most deeply of him, and we especially learn how to be like him.

President Ezra Taft Benson has said:

"That man is greatest and most blessed and joyful whose life most closely approaches the pattern of the Christ. This has nothing to do with earthly wealth, power, or prestige. The only true test of greatness, blessedness, joyfulness is how close a life can come to being like the Master, Jesus Christ. He is the right way, the full truth, and the abundant life" ("Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," *Ensign*, Dec. 1988, p. 2).

An urgent, pleading call

The call to come unto him has continued throughout time and is being renewed in our day. Modern scriptures are replete with the same invitation. It is an urgent, pleading call to everyone. Indeed, the calm but urgent appeal is

still from the Son of God himself. He is, in fact, the Anointed One, who will lift the greatest of burdens from the most heavily laden. The conditions for obtaining that assistance are still precisely the same. We must come unto him and take his yoke upon us. In meekness and lowliness, we must learn of him in order to receive eternal life and exaltation.

May we do so in appreciation for the loving gift of eternal joy he offers us I pray—as I leave with you my personal witness that God our Heavenly Father lives and that Jesus is the Christ, having suffered and given his life that we may have life everlasting—in his holy name, amen.

President Hinckley

President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable and satellite systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, who have sung so beautifully for us in this session, will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert E. Sackley of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Robert E. Sackley offered the benediction.

FIRST DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple

Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 1990, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second

Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a Young Women's choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions. Julie Hayes Hewlett conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Monson made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this second general session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference on television.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission. We express appreciation to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems for their cooperation in making these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brothers and sisters, I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may

We note that Elders L. Tom Perry, Jack H. Goasland, and Gardner H. Russell are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

The music for this session will be provided by a Young Women's choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions, under the direction of Sister Julie Hayes Hewlett, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir will begin this session by singing "More Holiness Give Me." Then the invocation will be offered by Elder Adney Y. Komatsu of the Seventy.

The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder Adney Y. Komatsu offered the invocation.

President Monson

This angelic choir will now sing "My Heart Ever Faithful." President Gordon B. Hinckley will then present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for our sustaining vote.

The choir sang "My Heart Ever Faithful."

manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

With gratitude for their service as General Authorities for the past 5½ years, it is proposed that we release Elders Waldo P. Call and Helio R. Camargo as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in expressing appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

As has been previously announced, these brethren have accepted calls to serve as presidents of the Mexico City and São Paulo Brazil temples respectively.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elders Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Monte J. Brough as the Young Men General Presidency and Elder Ted E. Brewerton as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency. I wish to note that these releases are made necessary because of other as-

signments. Those who wish to join in a vote of appreciation may do so.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Jack H. Goaslind, LeGrand R. Curtis, and Robert K. Dellenbach as the Young Men General Presidency and Elder H. Verlan Andersen as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency. All in favor, manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general officers of the Church as presently constituted. All in favor. Any opposed.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. We thank you, our beloved brothers and sisters, for your continued vote of confidence and love.

President Thomas S. Monson

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session. He will be followed by Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

A pattern in all things

Over the years I have experienced some uncomfortable times in commercial aircrafts while traveling in turbulent skies. Oftentimes, heavy winds, storms, angry clouds, down drafts, et cetera, have caused bumpy and anxious moments, particularly when it was time to land. A seasoned pilot gave me comfort once after such an experience when he talked about a landing pattern—the ordered flight path of an aircraft about to touch down. Precise instruments, experience, and trust guide the planes to safety en route and through proper landing and takeoff. “We can’t control the weather or elements, but we can stay within the pattern for safety,” he emphasized.

One day I was admiring a beautiful hand-finished quilt made by a skilled

seamstress. As we visited together, I learned that she had made many quilts over the years and was well known for her excellent handiwork. To my query, “Do you ever make one of these quilts without a pattern?” she said, “How would I know how it might turn out if I didn’t have a pattern to follow?”

How can we even guess how our lives will turn out if we don’t choose to follow the right pattern?

What a happy circumstance and strength in our day to have the Lord’s promise, “I will give unto you a *pattern* in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving” (D&C 52:14; italics added). I have always received courage, comfort, and direction from this powerful quotation.

A pattern is a guide for copying, a design, a plan, a diagram or model to be

followed in making things, a composite of traits or features characteristic of an individual. It is also the ordered flight path for an aircraft about to land.

God's pattern for righteous living

The gospel of Jesus Christ is God's pattern for righteous living and eternal life. It makes possible goal setting and lofty priorities. Satan and his advocates will constantly try to deceive and entice us into following their patterns. If we are to achieve daily safety, exaltation, and eternal happiness, we need to live by the light and truth of our Savior's plan. All salvation revolves around our Savior.

In a recent conversation with a drug addict about priorities, life's patterns, hopes, goals, and purposes, I was grieved when this attractive young lady said, "God is loving. God is kind. Leave me alone, and never mind." The wayward and disobedient will never be happy while smothered with Satan's suggestion that practice makes permanence. God's gift and commitment to agency never will include a tolerance of sin.

God is truly loving and kind. Part of his pattern is to help us use our gift of agency, but his pattern does not condone sin. When we abuse our agency to choose a life-style contrary to revealed patterns, we must live with the consequences. Our unwillingness to follow the true and tested patterns given for our happiness causes the individual, family, and friends heartaches and ultimate disaster. Our freedom to choose our course of conduct does not provide personal freedom from the consequences of our performances. God's love for us is constant and will not diminish, but he cannot rescue us from the painful results that are caused by wrong choices.

Be not deceived by Satan's patterns

It is no secret that Satan wages open war with the truth and all those

who live righteous lives. He deceives with skill and effectiveness even his own followers. He would have us give up, quit, rebel when setbacks come. Sometimes in life when we are committed to and are following proper patterns, we experience heavy bumps and anxious hours. Many times true winners in life are those who have been hurt and disappointed but have risen above these challenges. Very often in life, God gives us difficulties to bring out the best in us. It is true, life does not determine winners. Winners determine life.

The great Olympic slogan says that the glory of the Olympic Games is not in the victory, but in taking part—taking part like a man. Grantland Rice once wrote, "When the One Great Scorer comes to write against your name, he marks—not that you won or lost—but how you played the game" (in *The Home Book of Quotations*, sel. Burton Stevenson [New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1934], p. 754).

Satan has a way of wrapping enticing diversions with ribbons, bows, and fancy coverings. Inside are immorality, self-destruction, and substandard culture temptations. His established pattern is to deceive at all costs. His calls to "live it up," "enjoy the 'now,'" "go for it," "do your own thing," and yield to peer pressures are some of his available enticements for the susceptible in the days and hours to come. He cunningly uses damaging deceit in its most dastardly form. He would have us forget that the essential thing in life is not conquering, but steadfast commitment to righteous patterns.

Satan is the author of all programs that dress up evil and wrong to whet our appetites. Yielding to his temptations that promote immoral conduct will never bring happiness. When we are down and out and scrambling for relief from his clutches, he will continue to recommend patterns of conduct that allow us to destroy our self-respect.

Why does a loving God permit children he truly loves to be tempted by Satan and his ways? We have the answer from a great prophet-teacher:

"Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other" (2 Nephi 2:16).

Avoid Satan's territory of deceit. It will never lead to happiness. Evidence to the contrary, there are no successful sinners. All of us must one day stand before God and be judged according to our personal deeds done in the flesh. The burdens of the sinner will never be lighter than that of the saint. Be not deceived by the lures of Satan. God is at the helm and is grieved when we, his children, stray from proven paths of enduring happiness and righteousness. He would have us hold fast to the iron rod with total commitment and strength.

One of Satan's most intriguing traps among many of God's children today seems to be a trend to postpone taking on mature personal responsibilities, such as avoiding marriage because of the possibility of divorce, and becoming involved in the drug culture because life is so uncertain. There are segments of our population that march, protest, and demand handouts and cures rather than follow God's given rules of prevention and self-discipline. Following revealed patterns helps us to recognize our weaknesses, deal positively with them, overcome them, and rise to Christlike heights.

God's patterns are great gifts

We must, if we will have happiness, follow the straight and prescribed paths. "I will give you a pattern in all things" is one of the Lord's greatest gifts and promises. Today it comes from him and his prophets. Keeping one's mind occupied with constructive, useful things on a constant basis prevents Satan from having success in idle minds. Good music, art, literature, recreation, and other worthy pastimes can help es-

tablish proper patterns in one's mind and conduct. Happiness is a by-product of righteous living and sharing within the framework of lofty patterns. Actions of the moment may be fun, but true happiness depends upon how you feel after the involvement is over.

Besides patterns for prayer, we have direction for pondering, procedure, patience, action, and integrity. There are patterns for all worthy things if we will search for them. "And behold, it must be done according to the pattern which I have given unto you" (D&C 94:2). There is no other proven way.

"And again, he that is overcome and bringeth not forth fruits, even according to this pattern, is not of me.

"Wherefore, by this pattern ye shall know the spirits in all cases under the whole heavens" (D&C 52:18-19).

In all our phases of life, it is expedient that we have correct patterns to follow.

Roger Bannister's four-minute mile

One of my favorite sports stories has to do with Roger Bannister, who many years ago participated in the Olympic Games as a champion in the one-mile race. He was supposed to win, but he wound up finishing in fourth place. He went home from the Olympics discouraged, disillusioned, and embarrassed.

He had his mind set on giving up running. He was a medical student at the time, and his studies were so demanding. He decided that he'd better get on with life and devote all of his time in preparing for medicine and forget his hopes about running the world's record in the four-minute mile. He went to his coach and told him, "Coach, I'm through. I'm going to devote all my time to studying." His coach said, "Roger, I think you are the man who can break the four-minute mile. I wish you'd give it one last try before you quit."

Roger didn't answer him. He went home knowing not what to say or to do. But before the night was over, he

had convinced himself that he would develop an iron will before he quit running. He was going to break the four-minute mile.

He knew what this meant. He would have to set a pattern and live by it. He realized he would have to study seven, eight, or even nine hours a day to get through medical school. He would have to train for at least four hours a day.

Also involved was running continually to build up his body to the peak of perfection. He knew he would have to eat the best foods. He knew he would have to go to bed early every night and sleep nine or ten hours, to let his body recuperate and constantly build up for the great day. He determined within himself that he was going to follow the rigid pattern he and the coach knew was necessary for victory and achievement.

On May 6, 1954, the four-minute-mile barrier was broken by Roger Bannister—a tall, stooped Englishman with a big-boned, angular face and a ruddy complexion—a man committed to a winning pattern which would bring him recognition worldwide.

On a dreary, cold, wet, and windy day, he went to the Oxford University track to put his theories and skill to the acid test. His parents and a few hundred others were present. The rest is history. Running strictly according to his charts and pattern, he ran the miracle mile in 3:59.4. He became the first man in recorded history to speed across this distance in less than four minutes. He had proven that man could run faster than was thought possible. He paid the price and reaped the rewards of following the proper pattern. Today in England he is a doctor in his own right. At the time of his victory over the one-mile barrier, he became an international hero in all the record books. The four-minute-mile barrier is broken constantly these days, but Roger Bannister set the pattern many years ago and followed it with total commitment, self-discipline, and a will of iron.

A pattern for receiving revelation

Patterns are given by the Lord that we may follow, reason, and endure in righteousness. Within the Church there is an established pattern for receiving revelation and instructions. We need to be reminded that anyone claiming to receive direction or revelation for others should be held suspect. This is especially true when the content is believed to have relevance for areas, regions, stakes, or wards in the Church for whom the person has no particular responsibility. God has in the past and will continue in the future to reveal his will through his prophets.

A pattern of conduct

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, established a pattern of conduct for all mankind. He reminded us, "If ye love me, feed my sheep" (see John 21:17). The love is greater than the who, where, how, or when. It must be unconditional and constant.

To gain exaltation and happy daily life, we must follow a pattern of righteousness. Our self-esteem and success can best be measured by how we follow the patterns of life which prevent deceit, haughtiness, pride, or pessimism.

Solid, permanent progress can take place in the days ahead only if deception is avoided, no matter how advantageous it may seem to yield or compromise basic principles of conduct.

Be not deceived. God is not mocked. He knows what is best for his children and those who love him and would develop the traits and characteristics shown by his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

"For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward" (D&C 58:26).

Instead of our being commanded in all things, we are given a pattern in all things. The choice to use these safe

paths is ours. God help us to follow his patterns and reap the rewards he has in store for the obedient, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach

Gaining a testimony

May I tell you of the hour of my true conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ and his restored gospel. Perhaps my experience will strengthen those who desire a closer relationship with our Father in Heaven and a more profound testimony of the truthfulness of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Some years ago while traveling to a mission in Germany, I found myself, in stormy November, aboard a ship sailing from New York to Bremerhaven. The ocean boiled with turmoil. We were all seasick. All we could eat were soda crackers and Zwieback. I was almost afraid I was not going to die!

As the days passed it dawned on me: I'm really going on a mission. Do I truly have a testimony? Am I prepared to bear it "at all times and . . . in all places"? (Mosiah 18:9).

I thought I had a testimony, but now the real trial of my faith was coming. I was going to a foreign land where the only words I could speak in German were *Volkswagen* and *auf Wiedersehen*.

During the voyage I realized my testimony was not a spiritual fire of conviction, particularly of the Book of Mormon. And so I knelt down on the cold steel floor of that rocking ship and begged the Lord with my tears. I prayed, "Dear Father, I have got to know that the Book of Mormon is true. I have read it, I think I understand it, but I desire the fire which helps a man

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach, sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference, will now address us. The choir will then sing "God Is Love." Elder Harold G. Hillam, also sustained as a member of the Seventy last April, will follow the choir.

know that the Book of Mormon is thy word. Please, Father, help me."

Somewhere out on the lonely Atlantic, during those turbulent days, a sweet spirit and peace came to me — "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). I received a witness that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, and that supernal event became my hour of conversion.

If you question whether you have a testimony of the restored gospel, I encourage you to read, ponder, and study the Book of Mormon. Why the Book of Mormon? Because this holy scripture is the great testifier and converter. This ancient record is a spiritual compass for us to follow. Joseph Smith said, "The Book of Mormon was . . . the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*History of the Church*, 4:461). When you come to know that this testament of Christ is true, you will know that Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration and that Ezra Taft Benson is the Lord's prophet today. The Book of Mormon was written for our day to convince us "that Jesus is the Christ" (Book of Mormon title page). If your soul is searching for a more profound testimony of Jesus Christ and his restored kingdom, I suggest, in conjunction with studying the Book of Mormon, there are four steps you can take which will lead you to your hour of conversion.

These four steps are (1) desire, (2) works, (3) prayer, and (4) trust in the Lord. Let me briefly explain.

Desire a more firm witness

First, desire: Oliver Cowdery desired a more firm witness of the plates which contained the Book of Mormon record. The Lord said to Oliver: "If you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter?" (D&C 6:22-23). The Lord told Oliver that, first of all, a person needs to have desire.

Alma said, "Even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you" (Alma 32:27).

Do the works of righteousness

Second, works: Oliver Cowdery took a positive action. He moved himself from thinking to doing. In my case, while on board that ship, I had more intimately studied and pondered the Book of Mormon. Young Joseph reflected on the Bible, then went into the woods to pray. Moses climbed Mount Sinai. My Great-grandmother Nelson boarded a ship in Denmark, with a flock of little children, to join the Mormons in Utah. Righteous works yield a divine harvest. The Lord said, "He who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

Pray to know the truth

Third, prayer: "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, Uttered or unexpressed" (*Hymns*, no. 145).

As we sincerely pray to the Lord and rely upon his divine whisperings, that still, small voice will come to us (see Helaman 5:30). We will receive a peace, knowing that God has answered our prayers. Remember the peace that Oliver received. These spiritual embers can grow into a flame of testimony (see Helaman 5:45).

Alma, upon meeting the four sons of Mosiah, who had been on a fourteen-

year mission, rejoiced at their knowledge of the truth. He said, "They had searched the scriptures diligently, [and] they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; [and] they taught with power and authority of God" (Alma 17:2-3).

"Ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ," counseled Moroni, "if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, . . . he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4).

Surely the Lord would not ask us to pray if he did not intend to answer our prayers. "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Trust in the Lord

Fourth, "trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). We can trust the Lord. He is our truest Friend. He always keeps his word. "Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith," admonished Ether (Ether 12:6).

May I ask you to extend your trust in the Lord. Take the Book of Mormon into your hands. As you read it, ask yourself, Could any man write this? Then ask the Lord, Is this thy word?

A word of caution: Satan wants to stop you. He will try to distract, deceive, and weaken your desire, your righteous works, your sincere prayers, and your trust in the Lord. Do not be afraid. We have already overcome the evil one at another time and place. We are told that in the great premortal war, "[we] overcame [Lucifer] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of [our] testimony" (Revelation 12:11). We had a valiant testimony in our premortal state, and we can resist Satan and awaken that testimony again today.

The Book of Mormon is our testimonial Liahona (see Alma 37:45). This voice from the dust guides us to know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that his church has been restored.

If you have even a small desire for a greater witness, please do the works of righteousness, trust in the Lord, pray and anxiously explore the Book of Mormon. I testify that it is the word of God. This iron rod marks the path that will guide your soul to your hour of conver-

sion. I rejoice with you in that glorious event. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God Is Love."

Elder Harold G. Hillam

A shoeshine man in Lisbon

Some years ago, while I was serving as the mission president in Portugal, several of our missionaries introduced me to their shoeshine man. Their shoes looked so good that I was anxious to meet the man that could put such a shine on missionaries' shoes. Even though he had not chosen to listen to the missionaries' message, I considered the shoeshine man my friend, and we visited while he was busy shining my shoes. He indicated that his wife had died, that he had no family, and that about the only pleasure he had in life was seeing people walk away happy with the shoes he had just shined.

His place of business was on the curbside of a small square on a busy street in downtown Lisbon. His stand seemed to have all that was necessary. It consisted of a short, rusty, three-legged stool, upon which my frail friend would sit as he shined the shoes that were placed on a stained and well-used shoeshine box that was full of his polishes and brushes, and there was an ornate lamppost (which was kindly furnished by the city of Lisbon), upon which the customer would lean while he was having his shoes shined.

He would carefully apply two coats of polish, using a brush to polish between each coat. Last, he applied a special product that would give the shoes that extra special shine. With a final snap of the cloth, he would stand up, take off his little Portuguese cap, make a deep bow, and say, "*Pronto. Seus sapatos foram engrachados pelo o melhor engraxate do mundo.*" "There. Your

shoes were shined by the very best shoeshine man in the world." I was convinced that I had had my shoes shined by the very best.

A few months after our mission, I was called to serve as the Regional Representative to Portugal and had the opportunity to return to Lisbon a number of times. As occasion permitted, I would have my shoes shined by the "best shoeshine man in the world."

The last few times that I went, I was unable to find him at his usual place of business. I finally inquired at the prestigious stores that surrounded the square. The response was the same, "We don't know what happened to him. It seems that we had heard that he had died." I remember thinking, Could it be that the best shoeshine man in the world had died, and no one really knew or even seemed to care? I wondered: Had there been someone there with him, or did he slip away unnoticed?

Brother and Sister Joaquim Aires

May we contrast that for a moment with Brother and Sister Joaquim Aires, a marvelous man and his wife who came to Portugal following the 1974 revolution of Portugal's colonies in Angola and Mozambique. They had returned to Portugal unknown and with very few possessions. A great blessing occurred in their lives. They opened their door to two young missionaries, who taught them of the restoration of Christ's church. They received the missionaries, accepted their message, and were baptized.

As is the opportunity for all worthy men in the Church, he received the priesthood—authority to act in the name of our Father in Heaven—and to become a leader in the Church. Brother Aires became President Aires, president of one of the mission districts.

One day I received a telephone call. President Aires was in the hospital in Coimbra, several hours' travel away. He had suffered a very serious cerebral hemorrhage and was in very critical condition. Another priesthood holder and I made the trip as quickly as possible. As we walked quietly into the hospital room, we found him asleep. My first inclination was not to awaken him. And then I thought he would want to know that we had come. So I reached over and carefully touched his hand. He slowly opened his eyes and then looked at me for a moment, and then the tears came to both of our eyes. He then said in a very weak and soft voice, "I knew you would come. I knew you would come. Would you please give me a blessing." In his dear, sweet faith, he was asking for a priesthood blessing, the same that is taught of and recorded in the Bible. We read in James 5:14-15:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

As men of the priesthood, it was our privilege to pronounce a blessing on him with power and authority of our Father in Heaven.

As I would meet with the members of the Church from one end of Portugal to the other, the brothers and sisters would ask, "How is Brother Aires? Will you please tell him we love him and we're praying for him?"

This good man and his wife, who had returned to Portugal almost unknown, now, because of their membership in the Church, had literally thousands who loved them and were

concerned about them and remembered him in their prayers.

The prayers of faith were answered. He recovered completely, and he and Sister Aires went on to fulfill a full-time mission together.

I have thought often of the contrast between the two—my little shoeshine man on one hand, who, like so many of life's unknown wanderers, had slipped away without any understanding of life's purpose; and Brother Aires on the other, who was not only taught of life's real purpose, but had now become a part of a great body of people who showed their love and appreciation for him.

No more strangers and foreigners

As the Apostle Paul wrote to the members of the Church, or Saints as they were called and are called today, he reminded the newly baptized members of the Church of the blessings of belonging when he told them, "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). What a blessing it is to belong and to be wanted and needed! It becomes even more apparent during life's tender moments.

To all who find yourselves outside the household of faith and away from the Saints, would you please accept this invitation to come unto Christ that we might all, as Alma said, "bear one another's burdens" (Mosiah 18:8). Join with the Saints, that you might not be any longer strangers alone in this world, but truly cared for, loved, and appreciated.

And to all of us—those of us who are members of the Church, could I just counsel with you for a moment? Do you have anyone that you know who might be as our little shoeshine man, who is alone—alone in this great crowd of people—that could use your special love and caring and concern? Could you take a moment and let such people know how much you love them?

And may we also, as members of the Church, truly do our part to make His church a welcome refuge for all of our Father in Heaven's children, I pray humbly in the name of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Robert K. Dellenbach and Harold G. Hillam of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Now Let Us Rejoice." Elders Helvécio Martins and Lynn A. Mickelsen, who were also sustained as members of the Seventy at April conference, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."

Elder Helvécio Martins

Testimonies influenced conversion

Brothers and sisters, it all began one beautiful night during April of 1972 when Elders Thomas McIntire and Steve Richards knocked on my door. At that time, I was searching for answers to many questions that confused and troubled my spirit. The principles taught that night contained the answers my wife and I had searched for so anxiously.

Our hearts rejoiced upon hearing the message of the restored gospel. But one special thing deeply affected our souls: the power of the testimonies of two representatives of the Lord. A marvelous feeling that we never before had experienced filled our hearts, certifying the truthfulness of the message. Our first visit to church was an edifying experience because of the Spirit there and the love those people showed us. The spirit of the messages and testimonies was confirmatory evidence that we had found the true church. The support of the missionaries, the successful fellowshipping efforts by the members, and our combined prayers and fasting gradually changed our worldly habits.

With respect and reverence, we attended the meetings and activities, but we postponed baptism because of the fear of negative reactions from our extended families.

The events following showed us our complete lack of wisdom, and of this we repented. The district of Rio de

Janeiro met in the Tijuca chapel for its quarterly conference. A strong spirit filled the hall from the first chords of the organ prelude.

The inspired messages from the pulpit prepared our hearts for an unforgettable moment. President George A. Oakes of the Brazil North Mission, who presided at the conference, introduced Brother Val Carter, his mission counselor.

After quoting selected scriptures, President Carter invited the men to stand and sing "I Need Thee Every Hour." After sharing his testimony of the mission of our Lord, Jesus Christ, President Carter declared his complete dependence on Christ for salvation and exaltation.

That experience deeply touched my heart and all my being. It was not possible to control my emotions. I could not imagine myself in tears, but the tears were indeed real. In that moment, the Holy Ghost reconfirmed the truthfulness of the things we already knew: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the Lord's kingdom on earth, the road back to the celestial mansion of our Eternal Father.

A miracle occurred in that moment, and our fears about baptism vanished. On July 2, 1972, my wife and I and our eldest son, Marcus, entered the fold through the gates of baptism.

Through our obedience to the laws of the gospel, fasting, and service, our

Heavenly Father blessed us with power to overcome fear, challenges, and eventual adversities.

The value of a testimony

From our extended families, only one of my sisters, Ivette, has accepted the restored gospel and been baptized. Nevertheless, the remainder of the family highly respects the Church. The same miracle happened in our social and professional circles—prejudice and misunderstanding eventually subsided, and some of our best friends have accepted baptism.

To what must we attribute such miracles? To the strength and power of the testimonies of faithful Saints upon which I was temporarily dependent. This influence aroused me intellectually and spiritually, preparing my mind and heart to receive in fulness a personal confirmation of the Holy Ghost.

But a testimony is not a work that is merely completed and concluded. Indeed, it is a process in continuous development. Nourishing and strengthening our testimonies is essential to our spiritual survival.

John Taylor, still a newly called elder of the Church, arrived in Kirtland while the fierce winds of apostasy were raging. Parley P. Pratt reported to him the rumors murmured against Joseph Smith. John Taylor answered:

"The principles you taught me led to [the Lord], and I now have the same testimony that you then rejoiced in. If the work was true six months ago, it is true today; if Joseph Smith was then a prophet, he is now a prophet" (in B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963], pp. 39–40).

In the same way, Ammon and his brothers "had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God. But this is not all; they had given them-

selves to much prayer, and fasting" (Alma 17:2–3).

A testimony should not be hidden. It must be shared (see D&C 62:3; 84:61).

In a remarkable address during the April session of general conference in 1973, President Harold B. Lee said,

"For the strength of the Church is not in the numbers, nor in the amount of tithes and offerings paid by faithful members, nor in the magnitude of chapels and temple buildings, but because in the hearts of faithful members of the Church is the conviction that this is indeed the church and kingdom of God on the earth" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 9; or *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 6).

Gain and strengthen testimonies

Brothers and sisters, I am absolutely sure that you can imagine how long my journey was to arrive here. But I ask if you know what brings me here? And I hasten to answer: my testimony.

It is a special gift of our Heavenly Father given through the Holy Ghost to all people who search for truth (see Moroni 10:4–5). It is wise to gain and improve a testimony of the truth because it not only helps us face our daily challenges, but it also opens our eyes, minds, and hearts to the great and marvelous things created by our Heavenly Father for our improvement and eternal happiness.

I know that God lives. Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, also lives, and we are dependent on Him for our salvation and exaltation.

Joseph Smith was indeed the key prophet of the Restoration in this dispensation. The Lord speaks today through our living prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, whom we love and follow. The Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel.

This testimony I witness unto you with all my heart, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen

What is truth? This poignant question was asked by the Roman ruler Pilate as the accused Savior was brought before him declaring: "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). In modern-day revelation, He declared:

"Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come;

"And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning" (D&C 93:24-25).

Receiving truth by the Spirit

How can we know the truth? The early members of the Church brought with them many customs, traditions, and practices from their earlier beliefs. Not all of these practices conformed to the will of the Lord. In a revelation given in May 1831, He explained to the elders of the Church how to discern and decide which of these practices were appropriate. He referred to both sides of the issue of teaching and receiving. Not only must we teach by the Spirit, we must receive by the Spirit.

"And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

"If it be some other way it is not of God" (D&C 50:19-20).

If we do not receive the truth by His spirit, it is not His word. In a latter-day revelation the Lord speaks very strongly about those who get on the wrong side of the question:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that Satan has great hold upon their hearts; he stirreth them up to iniquity against that which is good;

"... And they love darkness rather than light . . . ; therefore they will not ask of me" (D&C 10:20-21).

Asking, seeking, and knocking

A few months ago, a friend came to our home under the pretext that he had

some questions about the Church he needed help in answering. He said he had discovered the Book of Mormon was not the word of God and that Joseph Smith was not a prophet of God. He then proceeded to quote articles and books which were written by enemies of the Church. As he listed his sources, I replied that I also had read them and others, and they had only served to confirm my faith in the Book of Mormon and the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was surprised that I could have read the same things he had read and not believe as he believed. I suggested that he devote at least equal time to the right side of the issue, but he had come with a decision, not a question. His mind was made up. He did not want to know. His heart was closed. I thought of the children of Israel and their reaction to the Lord after He had guided them out of bondage: "And notwithstanding they being led, the Lord their God, their Redeemer, going before them, leading them by day and giving light unto them by night, and doing all things for them which were expedient for man to receive, they hardened their hearts and blinded their minds, and reviled against Moses and against the true and living God" (1 Nephi 17:30).

The promise of the Lord with regard to His word and His works is very explicit: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John 7:17). This was His constant rejoinder to those who rejected Him.

He told the Pharisees and the Sadducees they were looking in the right places with the wrong objectives in mind when He said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). They had obviously made a very careful study of the word that testified of Him and failed to find Him. Their foregone conclusions had not allowed the Spirit to guide them.

The same conditions exist today: we must ask the right questions; we must seek in the right places and knock on the right doors. That sometimes is very difficult to do. Nicodemus had to come to the Savior by night because his position in the community and in his church would have been seriously threatened had his contemporaries known of his inquiry in the right place (see John 3:1–21).

King Lamoni asked the right questions of Ammon when he said, “Who are you? How do you know these things? Where is God? Are you sent from him?” Then Ammon explained the plan of salvation to him, and he was able to understand because he opened his mind to knowledge and his heart to the Spirit (see Alma 18:18–40).

The prophet Alma, in his great discourse to the Zoramites, said, “But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words” (Alma 32:27). He explained to them that we open the door to receive by the Spirit with just a desire to believe. We must want to know the truth; we manifest that desire by asking, seeking, and knocking; the explicit promise is that He will answer, open, and help us find the truth.

Preparing hearts to know truth

We must prepare our hearts and our minds with a sincere desire to know the truth. King Benjamin taught, “My brethren, all ye that have assembled yourselves together, you that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you this day; for I have *not* commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that you should hearken unto me, and open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be un-

folded to your view” (Mosiah 2:9; italics added).

On the day of Pentecost, when Peter and John obviously were speaking with great power and by the Spirit, the men were pricked in their hearts and asked the question, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). In order to receive the truth, we must do the same. That is our responsibility—to ask and to seek.

Mormon’s counsel for judging truth

As we seek for the truth, we should always bear in mind the counsel of Mormon when he explained, “Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil” (Moroni 7:12). He then counseled us to be very careful in choosing and gave us the way to decide:

“For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God” (Moroni 7:15–16).

Witnesses of the Savior

What a blessing it is for us that the Prophet Joseph Smith asked the right questions in the right places for the right reason. As he and Sidney Rigdon pondered the question of the state of man’s existence after this life, the Lord touched the eyes of their understanding, and they were opened to a vision of the kingdom of God. In recording this vision they said:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:22–24).

Yes, for me it is as clear as the night from the day. Their witness of the Savior is true. I have heard His voice as I have read His word in the sacred writings of the prophets of the Book of Mormon and rejoiced with the further light and knowledge granted to our latter-day prophets. I add my witness to theirs:

He lives; I know He lives. This is His church. May we all look in the right places and ask the right questions and thus be taught by His Spirit to know the truth, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard the remarks of Helvécio Martins and Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder James E. Faust, also of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

A few months ago, I received a letter from a Church member who posed an unusual question: "Do I have a right to bear testimony of the Savior? Or is that the sole prerogative of the Twelve?" In response, I will share some thoughts on why every member of this church should bear witness and testimony of Jesus Christ.

First parents established a pattern

In the beginning, God commanded Adam, "Thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore" (Moses 5:8). Then the Holy Ghost, "which beareth record of the Father and the Son," came upon Adam and Eve, and they "blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters" (Moses 5:9, 12).

Later, Enoch described how God had taught Adam that all must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, whose atoning sacrifice made possible the forgiveness of sins, and that they must teach these things to their children (see Moses 6:52–59).

And so our first parents established the pattern, receiving a testimony

from the Holy Ghost and then bearing witness of the Father and the Son to those around them.

Ways to witness of Christ

The prophet Nephi described the ordinance of baptism as an occasion when persons would witness unto the Father that they were willing to take upon them the name of Christ (see 2 Nephi 31:13). Similarly, the Lord has specified that those who desire to be baptized in this dispensation should "come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they . . . are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ" (D&C 20:37; see also Moroni 6:3). We renew that promise when we partake of the sacrament (see D&C 20:77; Moroni 4:3).

We also witness of Christ by our membership in the Church that bears his name (see 3 Nephi 27:7; D&C 115:4).

We are commanded to pray unto the Father in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 18:19, 21, 23; see also Moses 5:8), and to do "all things . . . in the name of Christ" (D&C 46:31).

If we follow these commandments, we serve as witnesses of Jesus Christ through our baptism, our membership in his church, our partaking of the sacrament, and our prayers and other actions in his name.

Some of us fall short as witnesses

But our duty to be witnesses of Jesus Christ requires more than this, and I fear that some of us fall short. Latter-day Saints can become so preoccupied with our own agendas that we can forget to witness and testify of Christ.

I quote from a recent letter I received from a member in the United States. He described what he heard in his fast and testimony meeting:

"I sat and listened to seventeen testimonies and never heard Jesus mentioned or referred to in any way. I thought I might be in [some other denomination], but I supposed not because there were no references to God, either. . . .

"The following Sunday, I again attended church. I sat through a priesthood lesson, a Gospel Doctrine lesson, and seven sacrament meeting speakers and never once heard the name of Jesus or any reference to him."

Perhaps that description is exaggerated. Surely, it is exceptional. I quote it because it provides a vivid reminder for all of us.

Stand as witnesses of God

In answer to the question, "What are the fundamental principles of your religion?" the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 121).

When Alma spoke to a group of prospective members at the Waters of Mormon, he instructed them on the duties of those who were "desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people" (Mosiah 18:8). One of those duties was "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9).

How to become witnesses

How do members become witnesses? The original Apostles were eyewitnesses to the ministry and resurrection of the Savior (see Acts 10:39–41). He told them, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8; see also 10:42–43). However, he cautioned them that their witnessing would be after they had received the Holy Ghost (see Acts 1:8; see also Luke 24:49).

An eyewitness was not enough. Even the witness and testimony of the original Apostles had to be rooted in the testimony of the Holy Ghost. A prophet has told us that the witness of the Holy Ghost makes an impression on our soul that is more significant than "a visitation of an angel" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 1:44). And the Bible shows that when we testify on the basis of this witness, the Holy Ghost testifies to those who hear our words (see Acts 2; 10:44–47).

Every member should bear witness

When Peter and the other Apostles were brought before the civil authorities, he testified that Jesus Christ was "a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). Then Peter added, "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them

that obey him" (5:32). The mission of the Holy Ghost is to witness of the Father and the Son (see 2 Nephi 31:18; 3 Nephi 28:11; D&C 20:27). Consequently, everyone who has received the witness of the Holy Ghost has a duty to share that testimony with others.

Apostles have the calling and ordination to be special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world (see D&C 107:23), but the duty to witness and testify of Christ at all times and in all places applies to every member of the Church who has received the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

The book of Luke records two examples of this. In obedience to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus to the temple at Jerusalem after forty days, to present him to the Lord. There, two aged and spiritual temple workers received a witness of his identity and testified of him. Simeon, who had known by revelation from the Holy Ghost that he should not taste of death until he had seen the Messiah, took the infant in his arms and testified to his divine mission (see Luke 2:25-35). Anna, whom the scripture called "a prophetess" (Luke 2:36), recognized the Messiah "and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38).

Anna and Simeon were eyewitnesses to the infant, but, just like the Apostles, their knowledge of his divine mission came through the witness of the Holy Ghost. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). Therefore, we can properly say that when each received this witness, Simeon was a prophet and Anna was a prophetess. Each then fulfilled the prophetic duty to testify to those around them. As Peter said, "To [Christ] give all the prophets witness" (Acts 10:43). This was what Moses meant when he expressed the wish "that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29).

The scriptures describe other occasions when ordinary members—men

and women—bore witness of Christ. The Book of Mormon tells of King Lamoni and his queen, who testified of their Redeemer (see Alma 19). The Bible describes the witness of the Holy Ghost coming upon the kinsmen and friends of Cornelius, who were then heard to "magnify God" (Acts 10:24, 46).

Our scriptural duty to witness of the Savior and to testify of his divine Sonship has been affirmed by the prophets in our own day.

We are told that the commandments are given and the gospel is proclaimed that every person "might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world" (D&C 1:20).

Gifts of knowing and believing

Spiritual gifts come by the power of the Holy Ghost, that all the faithful may be benefited. One of these gifts is "to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world" (D&C 46:13). Those who receive that gift have the duty to testify of it. We know this because immediately after describing the gift of knowing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Lord says, "To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful" (D&C 46:14; see also 3 Nephi 19:28). Those who have the gift to know must give their witness so that those who have the gift to believe on their words can enjoy the benefit of that gift.

Valiant in the testimony of Jesus

Speaking to some of the earliest missionaries of this dispensation, the Lord said: "But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them" (D&C 60:2).

In contrast, the Lord gave this great promise to those who were valiant in bearing testimony: "For I will forgive you of your sins with this commandment—that you remain steadfast . . . in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you" (D&C 84:61).

This caution and promise were directed specifically to missionaries, but other scriptures suggest that they apply to other members as well.

In his vision of the spirits of the dead, President Joseph F. Smith described "the spirits of the just" as those "who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality" (D&C 138:12).

In contrast, in his vision of the three degrees of glory, the Prophet Joseph Smith described those souls who go to the terrestrial kingdom as the "honorable men of the earth," who were "not valiant in the testimony of Jesus" (D&C 76:75, 79).

What does it mean to be "valiant in the testimony of Jesus"? Surely this includes keeping his commandments and serving him. But wouldn't it also include bearing witness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, to believers and nonbelievers alike? As the Apostle Peter taught the Saints of his day, we should "sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [us] a reason of the hope that is in [us]" (1 Peter 3:15).

All of us need to be valiant in the testimony of Jesus. As believers in Christ, we affirm the truth of Peter's testimony in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12; see also D&C 109:4). We know from modern revelation that we can come unto the Father only in his name (see D&C 93:19). As the Book of Mormon teaches, salvation is "in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (Mosiah 3:18; see also Moses 6:52, 59).

The need for us to profess our faith

To those who are devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, I say there has never been a greater need for us to profess our faith, privately and publicly.

When the gospel was first restored, the pulpits of this land were aflame with the testimony of Jesus, the divine Son of God and Savior of the world. True, the fulness of his doctrine and the power of his priesthood had been lost from the earth, but there were many good and honorable men and women who were valiant in their own testimonies of Jesus. Our earliest missionaries concentrated their message on the Restoration—the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the restoring of priesthood authority—since they could assume that most of those they taught had a fundamental belief in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Today, our missionaries cannot make that assumption. There are still many God-fearing people who testify to the divinity of Jesus Christ. But there are many more—even in the formal ranks of Christianity—who doubt his existence or deny his divinity. As I see the deterioration in religious faith that has happened in my own lifetime, I am convinced that we who are members of his church need to be increasingly valiant in our testimony of Jesus.

Speaking almost twenty years ago, President Harold B. Lee said: "Fifty years ago or more, when I was a missionary, our greatest responsibility was to defend the great truth that the Prophet Joseph Smith was divinely called and inspired and that the Book of Mormon was indeed the word of God. But even at that time there were the unmistakable evidences that there was coming into the religious world actually a question about the Bible and about the divine calling of the Master, himself. Now, fifty years later, our greatest responsibility and anxiety is to defend the divine mission of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, for all about us, even among those who claim to be professors of the Christian faith, are those not will-

ing to stand squarely in defense of the great truth that our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was indeed the Son of God" (address delivered at LDS Student Association Fireside, Utah State University, 10 Oct. 1971).

Our knowledge of the literal divinity, resurrection, and atonement of Jesus Christ is more certain and more distinctive with each passing year. That is one reason the Lord inspired his prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, to have us reemphasize our study and testimony of the Book of Mormon, whose mission is "the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God" (Book of Mormon title page).

Guard against careless omissions

We live in a time when too many who purport to be Christians have a cause that comes ahead of Christ. For example, a national magazine recently reported an innovation by a new bishop of a prominent Christian church. Their ministers have always consecrated the emblems of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ in the name of the "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." However, in an effort to use what are called "nonsexist words," this new bishop has begun to consecrate the eucharist in the name of the "Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer" ("Fretful Murmur in the Cathedral," *Insight*, 24 Apr. 1989, p. 47). Such trendy and expedient tampering with the Christian faith is illustrative of the extent to which some are unwilling to witness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Such deliberate deviations are not likely to be made by faithful Latter-day

Saints. However, we need to be on guard against careless omissions and oversights in our personal testimonies, in our formal instruction, and in our worship and funeral services.

Be not ashamed

In addition, each of us has many opportunities to proclaim our belief to friends and neighbors, fellow workers, and casual acquaintances. I hope we will take these opportunities to express our love for our Savior, our witness of his divine mission, and our determination to serve him.

If we do all of this, we can say, like the Apostle Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16).

And, we can say, like the prophet Nephi, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

I testify of Jesus Christ, the Lord God of Israel, the light and life of the world, as I affirm the truth of his gospel, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder James E. Faust

Being a parent is a divine calling

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I ask for your faith and prayers this afternoon as I feel moved upon to discuss a subject which I have chosen to call the greatest challenge in

the world. It has to do with the privilege and responsibility of being good parents. On this subject there are about as many opinions as there are parents, yet there are few who claim to have all of the answers. I am certainly not one of them.

I feel that there are more outstanding young men and women among our people at present than at any other moment in my lifetime. This presupposes that most of these fine young people have come from good homes and have committed, caring parents. Even so, the most conscientious parents feel that they may have made some mistakes. One time, when I did a thoughtless thing, I remember my own mother exclaiming, "Where did I fail?"

The Lord has directed, "Bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40). To me, there is no more important human effort.

Being a father or a mother is not only a great challenge, it is a divine calling. It is an effort requiring consecration. President David O. McKay stated that being parents is "the greatest trust that has been given to human beings" (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children* [pamphlet, n.d.], p. 1).

Creating successful homes

While few human challenges are greater than that of being good parents, few opportunities offer greater potential for joy. Surely no more important work is to be done in this world than preparing our children to be God-fearing, happy, honorable, and productive. Parents will find no more fulfilling happiness than to have their children honor them and their teachings. It is the glory of parenthood. John testified, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:4). In my opinion, the teaching, rearing, and training of children requires more intelligence, intuitive understanding, humility, strength, wisdom, spirituality, perseverance, and hard work than any other challenge we might have in life. This is especially so when moral foundations of honor and decency are eroding around us. To have successful homes, values must be taught, and there must be rules, there must be standards, and there must be absolutes. Many societies give parents very little support in

teaching and honoring moral values. A number of cultures are becoming essentially valueless, and many of the younger people in those societies are becoming moral cynics.

As societies as a whole have decayed and lost their moral identity and so many homes are broken, the best hope is to turn greater attention and effort to the teaching of the next generation—our children. In order to do this, we must first reinforce the primary teachers of children. Chief among these are the parents and other family members, and the best environment should be in the home. Somehow, some way, we must try harder to make our homes stronger so that they will stand as sanctuaries against the unwholesome, pervasive moral dry rot around us. Harmony, happiness, peace, and love in the home can help give children the required inner strength to cope with life's challenges. Barbara Bush, wife of President George Bush, a few months ago said to the graduates of Wellesley College:

"But whatever the era, whatever the times, one thing will never change: Fathers and mothers, if you have children, they must come first. You must read to your children and you must hug your children and you must love your children. Your success as a family, our success as a society, depends not on what happens in the White House but on what happens inside your house" (*Washington Post*, 2 June 1990, p. 2).

To be a good father and mother requires that the parents defer many of their own needs and desires in favor of the needs of their children. As a consequence of this sacrifice, conscientious parents develop a nobility of character and learn to put into practice the selfless truths taught by the Savior Himself.

I have the greatest respect for single parents who struggle and sacrifice, trying against almost superhuman odds to hold the family together. They should be honored and helped in their heroic efforts. But any mother's or father's task is much easier where there

are two functioning parents in the home. Children often challenge and tax the strength and wisdom of both parents.

How often do you have family prayer?

A few years ago, Bishop Stanley Smoot was interviewed by President Spencer W. Kimball. President Kimball asked, "How often do you have family prayer?"

Bishop Smoot answered, "We try to have family prayer twice a day, but we average about once."

President Kimball answered, "In the past, having family prayer once a day may have been all right. But in the future it will not be enough if we are going to save our families."

I wonder if having casual and infrequent family home evening will be enough in the future to fortify our children with sufficient moral strength. In the future, infrequent family scripture study may be inadequate to arm our children with the virtue necessary to withstand the moral decay of the environment in which they will live. Where in the world will the children learn chastity, integrity, honesty, and basic human decency if not at home? These values will, of course, be reinforced at church, but parental teaching is more constant.

Parents must set the example

When parents try to teach their children to avoid danger, it is no answer for parents to say to their children, "We are experienced and wise in the ways of the world, and we can get closer to the edge of the cliff than you. Parental hypocrisy can make children cynical and unbelieving of what they are taught in the home. For instance, when parents attend movies they forbid their children to see, parental credibility is diminished. If children are expected to be honest, parents must be honest. If children are expected to be virtuous, parents must be virtuous. If you expect your

children to be honorable, you must be honorable.

Among the other values children should be taught are respect for others, beginning with the child's own parents and family; respect for the symbols of faith and patriotic beliefs of others; respect for law and order; respect for the property of others; respect for authority. Paul reminds us that children should "learn first to shew piety at home" (1 Timothy 5:4).

Disciplining children

One of the most difficult parental challenges is to appropriately discipline children. Child rearing is so individualistic. Every child is different and unique. What works with one may not work with another. I do not know who is wise enough to say what discipline is too harsh or what is too lenient except the parents of the children themselves, who love them most. It is a matter of prayerful discernment for the parents. Certainly the overarching and undergirding principle is that the discipline of children must be motivated more by love than by punishment. Brigham Young counseled, "If you are ever called upon to chasten a person, never chasten beyond the balm you have within you to bind up" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:124–25). Direction and discipline are, however, certainly an indispensable part of child rearing. If parents do not discipline their children, then the public will discipline them in a way the parents do not like. Without discipline, children will not respect either the rules of the home or of society.

A principal purpose for discipline is to teach obedience. President David O. McKay stated: "Parents who fail to teach obedience to their children, if [their] homes do not develop obedience society will demand it and get it. It is therefore better for the home, with its kindness, sympathy and understanding to train the child in obedience rather than callously to leave him to the brutal and unsympathetic discipline that society will impose if the home

has not already fulfilled its obligation" (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children*, p. 3).

Teaching children to work

An essential part of teaching children to be disciplined and responsible is to have them learn to work. As we grow up, many of us are like the man who said, "I like work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours" (Jerome Klapka Jerome, in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, comp. John P. Bradley, Leo F. Daniels, and Thomas C. Jones [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 782). Again, the best teachers of the principle of work are the parents themselves. For me, work became a joy when I first worked alongside my father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers. I am sure that I was often more of an aggravation than a help, but the memories are sweet and the lessons learned are valuable. Children need to learn responsibility and independence. Are the parents personally taking the time to show and demonstrate and explain so that children can, as Lehi taught, "act for themselves and not . . . be acted upon"? (2 Nephi 2:26).

Luther Burbank, one of the world's greatest horticulturists, said, "If we had paid no more attention to our plants than we have to our children, we would now be living in a jungle of weeds" (in *Elbert Hubbard's Scrap Book* [New York: Wm. H. Wise and Co., 1923], p. 227).

Special challenges for parents

Children are also beneficiaries of moral agency by which we are all afforded the opportunity to progress, grow, and develop. That agency also permits children to pursue the alternate choice of selfishness, wastefulness, self-indulgence, and self-destruction. Children often express this agency when very young.

Let parents who have been conscientious, loving, and concerned and who

have lived the principles of righteousness as best they could be comforted in knowing that they are good parents despite the actions of some of their children. The children themselves have a responsibility to listen, obey, and, having been taught, to learn. Parents cannot always answer for all their children's misconduct because they cannot ensure the children's good behavior. Some few children could tax even Solomon's wisdom and Job's patience.

There is often a special challenge for those parents who are affluent or overly indulgent. In a sense, some children in those circumstances hold their parents hostage by withholding their support of parental rules unless the parents acquiesce to the children's demands. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said, "Those who do too much *for* their children will soon find they can do nothing *with* their children. So many children have been so much *done for* they are almost *done in*" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, p. 150; or *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 101). It seems to be human nature that we do not fully appreciate material things we have not ourselves earned.

There is a certain irony in the fact that some parents are so anxious for their children to be accepted by and be popular with their peers; yet these same parents fear that their children may be doing the things their peers are doing.

Helping children internalize values

Generally, those children who make the decision and have the resolve to abstain from drugs, alcohol, and illicit sex are those who have adopted and internalized the strong values of their homes as lived by their parents. In times of difficult decisions they are most likely to follow the teachings of their parents rather than the example of their peers or the sophistries of the media which glamorize alcohol consumption, illicit sex, infidelity, dishonesty, and other vices. They are like Helaman's two thousand young men who "had been taught by their mothers, that if

they did not doubt, God would deliver them" from death (Alma 56:47). "And they rehearsed . . . the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it" (56:48).

What seems to help cement parental teachings and values in place in children's lives is a firm belief in Deity. When this belief becomes part of their very souls, they have inner strength. So, of all that is important to be taught, what should parents teach? The scriptures tell us that parents are to teach their children "faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost," and "the doctrine of repentance" (D&C 68:25). These truths must be taught in the home. They cannot be taught in the public schools, nor will they be fostered by the government or by society. Of course, Church programs can help, but the most effective teaching takes place in the home.

A thousand threads of love

Parental teaching moments need not be big or dramatic or powerful. We learn this from the Master Teacher. Charles Henry Parkhurst said:

"The completed beauty of Christ's life is only the added beauty of little inconspicuous acts of beauty—talking with the woman at the well; . . . showing the young ruler the stealthy ambition laid away in his heart that kept him out of the kingdom of Heaven; . . . teaching a little knot of followers how to pray; . . . kindling a fire and broiling fish that his disciples might have a breakfast waiting for them when they came ashore from a night of fishing, cold, tired, and discouraged. All of these things, you see, let us in so easily into the real quality and tone of [Christ's] interests, so specific, so narrowed down, so enlisted in what is small, so engrossed with what is minute" ("Kindness and Love," in *Leaves of Gold* [Honesdale, Pa.: Coslet Publishing Co., 1938], p. 177).

And so it is with being parents. The little things are the big things sewn into

the family tapestry by a thousand threads of love, faith, discipline, sacrifice, patience, and work.

Children of the covenant

There are some great spiritual promises which may help faithful parents in this church. Children of eternal sealings may have visited upon them the divine promises made to their valiant forebears who nobly kept their covenants. Covenants remembered by parents will be remembered by God. The children may thus become the beneficiaries and inheritors of these great covenants and promises. This is because they are the children of the covenant (see Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, pp. 110–11).

God bless the struggling, sacrificing, honorable parents of this world. May He especially honor the covenants kept by faithful parents among our people and watch over these children of the covenant. I pray that this may be so in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to this Young Women's choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon and for their own personal beauty and innocence before the Lord. The choir will now sing in closing "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy. As we think of our beloved President and prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, watching the services from his hospital room, I think all of us

will recognize that the words of this song pertain to him.

The choir sang "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Elder John K. Carmack offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 6, 1990. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. The choir was directed by Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden, and John Longhurst was at the organ.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood meeting. The Tabernacle on Temple Square is filled to capacity. I am satisfied that if we had a hall that would seat fifty or sixty thousand, we could fill it with these priesthood meetings. Thank you for coming and participating in this great service.

President Ezra Taft Benson, who is unable to be present at the conference proceedings due to recent surgery, has asked that we go forward. We do so with his blessing. He will be able to see the proceedings in his hospital room.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU

Marriott Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world. Elders James E. Faust, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Alexander B. Morrison are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Joe J. Christensen and Lynn A. Sorensen are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon Elders Waldo P. Call and Helio R. Camargo were released as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

Sustained as the Young Men's General Presidency were Elders Jack H. Goaslind, LeGrand R. Curtis, and Robert K. Dellenbach. Elder H. Verlan Andersen was sustained as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "Oh Say, What Is Truth?" Following the singing, Elder Dean L. Larsen of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Oh Say, What Is Truth?"

Elder Dean L. Larsen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour," following which Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Coun-

cil of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder M. Russell Ballard**Moral cleanliness of youth**

My remarks are directed primarily to you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. The subject is the moral cleanliness of our youth. The leaders of the Church care so deeply about every one of you that I feel an urgent need to warn you once again of the consequences of moral misconduct. At the same time, I want to impress upon you the great promises extended to those who remain morally clean.

We are aware that the youth of the Church are growing up in a world that is plagued with teenage moral misconduct. We also know that sexual sin has increased tremendously during the past twenty years. Far too many of the youth, particularly American youth, have violated the law of chastity before they reach the age of nineteen. Unfortunately, the youth of the Church are not immune. For this reason, I want to assure you young men that your leaders know of the challenges you face in today's society. However, we have confidence that you can develop the strength and integrity to surmount these challenges and live for the blessings that are promised to those who remain morally clean.

I emphasize that you do *not* need to be caught in the trap of being immoral—not one of you, ever. Each one of you must look into the future to understand the consequences of your actions, both good and bad. The cartoon character Ziggy said it this way: "Our future is shaped by our past, . . . so be very careful what you do in your past!"

Act with your future in mind

Let me relate a personal experience to show the importance of keeping your future continually in mind. When I was in the Aaronic Priesthood, I and one of my friends attended general priesthood meeting in this tabernacle and found ourselves over here by the stairs where we didn't belong. President George Albert Smith, in his kindly way, saw our plight and invited us to sit on the stairs. As we sat there and watched the proceedings of the meeting, I did not believe that I ever again would get that close to this pulpit. I remember saying to my friend as we left the Tabernacle, "It would sure be nice to be a General Authority; then you would have one of those seats on the stand to sit in."

I know now by personal experience that, in some ways, brethren, the benches you are sitting on are much more comfortable than these on the stand. Now the point: As an Aaronic Priesthood holder, I had no idea that the time would come in my life when I would serve as a bishop, a mission president, a Seventy, and now as an Apostle. We cannot foresee what the Lord has in mind for us. Our only course of action is to be prepared and worthy for whatever he requires. We must govern our actions every day with our future in mind.

Satan blinds us to eternal rewards

One of Satan's clever tactics is to tempt us to concentrate on the present and ignore the future. The Lord warned Joseph Smith that "Satan seeketh to turn their hearts away from the truth,

that they become blinded and understand not the things which are prepared for them" (D&C 78:10). The "things which are prepared for them" are the promised rewards of eternal life, which come as a result of obedience. The devil attempts to blind us to these rewards. President Heber J. Grant said that "if we are faithful in keeping the commandments of God His promises will be fulfilled to the very letter. . . . The trouble is, the adversary of men's souls blinds their minds. He throws dust, so to speak, in their eyes, and they are blinded with the things of this world" (*Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1941], pp. 44-45). He tempts us with the transitory pleasures of the world so that we will not focus our minds and efforts on the things that bring eternal joy. The devil is a dirty fighter, and we must be aware of his tactics.

Deceptions about sin and repentance

Recently I talked with several groups of young men and women in Utah and Idaho. They told me that some of our youth feel that they can be immoral during their teen years and then repent when they decide to go on a mission or be married in the temple. Some young men talk about a mission as a time when they will be forgiven from their past sins. They have the notion that a few transgressions now are no big deal because they can repent quickly, go on a mission, and then live happily ever after.

Young men, please believe me when I tell you that this scenario is a gross deception by Satan; it is a fairy tale. Sin will always, *always*, result in suffering. It may come sooner, or it may come later, but it will come. The scriptures state that you will "stand with shame and awful guilt before the bar of God" (Jacob 6:9) and that you will experience "a lively sense of . . . guilt, and pain, and anguish" (Mosiah 2:38).

A related misconception is that repentance is easy. President Kimball

said that "one has not begun to repent until he has suffered intensely for his sins. . . . If a person hasn't suffered, he hasn't repented" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], pp. 88, 99). You need only talk to a person who has truly repented of serious sin to understand that the momentary pleasure of an immoral act is simply not worth the pain that always follows.

Peer pressure to be immoral

The youth told me that some are tempted to be immoral because they want to be accepted by their peers. For the young men, it may mean acceptance based on some sort of macho image. For the young women, it may be the need to feel they are accepted by having a boyfriend. Acceptance by your peers must not come at the expense of your virtue and self-esteem. King Benjamin indicates that those guilty of sin will "shrink from the presence of the Lord" (Mosiah 2:38). In a very real way, those who have been immoral shrink from the presence of others: their friends, their parents, other members of their family, and Church leaders.

Blessings of being morally clean

Now, let us consider the grand blessings the Lord has promised those who are obedient to the commandment to be morally clean. You never need to repent of a sin you have not committed. That seems obvious, but I want to emphasize it. Repentance is a great blessing, but you should never make yourself sick just so you can try out the remedy. You are infinitely better to maintain your spiritual health by staying morally clean. If you feel confident in the presence of your parents, peers, and priesthood leaders, you can sense how you will feel when you have the confidence and acceptance of the Savior.

Can you think of any better promise for the future than spoken by King Benjamin: "I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and

happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41).

The youth told me that a clean conscience improves their self-esteem. Their relationships with others are better, and they enjoy a very positive acceptance. In fact, some of them said they have lots more fun because of their high standards. They never have to worry about the dreaded diseases that often follow those who transgress the law of chastity.

Here are some suggestions that will help you stay morally clean.

Understand the standards

First, understand the standards of moral cleanliness. The Lord said concerning his commandments, "I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation" (D&C 82:9). In other words, commandments are guidance for happy living.

Our youth seem confused about the definition of moral cleanliness. Some young men and women take a certain definition and then push it to its limits to see how far they can go without being immoral by that definition. I suggest an opposite approach.

Several years ago, Elder Hartman Rector, who spent twenty-six years as a navy pilot, gave an interesting analogy. The navy had a rule that said, in effect, "Thou shalt not fly thy airplane in the trees." That makes sense. But to ensure that he obeyed this rule, he set his own standard: "Thou shalt not fly thy airplane closer than 5,000 feet to the trees." He said, "When you do this you make the navy's commandment of not flying in the trees easy to live" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1972, p. 172; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 131).

Some standards must not be compromised. If you are not sure about the

Church's standard of morality, talk to your parents or to your priesthood leaders. Also, you can know the correct standards of moral conduct by following the promptings of the Spirit. These promptings never will lead you to do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, unclean, or ashamed. You must be sensitive to these promptings because your physical passions can obscure them if you are not careful.

Commit to live by the standards

Second, once you understand the standards, you must determine that you will live by them. This kind of commitment is a fundamental gospel principle. The scriptures teach that "there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it" (Abraham 3:17). You must be the same way. You must be as Joseph who fled from the presence of Potiphar's wife rather than sin against God (see Genesis 39:7-12). You must avoid moral misconduct by making a firm decision to avoid compromising situations and to stand firm for what is right. You must have self-control and high goals. I urge every one of you tonight to set a goal to be morally clean, if you have not already done so.

You need not face temptation alone

Third, while you must exercise your agency and bear the responsibility for your decisions, you need not face temptation alone. Just two weeks ago at a stake conference, Elder Charles "Tiny" Grant, one of our fine Regional Representatives, shared an experience with us. He said that some years ago while he was the football coach at Ricks College, he met a man named Hal Barton, who was famous for his love of fishing. He was warned, however, that "although Hal knows where to find the big fish, he often goes into strong waters to find them."

Their first opportunity to go fishing together was in February as the ice was

breaking up. As they walked together up the river, Hal pointed to an island about fifty yards away and said, "Coach, that is where we will find the big ones." The day was cold, and now they had to cross a dangerous part of the river. The coach soon discovered that the rocks were round and slick, and the water was only inches from the top of his waders. Since he is six feet five inches tall, that meant it was deep. He was about to tell Hal that he was afraid he couldn't cross the water, but realized that the football coach could not admit that he was afraid.

Just then Hal said, "Coach, this is how we are going to cross the water. You take a step and get a firm footing while I hold your hand and arm steady. Then I will take a step while you stand firmly and furnish the support. We will work our way through this roiling, swift water over these slippery rocks." With this mutual support, they crossed the river safely and caught the big ones.

This is an excellent analogy for the way you can live the Lord's standard of morality. Some who have gone before you have a firm footing, having lived the moral standard and experienced the blessings of doing so. As you take steps into the deep water of life, they will support you. Then, as you gain a firm footing in righteousness, you can help others who come after you.

Generally, your most important source of support is your parents. Their teachings should be a powerful influence in your decision to be clean. I realize, however, that morality can be a sensitive subject. I urge you young men to initiate conversations with your parents about their moral values. Ask them to help you define the standards that will keep you morally clean.

Also seek counsel from your priesthood leaders, especially your bishop. He knows the standards, and he knows what to teach you. Seek opportunities to be with him. You can expect him to ask pointed, searching questions. Trust him. Confide in him. Ask him to help

you understand what the Lord expects from you. Make a commitment to live according to the Church's standards of morality. A meaningful relationship with an adult leader is vital to help you keep morally clean and worthy. Your Aaronic Priesthood advisers will teach you and give you the support and direction you may need. Ask them for guidance. They will know how to help you.

Choose good friends

Fourth, choose friends who share your standards, both members and non-members. Such friends will make peer pressure uplifting and positive. The young men and women I talked to said that acceptance of the peer group is a powerful influence either for good or bad. When your friends observe high moral standards, you are more likely to do the same. When you have established a strong bond with such friends, you can reach out to those who have not made firm decisions about morality. Help them to know that immorality is not "cool."

Respect women

Fifth, you young men must cultivate a considerate attitude toward women of all ages. The young women asked me to tell you that they want you to respect them and show them common, sincere courtesy. Do not hesitate to show your good manners by opening a door for them, taking the initiative in inviting them on a date, and standing as they enter a room. Believe it or not, in this age of equal rights, the young women want you to extend these simple courtesies.

Seek the Lord's help

Finally, seek help from the Lord, the source of spiritual power. If you "call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually," you will "not be tempted above that which ye can bear"

(Alma 13:28). Your daily prayers must include a heartfelt request for help in keeping your commitment to remain morally clean. When you do this, the Lord will bless you with the strength to remain morally clean.

Purity precedes power

Remember, young men, that purity precedes power. The Lord said, "But purify your hearts before me; and then go ye into all the world, and preach my gospel unto every creature who has not received it" (D&C 112:28). Missionaries discover this very early in their missions and make every effort to be worthy so they can serve with power.

The hope of repentance

Now, just a word to those of you who have violated the moral law. I hold out the hope of repentance to you. The Savior's atonement provides forgiveness when you have repented completely. You will necessarily suffer because of sin, but you can know the joy of being forgiven completely. Your bishop can guide you through the process of repentance, so talk to him as soon as possible. You must also seek divine forgiveness through your personal prayers. Alma said: "Never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul" (Alma 38:8). Once you have forsaken your sins, never return to them, because "unto

that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return" (D&C 82:7).

We need not fear the future

Tonight, I echo the prayer offered by President Hugh B. Brown in a setting such as this more than twenty years ago, when the moral misconduct of youth was not as commonplace as it is today. He prayed, "O Father, help these young men who are listening tonight, when they go home to get on their knees and commit themselves to thee; and then they may know, and I promise them in thy name that they will know, that with thy help they need not fear the future" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, pp. 116-17; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1967, p. 94).

Brethren, we need not fear the future if we will keep the Lord's commandments and live to be his worthy servants. You can stay morally clean and prepare now for a happy future. May the Lord bless every one of you to so live I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just heard from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Marion D. Hanks, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder J Ballard Washburn, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at the April conference.

Elder Marion D. Hanks

Changing channels

A few days ago, I enjoyed the challenging experience of speaking to a large group of younger teenagers. Thereafter, I received a special letter from a wonderful mother who, with her husband, a bishop, had accompanied their fourteen-year-old son, with some

of his friends, to the meeting. These are the last few words of her letter:

"Please accept my thanks. . . . You spoke seriously to a group of youth who are used to being told how wonderful they are. They *are* wonderful, but they needed to do some heavy thinking for a change. You helped them do that. Thank you!"

I was pleased that the meeting had encouraged some serious thinking and consideration among at least some of those present. We referred, as we began, to the aimless habit some of us have of channel hopping or dial switching as we sit in front of a television set or radio, and suggested that in preparation, I had done a similar kind of searching through my memory and notes. I was seeking to select, out of many observations and experiences and thoughts, a few that might make a difference to those who were seriously listening and might thereafter think about what they had heard. I would like to do the same with you in these few moments this evening.

The object of good parents

A picture forms on my monitor involving a father aboard an airplane on a short business trip. He has with him his five-year-old son and is almost wishing his son were not there because it is a very rough trip. There are downdrafts and updrafts and head winds alternating with tail winds, and some passengers are feeling a bit queasy. Apprehensively, the father glances at his son and finds him grinning from ear to ear. "Dad," he says, "do they do this just to make it fun for the kids?"

Good parents and family and leaders and friends do go to great lengths to make it fun for the kids, but the fun they are thinking of is wholesome fun; it hurts no one, and it lifts the spirit and is good to remember tomorrow and through a lifetime and forever. It never detracts from the real, long-term joy we came into this world to experience.

The next scene on the screen illustrates that clearly—it is a personal testimony of a noble and loving father to his children shortly before his death. Says Lehi: "I have spoken these few words unto you . . . in the last days of my probation; and I have chosen the good part, according to the words of the prophet. And I have none other object

save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls" (2 Nephi 2:30).

That is the object also of every good father and mother and grandparent and teacher and priesthood leader and friend.

Choose a course of giving

As we switch rapidly to another scene or two tonight, look for the principles of love and agency shining through the thoughts and illustrations. They are central principles of the gospel, encompassing "all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40), as Jesus said of the commandments to love God and love our neighbor, and they emphasize the individual responsibility and accountability in our choices with respect to all other virtues and values (see Matthew 22:36–40).

The Bible teaches us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that "Jesus Christ your Redeemer . . . so loved the world that he gave his own life" (D&C 34:1, 3).

God so loved that *he gave*.

Christ so loved that *he gave*.

We are here on this earth to learn, after the example of the Father and the Son, to love enough to *give*—to use our agency unselfishly. We are here to learn to do the will of the Father.

The love we speak of is not just a word or a feeling or a sentiment. John wrote, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

So we are speaking of choosing a course of sharing, of giving, of graciousness, of kindness, not as optional elements of the gospel, but as the heart of it. Decency and honor and unselfishness, good manners and good taste are expected of us. What really matters, after all, is what kind of people we are and *that* we are daily, hourly, deciding and manifesting. Jesus said, "Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do" (3 Nephi 18:24).

Are you looking at me?

A sobering and poignant scene appears on our screen as we switch channels. A grieving young father and his two children sit before a television set in their home after a makeshift dinner. The children have been staying with Grandmother while their mother has slowly slipped away in a lingering illness; now they and their father are home again after her funeral. The little girl drops off to sleep and is carried to her bed. The little boy fights off sleepiness until he finally asks his father if tonight, just tonight, he can sleep with him in his bed. As the two lie silently in the dark, the lad speaks: "Daddy, are you looking at me?" "Yes, son," the father replies, "I am looking at you."

The boy sighs and, exhausted, sleeps. The father waits a time and then, weeping, cries out in the dark, in anxious anguish: "God, are you looking at me? If you are, maybe I can make it. Without you, I know I can't."

Our Heavenly Father is looking at us. He loves us and he wants us to choose the path that leads us to happiness here and eternal life hereafter. In his plan he authorizes us to act for him, to be instruments of his concern for his children. But he won't force any of us to make choices that lead to happiness. He has given each of us the right and responsibility to make personal choices, individual decisions, and has made us accountable for them. He not only affects our lives, he is affected by our lives, and sometimes he weeps for us.

The same prophet Lehi, to whom we referred, taught his children these truths:

"Because . . . they are redeemed . . . they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon. . . .

"Wherefore . . . they are free to choose liberty and eternal life . . . or to choose captivity and death" (2 Nephi 2:26-27).

A deacon chooses correctly

Switch channels with me to a scene on a Saturday night in a ranch home kitchen, where a boy who has just answered the telephone nervously approaches his mother with a question: "Mom," he says, "Bob is on the phone. He and his dad and Tom and his dad are going snowmobiling and shooting tomorrow morning, and they want to know if I can go with them." The mother seems startled at the question and uncertain as she answers. (Later, she explains that she was strongly tempted to respond sharply to her boy, reminding him that he had duties on Sunday morning, that in their family they went to church together, and that when Dad returned later that night he would not consider such a thing.) But instead, she says to her son, "Richard, you are twelve years old. You hold the priesthood. You are president of the deacons quorum. I am sure Dad would want you to make up your own mind and answer Bob yourself."

The boy goes back to the telephone, and the mother goes to her room and prays that their son will give the right answer. Nothing more is said about the matter, and on Sunday morning the lad and his parents go into town to church, park in the lot across the street, and are crossing, arm-in-arm, when a pickup truck passes. Two men and two boys are in the seat, snowmobiles in the truck bed, guns slung in the rear window. The boys wave to Richard as they pass. He pauses a moment and says, "Gee, I wish . . ." The mother catches her breath a bit, and then Richard finishes: "Gee, I wish I had been able to talk Bob and Tom into coming to priesthood meeting this morning."

The mother, telling the story, thanks the Lord for this choice lad and his personal decision to do the right thing. And then she weeps freely as she explains how important that was to all of them. You see, their son was killed in a farm accident that week.

We push the remote control, and a classic statement from a great mind and heart stands out boldly: "Ah, my soul, look to the road you are walking on. He who picks up one end of the stick picks up the other. He who chooses the beginning of a road chooses the place it leads to" (Harry Emerson Fosdick).

A young man aboard ship in wartime

I would like to share with you young men tonight one very unhappy recording in my mind of a promising young man aboard ship in wartime, who chose the beginning of a road that led him to a destination that was one of the last places in the world he really wanted to be. His initial mistakes were understandable; he was young and away from home and friends and familiar standards, and he wanted to be independent. His intentions were not evil, but because he was a little arrogant and proud, he rejected good counsel and let himself be led away by individuals who were described perfectly in the Book of Mormon, thousands of years ago, in their sinful persuasion of others. It is written of them that "they do it for a token of bravery" (Moroni 9:10).

Imitation men being imitated; these "macho" visions of life, so pitifully empty, can lead only to tragedy.

There is good, and there is evil, and there is a way to help us all tell the difference:

"All things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil. . . .

" . . . My brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

"For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:12, 15-16).

A football player chooses wisely

A new picture comes on the screen and rivets our attention. A strong-look-

ing young football player is responding to questions from sportswriters about his development from a disappointing earlier career to one of great promise. What had brought about the change?

"You know," he said, "in high school you can sort of make up your own world and be king of it. In the real world, you're with everybody else, and you're just part of it."

He seems to be wisely using his agency now to follow a more constructive path. He had been on a road that seemed to be leading where he really did not want to be, and he had been mature enough to turn around and choose a better way.

A young convert feels the Spirit

Oh, we have seen remarkable events as we have flipped the remote control of observation and memory. One of the most touching involved a young lady convert to the Church who had found in a Latter-day Saint fellow student, and in her fellow student's home, where she was invited for family home evening, a spirit and a caring relationship she had never known in her own life. She said that since her baptism, things had not really materially changed in her own home; there were still abuse and argument and alcohol and foul language. "But," she said, "there is one room at my house where I can go and shut the door and read the scriptures and listen to good music and pray and feel the Spirit of the Lord. In my little room I can have that blessing. One day, if the Lord will help me, I will marry a man with whom I can live in a home where we can have the Spirit of the Lord always."

A scene from Nha Trang, Vietnam

There is one last scene I would call up for you from my journal. The sobering realities of our present Middle East involvement, where many of our people are in threatening conditions, make this memory particularly pertinent and particularly appreciated. I read it as I

wrote it in Nha Trang, Vietnam, in May 1967:

"There was a memorable meeting this morning, which began with a senior military chaplain of another church addressing us warmly as 'My brothers in Christ.' This touched me deeply, and the meeting that went along was consistent with his gentle beginning.

"It was a very special, tender meeting; the Spirit was strong.

"It was uncomfortably warm in the room where we met. There were two ancient air conditioners, but they were ineffective. In fact, we discovered when we finally opened the door that it was cooler outside than in. Notwithstanding this, a great spirit was felt and a sweet experience enjoyed.

"Outside the room after the meeting, I walked quietly down the passageway alongside the large room where we had met. As I passed the back door, I looked in and saw a kind of human barrier that had been set up to separate the many young men who were lingering in

the front part of the room from a few who were in the back. Three men had their hands on the head of another who sat on a chair. All four were dressed in battle gear; two had returned from air strikes to the north just in time for the meeting, and one was shortly to go. The three members of the district presidency were giving a blessing to an officer senior to them all, setting him apart as a district missionary."

For some reason this sweet scene affected me more deeply than any priesthood sermon I have heard. Priesthood to them meant the right and the power to serve, to act in the name of the Lord as his agents and in his interests with their fellowmen. This scene I hope I will never forget.

The scriptures teach us, "My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him" (2 Chronicles 29:11).

That we may, faithfully, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder J Ballard Washburn

President Benson's early life

Brethren, it's an honor to be with you. I humbly pray for the Spirit to guide the things that I say, that we may look at a few brief events in the life of our prophet and resolve to try harder to be like him, to be true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Elder Kimball quoted Mr. F. M. Bareham as saying, "When a wrong wants righting, or a truth wants preaching, or a continent wants discovering [and, we might add, or God wants us to read the Book of Mormon], God sends a baby into the world to do it" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1960, p. 84).

And so it was that on August 4, 1899, in Whitney, Idaho, Sarah Benson started into labor. Her husband, George, gave her a blessing. "Dr. Allan Cutler attended her in the bedroom of their farm home, with both grand-

mothers, Louisa Benson and Margaret Dunkley, there. The delivery was protracted. As the baby, a large boy, was delivered, the doctor couldn't get him to breathe and quickly laid him on the bed and pronounced, 'There's no hope for the child, but I believe we can save the mother.' While Dr. Cutler feverishly attended to Sarah, the grandmothers rushed to the kitchen, praying silently as they worked, and returned shortly with two pans of water—one cold, the other warm. Alternately, they dipped the baby first in cold and then in warm water, until finally they heard a cry. The 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ pound boy was alive! Later, both grandmothers bore testimony that the Lord had spared the child. George and Sarah named him Ezra Taft Benson" (Sheri L. Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson: A Biography* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987], pp. 13-14).

When Ezra was age twelve, his father was called on a mission, and being the oldest child, Ezra was left to help care for his mother, who was expecting, and his six brothers and sisters. A smallpox epidemic caused them all to be seriously ill, and the mother became critically ill, but they refused the insistence of the doctor that the father come home. And the Lord blessed them, and they weathered this and many other difficult situations while the father served a mission.

"In the early fall of 1920 Ezra spent a weekend in Logan preparatory to enrolling for winter quarter. He and a cousin were standing on a curb on Main Street when an attractive young woman drove by in a Ford convertible and waved to a friend. A few minutes later she drove by a second time and waved again. 'Who is that?' Ezra asked. 'Flora Amussen,' his cousin replied. There was something about the girl that impressed Ezra, and he responded enthusiastically, 'When I come down here this winter, I'm going to [court] her.' 'Like heck you will,' the cousin answered, adding, 'she's too popular for a farm boy like you.' 'That makes it all the more interesting,' Ezra countered. He received the distinct impression that he would marry her" (*Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 46-47).

President Benson's mission and marriage

In the summer of 1921, at age twenty-one, Ezra received a letter from President Heber J. Grant calling him on a mission to Great Britain. July 14, 1921, he went through the Logan Temple with his parents, and two days later, he said good-bye to his parents and girlfriend and started on his way to England (see *Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 50). Elder Benson studied and worked hard but didn't feel like he was doing too well and wrote in his journal that he was disgusted with his "frail attempt at speaking." But as he matured spiritually, he was invited to speak at the South

Shields Branch. He was assigned to speak on the Apostasy, but instead he "gave a strong and impressive discourse of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon." He later said, "I spoke with a freedom I had never experienced. Afterwards, I couldn't recall what I had said, but several non-members surrounded me and said, 'Tonight, we received a witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and we are ready for baptism.' It was the experience of a lifetime. . . . It was the first experience of that kind I'd had, where I knew that the Lord was with me" (*Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 55).

President Benson married his sweetheart September 10, 1926, in the Salt Lake Temple, after they had both served missions. He has said that Sister Benson had more faith in him than he had in himself. After sixty-four years of marriage, they are an example of love and devotion to us all.

Now, each of you young men can know that the Lord is with you and that he loves each one of you. You can follow this great prophet and serve a mission and be married in the temple. You can live a life of service as he has and be a disciple of Jesus.

God's chosen prophet

When President Kimball died, we were living in Arizona. President Kimball had been in our home. We had knelt with him in family prayer, and he had eaten bread and milk with us. We knew he was a prophet of God.

I wanted a witness of the Spirit that President Benson was God's chosen prophet. I wanted to know more than that he was just a good person and next in line after President Kimball. The Lord was kind to me, and, after fasting and prayer, I received, by the Spirit, the witness that President Benson was indeed God's chosen prophet for this time, with a special calling and a special message for our day.

Today there are thousands who have had a spiritual awakening because

they are studying and following the teachings of the Book of Mormon as the prophet has admonished us to do. There are thousands who feel they have received a special personal message from the prophet as he has spoken to the young men of the Church, the young women of the Church, the children, the elderly, the parents. There are thousands who are better people today because they have stripped themselves of pride, as counseled by this great prophet. Yes, "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days" (*Hymns*, no. 19).

I bear witness that Ezra Taft Benson was born to be a prophet, has lived so he could be a prophet, and has been called of God to be a prophet in our day. He has set a pattern of service and endurance that each of us should seek to follow.

We ever pray for thee

In closing, may I read the words of a song that were sung this afternoon by the young ladies' chorus that express our feelings for our prophet.

We ever pray for thee, our prophet dear,
That God will give to thee comfort and cheer;
As the advancing years furrow thy brow,
Still may the light within shine bright as now.

We ever pray for thee with all our hearts,
That strength be given thee to do thy part,
To guide and counsel us from day to day,
To shed a holy light around our way.
We ever pray for thee with fervent love;
And as the children's prayer is heard above,
Thou shalt be ever blest, and God will give
All that is meet and best while thou shalt live. [*Hymns*, no. 23]

May God bless and sustain his prophet, and may we follow him, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have listened to Elders Marion D. Hanks and J. Ballard Washburn of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will join in singing "High on the Mountain Top," following which we shall hear from Elder Durrel A. Woolsey, also sustained as a member of the Seventy at the April conference.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Durrel A. Woolsey

The patriarchal key

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Could we add, "lose his own soul, and his family"?

As I left California, bound for Salt Lake City to receive training and be set apart for a mission in Arizona, I experienced for a moment an alarming feel-

ing. I had lost all of my keys. The keys to the cars, home, business, and Church calling had been left behind. I had the depressing feeling that I no longer had any keys; even my pockets seemed empty.

Then came the exhilarating thought that I still had the most important key of all, a key that I will hold eternally, if I remain worthy. That key, of course, is the patriarchal key with my family.

I became aware of how temporary most other keys are, especially keys that control material things that will one day become victims of moth and rust. Priesthood keys of leadership and other keys of presidency are extremely vital; but for the most part, even they are temporary in nature. Eventually, after faithfully serving, you will then relinquish those keys to someone else.

We will, however, be blessed to continue to hold our patriarchal key. Fathers, you hold the key to accomplish the work stated by several of the prophets as vitally important. President Harold B. Lee said the most important work you will ever do "will be done within the walls of your own home," and President David O. McKay cautioned that "no other success can compensate for failure in the home."

Importance of honorable fathers

Many in the world are alarmed, and with some justification, at the plight and deteriorating condition of families. The most powerful thrust toward a resolution of this significant problem would be an honorable father, full of integrity and fidelity, giving righteous leadership to his family. That joyful work and calling is to do whatever is necessary to chart a course for you and your family to unitedly return and live with Heavenly Father.

We likely will not be called upon to endure the great physical hardships suffered by so many of our pioneer forefathers. Ours is a much more sinister and demoralizing challenge. Often this challenge will approach cloaked in confusing masks of misunderstood rights and agency or the enticements and allurements of a misguided world. We daily face the "anything for a thrill" crowd or the "What's in it for me?" society.

The anti-Christ Korihor, in the Book of Mormon, taught a similar type of damaging doctrine when he said, "There could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management

of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime" (Alma 30:17). This rhetoric could blend into much of the accepted doctrine of the world today.

Fathers should become heroes

So where is safety? How does a father go about safely guiding his most priceless possession through the reefs and shoals?

Dad, you need to be a hero in your family. They need a hero. They will have strong peer pressure and temptation to adopt the so-called heroes of today who are not worthy of their attention and most certainly not their emulation. The heroes or superstars in the sports and entertainment world, and there are many, frequently become examples of dishonesty, instability, and infidelity. They flagrantly and indifferently flaunt those weaknesses of character and immorality before a doting and accepting world, as Korihor said, "according to the management of the creature" (Alma 30:17).

Could not, should not, Father become the hero to his family? A father worthy of attention, worthy of emulation? Most certainly, but how?

Commit a generous amount of time

First of all, a generous amount of your time is required—not a superficial moment here and there, not the tired and worn-out phrase, "We'll talk about that later," but an honest, generous piece of your day on a continuing basis, even at the sacrifice of things social, things personally entertaining, or even things financially rewarding. All of the money in the world, significant worldly accomplishments which may include the upper rungs of the success ladder, or the personal enjoyment of athletic and sporting activities, will not return you and your family intact to live with Heavenly Father.

President Joseph F. Smith quoted from the Savior, as stated in Mark: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Then President Smith continued: "What would it profit me, though I should go out into the world and win strangers to the fold of God and lose my own children? Oh! God, let me not lose my own. I can not afford to lose mine, whom God has given to me and whom I am responsible for before the Lord, and who are dependent upon me for guidance, for instruction, for proper influence" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 462).

The salvation of our families will require all that we have to save all that we have. So you will make the time commitment. Great! Positive, wonderful benefits will begin to flow to you and your family almost immediately.

"Love thy wife with all thy heart"

So what next? I mentioned fidelity. It is absolutely essential that you set an undeviating course of loyalty and faithfulness to your companion, to whom you have previously made these very commitments and promises. The example of your great love and respect for her, the two of you being as one, will establish a singular guiding strength that your children will desire to follow. Your voices and actions blending together in a united front as you teach and lead your little family will be the trumpet with a certain sound of strength and unity leading to safety. Synonyms of *fidelity* are *allegiance* and *devotion*. They will be critical supports to your foundation of fidelity. "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22).

Search the scriptures daily

Father, one of your greatest resources will be the scriptures. You

would not consider making a large investment in a rather complicated and technical piece of equipment, then begin its operation, without an involved study of the handbook of instruction. Further, you would likely reference that handbook often. The handbook of instructions for your somewhat complicated, very sizable investment called family is certainly the original handbook of instruction—that being our beloved scriptures. They are complete with instructions and examples. Often, you will find the answer before the question is asked. Daily research is required. It is also vital to maintain open communication lines with the Fountainhead of all wisdom and truth through your daily family and personal prayers.

Follow the prophet

Finally, what better resource for direction could we have than a living prophet? A great safety net can envelop you and your family as you follow the Brethren. How blessed you are, Dad, to have living oracles of God to update you with current instruction to guide your family through modern-day challenges. To not hear, or ignore them, to not understand and heed those instructions would be like beginning a trip across the sea in a small boat without a compass.

Well, that's it, Dad. You must become the family hero, worthy of not only their attention but their emulation. This will require your constant investment of sufficient time, complete emotional and physical fidelity, with unity of purpose between you and your eternal companion. This will require your constant dependency upon the Lord, demonstrated through scripture study and prayer. This will require that you follow the Brethren in every sense of the word—hearing, understanding, and doing. This simple formula will unite and strengthen your beloved family and bring countless blessings from our Father.

May God bless all fathers to righteously obtain and maintain this patriarchal key to the blessing of families throughout the Church. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Durrel A. Woolsey of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President Thomas S. Monson

Come, all ye sons of God

One of my most vivid memories is attending priesthood meeting as a newly ordained deacon and singing the opening hymn, "Come, All Ye Sons of God Who Have Received the Priesthood." Tonight, to this capacity audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in chapels worldwide, I echo the spirit of that special hymn and say to you, Come, all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood; let us consider our callings, let us reflect on our responsibilities, let us determine our duty, and let us follow Jesus Christ, our Lord.

While we may differ in age, in custom, or in nationality, we hold membership in the same church and are united as one in our priesthood callings.

Two weeks ago I attended a sacrament meeting where the children responded to the theme, I Belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These boys and girls demonstrated they were in training for service to the Lord and to others. The music was beautiful, the recitations skillfully rendered, and the spirit heaven-sent. My eleven-year-old grandson had spoken of the First Vision as he presented his part on the program. Afterward, as he came to his parents and grandparents, I said to him, "Tommy, I think you are almost ready to be a missionary."

He replied, "Not yet; there is much I have to learn."

For the strength of youth

To help him and all youth prepare for their service to God, a new booklet, entitled *For the Strength of Youth*, has

been published under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. The booklet features standards from the writings and teachings of Church leaders and from scriptures, adherence to which will bring the blessings of our Heavenly Father and the guidance of His Son to each of us.

May I share with you, as I shared with the sisters in the women's meeting held last week, portions of the introduction to this new guide to your mortal journey, this new road map to help you chart an undeviating course toward eternal life. The statement by the First Presidency begins:

"Our beloved young men and women,

"We want you to know that we love you. We have great confidence in you. . . .

"We desire everything in this world for you that is right and good. . . . You are choice spirits who have been held in reserve to come forth in this day when the temptations, responsibilities, and opportunities are the very greatest. You are at a critical time in your lives. . . .

"We counsel you to [be] morally clean. . . .

"You cannot do wrong and feel right. It is impossible! Years of happiness can be lost in the foolish gratification of a momentary desire for pleasure. . . .

"You can avoid the burden of guilt and sin and all of the attending heartaches . . . as you keep the standards outlined in the scriptures and emphasized in this pamphlet.

"We pray that you—the young and rising generation—will keep your bodies and minds clean, free from the con-

taminations of the world, that you will be fit and pure vessels to bear triumphantly the responsibilities of the kingdom of God in preparation for the second coming of our Savior" (*For the Strength of Youth* [pamphlet, 1990], pp. 3–5).

May I review with you, the young men of the Church, these special standards referred to in the introduction just read? There are twelve items, followed by a conclusion. I shall treat briefly each standard.

1. Dating

Begin to prepare for a temple marriage. Proper dating is a part of that preparation. In cultures where dating is appropriate, do not date until you are sixteen years old. Not all teenagers need to date or even want to. When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates. Make sure your parents meet and become acquainted with those you date. Because dating is a preparation for marriage, date only those who have high standards.

Be careful to go to places where there is a good environment, where you won't be faced with temptation.

A wise father said to his son, "If you ever find yourself in a place where you shouldn't ought to be, get out!" Good advice for all of us.

2. Dress and appearance

Servants of the Lord have always counseled us to dress modestly to show respect for our Heavenly Father and for ourselves. The way you dress sends messages about yourself to others and often influences the way you and others act. Dress in such a way as to bring out the best in yourself and those around you. Avoid extremes in clothing and appearance.

3. Friendship

Everyone needs good friends. Your circle of friends will greatly influ-

ence your thinking and behavior, just as you will theirs. When you share common values with your friends, you can strengthen and encourage each other. Treat everyone with kindness and dignity. Many nonmembers have come into the Church through friends who have involved them in Church activities.

4. Honesty

The oft-repeated adage is ever true: "Honesty's the best policy" (Miguel de Cervantes, in *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed., comp. John Bartlett [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968], p. 197). A Latter-day Saint young man lives as he teaches and as he believes. He is honest with others. He is honest with himself. He is honest with God. He is honest by habit and as a matter of course. When a difficult decision must be made, he never asks himself, What will others think? but rather, What will I think of myself?

For some, there will come the temptation to dishonor a personal standard of honesty. In a business law class at the university I attended, I remember that one particular classmate never prepared for the class discussions. I thought to myself, How is he going to pass the final examination?

I discovered the answer when he came to the classroom for the final examination, on a winter's day, wearing on his bare feet only a pair of sandals. I was surprised and watched him as the class began. All of his books had been placed upon the floor. He slipped the sandals from his feet; and then, with toes that he had trained and had prepared with glycerine, he skillfully turned the pages of one of the books which he had placed on the floor, thereby viewing the answers to the examination questions.

He received one of the highest grades in that course on business law. But the day of reckoning came. Later, as he prepared to take his comprehensive examination, for the first time the dean of his particular discipline said, "This

year I shall depart from tradition and shall conduct an oral, rather than a written, test." Our favorite, trained-toe expert found that he had his foot in his mouth on that occasion and failed the examination.

5. Language

How you speak and the words you use tell much about the image you choose to portray. Use language to build and uplift those around you. Profane, vulgar, or crude language and inappropriate or off-color jokes are offensive to the Lord. Never misuse the name of God or Jesus Christ. The Lord said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

6. Media: movies, television, radio, videocassettes, books, and magazines

Our Heavenly Father has counseled us to seek after "anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy" (Articles of Faith 1:13). Whatever you read, listen to, or watch makes an impression on you.

Pornography is especially dangerous and addictive. Curious exploration of pornography can become a controlling habit, leading to coarser material and to sexual transgression.

Don't be afraid to walk out of a movie, turn off a television set, or change a radio station if what's being presented does not meet your Heavenly Father's standards. In short, if you have any question about whether a particular movie, book, or other form of entertainment is appropriate, don't see it, don't read it, don't participate.

Recently there appeared in the newspaper an observation by comedian Steve Allen. It describes one of the greater problems of our time:

"Steve Allen doesn't find anything funny about television's trend toward stronger language and adult-oriented themes. The veteran comedian lashed out at current television trends in an

opinion piece published in the *Los Angeles Times*.

"The 'flow is carrying all of us right into the sewer,' he wrote. 'The very sort of language parents forbid their children to use is now being encouraged not only by anything-goes cable entrepreneurs but the once high-minded networks,' said Allen. 'Shows that depict children and others using vulgar language only point up the collapse of the American family,' he said."

Perhaps Mr. Allen was referring to a review in a recent issue of *Newsweek* magazine entitled "A Season on the Brink." "Desperate to outrun [competition], the Big Three [networks] launch lineups that are rocking, ribald, real . . . and risky," reads the subheadline. A summary statement declares, "The networks . . . are suddenly turning the airwaves blue" (Harry F. Waters, 3 Sep. 1990, pp. 70-71).

7. Mental and physical health

The Apostle Paul declared, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Nutritious meals, regular exercise, and appropriate sleep are necessary for a strong body, just as consistent scripture study and prayer strengthen the mind and spirit.

Hard drugs, wrongful use of prescription drugs, alcohol, coffee, tea, and tobacco products destroy your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Any form of alcohol, including beer, is harmful to your spirit and your body. Tobacco can enslave you, weaken your lungs, and shorten your life.

8. Music and dancing

Music can help you draw closer to your Heavenly Father. It can be used to educate, edify, inspire, and unite. However, music can, by its tempo, beat, intensity, and lyrics, dull your spiritual sensitivity. You cannot afford to fill

your minds with unworthy music. Dancing can be enjoyable and provide an opportunity to meet new people and strengthen friendships. Plan and attend dances where dress, grooming, lighting, dancing styles, lyrics, and music contribute to an atmosphere in which the Spirit of the Lord may be present.

9. Sexual purity

Because sexual intimacy is so sacred, the Lord requires self-control and purity before marriage, as well as full fidelity after marriage. In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you. Tears inevitably follow transgression. Men, take care not to make women weep, for God counts their tears.

President David O. McKay advised, "I implore you to think clean thoughts." He then made this significant declaration of truth: "Every action is preceded by a thought. If we want to control our actions, we must control our thinking." Brethren, fill your minds with good thoughts, and your actions will be proper. May each one of you be able to echo in truth the line from Tennyson spoken by Sir Galahad: "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure" (in *Familiar Quotations*, p. 647).

From ancient times comes an example which emphasizes this truth. Darius, through the proper rites, had been recognized as legitimate king of Egypt. His rival, Alexander, had been declared legitimate son of Ammon; he, too, was Pharaoh. Alexander found the defeated Darius on the point of death and laid his hands upon his head to heal him, commanding him to arise and resume his kingly power, concluding, "I swear unto thee, Darius, by all the gods, that I do these things truly and without fakery," to which Darius replied with a gentle rebuke, "Alexander, my boy . . . do you think you can touch heaven with those hands of yours?"

Brethren, are we prepared to touch heaven as we fill our priesthood callings?

Recently, the author of a paper on teenage sexuality summed up his research by saying that he doesn't see any major reduction ahead in the sexual activity of teenagers, in part because society sends teens a mixed message: advertisements and the mass media convey "very heavy messages that sexual activity is acceptable and expected," inducements that sometimes drown out the warnings of experts and the pleas of parents. The Lord cuts through all the media messages with clear and precise language when He declares to us, "Be . . . clean" (3 Nephi 20:41).

Whenever temptation comes, remember the wise counsel of the Apostle Paul, who declared, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

10. Sunday behavior

The Lord has given the Sabbath day for your benefit and has commanded you to keep it holy. Many activities are appropriate for the Sabbath. Bear in mind, however, that Sunday is not a holiday. Sunday is a holy day.

11. Spiritual help

When you were confirmed a member of the Church, you received the right to the companionship of the Holy Ghost. He can help you make good choices. When challenged or tempted, you do not need to feel alone. Remember that prayer is the passport to spiritual power.

12. Repentance

If any has stumbled in his journey, there is a way back. The process is called repentance. Our Savior died to

provide you and me that blessed gift. Though the path is difficult, the promise is real: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

Don't put your eternal life at risk. Keep the commandments of God. If you have sinned, the sooner you begin to make your way back, the sooner you will find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness.

These, then, are the standards found in *For the Strength of Youth*. Joy and happiness come from living the way the Lord wants you to live and from service to God and others.

Greetings from President Benson

Our beloved President Ezra Taft Benson sends to you his greetings. He loves you. He trusts you. And how might you return that love, that trust?

You have a heritage: Honor it.

You will meet sin: Shun it.

You have the truth: Live it.

You have a testimony: Share it.

A missionary's faith

Spiritual strength frequently comes through selfless service. Some years ago, I visited the California Mission, where I interviewed a young missionary from Georgia. I recall saying to him, "Do you send a letter home to your parents every week?"

He replied, "Yes, Brother Monson."

Then I asked, "Do you enjoy receiving letters from home?"

He didn't answer. At length, I inquired, "When was the last time you had a letter from home?"

With a quavering voice, he responded, "I've never had a letter from home. Father's just a deacon, and Mother's not a member of the Church. They pleaded with me not to come. They said that if I left on a mission they would not be writing to me. What shall I do?"

I offered a silent prayer to my Heavenly Father: "What shall I tell this young servant of Thine, who has sacri-

ficed everything to serve Thee?" And the inspiration came. I said, "Elder, you send a letter home to your mother and father every week of your mission. Tell them what you are doing. Tell them how much you love them, and then bear your testimony to them."

He asked, "Will they then write to me?"

I responded, "Then they will write to you."

We parted, and I went on my way. Months later I was attending a stake conference in Southern California when a young man came up to me and said, "Brother Monson, do you remember me? I'm the young missionary who had not received a letter from my mother or my father during my first nine months in the mission field. I'm the one to whom you said, 'Send a letter home every week, Elder, and your parents will write to you.'" Then he asked, "Do you remember that promise, Elder Monson?"

I remembered. I inquired, "Have you heard from your parents?"

He reached into his pocket and took out a sheaf of letters with an elastic band around them, took a letter from the top of the stack and said, "Have I heard from my parents! Listen to this letter from my mother: 'Son, we so much enjoy your letters. We're proud of you, our missionary. Guess what? Dad has been ordained a priest. He's preparing to baptize me. I'm meeting with the missionaries; and one year from now we want to come to California as you complete your mission, for we, with you, would like to become a *forever family* by entering the temple of the Lord.'" Then the young man put his hand in mine and asked, "Brother Monson, does Heavenly Father always answer prayers and fulfill Apostles' promises?"

I replied, "When one has faith as you have demonstrated, our Heavenly Father hears such prayers and answers in His own way."

Clean hands, a pure heart, and a willing mind had touched heaven. A blessing, heaven-sent, had answered the fervent prayer of a missionary's humble heart.

Brethren, it is my prayer that we may so live that we, too, may touch heaven and be similarly blessed. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend this broadcast in the Tabernacle and also the Sunday morn-

ing session which follows must be in their seats by 9:15 A.M.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in your driving.

We thank the combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus for the inspiring music this evening.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "Hosanna." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Francis M. Gibbons of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now, brethren, if you'll bear with me for a few minutes I'd like to express some thoughts if I may be inspired by the Spirit. First let me say that I have appreciated all that has been said in this meeting. Much has been spoken to the young men. I endorse all of it. I hope that you have had impressed upon your minds the counsel you have heard. If you follow it, it will bless your lives, now and through all the years to come.

Counselors are important

As we come to the conclusion of this meeting, I want to talk with you about a particular subject.

In a previous general priesthood meeting, I spoke about the duty of bishops. I discussed the entire field of their responsibilities. I suppose none of you have remembered that, but I recall doing so nevertheless.

Tonight, I think I should like to talk with you about counselors. There are twice as many counselors as there are bishops and presidents, and they are important.

The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, has created in this church what we call presidencies. Essentially, all quorums and organizations are presided over by a presidency, except the Council of the Twelve Apostles, where there is one president of the Quorum, and

the Quorums of the Seventy, where there are seven presidents. I think I can understand why there is no presidency of the Twelve. The Council consists of twelve mature men, each of whom has comparable leadership responsibilities. The number is relatively small. Furthermore, the entire Twelve is a very close-knit body, with every man free to express himself on any matter that comes before the Quorum. Evidently, there is no need for a presidency of three to preside over the remaining nine brethren. All are seasoned by long experience. They are men who have been called with a special calling.

In the case of the Seventy, the number is large and flexible in terms of the number of quorums that might be organized. Each of the presidents, who is called from the First Quorum of Seventy, is coequal with the others, with one of the seven being denoted as the senior president.

In the case of the priests quorum, the bishop serves as president. But whether it be a bishopric, stake presidency, Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthood quorum presidency, mission presidency, temple presidency, auxiliary organization presidency, Area Presidency, or the First Presidency of the Church, there is a president with counselors.

Experiences as a counselor

I think I know from personal experience something about serving as a counselor. I think I know something about his place and the parameters of his responsibility.

In the large ward in which I grew up, there were five quorums of deacons. Each was presided over by a presidency of three boys. My first responsibility in the Church, the first office I ever held, was counselor to the boy who presided over our deacons quorum. Our good bishop called me in and talked with me about this calling. I was tremendously impressed. I was worried and concerned. I was by nature, believe it or not, a rather shy and backward boy, and I think this call to serve as a counselor in a deacons quorum was of as much concern to me, in terms of my age and experience, as is my present responsibility in terms of my age and experience.

I subsequently served in the presidencies of other priesthood quorums. I served as a counselor in the stake Sunday School superintendency, as it was then called, before I became the stake superintendent. I served as a counselor in the stake presidency before I was named stake president. And, as all of you know, I have served as a counselor to two Presidents of the Church, two wonderful and dedicated and inspiring leaders.

Selecting counselors

There are several cardinal principles with reference to counselors. In the first place, the presiding officer selects his own counselors. They are not chosen by others and forced upon him. However, it is necessary in most circumstances that his selections be approved by higher authority. For instance, in the organization of a stake, which occurs under direction of a General Authority, a president is carefully and prayerfully chosen. He is then asked to nominate men to serve as his counselors, and it is expected that the General Authority

will approve the selection before the men are interviewed.

It is imperative that the president himself select his counselors because theirs must be a compatible relationship. He must have absolute confidence in them. They must have confidence in him. They must work together in a spirit of mutual trust and respect. The counselors are not the president. In certain circumstances, they may act in his behalf, but this is a delegated authority. What, then, are some of the duties of a counselor?

An assistant

He is *an assistant to his president*. Regardless of the organization, the assignment of president is a heavy and burdensome one. Even for the deacons quorum president, if he performs his duty well, there is much of responsibility, for he is accountable for the activity and well-being of the boys of his quorum.

As an assistant, the counselor is not the president. He does not assume responsibility and move out ahead of his president.

In presidency meetings, each counselor is free to speak his mind on all issues that come before the presidency. However, it is the prerogative of the president to make the decision, and it is the duty of the counselors to back him in that decision. His decision then becomes their decision, regardless of their previous ideas.

The president, if he is wise, will assign to these chosen assistants particular duties and then leave them free to perform, requiring from them accountability for what happens.

A partner

A counselor is a partner. A presidency can be a wonderful relationship, a friendship where three brethren, working unitedly, have a close and satisfying fellowship. With delegation of responsibility, they move independently

only to a limited degree. All three, unitedly, have responsibility for the work of the ward, the quorum, the stake, the auxiliary organization, or whatever.

Such a partnership provides a safety valve. The wise writer of Proverbs tells us that "in . . . counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). When problems arise, when difficult decisions face us, it is wonderful to have those with whom we can talk with confidence and trust.

I recall that as a boy we had our presidency meetings. Our president would present whatever business was before him. We would talk about it. And then we would go forward, having had our discussion, to work to bring about the desired result.

No president in any organization in the Church is likely to go ahead without the assurance that his counselors feel good about the proposed program. A man or woman thinking alone, working alone, arriving at his or her own conclusions, can take action which might prove to be wrong. But when three kneel together in prayer, discuss every aspect of the problem which is before them, and under the impressions of the Spirit reach a united conclusion, then we may have the assurance that the decision is in harmony with the will of the Lord.

I can assure all members of this church that in the First Presidency we follow such a procedure. Even the President of the Church, who is prophet, seer, and revelator, and whose right and responsibility it is to make judgment and direct the course of the Church, invariably consults with his counselors to determine their feelings. If there is a lack of unity, there follows an absence of action. Two counselors, working with a president, preserve a wonderful system of checks and balances. They become a safeguard that is seldom, if ever, in error and affords great strength of leadership.

A friend

A counselor is a friend. Presidencies should do more than counsel together. Occasionally, but not to excess, they and their spouses should socialize together. They should be good friends, trusted friends, in a very real sense. The counselors should be concerned for the health and well-being of their president. He should feel free to discuss with them his personal problems, if he has any, with the full assurance that they will hold in the strictest confidence all that is told them.

A judge

A counselor is a judge. He is a lesser judge than the president, but he is nonetheless a judge.

In times of disciplinary councils, the three brethren of the bishopric, or the three brethren of the stake presidency, or the three brethren of the presidency of the Church, sit together, discuss matters together, pray together, in the process of reaching a decision. I wish to assure you, my brethren, that I think there is never a judgment rendered until after prayer has been had. Action against a member is too serious a matter to result from the judgment of men alone, and particularly of one man alone. There must be the guidance of the Spirit, earnestly sought for and then followed, if there is to be justice.

A proxy

In some circumstances, *a counselor may serve as a proxy for his president.* The power of proxy must be granted by the president, and it must never be abused by the counselor. The work must go forward notwithstanding absences of the president for reasons of illness, employment, or other factors beyond his control. In these circumstances, and in the interest of the work, the president should give his counselors authority to act with full confidence, he having

trained them as they have served together as a bishopric or presidency.

It may not be easy to be a counselor. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., who, as a counselor, had responsibility for the operation of the Church while President Heber J. Grant was ill, said to me on one occasion, "It is difficult to have responsibility without authority."

He was saying, in effect, that he had to move forward in handling those duties which ordinarily devolve upon the President, but while doing so, he did not have the authority of the President.

Counselor to President Kimball

I came to understand that situation in a very real way. If I may share with you some personal feelings: During the time that President Kimball was ill, President Tanner's health failed and he passed away. President Romney was called as First Counselor, and I as Second Counselor to President Kimball. Then President Romney became ill, thus leaving to me an almost overwhelming burden of responsibility. I counseled frequently with my Brethren of the Twelve, and I cannot say enough of appreciation to them for their understanding and for the wisdom of their judgment. In matters where there was a well-established policy, we moved forward. But no new policy was announced or implemented, and no significant practice was altered without sitting down with President Kimball and laying the matter before him and receiving his full consent and full approval.

In such circumstances when I would go to visit him, I always took a secretary who kept a detailed record of the conversation. I can assure you, my beloved brethren, that I never knowingly moved ahead of my file leader, that I never had any desire to move out ahead of him in Church policy or instruction. I knew that he was the appointed prophet of the Lord in that day. Even though I, too, had been sustained as a prophet, seer, and revelator, along with my Brethren of the Twelve, I knew

also that none of us was the President of the Church. I knew that the Lord prolonged the life of President Kimball for purposes known to the Lord, and I had perfect faith that this prolonging of life was for a reason under the wisdom of Him who has greater wisdom than any man.

Counselors to President Benson

In November 1985, President Kimball passed away, and President Ezra Taft Benson, then President of the Council of the Twelve, was unanimously sustained as the President of the Church and prophet, seer, and revelator. He chose his counselors, and I give you the assurance that we have worked together harmoniously and well, and it has been a great and wonderfully rewarding experience.

President Benson is now ninety-one years of age and does not have the strength or vitality he once possessed in abundance. Brother Monson and I, as his counselors, do as has been done before, and that is to move forward the work of the Church, while being very careful not to get ahead of the President nor to undertake any departure of any kind from long-established policy without his knowledge and full approval.

I am grateful for President Monson. We have known one another for a long time and have worked together in many responsibilities. We counsel together. We deliberate together. We pray together. We postpone action when we are not fully certain of our course and do not move forward until we have the blessing of our President and that assurance which comes from the Spirit of the Lord.

We pray for our President. We pray often and with great earnestness. We love him and know our proper relationship to him, as well as our responsibility to the entire church. We counsel with the Twelve and partake of their judgment, which is a greater resource than I am able to describe.

Presidency called by the Lord

Do not fear, brethren: there is a Presidency over this church. I hope it will not sound egotistical when I say that it has been put in place by the Lord. We are not here of our own choosing. We are grateful for your sustaining support. We know that you pray for us and want you to know that we pray for you. We hope that we are following the will of the Lord. We earnestly believe that we are. We hope that you feel that we are. We have no other desire than the desire to do His will concerning His kingdom and His people.

We serve by His sufferance, knowing that at any time He chooses to do so, He can easily remove us. We are answerable to Him in this life, and will be held accountable when we are called before Him to make our report. I hope that we shall not be found wanting. I hope that when that time comes, I may have the opportunity of standing before

my Beloved Savior to give an accounting of my stewardship, and that I may be able to do so without embarrassment, or apology, or excuse. I have so tried to conduct my life. I know that I am not a perfect man, that I have many weaknesses. But I can say that I have tried to do that which the Lord would have me do as His servant, and as the servant of every member of this church throughout the world, and most particularly as the servant of my beloved President, our prophet, seer, and revelator.

I serve as a counselor, just as so many of you present tonight do, you in your responsibility and I in mine. I pray, my beloved brethren, that we may be faithful and true in these holy callings, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Hosanna."

Elder Francis M. Gibbons offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 7, 1990. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Robert Cundick and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!" without announcement.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 160th semiannual con-

ference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, from the sessions of the conference due to recent surgery. He is viewing the sessions by television. We miss him deeply, and we express our love to him.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Richard G. Scott, Charles Didier, and Douglas J. Martin are seated on the stand. We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations that are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and

civic leaders, and other members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brothers Robert Cundick and John Longhurst at the organ, will provide the music for this session. The choir opened these services by singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" and will now sing "Turn Your Hearts," following which Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Turn Your Hearts."

Elder Angel Abrea offered the invocation.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

I'd like to first say that our hearts reach out to the family of former governor Scott Matheson, who died this morning, a man that many of us knew and greatly appreciated. We pray that the Spirit of the Lord will comfort those who grieve.

My beloved brethren and sisters, I greet you with love this beautiful Sabbath morning as we are assembled in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, and as you are gathered in thousands of other church buildings across the world, as well as in your homes. It is a beautiful autumn morning here in the valley of the mountains where almost a century and a half ago, after much suffering, our pioneer forefathers found a place where they could worship God according to the dictates of conscience. How grateful we are for the peace we enjoy. How precious is the privilege of worshipping our Eternal Father as we desire so to do, while respecting others as they worship according to their desire.

The name of the Church

We meet in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind. We meet as members of the Church which carries His sacred name.

Many of our people are disturbed by the practice of the media, and of many others, to disregard totally the

true name of the Church and to use the nickname *the Mormon Church*.

Six months ago in our conference Elder Russell M. Nelson delivered an excellent address on the correct name of the Church. He quoted the words of the Lord Himself:

"Thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (D&C 115:4).

He then went on to discourse on the various elements of that name. I commend to you a rereading of his talk.

The Mormon Church, of course, is a nickname. And nicknames have a way of becoming fixed. I think of the verse concerning a boy and his name:

Father calls me William,
Sister calls me Will,
Mother calls me Willie,
But the fellers call me Bill.
["Jest 'fore Christmas"]

Mormon means more good

I suppose that regardless of our efforts, we may never convert the world to general use of the full and correct name of the Church. Because of the shortness of the word *Mormon* and the ease with which it is spoken and written, they will continue to call us the Mormons, the Mormon Church, and so forth.

They could do worse. More than fifty years ago, when I was a missionary in England, I said to one of my associates, "How can we get people, including our own members, to speak of the Church by its proper name?"

He replied, "You can't. The word *Mormon* is too deeply ingrained and too easy to say." He went on, "I've quit trying. While I'm thankful for the privilege of being a follower of Jesus Christ and a member of the Church which bears His name, I am not ashamed of the nickname *Mormon*."

"Look," he went on to say, "if there is any name that is totally honorable in its derivation, it is the name *Mormon*. And so, when someone asks me about it and what it means, I quietly say—'*Mormon* means *more good*.'" (The Prophet Joseph Smith first said this in 1843; see *Times and Seasons*, 4:194; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 299–300).

His statement intrigued me—*Mormon* means *more good*. I knew, of course, that *more good* was not a derivative of the word *Mormon*. I had studied both Latin and Greek, and I knew that English is derived in some measure from those two languages and that the words *more good* are not a cognate of the word *Mormon*. But his was a positive attitude based on an interesting perception. And, as we all know, our lives are guided in large measure by our perceptions. Ever since, when I have seen the word *Mormon* used in the media to describe us—in a newspaper or a magazine or book or whatever—there flashes into my mind his statement, which has become my motto: *Mormon* means *more good*.

The prophet-leader Mormon

We may not be able to change the nickname, but we can make it shine with added luster.

After all, it is the name of a man who was a great prophet who struggled to save his nation, and also the name of a book which is a mighty testament of

eternal truth, a veritable witness of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May I remind you for a moment of the greatness and of the goodness of this man Mormon. He lived on this American continent in the fourth century after Christ. When Mormon was a boy of ten, the historian of the people, whose name was Ammaron, described him as "a sober child, and . . . quick to observe" (Mormon 1:2). Ammaron gave him a charge that when he reached the age of twenty-four, he was to take custody of the records of the generations who had preceded him.

The years that followed Mormon's childhood were years of terrible bloodshed for his nation, the result of a long and vicious and terrible war between those who were called Nephites and those who were called Lamanites.

Mormon later became the leader of the armies of the Nephites and witnessed the carnage of his people, making it plain to them that their repeated defeats came because they forsook the Lord and He in turn abandoned them. His nation was destroyed with the slaughter of hundreds of thousands. He was one of only twenty-four who survived. As he looked upon the moldering remains of what once had been legions, he cried:

"O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!" (Mormon 6:17).

He wrote to our generation with words of warning and pleading, proclaiming with eloquence his testimony of the resurrected Christ. He warned of calamities to come if we should forsake the ways of the Lord as his own people had done.

Knowing that his own life would soon be brought to an end, as his enemies hunted the survivors, he pleaded for our generation to walk with faith, hope, and charity, declaring, "Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him" (Moroni 7:47).

Such was the goodness, the strength, the power, the faith, the prophetic heart of the prophet-leader Mormon.

The Book of Mormon changes lives

He was the chief compiler of the book which is called after his name and which has come forth in this period of the world's history as a voice speaking from the dust in testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It has touched for good the lives of millions who have prayerfully read it and pondered its language. May I tell you of one such I recently met in Europe.

He was a businessman, successful in his undertakings. In the course of his travels he met two of our missionaries. They tried to set up an appointment to teach him. He put them off but finally agreed to listen. He somewhat perfunctorily accepted what they had to say. He became convinced in his mind that they spoke the truth, but he was not moved in his heart.

He decided that he would read the Book of Mormon. He said that he had been a man of the world, never given to crying. But as he read the book, tears coursed his cheeks. It did something to him. He read it again and felt the same emotions. What had been conversion of the mind became conversion of the heart.

His way of life was altered, his perspective changed. He threw himself into the work of the Lord. Today he fills a high and holy calling in the cause he has come to love.

And so, while I sometimes regret that people do not call this church by its proper name, I am happy that the nickname they use is one of great honor made so by a remarkable man and a book which gives an unmatched testimony concerning the Redeemer of the world.

Anyone who comes to know the man Mormon through the reading and pondering of his words, anyone who

reads this precious trove of history which was assembled and preserved in large measure by him, will come to know that *Mormon* is not a word of disrepute, but that it represents the greatest good—that good which is of God. It was the modern translator of this ancient record who declared that through reading it a man would come closer to God than through the reading of any other book.

More good from the Word of Wisdom

All of this places upon us of this church and this generation an incumbent and demanding responsibility to recognize that as we are spoken of as Mormons, we must so live that our example will enhance the perception that *Mormon* can mean in a very real way, more good.

In what way, you ask? There are many ways, but I have time to mention only three or four. When I think of the more obvious matters, I think of what we call the Word of Wisdom. This is a divine code of health received through revelation in 1833, 157 years ago. It proscribes alcohol and tobacco, tea and coffee, and emphasizes the use of fruit and grains. This Word of Wisdom came to us from the Father of us all, the God of heaven, for our blessing and the blessing of all who would observe it.

I regret that we as a people do not observe it more faithfully. But remarkable have been the blessings that have come of its observance to the degree that we have observed it. Newspapers across the nation have recently run reports on a significant California study. It was conducted by Dr. James Enstrom of the UCLA School of Public Medicine. It included a substantial number of active members of the Church—5,231 high priests and 4,613 of their wives. I quote now from a newspaper story:

“Compared to the other groups, the study found the Mormons had an average of 53 percent fewer fatal cancers . . . , 48 percent fewer deaths from

heart disease and 53 percent fewer fatal illnesses of all kinds (*Salt Lake Tribune*, 12 Sep. 1990, p. B1).

Dr. Enstrom, speaking of the eight-year study, said that he "can predict that a very active, health-conscious 25-year-old *Mormon* male will live 11 years longer than the average American male of the same age" (p. B1; italics added).

Can you doubt that the word *Mormon*, spoken in this context, means more good? It means, on average, a longer life. It means, on average, a life substantially more free of pain and misery. It means more happiness. It means more good.

Of course, some of our people suffer from these same diseases that afflict others. Some of them die young. But here are the scientific data, released to the world, of an independent study of eight years made by a faculty member of one of the great universities of the nation, a recognized expert in public health who knows whereof he speaks.

More good in family life

As with personal and public health, so also *Mormon* should mean more good in terms of family life.

I recently read an illuminating article on the deterioration of the family in New York City, which is described as a root cause of the severe problems that plague that city and almost every other large city across the world.

The strength of any community lies in the strength of its families. The strength of any nation lies in the strength of its families. Strong family life comes of strong and clear religious understanding of who we are, and why we are here, and of what we may eternally become. Strong family life comes of the perception that each of us is a child of God, born with a divine birthright, and with a great and significant potential. Strong family life comes of parents who love and respect one another, and who love and respect and nurture their children in the ways of the Lord. These are undergirding prin-

ciples of our teachings as a church. To the degree that we observe these teachings we build strong families whose generations will strengthen the nation.

These are families where there is daily prayer with an acknowledgment of God as our Eternal Father and of our accountability to Him for what we do with our lives.

These are families where parents and children counsel together. These are families where education is encouraged and where children build upon the strengths of one another.

We are far from perfect in doing all that we ought to do, but, speaking collectively, we are trying, and we are achieving some measure of success.

To the degree that we accomplish these Church-fostered goals, *Mormon* means more good.

More respect and charity

It also means more of tolerance and mutual respect and helpfulness. Said the Prophet Joseph Smith, speaking in Nauvoo in the year 1843:

"The Saints can testify whether I am willing to lay down my life for my brethren. If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a 'Mormon'. I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves" (*History of the Church*, 5:498).

Last Sunday I attended a sacrament service in one of our university wards, a ward composed entirely of young married students who are struggling with their educational pursuits as well as with the burdens of family life. Two babies, recently born, were given blessings by their fathers as they were given names to be placed on the rolls of the Church.

I was touched by the prayers of both of these young fathers. One of them, speaking to his newborn son, blessed him that throughout his life he would have a spirit of love for all people regardless of their circumstances or condition. He blessed him that he should practice respect for others regardless of race, religious denomination, or other differences. I know that this young father, a medical student, has carried in his own life, as a faithful member of this church, love and appreciation and respect for all.

How great a thing is charity, whether it be expressed through the giving of one's substance, the lending of one's strength to lift the burdens of others, or as an expression of kindness and appreciation.

The people of this church, the people of this so-called Mormon Church, have given generously of their resources to help those in need. My mind goes back to one Sunday, a few years ago, when the Presidency of the Church asked that our people fast for two meals and consecrate the equivalent value, and more, to help the homeless and hungry in areas of Africa where we had no members, but where there was much of famine and suffering.

On Monday morning the money began to come in. There were hundreds of dollars, and then thousands of dollars, then hundreds of thousands of dollars, and then millions of dollars. These consecrated funds became the means of saving many who otherwise might have starved.

We do not boast of this. I simply mention it in furtherance of my theme that *Mormon* can and for many does mean more good.

The Relief Society of the Church, the Mormon Relief Society which embraces over two million women organized in more than a hundred nations, has as its motto Charity Never Filleth. Innumerable are the deeds of these remarkable and wonderful and unselfish women in succoring those in distress, in binding up the wounds of those who

have been hurt, in giving cheer and comfort to those in distress, in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and in lifting up those who have fallen and giving them strength and encouragement and the will to go forward.

This remarkable choir seated behind me is known across the world as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Everywhere that it has been heard—and those places are numerous—its song has been a hymn of peace, of love, of reverence, and of humanity, given in anthem of praise to the Almighty and His Beloved Son.

They of this choir are a part, a segment, of this remarkable thing which the world calls Mormonism and which we call the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Live worthy of the name *Mormon*

And so I leave with you the simple but profound thought: *Mormon* means more good.

The current issue of *Fortune* magazine, a highly respected business journal, carries a lead article naming Salt Lake City the number one city in America in which to do business. This is a great and singular compliment. Some feel it will help to attract many new people to the community. For us of the Church who reside here, this presents a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate through our attitudes, through our integrity, through our industry and neighborliness that we are the kind of people others appreciate.

May God grant us the strength and the discipline so to conduct our lives as to follow more nearly the matchless example of the Redeemer, of whom it was said, He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

I testify of His living reality. I testify of the reality of God, our Eternal Father. I testify of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this the dispensation of the fulness of times. I testify that the Book of Mormon is the word of God and that when people

speak of us by the name of this book, they will compliment us, if we will live worthy of the name, remembering that in a very real sense *Mormonism* must mean that greater good which the Lord Jesus Christ exemplified. I so pray in His holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" without announcement.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder David B. Haight, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker.

Elder David B. Haight

Importance of temples

Temples are the most sacred places of worship on earth where sacred ordinances are performed—ordinances which pertain to salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of God. Each one is literally a house of the Lord—a place where He and His spirit may dwell, where He may come or send others to confer priesthood blessings and to give revelation to His people.

Temples built especially to the Lord have been erected in all ages. Moses built a tabernacle in the wilderness for the children of Israel. Solomon built a magnificent temple in Jerusalem. The Nephites built sacred temples. Joseph Smith built houses of the Lord in Kirtland and Nauvoo, and succeeding prophets have built temples throughout the world. These have all been initiated and built under the direction and revelation of God.

Without revelation, temples can neither be built nor properly used. They are one of the evidences of the divinity of our Lord's true gospel. In our day, the Lord has said, "How shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name . . . that . . . ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from . . . the world" (D&C 124:37–38).

Importance of our premortal life

Latter-day Saints should be eternally grateful for the revealed knowledge given anciently but reaffirmed in even greater plainness in our dispensation, and which was known by our Lord's Apostle, Peter, when he prophesied that before the second coming of Christ there would be a "restitution of all things" spoken of by God (see Acts 3:21; see also D&C 121:26–32). One of these restored doctrines, premortality or preexistence, should give us a greater appreciation for ourselves and the work assigned us, for each one of us existed as a spirit entity before we were born on this earth.

Most of us have wondered about what occurred in the premortal world and how it relates to our existence here. We should be acquainted with the truth that knowledge of the premortal life was restored that we might fulfill our responsibilities as children of God.

The Lord has revealed that a grand council was held in that preearth world where we exercised our agency regarding the plans presented. The major proposition in the accepted plan of salvation provided for an earth life where each person could work out his eternal salvation.

John A. Widtsoe provides insight to an earth-life responsibility made in that premortal world which is of great importance. He highlights a contractual agreement we made concerning the

eternal welfare of all of the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father:

"In our preexistent state, in the day of the great council, we made a[n] . . . agreement with the Almighty. The Lord proposed a plan. . . . We accepted it. Since the plan is intended for all men, we became parties to the salvation of every person under that plan. We agreed, right then and there, to be not only saviors for ourselves but . . . saviors for the whole human family. We went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father's work, and the Savior's work, but also our work. The least of us, the humblest, is in partnership with the Almighty in achieving the purpose of the eternal plan of salvation."

Elder Widtsoe continues:

"That places us in a very responsible attitude towards the human race. By that doctrine, with the Lord at the head, we become saviors on Mount Zion, all committed to the great plan of offering salvation to the untold numbers of spirits. To do this is the Lord's self-imposed duty, this great labor his highest glory. Likewise, it is man's duty, self-imposed, his pleasure and joy, his labor, and ultimately his glory" ("The Worth of Souls," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Oct. 1934, p. 189).

Responsibility to redeem the dead

Latter-day Saints are a chosen people, so appointed in the premortal world, to be in partnership with the Lord for the salvation of the living and the dead. The First Presidency has announced that one of the major responsibilities of the Church, and therefore of its members, is to redeem the dead.

We learn by revelation from the Prophet Joseph Smith that "these . . . principles in relation to the dead and the living . . . cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation. . . .

"For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect" (D&C 128:15, 18; see also Hebrews 11:39-40).

It would be difficult for one to find stronger language on a requirement to receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

The mission of Elijah

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had received the Melchizedek Priesthood under the hands of Peter, James, and John; however, it was necessary for the prophet Elijah to restore special keys, "in order that all the ordinances may be attended to in righteousness" (*History of the Church*, 4:211). Thus, the sealing powers and ordinances necessary for the dead as well as the living were to be restored. This was accomplished by Elijah's visit to Joseph and Oliver on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple.

Elijah's mission was to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6). The turning of the hearts of the fathers in the spirit world to the children on earth provides for the gathering of ancestral data of their deceased fathers in order that ordinances might be performed in the temples of the Lord. Thus, the living having their hearts turned to their fathers is in accordance with the premortal agreement we made before the earth was formed.

Elijah's visit to the Kirtland Temple is attested by several truths.

First, no one else has claimed that the prophecy regarding Elijah's coming in the last days has been fulfilled.

Second, the testimony of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery stands unassailable—they could not turn the hearts of the children to the fathers except by the power sent by God.

Third, neither did they have the power to persuade millions of people to turn their attention to their deceased fathers. Remarkable indeed is the fact that organized efforts to gather genea-

logical information began after Elijah came in 1836. In America, the New England Historical and Genealogical Society was organized in 1844, and the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society in 1869, for the purpose of gathering genealogy. What is known as the "Spirit of Elijah" has influenced non-members as well as members of the Church in this vital activity. The micro-filming of thousands of records is continuing on a large scale throughout the world. (See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56], 2:122-28).

The Jewish people have looked forward to the return to the earth of Elijah as promised by Malachi. Each year in the spring the Paschal feast is observed in many Jewish homes, at which time a door is opened so that Elijah might come in and sit at the feast.

"It was . . . on the third day of April, 1836," said President Joseph Fielding Smith, "that the [Jewish people], in their homes at the Paschal feast, opened their doors for Elijah to enter. [However,] on that very day Elijah did enter—not in the home of the Jews to partake of the Passover with them, but he appeared in the House of the Lord . . . in Kirtland, and there bestowed his keys" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1936, p. 75).

Temple building

The Prophet Joseph said the main object of the "gathering [of] the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world . . . was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 307-8).

Bible prophecies indicate that in the last dispensation of the gospel, there would be a restoration of all

of the principles and practices of former dispensations, which includes temple building and the performing of ordinances therein (see Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2; Acts 3:19-21; Ephesians 1:9-10).

A latter-day Apostle wrote, "The history of Temples teaches us that the people of God have been strong, or weak, in proportion to the faithfulness with which they have attended to their sanctuaries" (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951], p. 612).

Seven blessings of temple service

We would do well to follow the example of our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. He and his sweet companion, Flora, have set aside time each Friday to regularly attend the house of the Lord, and they would join with me here this morning in declaring that members of the Church who absent themselves from temple attendance, where it is possible for them to attend, are denying themselves rich blessings.

"There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

"And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:20-21).

"Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

"And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come" (D&C 130:18-19).

With these two scriptures in mind, I exhort all members for a renewed commitment in strengthening their faith and progression to exaltation in the celestial kingdom—

First, by fulfilling our responsibility to our dead.

The Prophet Joseph said, "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us, is to seek after our dead" (*Times and Seasons*, 5:616).

I am indebted to my kindred dead who made it possible for me to live in this dispensation and to have the privilege of being a member of the "only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30).

Our opportunities are twofold: to do genealogical research and to perform temple work. There may be a time when we may not be able to do the research required, but this should not deter us from receiving the blessings of temple attendance. With forty-four functioning temples located in various parts of the world, the privilege of participating in temple activity is becoming more and more available. Should you or I neglect either of these responsibilities?

Second, by being "endowed with power from on high" (D&C 38:32).

The environment in the temple is intended to provide the worthy member of the Church with the power of enlightenment, of testimony, and of understanding. The temple endowment gives knowledge that, when acted upon, provides strength and conviction of truth.

Third, by finding a place of refuge and peace (see D&C 124:36).

The moment we step into the house of the Lord, the atmosphere changes from the worldly to the heavenly, where respite from the normal activities of life is found, and where peace of mind and spirit is received. It is a refuge from the ills of life and a protection from the temptations that are contrary to our spiritual well-being. We are told that "he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

Fourth, by receiving revelation.

John A. Widtsoe wrote: "I believe that the busy person on the farm, in the shop, in the office, or in the household, who has his worries and troubles, can solve his problems better and more quickly in the house of the Lord than

anywhere else. If he will . . . [do] the temple work for himself and for his dead, he will confer a mighty blessing upon those who have gone before, and . . . a blessing will come to him, for at the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come to him, as a revelation, the solution of the problems that vex his life. That is the gift that comes to those who enter the temple properly" ("Temple Worship," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, pp. 63-64).

Revelation also comes in receiving greater understanding of the endowment as one seeks to comprehend its meaning.

Fifth, by giving genealogical and temple service.

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, "Those Saints who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation" (*History of the Church*, 4:426).

Sixth, by becoming saviors on Mount Zion.

The Prophet Joseph wrote: "But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, . . . and receiving all the ordinances, . . . ordinations and sealing powers upon their [own] heads, [and] in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah" (*History of the Church*, 6:184).

And seventh, by qualifying to see and understand God in the house of the Lord.

At Kirtland, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph:

"And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it;

"Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God" (D&C 97:15-16).

It is true that some have actually seen the Savior, but when one consults

the dictionary, he learns that there are many other meanings of the word *see*, such as coming to know Him, discerning Him, recognizing Him and His work, perceiving His importance, or coming to understand Him.

Such heavenly enlightenment and blessings are available to each of us.

God our Father lives, as does His Son, Jesus the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I am a grateful recipient of His healing power and love. This is His work. I so testify in His holy name, amen.

The choir sang "Blessed Are the Men Who Fear Him" without announcement.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the choir singing "Blessed Are the Men Who Fear Him."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "How Firm a Foundation," following which we shall hear from Elder James M. Paramore, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

Elder James M. Paramore

My beloved brothers and sisters, I love you so much and I seek an interest in your faith and prayers today as I speak a few words to you. Several weeks ago I met a wonderful man while traveling to Texas. May I share with you a letter that I have written to him.

Witnesses of the Lord

Dear Ken, I feel impressed to write you following our long discussion a few weeks ago on the airplane. I hope you have received my letters and the materials about the Church. I have thought of you so often and how anxious you were to learn all you could about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I felt I would like to share some thoughts today about the many witnesses of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and His mission to bless all mankind. Because He is the central figure of the life on this earth, every possible opportunity should be taken to understand Him, His purposes, and the witnesses that can bring us to Him. It seems that nothing could be more important to this

world and to each of us than to know that.

You know, Ken, each Christmas we sing a song with great feeling and gusto, "Joy to the world, the Lord [will] come; Let earth receive her King! Let ev'ry heart prepare him room, And Saints and angels sing" (*Hymns*, no. 201). These immortal, almost sacred words state that He will come. But, Ken, He *has* come. And it is about His coming—many times—and the witnesses thereof that I would like to write today.

God, our Father, has indeed established a plan for this earth and for all of us. Jesus Christ was central to that plan. Christ would come to earth, give of Himself to people every day, overcome the world, establish His ways for others to follow, and then take upon Himself the sins of the world in Gethsemane, and then be raised from the tomb to live again and tell us that we would live. He would give to the world hope and eternal perspectives. He would offer the way, the truth, and the light by which it could be done. His message would illuminate every human aspiration, every hope and desire.

No more could we cry out, Ken, "If only I could know who I am, what is my destiny, who is God, and why am I here." Many times He gave the answers in His life, in His teachings, and in the words left about Him. Thank our Heavenly Father above that there are many witnesses of Him in each era of time to which we can go and with perfect surety know of Him and His ways. All these witnesses certify of Him, and of the things He taught, and of the guidelines or standards—yes, the commandments—He gave that man could securely pass through this earth with joy and happiness and eternal blessings.

Old Testament witnesses

As we open scriptural pages to read of the plan for life on earth, we see that our Father in Heaven made known to the prophets of the Old Testament that the Savior, His Only Begotten Son, would come to earth. Isaiah the prophet said that "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son" (Isaiah 7:14), and "the government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6), and later said that "the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 40:28) was "the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 43:3), even the "redeemer . . . that maketh all things" (Isaiah 44:24; see Isaiah 40-45). Jeremiah, Zechariah, Job, Moses, and others of the prophets had revealed to them the Christ and that He would come to provide the way for all of us to return to our Father in Heaven. These prophets left their witnesses for us to study and to pray about and to receive our own testimony of the "looked for" Savior of the Old Testament.

New Testament witnesses

My friend, the world waited for the Savior, not knowing fully what He would do. And then came that long-awaited day when He came to the earth as the babe in Bethlehem. Miraculous events surrounded His birth, and acknowledgment was given from heaven

that this indeed was the Only Begotten Son of God sent to earth to redeem all mankind from death.

While here on the earth those short years, He fulfilled His ministry, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6); and by acknowledging that He was sent to do the work of His Father in Heaven, and fulfilling all righteousness—He would Himself be baptized by one whom He acknowledged to be a prophet, even John the Baptist. He gave a special power, the gift of the Holy Ghost, to all who would follow Him and be baptized, which would, He said, be a Comforter, would guide to all truth, would teach all things, would bring all things to our remembrance, would show us all things to come, and would be a witness, and testify of Him (see John 14-16).

He also called Apostles and prophets and others and gave them authority to act in His name. He established His church to serve as a refuge from the world, where the Saints could learn about Him and His truths and His ways and could learn to love and serve each other.

One stands in awe in reading and feeling the profound effect of His teachings and life. He raised the dead and made the blind see. He fed thousands on several occasions from just a few loaves of bread and some fishes. He forgave the repentant sinner, gave hope and encouragement, and administered to others all the days of His life. And then He offered Himself, though in the greatest agony and pain ever known to mankind, upon the cross as a final witness of His love for you and me by taking our sins upon Himself, a pure and sinless Son of God, that we might have eternal life. He did something for us that we could not do for ourselves. But think of the great blessing that came a few days later when the tomb was open and He emerged as the living, resurrected, immortal Christ, showing us that He lives and that we, too, would live.

So, again, the witnesses. The record in the New Testament reveals His life and the many witnesses of Him. It did again provide the commandments, or guides or standards, and ordinances by which mankind could be blessed eternally.

Book of Mormon witnesses

Ken, when Jesus was in Palestine, He said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16). And following His resurrection, He visited some of the other sheep on the American continent and again established and provided the witnesses as He had done in Palestine.

When He came among them, He said, "And behold, I am the light and the life of the world" (3 Nephi 11:11). "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets [including those who lived on the American continent] testified shall come into the world" (11:10).

He established the Church among them. He gave the priesthood and the ordinances of baptism and again the gift of the Holy Ghost to all who would follow Him. He gave prophets and disciples to direct His church and people. He blessed the people, and many miracles followed His work.

My friend, His few days among this people are recorded in the Book of Mormon to help us gain the witness for ourselves. The people in ancient America were so touched and changed by the teachings and power of the Savior that they lived His teachings for over two hundred years. This stands as an everlasting witness of the power of the Savior to cause people to live in peace and unity and receive His blessings. Listen to a recorded account of a very special witness, the Book of Mormon:

"And it came to pass . . . , the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, . . . and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man

did deal justly one with another. . . .

" . . . They did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord. . . .

" . . . And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God" (4 Nephi 1:2, 12, 16).

"[And all of this] because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people" (1:15).

Latter-day witnesses

My friend, what powerful witnesses Jesus gave those few short years upon the earth. But, unfortunately, man would ultimately change His truths, His church, and lose sight of His promises. And so, in the year 1820, Jesus would again cross the veil that separates earth life and life hereafter in response to a fervent desire and prayer of a young man, Joseph Smith, Jr., and provide the witnesses again.

Joseph read in the New Testament, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, . . . and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Joseph then, in sincere faith in this promise of the Lord, went and poured his soul out to God. And the heavens opened, and two heavenly beings descended and stood in the air above him.

And Joseph said, "I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). And so the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to the young man and ushered in the witnesses that would bring us back to the knowledge once again.

Ken, the heavens were opened, not just for Joseph Smith, Jr., but for the whole world. This would usher in again all that He had established while He was upon the earth.

So, once again witnesses were given, as during the *Old Testament days*

and during the *life of the Savior* upon the earth and as *He appeared to the inhabitants of the American continent* after His resurrection. He always provides witnesses of the truths and blessings He brings.

Finally, Ken, we have in our day, as before, the witnesses of the members of the Church, who follow, know, and testify of these eternal truths through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The most important news

My friend, many years ago, about the turn of the century, a writer for a newspaper was asked an important question, "What would be the most important news the world could receive?" He thought and thought about the question, he talked to many people, and read all he could in an effort to find an answer for himself. And finally, he printed his answer, "To know that Jesus Christ lives today would be the most important news the world could receive. In fact, if He lives today, then we too will live eternally as He said."

Ken, no, God has not forgotten His children, even though they leave His

presence for a season and come to earth. We are all on a journey to come to earth and prove ourselves, to find the Savior and the witnesses we have talked about today, and to embrace them with all of our heart. This will bring us peace and safety in a world of ever more frightening challenges and will ultimately make us witnesses ourselves of Him and His work and take us home one day to our Father in Heaven crowned with glory and eternal lives. Ken, won't you take that journey? I bear to you my solemn testimony that it is true. There are witnesses—the New and Old Testaments. There are Apostles and prophets upon this earth today. His church is upon this earth today, and I do so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder James M. Paramore, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

The straight and narrow way

While traveling along a mountainous road one evening through a driving rainstorm punctuated with frequent claps of thunder and flashes of lightning, Sister Wirthlin and I could barely see the road, either in front of us or to the right and the left. I watched the white lines on that road more intently than ever before. Staying within the lines kept us from going onto the shoulder and into the deep canyon on one side and helped us avoid a head-on collision on the other. To wander over either line could have been very dangerous. Then I thought, "Would a right-thinking person deviate to the left or the right of a traffic lane if he knew

the result would be fatal? If he valued his mortal life, certainly he would stay between these lines."

That experience traveling on this mountain road is so like life. If we stay within the lines that God has marked, he will protect us, and we can arrive safely at our destination.

The Savior taught this principle when he said,

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13–14).

In modern-day revelation he taught further, "For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it" (D&C 132:22).

King Josiah was a king of Judah who reigned in righteousness. When he was only eight years old, he succeeded his father as king. Scripture tells us that although he was just a boy, Josiah "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, . . . and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left" (2 Kings 22:2).

The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round" (D&C 3:2).

Getting sidetracked

Even though these teachings of the Savior are plain and direct, we are still at risk of getting sidetracked. Some people choose to follow the teachings of the Lord and of his living prophet only when convenient, but reject them when sacrifice or deeper commitment is required. Some fail to follow only because his divine teachings do not agree with their own preconceived notions.

We get sidetracked by submitting to temptations that divert us past the bounds of safety. Satan knows our weaknesses. He puts attractive snares on our paths at just those moments when we are most vulnerable. His intent is to lead us from the way that returns us to our Heavenly Father. Sin may result from activities that begin innocently or that are perfectly legitimate in moderation, but in excess they can cause us to veer from the straight and narrow path to our destruction.

One example is sports. Many of us enjoy going to ball games and watching them on television. I am no exception. I love to watch a good athletic contest. If we spend excessive time with sporting

events, however, we may neglect things that are much more important.

Good physical and spiritual health can help us to stay on the straight and narrow way. The Lord gave his code of health in the Word of Wisdom, a "principle with promise" that modern medical science continues to substantiate (D&C 89:3). All of God's commandments, including the Word of Wisdom, are spiritual (see D&C 29:34-35). We need to nourish ourselves spiritually even more than physically. Are we giving adequate emphasis to our spiritual health?

Another activity that can detract us from the proper way is watching television excessively or viewing improper movies. While fine productions on these media are uplifting and entertaining, we need to be very selective in choosing what we see and how much of our time such an activity deserves. Our precious time must not be diverted to the sideline attractions of vulgar language, immoral conduct, pornography, and violence.

Material possessions

Another temptation to detour us is placing improper emphasis on the obtaining of material possessions. For example, we may build a beautiful, spacious home that is far larger than we need. We may spend far too much to decorate, furnish, and landscape it. And even if we are blessed enough to afford such luxury, we may be misdirecting resources that could be better used to build the kingdom of God or to feed and clothe our needy brothers and sisters.

Jacob, the Book of Mormon prophet, warned us, "Do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy" (2 Nephi 9:51). And in even stronger words, he said:

"Because some of you have obtained more abundantly than . . . your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and

high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they.

"And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you. . . .

"Do ye not suppose that such things are abominable unto him who created all flesh? And the one being is as precious in his sight as the other" (Jacob 2:13-14, 21).

Pride and vanity, the opposites of humility, can destroy our spiritual health as surely as a debilitating disease can destroy our physical health.

The Savior taught clearly the proper value of worldly possessions in his conversation with the rich young ruler who asked what more was required to have eternal life; he had kept all the commandments from his youth. He asked the Master what he still lacked. Jesus told him to sell all that he had and give to the poor, and come and follow Him. But the man went away sorrowing, for he loved his possessions (see Matthew 19:16-22). How many of us would pass this test?

Many of us have made sacred covenants to live the laws of sacrifice and consecration. But when the Lord blesses us with riches and affluence, we may give little thought to how we should use these blessings to help build up his church.

The scriptures are full of warnings against worldliness and pride because they, too, can lead us off course. The Lord explained to the Prophet Joseph Smith that many people veer from the path "because their hearts are set so much [on] the things of this world" (D&C 121:35).

Moral integrity

My brothers and sisters, I plead with you also to be certain that you do not cross over the lines of safety into the paths of immorality. Our living prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, said from

this pulpit: "The plaguing sin of this generation is sexual immorality. . . . It permeates our society" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 4; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 4). The broken hearts and broken families that come to my attention likewise demonstrate that immorality is, indeed, a very serious problem in the world and even among some Church members. Remember, "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). "You cannot do wrong and feel right" (Ezra Taft Benson, "To 'the Rising Generation,'" *New Era*, June 1986, p. 5).

The first deviation toward moral breakdown in a man or woman is similar to a spark that ignites a devastating forest fire. On a hot, windy summer day this year in Midway, Utah, embers from a small campground fire were fanned into a raging forest fire that soon swept over the entire mountainside. Before the flames were brought under control, the lives of two outstanding members of the Church were lost. The roaring fire had destroyed the beautiful autumn foliage, plus eighteen homes. We risk similar damage to our moral integrity when we let our guard down for even one brief moment. The spark of an evil thought can enter our mind and could ignite and destroy the moral fiber of our soul.

Learn and apply the word of God

How can we keep ourselves on the straight and narrow way? The Lord gave the answer over and over again. We must learn the word of God by studying the scriptures and apply his word by praying daily to the Lord and serving our fellowmen.

In the Book of Mormon, the word of God is referred to as an iron rod. In interpreting his father's dream for his brothers, Nephi wrote:

"And they said unto me: What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree?

"And I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would

hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction" (1 Nephi 15:23–24).

In other words, Nephi taught that by clinging to the word of God, as though it be a handrail, we would be able to avoid temptations and not lose our way in darkness. Thus, we would remain on the narrow path.

Using another apt symbol, the Psalmist wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

God's word, then, is the light for our path, the iron rod or railing to which we can cling. It provides the limiting lines that we must not cross if we are to reach our destination.

Through daily study of the scriptures and the words of the modern-day prophets, we can keep our values in line with the will of our Heavenly Father. The scriptures lead us "to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God" (1 Nephi 11:25).

Daily prayers can help us keep on the path that leads to eternal life. In Proverbs we read, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6). Daily prayer in private and as families will help us stay close to our Heavenly Father and help us know what is of most value to us and to him. We are very unlikely to stray if we offer a humble, simple prayer at least each morning and evening to express thanks and to seek divine guidance.

Serve others

The Savior taught the value of service to our fellowmen in the parable of the sheep and the goats when he said to the righteous:

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:34–40).

King Benjamin taught the same principle, saying, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

Enjoy the fruits of the gospel

As you pray, occasionally take a personal inventory to see how you measure up in your righteousness, in meeting the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We each can know for ourselves, as the Lord knows, where we need to improve. We must hold to the standards. If we have advanced in material, outward things, how are we doing inwardly? Are our lives acceptable to the Lord? Are we willing to acknowledge our sins and then make the effort to forsake them, repent, and make the course correction that will return us to the straight and narrow path?

I know that each of us has much to do. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the tasks we face. But if we keep our priorities in order, we can accomplish all that we should. We can endure to the end regardless of temptations, problems, and challenges. Those who remain faithful will receive God's greatest blessing, eternal life, and the privi-

lege of living with our Heavenly Father and his Beloved Son in the celestial kingdom.

Elder Marion G. Romney said, "When earth life is over and things appear in their true perspective, we shall more clearly see . . . that the fruits of the gospel are the only objectives worthy of life's full efforts" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1949, p. 39).

The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob declared: "O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there" (2 Nephi 9:41).

I pray that we may all enjoy the fruits of the gospel. Let us be faithful and true to our covenants. Let us each be mindful of the straight and narrow way and do all we can to stay within the straight lines in the midst of the storms and temptations of life. Let us study the scriptures, hold to the rod of the word of God, be prayerful in all we do, and perform Christlike acts of service. May we be filled with charity, the pure love of Christ, and may that love be

reflected in our actions. We then will observe the "weightier matters" of God's law while not leaving the rest undone (Matthew 23:23).

I bear solemn testimony that Jesus is the Holy One of Israel, our Savior, and our Redeemer. This is his church. He is the Son of God, our Heavenly Father. Joseph Smith is the Prophet of the Restoration in these latter days, and President Ezra Taft Benson is a living prophet today. I bear this testimony in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Sing Praise to Him" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Twelve, has just addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Sing Praise to Him."

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will conclude this session by singing "We Have Partaken of Thy Love." The benediction will then be offered by Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

Historic changes in eastern Europe

As the year 1990 moves inexorably toward its close, all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can pause and reflect on the momentous happenings that have occurred in our time, in our day, and in our lives.

In the month of May, my wife and I were in the historic city of Berlin. We boarded a taxi and asked that the driver take us to the Berlin Wall. When the driver failed to respond to the direction provided, again the desired destination was given. Still no movement. Then he turned toward us and, in halting

English, explained, "I can't. The wall is *kaput*—gone!" We drove to the Brandenburg Gate. We viewed its restoration. We gazed from West Berlin to East Berlin, now one Berlin, and reflected on the events which followed the wall's demise: a new mission of the Church established in Poland, another in Hungary, yet another in Greece, and a mission reestablished in Czechoslovakia. And now, official recognition of our Leningrad Branch in the Soviet Union. Who, except the Lord Himself, could have foreseen these historic events? It was He who declared, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached

in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matthew 24:14). Surely the purposes of the Lord continue to unfold to our view if we but have eyes that truly see and hearts that know and feel.

The Toronto Ontario Temple

Another transcendent blessing came the last weekend of August when a magnificent temple of the Lord was dedicated in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. In its gleaming glory, the temple seems to beckon to each who views its splendor, "Come! Come to the house of the Lord. Here is found 'rest for the weary and peace for the soul.'"

And how the people did come! First they thronged to the public open house, where reverently and quietly they viewed the interior of the temple and learned the purpose for its erection and of the blessings which the temple can provide. One visitor described the temple's beauty with the words, "This is a center of serenity."

As she was about to leave the temple, a young Asian girl said, "Mommy, this is beautiful here. I don't want to go."

One woman surprised an usher with her request: "I have been so impressed with what I have seen. How do I join your church?"

Then came the faithful membership of the Church to the dedicatory sessions. From Ontario and Quebec they came. Others traveled from those cities in the United States which are a part of the temple district. Some journeyed to Toronto from the distant Maritime Provinces of Canada. None who came returned home disappointed.

A boy of tender years viewing the cornerstone-laying ceremony was, by the spirit of inspiration, called to take trowel in hand and assist in the sealing of the cornerstone.

Dora Valencia, who had lain four years in the Ajax Ontario Hospital, mustered her courage and fulfilled the desire to attend. From her hospital bed,

which was wheeled into the celestial room, she not only basked in the spirit found there, but she also helped to provide that spirit. As I walked past her, upon leaving the room, and gazed at her expression of profound gratitude to the Lord, I bent low and took her hand in mine. Heaven was very near.

Angelic choirs lifted spirits heavenward as they sang the beautiful "Hosanna Anthem." When the congregation joined with the choir to sing "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning," no eye remained dry and no heart untouched.

Speakers recounted the history of the Church in the Toronto area, and the beautiful dedicatory prayer given at each session whispered peace. The words of Oliver Cowdery, spoken of another time, seemed to capture the spirit of the dedication: "These were days never to be forgotten" (Joseph Smith—History 1:71, note).

The Church in eastern Canada

As we recount the history of the Church in eastern Canada, we come to appreciate the tender feelings of the members of the Church on having a temple in their midst.

As early as April 1830, Phineas Young received a copy of the Book of Mormon from Samuel Smith, brother of the Prophet, and a few months later traveled to upper Canada. At Kingston, he gave the first known testimony of the restored Church beyond the borders of the United States.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, with Sidney Rigdon and Freeman Nickerson, was in Brantford and Mt. Pleasant, Ontario, in 1833. Joseph and Sidney had long been absent from their families and felt great concern about them. In the revelation we now know as the 100th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord counseled:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my friends Sidney and Joseph, your families are well; they are in mine hands. . . .

"Therefore, follow me, and listen to the counsel which I shall give unto you.

"Behold, . . . I have much people in this place, in the regions round about; and an effectual door shall be opened . . . in this eastern land" (D&C 100:1-3).

Toward the people, the Prophet evidenced the same kind feelings that the Lord had shown to him and Sidney Rigdon. Of them he makes entries in his journal, such as, "The people were very tender and inquiring," and again, "O God, seal our testimony to their hearts" (*History of the Church*, 1:422-23).

In 1836 Parley P. Pratt went to Canada following a great prophecy uttered by Heber C. Kimball in which Brother Pratt was instructed to go to Toronto. He was told that he would there find people waiting for him who would receive the gospel, and that from there the gospel would spread into England, where a great work would be done. In Toronto he found President John Taylor, the Fieldings, and many others.

In August of the next year, 1837, the Prophet Joseph Smith, with Sidney Rigdon and Thomas B. Marsh, then President of the Twelve Apostles, visited Toronto. Riding in a carriage and holding evening meetings by candlelight, they visited the churches. Elder Taylor accompanied them. He said: "This was as great a treat to me as I ever enjoyed. I had daily opportunities of conversing with them, of listening to their instructions, and in participating in the rich stores of intelligence that flowed continually from the Prophet Joseph."

Recounting this history brings to my mind the experience of John E. Page as the Prophet Joseph Smith called him to serve a mission in Canada. "But I can't go on a mission to Canada, Brother Joseph," protested John E. Page. "I don't even have a coat to wear."

"Here," said Joseph Smith, removing his own coat, "take this, and the Lord will bless you."

John E. Page left Kirtland, Ohio, May 31, 1836, on his first mission as an

elder of the Church. He labored in Canada for two years. During that time, he traveled over five thousand miles, mostly on foot, and baptized some six hundred people.

The Archibald Gardner family

One of the great families to join the Church in Canada was that of Archibald Gardner. From his journal, we learn of the family's experience in Canada during the year 1843.

Robert Gardner describes the day of their baptism: "We went about a mile and a half into the woods to find a suitable stream. We cut a hole through ice eighteen inches thick. My brother William baptized me. . . . I was confirmed while sitting on a log beside the stream. . . .

"I cannot describe my feelings at the time and for a long time afterwards. I felt like a little child and was very careful of what I thought or said or did lest I might offend my Father in Heaven. Reading the Scriptures and secret prayer occupied my leisure time. I kept a pocket Testament constantly with me. When something on a page impressed me supporting Mormonism, I turned down a corner. Soon I could hardly find a desired passage. I had nearly all the pages turned down. I had no trouble believing the Book of Mormon. Everytime I took the book to read I had a burning testimony in my bosom of its truthfulness."

Archibald Gardner added: "[My] mother . . . [accepted] the Gospel at once and whole heartedly, after hearing it. . . . Not long after contacting the new faith she became desperately ill, so ill that her life was despaired of. She insisted on being baptized. The neighbors said that if we put her in the water they would have us tried for murder as she would surely die. Nevertheless, well bundled up, and tucked into a sleigh, we drove her two miles to the place appointed. Here a hole was cut in the ice and she was baptized in the presence of a crowd of doubters who had come to witness her demise. She was taken

home. Her bed was prepared but she said, 'No, I do not need to go to bed. I am quite well.' And she was" (in Delilah G. Hughes, *The Life of Archibald Gardner: Utah Pioneer of 1847* [Draper, Utah: Review and Preview Publishers, 1970], pp. 25-27).

Down through the years, this same spirit of faith and confidence in the Lord has continued. During the period 1959 to 1962, my family and I lived in Toronto, where I served as the mission president. We are witnesses to the love God has for the Saints in that area. May I describe some of these "never to be forgotten" events?

Donald Mabey

One situation featured the Donald Mabey family. Brother Mabey had moved his family from Salt Lake City to North Bay, Ontario, because of a business transfer by his company. Don was an elder in the Church but had been less than fully active in priesthood callings. He was about thirty-five years of age at the time and had a lovely family. The North Bay Branch was a struggling unit desperately in need of priesthood leadership. When I attended that branch and recognized this fact, I held an interview with Brother Mabey and said to him, "I am calling you to serve in the presidency of the North Bay Branch."

He replied, "I can't do it."

I asked, "Why?"

He answered, "I have never done it before."

"That's no hindrance," I responded. I took fresh hope from Don's name, *Mabey*, and the words of a once-popular ballad, "Please don't say no—say maybe."

Brother Mabey said yes. Today he is a high priest living here in the West. All of his family members have entered temple doors and have received temple blessings.

A chapel for the St. Thomas branch

Another evidence of faith took place when I first visited the St. Thomas

Branch of the mission, situated about 120 miles from Toronto. My wife and I had been invited to attend the branch sacrament meeting and to speak to the members there. As we drove along a fashionable street, we saw many church buildings and wondered which one was ours. None was. We located the address which had been provided and discovered it to be a decrepit lodge hall. Our branch met in the basement of the lodge hall and was composed of perhaps twenty-five members, twelve of whom were in attendance. The same individuals conducted the meeting, blessed and passed the sacrament, offered the prayers, and sang the songs.

At the conclusion of the services, the branch president, Irving Wilson, asked if he could meet with me. At this meeting, he handed to me a copy of the *Improvement Era*, forerunner of today's *Ensign*. Pointing to a picture of one of our new chapels in Australia, President Wilson declared, "This is the building we need here in St. Thomas."

I smiled and responded, "When we have enough members here to justify and to pay for such a building, I am sure we will have one." At that time, the local members were required to raise 30 percent of the cost of the site and the building, in addition to the payment of tithing and other offerings.

He countered, "Our children are growing to maturity. We need that building, and we need it now!"

I provided encouragement for them to grow in numbers by their personal efforts to fellowship and teach. The outcome is a classic example of faith, coupled with effort and crowned with testimony.

President Wilson requested six additional missionaries to be assigned to St. Thomas. When this was accomplished, he called the missionaries to a meeting in the back room of his small jewelry store, where they knelt in prayer. He then asked one elder to hand to him the yellow-page telephone directory, which was on a nearby table. President Wilson took the book in hand and

observed, "If we are ever to have our dream building in St. Thomas, we will need a Latter-day Saint to design it. Since we do not have a member who is an architect, we will simply have to convert one." With his finger moving down the column of listed architects, he paused at one name and said, "This is the one we will invite to my home to hear the message of the Restoration."

President Wilson followed the same procedure with regard to plumbers, electricians, and craftsmen of every description. Nor did he neglect other professions, feeling a desire for a well-balanced branch. The individuals were invited to his home to meet the missionaries, the truth was taught, testimonies were borne, and conversion resulted. Those newly baptized then repeated the procedure themselves, inviting others to listen, week after week and month after month.

The St. Thomas Branch experienced marvelous growth. Within 2½ years, a site was obtained, a beautiful building was constructed, and an inspired dream became a living reality. That branch is now a thriving ward in a stake of Zion.

When I reflect on the town of St. Thomas, I dwell not on the ward's hundreds of members and many dozens of families; rather, in memory I return to that sparse sacrament meeting in the lodge-hall basement and the Lord's promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Temples like the Toronto Temple are built with stone, glass, wood, and metal. But they are also a product of faith and an example of sacrifice. The funds to build temples come from all tithe payers and consist of the widow's mite, children's pennies, and workmen's dollars—all sanctified by faith.

Gustav and Margarete Wacker

Whenever I attend a temple dedication, I think of Brother and Sister

Gustav and Margarete Wacker of Kingston, Ontario. He was once the branch president of the Kingston Branch. He was from the old country. He spoke English with a thick accent. He never owned or drove a car. He plied the trade of a barber. He made but little money cutting hair near an army base at Kingston. How he loved the missionaries! The highlight of his day would be when he had the privilege to cut the hair of a missionary. Never would there be a charge. When they would make a feeble attempt to pay him, he would say, "Oh, no; it is a joy to cut the hair of a servant of the Lord." Indeed, he would reach deep into his pockets and give the missionaries all of his tips for the day. If it were raining, as it often does in Kingston, President Wacker would call a taxi and send the missionaries to their apartment by cab, while he, himself, at day's end would lock the small shop and walk home—alone in the driving rain.

I first met Gustav Wacker when I noticed that his tithing was far in excess of that expected from his potential income. My efforts to explain to him that the Lord required no more than a tenth fell on attentive but unconvinced ears. He simply responded that he loved to pay all he could to the Lord. It amounted to about a third of his income. His dear wife felt exactly as he did. Their unique manner of tithing payment continued.

Gustav and Margarete Wacker established a home that was a heaven. They were not blessed with children but mothered and fathered their many Church visitors. A sophisticated and learned Church leader from Ottawa told me, "I like to visit the Wacker home. I come away refreshed in spirit and determined to ever live close to the Lord."

Did our Heavenly Father honor such abiding faith? The branch prospered. The membership outgrew the rented Slovakian Hall where they met and moved into a modern and lovely chapel of their own to which the branch

members had contributed their share and more, that it might grace the city of Kingston. President and Sister Wacker had their prayers answered by serving a proselyting mission to their native Germany and later a temple mission to that beautiful temple in Washington, D.C. Then, in 1983, his mission in mortality concluded, Gustav Wacker peacefully passed away while being held in the loving arms of his eternal companion, dressed in his white temple suit, there in the Washington Temple.

Homeward to heaven

All of this history and much more crowded my mind during the dedication services of the Toronto Temple. I reflected on the many nationalities represented by our members there. English, Scottish, German, French, and Italian predominated, but there were also members from Greece, Hungary, Finland, Holland, Estonia, and Poland. Surely, Toronto is an example of the promise of the Lord found in Jeremiah: "I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion" (3:14). This He has done; and from this Zion called Toronto, the word now goes

forth in these native tongues to the home nations of those He has gathered.

When I prepared to leave Toronto following the concluding dedicatory session, I gazed upward toward heaven, that I might offer a silent prayer of gratitude to God for His watchful care, His bounteous blessings, and for "days never to be forgotten." High above the gleaming white temple, which personifies purity and reflects righteousness, is the gold-leafed statue of the Angel Moroni. I remembered being told that from that height of 105 feet, on a clear day one can see all the way to Cumorah. I noted that in Moroni's hand was his familiar trumpet. He was gazing homeward—homeward to Cumorah. The beautiful Toronto Temple prepares all who enter to return homeward—homeward to heaven, homeward to family, homeward to God.

That all of us may travel safely to our eternal home is my humble prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "We Have Partaken of Thy Love."

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 160th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 7, 1990. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst and Robert Cundick at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks as the meeting began:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the

160th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To those in the adjacent Assembly Hall, we note that Elders Marvin J. Ashton, Robert E. Wells, and L. Aldin Porter are seated on the stand.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Donald Ripplinger and accompanied by John Longhurst and Robert Cundick, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service

by singing "Saints, Behold How Great Jehovah." The invocation will then be offered by Elder F. Enzio Busche of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Saints, Behold How Great Jehovah."

Elder F. Enzio Busche offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Be Not Afraid," following which Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Be Not Afraid."

Elder L. Tom Perry

"Be not afraid." Thank you, choir, for that extra support.

"And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it;

"Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God.

"But if it be defiled I will not come into it, and my glory shall not be there; for I will not come into unholy temples" (D&C 97:15-17).

The attitude of reverence

I want to speak to you today about reverence. While I believe that reverence is often exhibited through reverent behaviors, it is not behaviors that concern me now. I want to discuss reverence as an attitude—an attitude of deepest respect and veneration toward Deity. Of course, reverent behaviors follow reverent attitudes, but it is the attitude of reverence that we need to cultivate first among our members. Reverent behaviors without reverent attitudes are empty of meaning because they are performed for the praises of men, not God.

The scriptures remind us constantly of the goodness that is centered in the heart. Those who put on an appearance only to receive the honors

of men, but have unclean hearts, are called hypocrites. It is not enough to behave reverently; we must feel in our hearts reverence for our Heavenly Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Reverence flows from our admiration and respect for Deity. Those who are truly reverent are those who have paid the price to know the glory of the Father and His Son. As Paul admonished in Hebrews, "Serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (12:28).

The conversion of Alma the Younger

The story of Alma the Younger provides a wonderful illustration of the reverence we feel in our hearts when we come to know God. As a young man, he had chosen to be sinful and worldly. Alma was so astonished when an angel appeared to him and called him to repentance that he became dumb and so weak he could not move. After two days and two nights, when Alma's limbs received their strength, he stood up and began to speak unto the people about how he had been redeemed of the Lord. Alma was born again. He was a new creature. His heart had changed.

In verse twenty-nine of the twenty-seventh chapter of Mosiah, Alma describes his marvelous transformation. He declares: "My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and

bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more."

Then in the thirty-first verse, we see evidence of Alma's deep reverence for God: "Yea, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him. Yea, even at the last day, when all men shall stand to be judged of him, then shall they confess that he is God; then shall they confess, who live without God in the world, that the judgment of an everlasting punishment is just upon them; and they shall quake, and tremble, and shrink beneath the glance of his all-searching eye."

Alma's experience had enabled him to understand the glory of God and also "godly fear." He held the deepest respect and veneration for God because he had seen Him seated upon His heavenly throne, in all His power and majesty.

Reverence in area conferences

Several years ago, I had the opportunity of traveling with the President of the Church to attend a series of area conferences. I will never forget the contrast between two conferences that were held just a few days apart. The first area conference was held in a large arena, and as we sat on the stand, we noticed continuous movement by the people. We saw individuals throughout the arena leaning over and whispering to family members and friends seated next to them. Giving the members the benefit of the doubt, we attributed the general lack of reverence to the nature of the facility.

A few days later, we were in another country attending another area conference in an arena much like the first. When we entered the arena, however, an immediate hush came over the congregation. As we sat through the two-hour general session, there was very little movement among the people. Everyone listened intently. Great atten-

tion and respect was shown all the speakers, and when the prophet spoke, you could hear a pin drop.

After the meeting was over, I asked the priesthood leaders about what they had done to prepare the people for the conference. They told me their preparation had been simple. They had asked priesthood holders to explain to the members of their families, and also the families they home taught, that at an area conference they would have the privilege of hearing the words of the prophet and the Apostles. The priesthood leaders explained that the reverence their people felt for God and His servants was the basis for their reverent behavior at the conference.

A bishop teaches reverence

I remember as a young child being taught a valuable lesson by my bishop. President Heber J. Grant had just visited our community to dedicate our new chapel. Our bishop was so impressed with the dedicatory prayer that the next Tuesday when we held Primary he attended with us. He wanted to teach us to have respect for the building which had just been dedicated as a place of worship.

The bishop took us on a tour of our new chapel and showed us the various features of the building to impress upon us that it was now a house dedicated to the Lord. First, he pointed to the back of the hall where the beehive emblem had been painted above the back exit doors. He explained that the beehive was the emblem of industry for the early pioneers. "The bees are ever busy bringing honey and sweetness into the hive," he said. The beehive painted on our wall was to be a reminder of the importance of being industrious each day and gathering the good things of this world and bringing them with us to be shared as we worshiped in our Sunday services.

Then he pointed to the large painting in the front of the hall depicting the arrival of the pioneers into the Salt Lake Valley. He spoke to us about the

sacrifices the pioneers had made for us by coming here and building our cities and our first houses of worship, so we could partake of the Spirit of the Lord and be instructed in His ways.

The bishop directed our attention to two other paintings, one on each side of the large painting of the pioneers. The painting on the right was of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the one on the left was of the prophet Brigham Young. He spent time telling us about the reverence we should have for the prophets and that we should heed their words of counsel. He then reminded us of President Grant's trip and described some of the sacrifices he had made to come and dedicate and turn over this building to the care and keeping of the Lord.

The bishop next explained the motif that ran around the entire chapel. It was of the egg and the dart repeated over and over again. He discussed why this motif was selected—the egg signified new life, the dart signified the end of life. The egg was a reminder of our mortal birth and the time we have to be taught and trained in the ways of the Lord, to be obedient to His will, and to partake of the sacred ordinances which would qualify us to return to His presence. The dart represented the time of transition from mortality to immortality. He reminded us that if we proved ourselves worthy, we would be blessed with the greatest gift of God, the gift of eternal life.

Finally, for special emphasis, the bishop focused our attention on the sacrament table. He instructed us about the purpose of the sacrament as a time to renew our baptismal covenants and to remember the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior. He concluded with an appeal to each of us to always be reverent in this house, which had been dedicated to the Lord.

Witnessing the dedication of our chapel by a prophet of God and attending the tour guided by my bishop impressed me greatly. I realized that every time I entered the chapel I was entering a holy place. It was not difficult for me

to be reverent at church because all around me there were reminders of the Lord, His servants, and His eternal plan for me. These reminders reinforced my reverent attitude, and reverent behavior followed.

Of course, our chapels are not all constructed with the same design features. However, each one centers on the mission of our Savior. They are buildings dedicated for the purpose of worshipping Him. Now, the bishops of the Church today may not be able to instruct the Primary as my bishop was able to do for us because our chapels are usually occupied during the time Primary is in session in this day and age. But perhaps the parents of the Church could increase the reverent attitudes of their children by finding a time to be alone with them in the chapel and explaining to them that this is a special place, dedicated to the Lord, wherein only reverent attitudes and behavior are acceptable to Him.

Teach reverence in the home

If reverence is an attitude toward Deity, then it is a private feeling. It is something we feel inside our hearts no matter what is going on around us. It is also a personal responsibility. We cannot blame others for disturbing our reverent attitudes.

Where, then, does the development of reverent attitudes begin? The home is the key to reverent attitudes, as it is to every other godlike virtue. It is during personal and family prayer that the little ones learn how to bow their heads, fold their arms, and close their eyes while our Father in Heaven is being addressed. It is a mother taking time to be certain that during each day there is a quiet period where the hustle and bustle of daily activities are divorced from the house, where just parents and children have time together in quiet solitude for reflection and teaching, to set the example of having reverence in the home.

It is during family home evenings, which are a part of our home life, where

children are taught that there are special times, not only in church but also at home, when we learn of our Heavenly Father and when everyone needs to be on his best behavior. Behavior learned at home determines behavior in church meetings. A child who has learned to pray at home understands that he must be quiet and still during prayers in worship services.

Serve God reverently

One Sunday, my granddaughter Diana, who is four years old, was sitting next to her father at church. Diana sat reverently, enjoying the comfort of her father's arm holding her close to him. However, when the bishop stood up and announced the sacrament hymn, Diana gently lifted her father's arm from off her shoulder and placed it in his lap. Then she sat up straight and folded her arms. She looked over at her father and encouraged him to do the same.

Diana's message to her father was perfectly clear. She was telling him to turn his complete and total attention to

the Savior. This is the message a reverent attitude always conveys, and when reverent attitudes abound, reverent behavior will always flourish. I pray that, like Diana, we may all strive to develop reverent attitudes so that we may serve God reverently and with godly fear (see Hebrews 12:28).

Let us never depreciate the value of our own personal example of being a living witness of the love and respect we have for Him whom we call "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (2 Nephi 19:6), is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson, also a member of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., of the Seventy.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Choices

Not long ago a beautiful young mother asked me for guidance with a very difficult decision she was facing. It pertained to an important surgical operation that was being considered. Consequences of her choice would affect her husband and her family as well. She said, "Decisions are really hard for me. I even have trouble choosing what to wear each morning."

"You are not so different," I replied. "Each of us must make choices. That is one of life's great privileges."

I told this lovely mother that my fellow physicians are regularly asked questions about the human body. Some questions relate to surgical intervention to save a life or to save a part of the body. Other questions relate to elective procedures to alter the body's structure

or function. In recent years, many questions relate to the "choice" to abort the life of a newly forming human being. Ironically, such "choice" would deny that developing individual both life and choice.

I reminded her that questions regarding our bodies represent only an important fraction of life's most challenging choices. Others include Where shall I live? What shall I do with my life? To which cause should I commit my effort and my good name? These are but a few of the many choices that we must make each day.

I will not disclose the name of the sister, nor the specific operation she was contemplating. To do so might divert our attention to a specific topic and away from those fundamental principles that pertain to important decisions generally.

Because challenging choices face all of us from time to time, I invite others to join with us as I extend my conversation with this young mother.

I would suggest three questions you might ask yourself as you consider your options. Whether they are once-in-a-lifetime or routine daily decisions, serious reflection on these three questions will help clarify your thinking. You might wish to review these questions first alone and then with your husband. They are:

1. *Who am I?*
2. *Why am I here?*
3. *Where am I going?*

Truthful answers to these three questions will remind you of important anchors and unchanging principles.

As you consider these fundamental questions, it will become clear that decisions you first thought to be purely personal virtually always impact the lives of others. In answering these questions, then, you must be mindful of the broader circle of family and friends who will be affected by the consequences of your choice. This self-evaluation will be a silent examination. No one else will hear your replies. Though I will suggest some answers, the ultimate responses must be uniquely yours.

Who am I?

Remember, you are a daughter of God, just as your husband is a son of God. Our Heavenly Father loves you. He has created you to be successful and to have joy.

"He created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness" (D&C 20:18; see also Genesis 1:26–27; Mosiah 7:27; Alma 18:34; 22:12; Ether 3:15; Moses 2:27).

These bodies, created in God's image, are to be preserved, protected, and well cared for. I feel as did the Apostle Paul, who likened the human body to a temple:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

You are one of God's noble and great spirits, held in reserve to come to earth at this time (see D&C 86:8–11). In your premortal life you were appointed to help prepare the world for the great gathering of souls that will precede the Lord's second coming. You are one of a covenant people. You are an heir to the promise that all the earth will be blessed by the seed of Abraham and that God's covenant with Abraham will be fulfilled through his lineage in these latter days (see 1 Nephi 15:18; 3 Nephi 20:25).

As a member of the Church, you have made sacred covenants with the Lord. You have taken upon yourself the name of Christ (see D&C 18:28; 20:29, 37). You have promised to always remember Him and to keep His commandments. In return, He has agreed to grant His Spirit to be with you (see Moroni 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77).

Having briefly considered some answers to question number one, let us turn our attention to question number two.

Why am I here?

This question is one I have often asked myself. Well do I remember doing so many years ago while in military service, separated from family and friends, surrounded by the horrible devastation of war. On another unforgettable occasion, I was stranded in a cold, remote area, far from transportation, food, or shelter. No doubt you have had similar anxious moments. But those experiences are the exceptions. I'd like to discuss the greater question.

Why are you here on planet earth?

One of the most important reasons is to receive a mortal body. Another is to be tested—to experience mortality—to determine what you will do with life's challenging opportunities. Those opportunities require you to make

choices, and choices depend on agency. A major reason for your mortal existence, therefore, is to test how you will exercise your agency (see 2 Nephi 2:15, 25).

Agency is a divine gift to you. You are free to choose what you will be and what you will do. And you are not without help. Counsel with your parents is a privilege at any age. Prayer provides communication with your Heavenly Father and invites the promptings of personal revelation. And in certain circumstances, consultation with professional advisers and with your local leaders in the Church may be highly advisable, especially when very difficult decisions must be made.

That is precisely the pattern chosen by President Spencer W. Kimball. In 1972, Elder Kimball, then a member of the Council of the Twelve, knew that his mortal life was slipping away because of heart disease. He obtained competent medical counsel and prayerfully consulted with the Lord and with his file leaders in the Church. Elder and Sister Kimball and the First Presidency carefully weighed available alternatives. Then President Harold B. Lee, speaking for the First Presidency, counseled Elder Kimball. With great conviction, President Lee said: "Spencer, you have been called! You are not to die! You must do everything you need to do to care for yourself and continue to live" ("Spencer W. Kimball: Man of Faith," *Ensign*, Dec. 1985, p. 40).

President Kimball chose to have an operation performed upon his heart that was known to carry a high risk. He was blessed with a successful result. He lived thirteen more years, eventually to succeed President Lee as President of the Church.

That precious privilege of choice—man's agency—was decreed before the world was created (see D&C 93:29–31). It is a moral agency (see D&C 101:78). Thus, it was opposed by Satan (see Moses 4:3) but affirmed by the Lord (see Moses 4:2) and reaffirmed through prophets in ancient and in modern

times (see D&C 58:26–28; Moses 6:56; 7:32).

The proper exercise of moral agency requires faith. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:4). Because of Him, you have your agency. He must be the very foundation of your faith, and the testing of that faith is a fundamental reason for your freedom to choose.

You are free to develop and exercise faith in God and in His divine Son, faith in His word, faith in His church, faith in His servants, and faith in His commandments.

Facing difficult challenges is neither new nor unique. Centuries ago, Joshua spoke of a choice his family faced. He declared,

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15; see also Moses 6:33).

Cultivation of that faith will entitle you to the companionship of the Holy Ghost, who will help you make wise decisions (see 2 Nephi 2:27–28; D&C 14:8).

Many may profess a measure of faith in God, but without sincere repentance, faith cannot be fully operative. This concept was made known to the Nephites:

"Many of them . . . are brought to the knowledge of the truth, . . . and are led to believe the holy scriptures, . . . which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them" (Helaman 15:7).

Faith, repentance, and obedience will qualify you for sublime gifts of justice and mercy, which are bestowed upon those worthy of the blessings of the Atonement (see Alma 34:16–17).

Yes, every test, every trial, every challenge and hardship you endure is an opportunity to further develop your faith (see D&C 63:11; 101:4).

Faith can be fortified through prayer. Prayer is the powerful key to making decisions, not only concerning

your physical body, but concerning all other important aspects of your life. Humbly seek the Lord in prayer with a sincere heart and real intent, and He will help you (see Alma 33:23; Moroni 7:9, 10:4; D&C 9:7-9).

Remember that faith and prayer alone are seldom sufficient. Personal effort is usually necessary to accomplish your heart's desire. "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17; see also 2:18, 20, 26; Alma 26:22).

The answers to question number two emphasize that you are here to exercise faith, to pray, and to work hard.

Now let's turn our attention to question number three.

Where am I going?

This question reminds us that eventually you (and I) are going to die, be resurrected, be judged, and be awarded a place in eternal realms (see 1 Corinthians 15:22; Alma 12:24; 21:9; Helaman 14:16-17; D&C 138:19). With each passing sunset, you are closer to that inevitable day of judgment. Then you will be asked to account for your faith, your hopes, and your works. The Lord said,

"Every man may act in doctrine and principle . . . according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment" (D&C 101:78; see also Mosiah 3:24).

As all will be resurrected, your physical body will then be restored to its proper and perfect frame (see Alma 11:43; 40:23). The day of your resurrection will be a day of judgment that will determine the kind of life you shall have hereafter.

That judgment will consider not only your actions, but also your innermost intent and heartfelt desires. Your everyday thoughts have not been lost. Scriptures speak of the "bright recollection" (Alma 11:43) and "perfect remembrance" (Alma 5:18) that your mind will provide in times of divine judgment.

The Lord knows the desires of our hearts. At the time of judgment, surely the special yearnings of single sisters and childless couples, for example, will be given compassionate consideration by Him who said,

"I, the Lord, will judge all . . . according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:9; see also Hebrews 4:12; Alma 18:32; D&C 6:16; 33:1; 88:109).

He will know of your longings as a wife and mother who tried diligently to serve your family and society properly.

As I listen to those who argue for causes contrary to the commandments of God and observe individuals who revel in the pleasures of the world with apparent disregard for eventual judgment, I think of this divine description of their folly:

"They despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, . . . for their heart went after their idols" (Ezekiel 20:16).

Interviews, as for temple recommends, with your bishop and members of your stake presidency are precious experiences. And, in a way, they could be considered meaningful "dress rehearsals" for that grand colloquy when you will stand before the Great Judge.

After the Resurrection and Judgment, you will be assigned to your everlasting home on high. The revelations liken the glory of those dwelling places to the differing lights of heavenly bodies. Paul said,

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars" (1 Corinthians 15:41).

The Lord revealed more to the Prophet Joseph Smith, who wrote of the *testial* glory, where those will ultimately abide "who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus" while in this life (D&C 76:82).

The Prophet taught of the *terrestrial* glory as the abode for the "honorable . . . of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men," who rejected

the gospel while on the earth (D&C 76:75).

And then he wrote of the *celestial* glory, which "glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all" (D&C 76:70). There the faithful will dwell together with their families, enjoying exaltation with our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. With them will be those who have been obedient to ordinances and covenants made in holy temples, where they were sealed to predecessors and posterity.

Elder Hartman Rector, Jr.

The Resurrection

Brothers and sisters, I would like to visit with you for a few moments this afternoon about the Resurrection and the importance of going home to our Heavenly Father in a clean condition. Surely there is not much known by the living about the Resurrection because neither prophets nor resurrected persons have explained the process to mortals. Only this much: that the atonement of Jesus Christ "bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead" (Alma 42:23), death being the separation of the spirit from the body.

The Resurrection has to do with the restoration of the spirit to the body and the body to the spirit. In the words of Alma, "Yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23). And why is this done? Again in the words of Alma, "The resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice" (Alma 42:23).

Jacob gives us some idea of what resurrection will be like:

"O how great the plan of our God! For . . . the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the right-

eous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect.

May each of us choose wisely and with faith in Him who created us, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

"Wherefore, we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness. . . .

"And assuredly, as the Lord liveth, for the Lord God hath spoken it, . . . they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still; wherefore, they who are filthy are the devil and his angels" (2 Nephi 9:13-14, 16).

Repentance

It seems, then, there is good news and bad news about the Resurrection. The good news is that everyone will be resurrected. All will live again! And all who have been righteous (have repented) will still be righteous. The bad news is that he that is filthy (which means the devil and those who have chosen to associate with him) shall be filthy still. Others will receive a lesser glory than the celestial because they have not repented while in the flesh.

Therefore, in the Resurrection men will be judged. Judgment tells how well we have kept the commandments in the flesh (see Alma 5:15).

Then, looking forward to what condition we will be in when we are resurrected, probably the most important commandment is, in the words of the Father, "Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son" and then endure to the end (2 Nephi 31:11; see also 31:15).

In fact, the Master has indicated we should say nothing but repentance to this generation (see D&C 6:9; 11:9; 14:8; 19:21). Repentance seems to be the most important experience we can have on this earth to prepare for the Resurrection, because "none but the truly penitent are saved" (Alma 42:24).

So the question of questions is, What makes people repent? As near as I have been able to determine, once a person has sufficient faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that he believes Christ has paid for his sins, then he will repent. And it seems that very few, if any, will repent until they believe this truth. Therefore, it is vital to teach the truth about Jesus Christ as the literal son of God and our Lord and Savior and Redeemer in order to bring souls to repentance. Faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance *is* the saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Alma 34:16).

Baptism

When we experience repentance, we are permitted to make a sacred covenant with God in the waters of baptism. Baptism is for the remission of sins (see D&C 13:1; 68:27), and further, it is a witness before God the Father that we will be obedient unto Him hereafter in keeping His commandments (see 2 Nephi 31:6-7).

Once baptized, we then receive the Holy Ghost, a special gift from God, which is priceless beyond expression. The Holy Ghost bears witness of the Father and the Son and guides us to all

truth and comforts us and gives us peace for the rest of our lives. The Holy Ghost is received by the laying on of hands of an elder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the same time we are received into the Church and become "born again"—sons and daughters of Jesus Christ (see John 1:12; Ether 3:14; Alma 5:49).

Enduring to the end

According to the Father, all that is required thereafter is that we endure to the end (see 2 Nephi 31:15), which means that we will hereafter—

1. Continue to repent (see Moses 5:8).
 2. Continue to forgive others (see D&C 64:9-10) for the rest of our lives.
- Perhaps there is one other thing we must do:
3. We must be nice!

The nicest things we can do

I do not believe there will be anyone in the celestial kingdom that is not nice (see D&C 31:9; 52:40).

"To be nice" means much more than just to be good. For instance, probably the nicest thing that parents can do for their children is to give them birth under the temple covenant or to be sealed to them thereafter. There is probably nothing of greater value than this. Why? Because it guarantees to the children eternal life—if *they* remain faithful. And this is true irrespective of what happens to the parents.

The nicest thing that children can do for their parents is to be obedient unto them (see Colossians 3:20). The nicest gift a father can give to his children is to love their mother and be true to her. Conversely, the nicest gift that a mother can give her children is to love their father and be true to him. Why is this such a nice gift? Well, basically, it assures the children that they will never have to choose between their parents.

The nicest gift that you can give to nonmember friends or acquaintances is to share the gospel with them. This is probably most easily done by having a copy of the Book of Mormon delivered to them by the missionaries. Why the Book of Mormon? Because it is, in the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, "the most correct . . . book on earth" (*History of the Church*, 4:461). Why is the Book of Mormon so great? Probably because the "plain and precious" truths that were lost or taken from the Bible were put back or restored in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 13:40). In my opinion, a man can learn more about Jesus Christ by reading the Book of Mormon than any other book.

The nicest thing we can do for less-active members of the Church is to reach out to them with love and tenderness and kindness and bring them back into activity in the Church so that they can go to the temple, which they must do to prepare for a glorious resurrection.

The nicest thing we can do for the poor is, in the words of King Benjamin, to "impart of [our] substance to [them], every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants" (Mosiah 4:26).

Keeping the commandments

When the Lord invites us to return unto Him (see Malachi 3:7), He means, in essence, that we repent and return to His commandments, for they are calculated to make us happy and prepare us for the Resurrection.

Well! Which commandments do we have to keep? After baptism, let's start with the Ten Commandments and add the Word of Wisdom and the law of tithing.

Well, what is so important about the Word of Wisdom? If we do not live the Word of Wisdom, we run the risk of killing ourselves. And that's contrary

to the sixth commandment. Here is a statement I took from a package of cigarettes, one of the most popular brands in America: "Surgeon General's Warning: Smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema and may complicate pregnancy." Sounds like it might kill us, doesn't it?

What is so important about tithing? If you don't pay tithing, you are stealing from the Lord (see Malachi 3:8), and that's contrary to the eighth commandment, and no one has ever prospered doing that. On the other hand, when we pay our tithes and offerings, the Lord gives it all back to us "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38). How is that for a promise?

The Ten Commandments are eternal laws that *have* not changed from Sinai until now. They are timeless, eternal laws that will never change.

Keeping the Ten Commandments plus paying tithes and keeping the Word of Wisdom after baptism is the standard or guide to continue to repent or, in the words of Nephi, to "feast upon the words of Christ" (2 Nephi 32:3). Therefore, if you are not paying tithing, repent and start paying it. If you are not living the Word of Wisdom, repent and start living it. If you are not morally clean, repent and become clean.

Repentance means to confess and forsake sins (see D&C 58:43) and partake of the sacrament, where we renew our baptismal covenant. Then we are clean because we have a Savior who has paid for our sins, but only on condition of our repentance (see D&C 18:12).

If you are not keeping the Sabbath day holy, repent and start doing it. If you are not truthful, repent and start telling the truth. If you are not honoring your parents, repent and start honoring your parents. If you are worshiping false gods—such as football, baseball, golf, tennis, or money or technology or automobiles or houses or gold or silver—and you can tell what a man worships by what he does on Sunday—repent and start worshipping the true and living

God, the maker of heaven and earth and all things that in them are.

The gospel is easy to live

Brothers and sisters, the gospel is easy to live. All we have to do is stay everlastingly at it.

We are here upon the earth to learn how to be happy eternally as we prepare for a glorious resurrection, because man is that he might have joy (see 2 Nephi 2:25), and we receive our blessings from Him whom we list to obey (see Alma 3:27; D&C 29:45).

Isn't it just smart to follow the Lord? In fact, there is no other way, for the Lord God hath spoken it, and He never doth vary from that which He hath said (see Mosiah 2:22).

My brothers and sisters, I am a witness before God that He lives and hears and answers prayers. I bear witness that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to pay the price for sin, which He did, and to break the bands of death, which He also did. I know that it is only through Him that we live and move and have our being, that His is the only name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved or *made clean* (see 2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 3:17; Acts 4:12). I know that this church, The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints, is the only true church on earth, with which the Lord is well pleased—speaking collectively and not individually. These things I don't just believe—I know them. I also bear record that Ezra Taft Benson is a living, breathing prophet of God.

If I have done anything or said anything that has offended anyone within hearing today, I am truly sorry and I humbly beg your forgiveness, for surely the central truth of the gospel is “none but the truly penitent are saved” (Alma 42:24), to which I bear witness and express to you my love, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve has addressed us, followed by Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will join in singing “Praise to the Man,” following which Sister Ruth B. Wright, second counselor in the Primary General Presidency, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang “Praise to the Man.”

Sister Ruth B. Wright

Pictures of Book of Mormon events

On the walls of our Primary office hang pictures, drawn by children from around the world, which illustrate some of the great events from the Book of Mormon. As I look at them, I feel the spirit of noble prophets and leaders who made choices to be obedient to the Lord in spite of earthly trials. The examples of their faith, courage, love, humility, service, and endurance sustain me and give me strength to face challenges in my own life.

So that you might also gain strength from their messages, let me describe some of these plain and simple pictures and share some insights about the powerful principles they teach. The stories are familiar, yet the precepts we learn from them may be different each time we read them. The scriptures have the power to speak to our particular situations wherever we are in life. The insights you gain may be entirely different from the ones that I gain, but they all can strengthen us personally.

Lehi's journey

The first picture is Lehi's journey. With complete faith that the Lord would guide him day by day, Lehi turned from the security and comfort of his home in Jerusalem and began his journey in the wilderness facing an unknown future.

When the unknown looms ahead of me, I gain strength by remembering Lehi and exercising faith that the Lord will guide me.

Nephi building a ship

As I look at Nephi building a ship, I can imagine what might have gone through his mind. "How can I do that? I don't know anything about building a ship. I haven't had any training!" Instead, he faced his challenge with courage. He said:

"If God had commanded me to do all things I could do them. If he should command me that I should say unto this water, be thou earth, it should be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done.

"And now, if the Lord has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that he cannot instruct me, that I should build a ship?" (1 Nephi 17:50-51).

So Nephi built a ship.

When tasks seem too great or even impossible, I think of courageous Nephi by the water's edge building a ship.

King Benjamin's address

I love to look at the picture of King Benjamin standing on the mighty tower with his loving arms outstretched to all his people. This beloved king, who spent his life in service to others, showed great humility when he willingly admitted his weaknesses and shortcomings and yet stated with conviction that he recognized his calling was from God.

"I have not commanded you to come . . . that ye should fear me, or that

ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man.

"But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind . . . , and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people . . . to serve you with all the might, mind and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me" (Mosiah 2:10-11).

When I feel inadequate and overwhelmed with my own weaknesses, I think of King Benjamin and try again.

Alma and Amulek in prison

Picture Alma and Amulek sitting side by side bound with cords in prison. Wicked men persecuted them, imprisoned them, and allowed them to suffer great afflictions because they were testifying of the truth. We know that God's children, since time began, have suffered for righteousness' sake and will continue to be tried. I gain strength from reading about Alma and Amulek as I endeavor to meet my individual trials.

Helaman's stripling warriors

In a day of ever-changing values in which some say, If it doesn't hurt anyone, do what you want, or If it feels good, do it, or It's only cheating when you get caught, I think about Helaman's stripling warriors. These young men, who were taught correct principles by their mothers, "were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted" (Alma 53:20).

Now, that means being true when you are tempted, being true when you don't want to be, being true when it means standing alone from the rest of the world. Remembering the example of these faithful young men strengthens me in my effort to be steadfast in obeying gospel principles.

Christ ministering to the Nephites

As I look at the picture of Christ appearing to the Nephites, I remember a dear friend who had a series of traumatic events happen to her in a short period of time. She was physically weakened, emotionally distraught, and spiritually drained. Every day seemed harder for her to face than the day before. She was desperate for comfort. While lying in a hospital bed anticipating an unwanted but necessary surgery, she felt utterly alone. Her thoughts turned to Joseph Smith and his sufferings in Liberty Jail. Then she thought about our Savior, Jesus Christ. She asked her husband to read to her from 3 Nephi. The Nephites had gathered at the temple in the land Bountiful and twice heard a voice they didn't understand that seemed to come from heaven.

"It being a small voice . . . did pierce them . . . to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn. . . .

"And behold, the third time they did understand the voice. . . .

"Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.

"They saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe. . . .

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

"And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:3, 6–8, 10–11).

After my friend listened to this passage, a sweet peace enveloped her. For the first time in months she felt relief. Her fears were calmed. She gained strength to carry on.

Not only did Christ minister to the multitude; he also gave strength to the children. In the seventeenth chapter of 3 Nephi, Jesus asked that the little ones be brought to him, and he gathered them around him.

"He took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. . . .

"And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

"And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them" (3 Nephi 17:21, 23–24).

When I read this passage, I am filled to overflowing with the love Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father have for me and you and the whole world. He blesses us daily, as he blessed the little children, with a love that gives me strength to go forth with assurance that he will guide me.

My dear brothers and sisters, I testify that by prayerfully reading and pondering the Book of Mormon, each of us can gain strength to meet our daily challenges. I know the Book of Mormon is the word of God. Every time I read from its pages I receive a confirmation of its truth. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Sister Ruth B. Wright of the Primary General Presidency, who has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders Helio R. Camargo and Waldo P. Call, who were released yesterday from the Second Quorum of the Seventy after serving faithfully for more than five years as General Authorities. These brethren have now been called to serve as the presidents of the São Paulo and Mexico City temples respectively.

Elder Helio R. Camargo

In all things give thanks

Brothers, sisters, and friends, as the Apostle Paul counseled the Thessalonian Saints, "In every thing give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18), today I would like to express my gratitude for some of the special blessings in my life.

I am very grateful to have been born and reared in a Christian family, where from the earliest years of my life I had the privilege of coming to know and appreciate the sacred scriptures of the Bible.

I am grateful to have been taught the principles of honesty, hard work, and thrift even more by the daily example of my parents and relatives than by their words and counsel.

In those now distant past days of my adolescence, I chose to pursue a career in the military. In the academy I was taught by my leaders and professors in the principles of discipline, obedience, and dedication. For that experience, my soul is also filled with gratitude.

When I was still young, at the time it occurred, I considered the unfortunate accident that prevented my continuing a military career to be a terrible impediment to the realization of my fondest dreams. However, today, at this point in my life when my brown hair has been substituted for white and now even threatens to abandon me entirely, I have come to recognize that accident as a blessing in disguise, destined to propel my life in other paths that have led to higher levels of understanding and self-realization. I am also grateful for this.

I am grateful as I contemplate the years that have passed and the happenings that have unfolded, measuring what the Lord has given me and considering the sure promises for a happier future—a future made even happier by the company of relatives and friends who have preceded me in passing to the other side of the veil, and thinking of

those loved ones with whom I still enjoy living every day—particularly the extraordinary woman that God allowed me to have as a wife in mortality and throughout eternity. Also, I am grateful for the wonderful children and grandchildren he sent to our home to be the joy of our life. As I contemplate all these blessings, gratitude is the predominant feeling that comes to my heart.

Because of these and many other blessings that I cannot describe adequately, when I received the invitation to speak during this conference, gratitude was the primary theme that first came to my mind.

I express appreciation to those who preserved the Bible for future generations, beginning with the faithful patriarchs of Israel and then passed on by those dedicated scholars who translated the prophets' writings into Greek—the universal language of the time—and thus preserved for us that precious version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. Later, there were the steadfast individuals who tirelessly worked to copy the scriptures during the Middle Ages and who patiently reproduced and defended them from the barbarians who invaded Europe. I also pay honor and praise to the courageous reformers of the sixteenth century who translated the scriptures into the language of the people and made them available for the general reading and edification of all the children of God.

I express appreciation to our Father in Heaven for Joseph Smith, that humble and faithful prophet through whom were revealed to this generation the spiritual experiences and the precious doctrinal teachings of the prophets who lived in this hemisphere and recorded their testimony of Jesus Christ in the scriptures which are today known as the Book of Mormon—the book that casts so much light on the obscure passages of the Bible, confirming the word of God and filling in that marvelous portion of the plan of salva-

tion created by our Father in Heaven for the happiness of his children.

I also express appreciation for the good families—descendants of the pioneers who populated these desert valleys, rearing noble children, pure and dedicated, ready to accept mission calls and willing to leave their homes and go into the world sharing the precious truths of the restored gospel with unknown and sometimes hostile people. I express a special thanks to those whose children were called to our native land of Brazil and for all they did for the people generally and for my family particularly.

I am grateful to the Almighty for the privilege given to all of us to be born in this generation of immense challenges and bright hopes, of technological progress and magnificent scientific accomplishments. I am also thankful for being born in a free nation where the gospel message can be freely preached for the eternal happiness of all who will receive it.

I express gratitude for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—perfect in organization, incomparable in spiritual power, and unassailable in doctrine and practice. I am grateful that in the restored gospel, the truths of the universe are incorporated in such a way that all who embrace them are never forced to abandon any previously known truth, nor any comforting hope, nor any ennobling principle possessed before. To the contrary, these truths of the restored gospel only cause the light already had to shine with greater brilliance—any happiness and joy already experienced to be magnified, and inspired wisdom to be added to

the knowledge already acquired. Thus through the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, an individual can be raised to the highest levels that the human mind and heart can envision.

I am grateful especially for the restoration of the priesthood, including the same sealing keys promised by Jesus Christ himself to his Apostles that permit loved ones in our day to be sealed as families forever (see Matthew 16:19).

The recognition of and gratitude for blessings received has been a message emphasized not only by the Apostles and prophets of ancient times, but also even in this time by these prophets who are present with us here in the Tabernacle today.

Considering again the admonition of the Apostle Paul, “in every thing give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:18), we should be grateful for the blessings which we seek and receive as well as for those blessings that come to us that are beyond our current capacity to comprehend. All is provided by God, who is just, loving, and perfect and will result for our good because “all things work together for good to those that love God” (Romans 8:28).

May human pride and pretensions never arise in us to cause us to imagine in those moments of personal victory or accomplishment that it is by our own merit that we have achieved, but rather may we recognize the hand of God in all things because, as we read in modern scriptures, “in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments” (D&C 59:21). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Waldo P. Call

Naaman and Elisha

In the Old Testament, in 2 Kings, we read of a man by the name of Naaman. He was the “captain of the host of the king of Syria, . . . but he was a leper” (2 Kings 5:1).

An Israelite maid who “waited on Naaman’s wife” said: “Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy” (5:2–3).

Captain Naaman, not a member of the Church, accepted this in full faith

and hope. The Syrian king gave him a letter for the king of Israel, and gold, silver, and fine clothing as gifts.

The king of Israel, a man of little faith, was upset about this because he knew he could not heal Naaman, and he said, "See how he seeketh a quarrel against me" (5:7).

"When Elisha the man of God had heard" this, "he sent to the king, saying, . . . let him come . . . to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel" (5:8).

Naaman went to the prophet. "Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

"But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

"Are not . . . rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? . . . So he turned and went away in a rage" (5:10-12).

His pride would not let him follow the prophet's direction. He was going home, and he was leprous still. Could this be because of a proud heart?

His good servants convinced him that he should do as the prophet had said, saying:

"If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?

"Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (5:13-14).

Naaman was grateful for this and went to the prophet with the gold and silver and fine clothes. But the prophet of God, of course, would not accept payment for the blessings of God.

So Naaman and his company started home. The servant of Elisha, the prophet, found it hard to see these

riches slip from his hands, so he ran after Naaman. Naaman stopped when he saw him coming. The servant said that his master had company and asked for a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.

Naaman was delighted to give them to him and even sent two of his servants to carry them. Before coming to the house of Elisha, the servant stopped and put them in a house. Then he went in to Elisha.

And Elisha said: "Whence comest thou? . . .

"Went not mine heart with thee? . . . Is it a time to receive money? . . .

"The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow" (5:25-27).

Are we following the prophet?

President Benson, the prophet of God, has counseled us on so many important things. Are we doing them? Or do we say:

"Oh, yes, he is the Lord's prophet, but I don't want to go on a mission."

"I don't want to get married."

"I don't have time to read the Book of Mormon every day. I'm too busy with my work or studies."

"We don't have time for family prayer or home evening."

"But I need to sleep in on Sunday after the big activity. I cannot go to church."

"But Sunday is the only day I have to shop because of my work and studies."

Be submissive and do not murmur

A quote from the sermon of King Benjamin says, "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint

through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, *submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father*" (Mosiah 3:19; italics added).

The prophet Lehi said to his son Nephi, "And now, behold thy brothers *murmur*, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord" (1 Nephi 3:5; italics added).

Can you hear President Benson saying, "But behold, I have not told you to go on a mission or marry in the temple; but it is a commandment of the Lord"?

Lehi continues:

"Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be favored of the Lord, because thou hast *not murmured*.

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:6-7; italics added).

Do we have the faith of Nephi?

The Lord told his disciples on this continent, "And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; *and if he endureth to the end*, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world" (3 Nephi 27:16; italics added).

The Lord will show us the way

My dear brothers and sisters and family, can't you see what we need to do? *Be submissive—do not murmur—endure to the end*. If we will do this, the Lord will show us the way, if we will but follow his prophets and Apostles.

Do not question their direction! It is as simple as that. No, I am not

saying to have blind faith or blind obedience.

Sometimes you may want proof of this doctrine or that saying of the prophet. Keep the commandments! Pray, walk in righteousness, and through the Holy Spirit you can know by that sweet, calm feeling that it is true.

Moroni said, "By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5).

We can know by the Spirit that it is right, if, like Nephi, we have faith, are obedient, and keep the commandments.

What if Naaman had let his pride rule him? He would have remained a leper.

Could we take the servant of Elisha as a type for us when we look at riches, worldly things, and the wisdom of men instead of following the prophets? Will we and our descendants be out of the Church or unclean forever more because of disobedience?

The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith, "And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:14).

I testify that God, our Heavenly Father, lives. His Son, Jesus Christ, lives, and he is our Savior and Redeemer. This is his church, and he directs it through his prophets. I testify that President Ezra Taft Benson is his prophet; that President Hinckley and President Monson and the Twelve Apostles are worthy prophets and God's servants.

I love my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I love these prophets, Apostles, seers, and revelators. I respect them, I sustain them, and I pray for them.

I love my family; and I love you, my brothers and sisters; and I pray that we will follow the prophets and Apostles and keep the commandments of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

These two dedicated men who have just spoken to us are Elders Helio R. Camargo, who comes from Brazil,

and Waldo P. Call, who comes from the Mormon colonies in Mexico.

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve will now address us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Covenants

It was an experience to hear President Joseph Fielding Smith pray. Even when he was past ninety he would pray that he would “keep his *covenants* and *obligations* and endure to the end.” The word *covenant* is the subject of my message.

The Lord told the ancients, “With thee will I establish my covenant” (Genesis 6:18). He told the Nephites, “Ye are the children of the covenant” (3 Nephi 20:26). And he described the restored gospel as the “*new and . . . everlasting covenant*” (D&C 22:1; italics added). Every Latter-day Saint is under *covenant*. Baptism is a covenant; so is the sacrament. Through it we renew the covenant of baptism and commit to “always remember him and keep his commandments” (D&C 20:77).

Three dangerous life-styles

My message is to you who are tempted either to promote, to enter, or to remain in a life-style which violates your covenants and will one day bring sorrow to you and to those who love you.

Growing numbers of people now campaign to make spiritually dangerous life-styles legal and socially acceptable. Among them are abortion, the gay-lesbian movement, and drug addiction. They are debated in forums and seminars, in classes, in conversations, in conventions, and in courts all over the world. The social and political aspects of them are in the press every day.

Moral and spiritual

The point I make is simply this: there is a *MORAL* and *SPIRITUAL* side

to these issues which is universally ignored. For Latter-day Saints, morality is one component which must not be missing when these issues are considered—otherwise sacred covenants are at risk! Keep your covenants and you will be safe. Break them and you will not.

The commandments found in the scriptures, both the positive counsel and the “shalt nots,” form the *letter* of the law. There is also the *spirit* of the law. We are responsible for both.

Some challenge us to show where the scriptures specifically forbid abortion or a gay-lesbian or drug-centered life-style. “If they are so wrong,” they ask, “why don’t the scriptures tell us so in ‘letter of the law’ plainness?” These issues are not ignored in the revelations.* The scriptures are generally positive rather than negative in their themes, and it is a mistake to assume that anything not specifically prohibited in the “*letter of the law*” is somehow approved of the Lord. All the Lord approves is not detailed in the scriptures; neither is all that is forbidden. The Word of Wisdom, for instance, makes no specific warning against taking arsenic. Surely we don’t need a revelation to tell us that!

The Lord said, “It is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same

* See Genesis 13:13 (footnote 13b); 18:20–22 (footnote 20b); 19:4–9 (footnote 5a); JST, Genesis 19:9–15; Leviticus 18:22, 29; 20:13 (footnote 13a); Deuteronomy 23:17 (footnote 17b); Romans 1:24–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9 (footnotes 9e, f); 1 Timothy 1:9–10 (footnote 10b, c).

is a slothful and not a wise servant" (D&C 58:26). The prophets told us in the Book of Mormon that "men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil" (2 Nephi 2:5; see also Helaman 14:31).

Life is meant to be a test to see if we will keep the commandments of God (see 2 Nephi 2:5). We are free to obey or to ignore the spirit and the letter of the law. But the agency granted to man is a *moral* agency (see D&C 101:78). We are not free to break our covenants and escape the consequences.

The laws of God are ordained to make us happy. Happiness cannot coexist with immorality: the prophet Alma told us in profound simplicity that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Right of choice

Always when these destructive lifestyles are debated, "*individual right of choice*" is invoked as though it were the one sovereign virtue. That could be true only if there were but one of us. The rights of any individual bump up against the rights of another. And the simple truth is that we cannot be happy, nor saved, nor exalted, without one another.

Tolerance

The word *tolerance* is also invoked as though it overrules everything else. Tolerance may be a virtue, but it is not *the* commanding one. There is a difference between what one *is* and what one *does*. What one *is* may deserve unlimited tolerance; what one *does*, only a measured amount. A virtue when pressed to the extreme may turn into a vice. Unreasonable devotion to an ideal, without considering the practical application of it, ruins the ideal itself.

Abortion

Nowhere is the right of choice defended with more vigor than with

abortion. Having chosen to act, and a conception having occurred, it cannot then be unchosen. But there are still choices; always a best one.

Sometimes the covenant of marriage has been broken; more often none was made. In or out of marriage, abortion is not an individual choice. At a minimum, three lives are involved.

The scriptures tell us, "Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do *anything* like unto it" (D&C 59:6; italics added).

Except where the wicked crime of incest or rape was involved, or where competent medical authorities certify that the life of the mother is in jeopardy, or that a severely defective fetus cannot survive birth, abortion is clearly a "thou shalt not." Even in these very exceptional cases, much sober prayer is required to make the right choice.

We face such sobering choices because we are the children of God.

Man not just an animal

Little do we realize what we have brought upon ourselves when we have allowed our children to be taught that man is only an advanced animal. We have compounded the mistake by neglecting to teach moral and spiritual values. Moral laws do not apply to animals for they have no agency. Where there is agency, where there is choice, moral laws must apply. We cannot, absolutely cannot, have it both ways.

When our youth are taught that they are but animals, they feel free, even compelled, to respond to every urge and impulse. We should not be so puzzled at what is happening to society. We have sown the wind, and now we inherit the whirlwind. The chickens, so the saying goes, are now coming home to roost.

Gay and lesbian rights

Several publications are now being circulated about the Church which defend and promote gay or lesbian con-

duct. They wrest the scriptures attempting to prove that these impulses are in-born, cannot be overcome, and should not be resisted; and therefore, such conduct has a morality of its own. They quote scriptures to justify perverted acts between consenting adults. That same logic would justify incest or the molesting of little children of either gender. Neither the letter nor the spirit of moral law condones any such conduct.

I hope none of our young people will be foolish enough to accept those sources as authority for what the scriptures mean. Paul, speaking on this very subject, condemned those "who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). In that same reference the word *covenantbreakers* is used for the only time in scripture (see Romans 1:31).

Some choose to reject the scriptures out of hand and forsake their covenants. But they cannot choose to avoid the consequences. That choice is not theirs or ours or anybody's.

All of us are subject to feelings and impulses. Some are worthy and some of them are not; some of them are natural and some of them are not. We are to control them, meaning we are to direct them according to the moral law.

The legitimate union of the sexes is a law of God. The sacred covenants made by husband and wife with God protect the worthy expression of those feelings and impulses which are vital to the continuation of the race and essential to a happy family life. Illicit or perverted conduct leads without exception to disappointment, suffering, to tragedy.

Local priesthood leaders

We receive letters pleading for help, asking why should some be tormented by desires which lead toward addiction or perversion. They seek desperately for some logical explanation as to why they should have a compelling

attraction, even a predisposition, toward things that are destructive and forbidden.

Why, they ask, does this happen to me? It is not fair! They suppose that it is not fair that others are not afflicted with the same temptations. They write that their bishop could not answer the "why," nor could he nullify their addiction or erase the tendency.

We are sometimes told that leaders in the Church do not really understand these problems. Perhaps we don't. There are many "whys" for which we just do not have simple answers. But we *do* understand temptation, each of us, from personal experience. Nobody is free from temptations of one kind or another. That is the test of life. That is part of our mortal probation. Temptation of some kind goes with the territory.

What we do know is where these temptations will lead. We have watched these life-styles play themselves out in many lives. We have seen the end of the road you are tempted to follow. It is not likely that a bishop can tell you what causes these conditions or why you are afflicted, nor can he erase the temptation. But he can tell you what is right and what is wrong. If you know right from wrong, you have a place to begin. That is the point at which individual choice becomes operative. That is the point at which repentance and forgiveness can exert great spiritual power.

I believe that most people are drawn into a life of drug addiction or perversion or submit to an abortion without really realizing how morally and spiritually dangerous they are.

A tempter

Perhaps the worst of all conditions which we can create for ourselves is to become a tempter and lead an innocent one into a life-style that is destructive. The tempter entices others to come out of a "closet," to violate covenants which they have made with God. He promises emancipation and exhilaration without

saying that such a course may be spiritually fatal.

A tempter will claim that such impulses cannot be changed and should not be resisted. Can you think of anything the adversary would rather have us believe?

The Lord warned, "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (Mark 9:42).

Support groups

There are support groups of many kinds which seek to fortify those struggling to withdraw from drug addiction or to master other temptations. On the other hand, there are organizations which do just the opposite. They justify immoral conduct and bind the chains of addiction or perversion ever tighter. Do not affiliate with such an organization. If you have already, withdraw from it.

Spirit of sympathy and love

Now, in a spirit of sympathy and love, I speak to you who may be struggling against temptations for which there is no moral expression. Some have resisted temptation but never seem to be free from it. Do not yield! Cultivate the spiritual strength to resist—all of your life, if need be.

Some are tortured by thoughts of covenants already forsaken and sometimes think of suicide. Suicide is no solution at all. Do not even think of it. The very fact that you are so disturbed marks you as a spiritually sensitive soul for whom there is great hope.

You may wonder why God does not seem to hear your pleading prayers and erase these temptations. When you know the gospel plan, you will understand that the conditions of our mortal probation require that we be left to choose. That test is the purpose of life. While these addictions may have de-

voured, for a time, your sense of morality or quenched the spirit within you, it is never too late.

You may not be able, simply by choice, to free yourself at once from unworthy feelings. You *can* choose to give up the immoral expression of them.

The suffering you endure from resisting or from leaving a life-style of addiction or perversion is not a hundredth part of that suffered by your parents, your spouse, or your children, if you give up. Theirs is an innocent suffering because they love you. To keep resisting or to withdraw from such a life-style is an act of genuine unselfishness, a sacrifice you place on the altar of obedience. It will bring enormous spiritual rewards.

Remember that agency, that freedom of choice that you demanded when you forsook your covenants? That same agency can now be drawn upon to exert a great spiritual power of redemption.

The love we offer may be a tough love, but it is of the purest kind; and we have more to offer than our love. We can teach you of the cleansing power of repentance. If covenants have been broken, however hard it may be, they may be reinstated, and you can be forgiven. Even for abortion? Yes, even that!

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

God bless you who are struggling to resist or to free yourself from these terrible temptations that now sweep across the world, and from which we are not free in the Church. Bless those who love you and sustain you. There is great cleansing power in the priesthood. There is great cleansing power in the Church. It is a gospel of repentance. He is our Redeemer. Of him I bear witness—Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father, who sacrificed himself that we might be clean. And of him I bear witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

As we draw to the conclusion of this great conference, we extend appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, the Young Women's Choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions, and this great Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music we have had.

We extend our gratitude to city officials for their cooperation; to the Relief Society, doctors, and Church Health Unit nurses who have been on hand to render service; to the ushers and interpreters and all who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on the grounds.

We are grateful to local and national press representatives and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

Now, as you have noted there has been a vacant chair on the stand. We have missed the presence of our beloved leader, President Ezra Taft Benson, who, if he were here, would leave with us his blessing. President Monson will speak in his behalf, and the choir will then sing "Peace I Leave with You," following which the benediction will be offered by Elder Albert Choules, Jr., of the Seventy. This conference will then stand adjourned for six months.

President Thomas S. Monson

There is a loneliness in the empty chair between President Hinckley and me, and we feel it in our hearts. I wish I could take you with President Hinckley and me to President Benson's hospital room, which we visited a few days ago. I think the picture of tranquillity and love which was there would be very beneficial for all members of the Church to see. President Benson lay on his hospital bed, his left hand held by a noble son and his right hand by a beautiful daughter as she read to him from the Book of Mormon. In the background, a recording of Tabernacle Choir music played softly. It was just a little bit of heaven.

As we come to the close of another conference, our spirits have been lifted, our minds inspired, and our souls filled.

The messages delivered at this pulpit have provided words of counsel and guidance for our journey through mortality. The prayers have been offered with humility, and their petitions reflect the feelings of our hearts. The angelic music provided by the choirs at each session has confirmed the Lord's words that "the song of the righteous is a

prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads" (D&C 25:12).

President Benson's love and service

We sincerely regret that President Ezra Taft Benson has been unable to be with us here in the Tabernacle. Nonetheless, we have felt his spirit throughout the proceedings. His love of the Lord, for the membership of the Church, and for God's children everywhere is legendary. His many acts of kindness have blessed the lives of those with whom he has met everywhere he has gone.

One Friday, he and Sister Benson followed their usual practice of attending a session at the Jordan River Temple. While there, President Benson was approached by a young man who greeted him with joy in his heart and announced that he had been called to fill a full-time mission. President Benson took the newly called missionary by the hand and, with a smile on his lips, declared, "Take me with you! Take me with you!" That missionary testified

that, in a way, he *took* President Benson with him on his mission, since this greeting demonstrated President Benson's abiding love, his devotion to missionary work, and his desire to ever be found in the service of the Lord.

With the rapidly developing changes on the face of Europe, we remember President Benson's great service to the hungry and to the homeless on that continent at the close of World War II. In attendance today is one who was the recipient of such service. She recently wrote to President Benson: "This is the first time in my life that I am here in Salt Lake City to attend general conference. I hope you will remember our first acquaintance in the autumn of 1946 in Langen, Germany. You and I will never forget the remarkable days following the Second World War. We will never forget your help for the refugees in those sad days. Now, forty-four years have gone, and we have both grown older. I wish you happiness and the blessings of the Lord all the days of your life and send you all my love."

Counsel from President Benson

If President Benson were here at the pulpit at this, the conclusion of the final session of this glorious conference, he would extend to you his love, his admonitions, and his blessing. May I, with President Benson's own words, provide you his counsel:

"Let us be valiant in our testimony of Jesus all the days of our lives" (*Come unto Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983], p. 16).

"His word is one of the most valuable gifts He has given us. I urge you to recommit yourselves to a study of the scriptures. Immerse yourselves in them daily so you will have the power of the Spirit to attend you. . . . Read them in your families and teach your children to love and treasure them" ("The Power of the Word," *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82).

"It is soul-satisfying to know that God is mindful of us and ready to respond when we place our trust in Him and do that which is right. There is no place for fear among men and women

who place their trust in the Almighty and who do not hesitate to humble themselves in seeking divine guidance through prayer. Though persecutions arise, though reverses come, in prayer we can find reassurance, for God will speak peace to the soul. That peace, that spirit of serenity, is life's greatest blessing" ("Pray Always," *Ensign*, Feb. 1990, p. 5).

He continues: "I am getting older and less vigorous and am so grateful for your prayers and for the support of my younger Brethren. I thank the Lord for renewing my body from time to time so that I can still help build His kingdom. . . . God willing, I intend to spend all my remaining days in that glorious effort" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, p. 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 6).

God be with you till we meet again

President Benson is a man of love, and this love he would have me extend to you in his behalf. He has a beautiful voice and has often sung the melodic strains of a favorite hymn:

God be with you till we meet again;
By his counsels guide, uphold you;
With his sheep securely fold you.
God be with you till we meet again.

God be with you till we meet again;
When life's perils thick confound
you,
Put his arms unfailing round you.
God be with you till we meet again.
(*Hymns*, no. 152)

To the membership of the Church and to God's children everywhere, our prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, conveys to you the tender feelings of his heart, his gratitude for your prayers, and his abiding love. God be with you, brothers and sisters, till we meet again, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Peace I Leave with You."

Elder Albert Choules, Jr., offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, sang for the Saturday morning session of the conference.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Young Women's choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions, conducted by Julie Hayes Hewlett.

At the general priesthood session, music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus. Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden conducted the choir.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by Robert Cundick, John Longhurst, and Clay Christiansen, Tabernacle organists.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the conference

INDEX

A

Ashton, Elder Marvin J.	23
A pattern in all things; God's pattern for righteous living; Be not deceived by Satan's patterns; God's patterns are great gifts; Roger Bannister's four-minute mile; A pattern for receiving revelation; A pattern of conduct	
Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of General	22
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2
Ayala, Elder Eduardo	10
A faithful physician; Blessings of the Word of Wisdom; A commandment for today	

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell	45
Moral cleanliness of youth; Act with your future in mind; Satan blinds us to eternal rewards; Deceptions about sin and repentance; Peer pressure to be immoral; Blessings of being morally clean; Understand the standards; Commit to live by the standards; You need not face temptation alone; Choose good friends; Respect women; Seek the Lord's help; Purity precedes power; The hope of repentance; We need not fear the future	

C

Call, Elder Waldo P.	104
Naaman and Elisha; Are we following the prophet?; Be submissive and do not murmur; The Lord will show us the way	
Camargo, Elder Helio R.	103
In all things give thanks	
Church Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of	22
Conference Music, Summary of	113
Curtis, Elder LeGrand R.	13
The ideal home; A house of God	

D

Dellenbach, Elder Robert K.	27
Gaining a testimony; Desire a more firm witness; Do the works of righteousness; Pray to know the truth; Trust in the Lord	

F

Faust, Elder James E.	39
Being a parent is a divine calling; Creating successful homes; How often do you have family prayer?; Parents must set the example; Disciplining children; Teaching children to work; Special challenges for parents; Helping children internalize values; A thousand threads of love; Children of the covenant	
Fifth Session	89
First Day, Afternoon Session	21
First Day, Morning Session	2
First Session	2
Fourth Session	67

G

General Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of	22
General Authorities Present	1
General Priesthood Session	44

H

Haight, Elder David B.	73
Importance of temples; Importance of our premortal life; Responsibility to redeem the dead; The mission of Elijah; Temple building; Seven blessings of temple service	
Hanks, Elder Marion D.	49
Changing channels; The object of good parents; Choose a course of giving; Are you looking at me?; A deacon chooses correctly; A young man aboard ship in wartime; A football player chooses wisely; A young convert feels the Spirit; A scene from Nha Trang, Vietnam	
Hillam, Elder Harold G.	29
A shoeshine man in Lisbon; Brother and Sister Joaquim Aires; No more strangers and foreigners	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (first session)	3
This work will go forward	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (fourth session)	68
The name of the Church; <i>Mormon</i> means more good; The prophet-leader Mormon; The Book of Mormon changes lives; More good from the Word of Wisdom; More good in family life; More respect and charity; Live worthy of the name <i>Mormon</i>	

- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) 63**
 Counselors are important; Experiences as a counselor; Selecting counselors; An assistant; A partner; A friend; A judge; A proxy; Counselor to President Kimball; Counselors to President Benson; Presidency called by the Lord

- Hunter, President Howard W. 19**
 Is not this Joseph's son?; Come unto me; Jesus can ease our burdens; Learning to be like Jesus; An urgent, pleading call

M

- Martins, Elder Helvécio 31**
 Testimonies influenced conversion; The value of a testimony; Gain and strengthen testimonies

- Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 15**
 The dangers of selfishness; Jesus' example of meekness; Put off the natural man; Important spiritual perspectives; Come off conqueror; Men and women of Christ; We do not own ourselves; Blessings of shedding selfishness

- Mickelsen, Elder Lynn A. 33**
 Receiving truth by the Spirit; Asking, seeking, and knocking; Preparing hearts to know truth; Mormon's counsel for judging truth; Witnesses of the Savior

- Monson, President Thomas S. (fifth session) 111**
 President Benson's love and service; Counsel from President Benson; God be with you till we meet again

- Monson, President Thomas S. (fourth session) 84**
 Historic changes in eastern Europe; The Toronto Ontario Temple; The Church in eastern Canada; The Archibald Gardner family; Donald Mabey; A chapel for the St. Thomas branch; Gustav and Margarete Wacker; Homeward to heaven

- Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 58**
 Come, all ye sons of God; For the strength of youth; Dating; Dress and appearance; Friendship; Honesty; Language; Media: movies, television, radio, videocassettes, books, and magazines; Mental and physical health; Music and dancing; Sexual purity; Sunday behavior; Spiritual help; Repentance; Greetings from President Benson; A missionary's faith

- Music, Summary of Conference 113**

N

- Nelson, Elder Russell M. 93**
 Choices; Who am I?; Why am I here?; Where am I going?

O

- Oaks, Elder Dallin H.** 35
 First parents established a pattern; Ways to witness of Christ; Some of us fall short as witnesses; Stand as witnesses of God; How to become witnesses; Every member should bear witness; Gifts of knowing and believing; Valiant in the testimony of Jesus; The need for us to profess our faith; Guard against careless omissions; Be not ashamed

P

- Pace, Bishop Glenn L.** 7
 I've told you a thousand times; The Lord's warnings; Overcome fatalism; Do not rejoice when the wicked suffer; Responding to suffering; Reach beyond the Church
- Packer, Elder Boyd K.** 107
 Covenants; Three dangerous life-styles; Moral and spiritual; Right of choice; Tolerance; Abortion; Man not just an animal; Gay and lesbian rights; Local priesthood leaders; A tempter; Support groups; Spirit of sympathy and love
- Paramore, Elder James M.** 77
 Witnesses of the Lord; Old Testament witnesses; New Testament witnesses; Book of Mormon witnesses; Latter-day witnesses; The most important news
- Perry, Elder L. Tom** 90
 The attitude of reverence; The conversion of Alma the Younger; Reverence in area conferences; A bishop teaches reverence; Teach reverence in the home; Serve God reverently
- Priesthood Session, General** 44

R

- Rector, Elder Hartman, Jr.** 97
 The Resurrection; Repentance; Baptism; Enduring to the end; The nicest things we can do; Keeping the commandments; The gospel is easy to live

S

- Scott, Elder Richard G.** 3
 Ordinance work for the dead; Simplified procedures and regulations; Computer resources; Loving ancestors through temple work; The Lord will bless your efforts; A monumental effort of cooperation
- Second Day, Afternoon Session** 89
- Second Day, Morning Session** 67

Second Session	21
Summary of Conference Music	113
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	22

T

Third Session	44
----------------------------	-----------

W

Washburn, Elder J Ballard	53
President Benson's early life; President Benson's mission and marriage; God's chosen prophet; We ever pray for thee	
Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	80
The straight and narrow way; Getting sidetracked; Material possessions; Moral integrity; Learn and apply the word of God; Serve others; Enjoy the fruits of the gospel	
Woolsey, Elder Durrel A.	55
The patriarchal key; Importance of honorable fathers; Fathers should become heroes; Commit a generous amount of time; "Love thy wife with all thy heart"; Search the scriptures daily; Follow the prophet	
Wright, Sister Ruth B.	100
Pictures of Book of Mormon events; Lehi's journey; Nephi building a ship; King Benjamin's address; Alma and Amulek in prison; Helaman's stripling warriors; Christ ministering to the Nephites	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-first
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 6 and 7, 1991

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-first
Annual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
April 6 and 7, 1991

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Copyright © 1991 Corporation of the President
of
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

All Rights Reserved
Printed in the United States of America

THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 161st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 1991, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 6 and 7, 1991. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 6, 1991, at 6:00 P.M.

President Ezra Taft Benson presided at the Saturday morning and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of some of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

The First Presidency: Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks,

M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

The Presidency of the Seventy: Dean L. Larsen, Marion D. Hanks, Robert L. Backman, James M. Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pincgar, and Carlos E. Asay

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Joe J. Christensen, Gene R. Cook,¹ Jacob de Jager, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goaslind, John H. Groberg, W. Eugene Hansen, Harold G. Hillam, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, Alexander B. Morrison, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, L. Aldin Porter, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Carlos H. Amado, H. Verlan Andersen, Eduardo Ayala, Benjamin B. Banks, George I. Cannon, Albert Choules, Jr., Spencer J. Condie, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Clinton L. Cutler, Julio E. Dávila, Robert K. Dellenbach, Graham W. Doxey, Lloyd P. George, Francis M. Gibbons, F. Melvin Hammond, George R. Hill III, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Kenneth Johnson, Cree-L Kofford, John R. Lasater, W. Mack Lawrence, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, Douglas J. Martin, Helvécio Martins, Gerald E. Melchin, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Joseph C. Muren, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Jorge A. Rojas, Glen L. Rudd, Gardner H. Russell, Robert E. Sackley, Douglas H. Smith, Lynn A. Sorensen, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, and Durrel A. Woolsey

¹Elder Derek A. Cuthbert was excused due to illness.

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, Henry B. Eyring, and Glenn L. Pace

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included Regional Representa-

tives, stake presidents and their counselors, temple presidents, bishops, and presidencies and members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood quorums.

Many general, stake, and ward auxiliary officers also attended.

FIRST DAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 161st Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 1991, at 10:00 A.M. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer" without announcement. President Monson then made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

Good morning. We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 161st annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

It was on this date, April 6, 1830, that the Church of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth in Fayette, New York, under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders M. Russell Ballard, Rex D. Pinegar, and Glen L. Rudd are seated on the stand. We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except Elder Derek A. Cuthbert, who is excused because of illness. We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. And we send a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us in goodly number here this morning.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened this session by singing "Joseph Smith's First Prayer." The chorus will now favor us with "O My Father."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "O My Father."
Elder John H. Groberg offered the invocation.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, it has been customary for the President of the Church to welcome you and deliver a message at the commencement of conference. With all his noble heart, President Benson would desire to stand at this pulpit and bear to you his witness concerning the truth of this work, the gratitude he feels for your prayers, and his fervent hope that all may so live as to merit and receive the abundant blessings a loving Heavenly Father desires to bestow.

Tears come easily to the eyes of our prophet when he receives letters written by children in which they express their greetings and send to him their love. President Benson is a family man who loves his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren and, indeed, children everywhere in this wonderful world in which we live.

Days of national prayer

President Benson has suggested that I begin this conference with a brief message in his behalf. He is pleased that the president of the United States has proclaimed that yesterday, today, and tomorrow be designated as days of national prayer and that sincere expressions of gratitude ascend to heaven for the end of the war in the Middle East. The First Presidency has commented: "We are thankful for the resolution of the war, and it is our fervent hope and prayer that all nations involved will work in concert for a lasting peace. The collective prayers of the nation and the world should focus not only on a lasting peace but also on the needs of the many on both sides who lost loved ones and endured suffering in the conflict."

The price of peace

President Benson has stated: "The price of peace is righteousness. Men

and nations may loudly proclaim, 'Peace, peace,' but there shall be no peace until individuals nurture in their souls those principles of personal purity, integrity, and character which foster the development of peace. Peace cannot be imposed. It must come from the lives and hearts of men. There is no other way" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 703).

Depend on prayer

President Benson has urged: "If we would advance in holiness—increase in favor with God—nothing can take the place of prayer. . . . Give prayer—daily prayer, secret prayer—a foremost place in your lives. Let no day pass without it. Communion with the Almighty has been a source of strength, inspiration, and enlightenment through the world's history to men and women who have shaped the destinies of individuals and nations for good" (*God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 8).

In speaking to a large audience in São Paulo, Brazil, some time ago, President Benson testified:

"All through my life the counsel to depend on prayer has been prized above almost any other advice I have ever received. It has become an integral part of me, an anchor, a constant source of strength and the basis of my knowledge of things divine.

"Our Heavenly Father is always near. . . . Thank God we can reach out and tap that unseen power, without which no man can do his best" (address delivered to temple workers and Church employees at São Paulo, Brazil, 20 Nov. 1982).

President Benson has frequently quoted the words of a favorite hymn:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near. . . .

O thou by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way!
The path of prayer thyself hast
trod;
Lord, teach us how to pray.
(*Hymns*, no. 145)

President Benson's testimony

The words of testimony spoken by President Benson are particularly ap-

propriate on this special day of prayer and thanksgiving. He said: "I testify that there is a God in heaven who hears and answers prayers. I know this to be true, for He has answered mine. I would humbly urge all within the sound of my voice to keep in close touch with our Father in Heaven, through prayer" (São Paulo, Brazil, 20 Nov. 1982).

I heartily endorse this plea of our prophet and President, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley will now present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for our sustaining vote. Then Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, will present the statistical report for the Church for the year 1990.

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Our brethren and sisters, as is customary in the general conference of the Church, we present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may do so.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A.

Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may do likewise.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

In December we announced the calls of Elder Earl C. Tingey as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and Elders W. Mack Lawrence and Rulon G. Craven as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in sustaining these Brethren in these callings, please manifest it. Any who feel otherwise.

It is also proposed that we sustain as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy the following Brethren cur-

rently serving as members of the Second Quorum: Alexander B. Morrison, L. Aldin Porter, L. Lionel Kendrick, Monte J. Brough, and Harold G. Hillam. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as additional members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Dennis B. Neuenschwander; Cree-L Kofford; Joseph C. Muren; Graham W. Doxey; Jorge A. Rojas, who comes from Chihuahua City, Mexico; and Julio E. Dávila, who comes from Bogotá, Colombia.

Changes were made in the Counselors of the General Sunday School Presidency effective January 1. Those who wish to join in a vote of appreciation to Derek A. Cuthbert as First

Counselor and H. Verlan Andersen as Second Counselor may indicate.

Those in favor of the calls of Elder H. Verlan Andersen as First Counselor and Elder Rulon G. Craven as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general officers of the Church as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may do so.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued love and confidence.

We invite the newly called members of the Seventy to take their places on the stand at this time.

The Church Statistical Report for 1990

F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of 31 December 1990. (Statistics are based on 1990 reports available prior to the conference.)

Number of Church units

Stakes	1,784
Districts	479
Missions	256
Wards and branches	18,090
Nations and territories with organized wards or branches	130
(These statistics reflect an increase of 45 stakes and 785 wards and branches during 1990.)	

Church membership

Total membership.....	7,760,000
-----------------------	-----------

Children of record baptized during 1990	78,000
Converts baptized during 1990	330,877

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	43,651
------------------------------	--------

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Warren E. Pugh, member of the Church Audit Committee; Isaac M. Stewart, former president of the Tabernacle Choir; Helen Woodruff Anderson and Donna D. Sorensen, former counselors in the Relief Society General Presidency; Arta Priscilla Mathews Hale, former counselor in the Primary General Presidency.

President Monson

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

"Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

"In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

"For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had" (John 5:2-4).

There has always been in all of humanity a sprinkling of those who are described in the scriptures as the blind, the halt, the lame, the deaf, the withered, the dumb, the impotent folk. We refer to them as having learning or communication disorders, as the hearing or visually impaired, as those with motor or orthopedic limitations. We speak of intellectual or emotional impairment, of retardation, and mental illness. Some suffer from a combination of these, and all of them cannot function without some help.

I speak to the families of those who, at birth or as the result of accident or disease, must live with an impaired body or mind. I desire to bring comfort to those to whom the words *handicapped* or *disability* have very personal meaning.

Teach doctrine

It is my intent to teach doctrine which, if understood, will reinforce your courage and endurance, even foster a measure of contentment with circumstances which you did not invite, do not deserve, but from which you cannot turn away.

No room for guilt

I must first, and with emphasis, clarify this point: It is natural for par-

ents with handicapped children to ask themselves, "What did we do wrong?" The idea that *all* suffering is somehow the direct result of sin has been taught since ancient times. It is false doctrine. That notion was even accepted by some of the early disciples until the Lord corrected them.

"As Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:1-3).

There is little room for feelings of guilt in connection with handicaps. Some handicaps may result from carelessness or abuse, and some through addiction of parents. But most of them do not. Afflictions come to the innocent.

Laws of nature sovereign

The very purpose for which the world was created, and man introduced to live upon it, requires that the laws of nature operate in cold disregard for human feelings. We must work out our salvation without expecting the laws of nature to be exempted for us. Natural law is, on rare occasions, suspended in a miracle. But mostly our handicapped, like the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, wait endlessly for the moving of the water.

Never ridicule

I must say this to parents. It is not unusual for foolish children and some very thoughtless adults to make light of the handicapped. The mimicking or teasing or ridiculing of those with handicaps is cruel. Such an assault can

inflict deeper pain than can physical punishment—more painful because it is undeserved. It is my conviction that such brutality will not, in the eternal scheme of things, go unanswered, and there will come a day of recompense.

My mother taught us when we were very young that we must never ridicule the unfortunate. Her mother died when she was six. My mother worked in the fields from a very early age. One day some teenagers were picking fruit. One of the girls laughingly mimicked one who suffered from cerebral palsy, saying, "Look who I am," and she named the handicapped person. They all laughed as she threw herself into a stumbling walk. Suddenly she fell as if struck down. They gathered around her in great fright. Presently she recovered, but there was no more fun at the expense of the handicapped. Mother never forgot what she saw, nor to teach a lesson from it.

Parents, take time in the next home evening to caution your family never to amuse themselves at the expense of the handicapped or of any whose face or form or personality does not fit the supposed ideal or whose skin is too light or too dark to suit their fancy. Teach them that they, in their own way, should become like angels who "move the water," healing a spirit by erasing loneliness, embarrassment, or rejection.

In Mendoza, Argentina, we attended a seminary graduation. In the class was a young man who had great difficulty climbing ordinary steps. As the class marched in, two strong young classmates gracefully lifted him up the steps. We watched during and after the proceedings, and it became apparent that the whole class was afflicted with a marvelous kind of blindness. They could not see that he was different. They saw a classmate, a friend. In *them* the works of God *were being* manifest. While there was no physical transfor-

mation in the boy or in his classmates, they were serving like angels, soothing a spirit locked in a deformed body awaiting that time when it would be everlastingly made perfect.

She's under there someplace

At a recent stake conference, I noticed on the front row a family including a girl of ten who has palsy and is deaf. Her father held her so that she would not slide off the bench. Their tenderness touched me deeply. When the meeting ended, I motioned for them to come up to me, for they were holding back. The father turned so that I could see Heidi's face, which was buried into his shoulder, and he said with a smile, "She's under there someplace."

Indeed she is under there someplace. All of them are under there somewhere.

President Joseph Fielding Smith

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained that "all spirits while in the pre-existence were perfect in form, having all their faculties and mental powers unimpaired. . . . Deformities in body and mind are . . . physical" (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., 5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957-66], 3:19). *Physical* means "temporal"; *temporal* means "temporary." Spirits which are beautiful and innocent may be temporally restrained by physical impediments.

If healing does not come in mortal life, it will come thereafter. Just as the gorgeous monarch butterfly emerges from a chrysalis, so will spirits emerge.

Restored to perfect frame

"Their sleeping dust [will] be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh

upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of joy" (D&C 138:17).

And, "the soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their *proper* and *perfect* frame" (Alma 40:23; italics added).

"O how great the plan of our God! . . . The spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect" (2 Nephi 9:13).

Eternal truths bring perspective

The Apostle Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

If our view is limited to mortal life, some things become unbearable because they seem so unfair and so permanent. There are doctrines which, if understood, will bring a perspective toward and a composure regarding problems which otherwise have no satisfactory explanation.

Truth: We are spirit children of a Father God. We lived with him in our premortal existence, of which it must be said that there was not, neither could there have been, a beginning. The revelations speak of things "from before the foundation of the world" and "before the world was" (see D&C 124:33-41).

Truth: Mortal life is temporary and, measured against eternity, infinitesimally brief. If a microscopic drop-let of water should represent the length of mortal life, by comparison all the oceans on earth put together would not even begin to represent everlasting life.

Truth: After mortal death we will rise in the Resurrection to an existence to which there will not neither could there be an end. The words *everlasting*, *never ending*, *eternal*, *forever* and *forever* in the revelations describe both the gospel and life.

Look after the handicapped

That day of healing will come. Bodies which are deformed and minds that are warped will be made perfect. In the meantime, we must look after those who wait by the pool of Bethesda.

You parents and you families whose lives must be reordered because of a handicapped one, whose resources and time must be devoted to them, are special heroes. You are manifesting the works of God with every thought, with every gesture of tenderness and care you extend to the handicapped loved one. Never mind the tears nor the hours of regret and discouragement; never mind the times when you feel you cannot stand another day of what is required. You are living the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ in exceptional purity. *And you perfect yourselves in the process.*

Now, in all of this there must be balance, for the handicapped have responsibility to work out their own salvation. The nearer the normal patterns of conduct and discipline apply to the handicapped, the happier they will be.

Every quarter of an inch of physical and mental improvement is worth striving for. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that "all the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 354).

I have known some who seemed to enjoy poor health and have interrupted

the lives of those who were caring for them unnecessarily, making life miserable for all. They thrive on sympathy, which is generally very low in nourishment. To know just how far to press the handicapped when physical and emotional pain are involved may be the most difficult part for those who serve them. Nevertheless, as the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "There must be decision of character, aside from sympathy" (*History of the Church*, 4:570).

Think of this: Unless we die prematurely, every one of us may end up both physically and mentally handicapped. We would do well to make advance payments of service and compassion on which we may draw when that time comes.

Why not help the parents who have extra things to do and extra expenses and are confined because of a handicapped family member. Encourage the teachers and social workers who show such devotion to them. And it wouldn't hurt you to donate a few dollars or a few hours to one of the many organizations which help the handicapped. If we do this, without the slightest idea of selfishness, it will remain in our account against that time when we may need help. And the works of God will be made manifest in our lives.

After tribulation come the blessings

"Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and

the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.

"For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand" (D&C 58:3-4).

I bear witness of the restoration which will come. Each body and mind will be restored in perfect frame. However long and unfair mortality may seem, however long the suffering and the waiting may be, he has said:

"After that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come.

"Behold, I, the Lord, have spoken it" (D&C 58:11-12).

I am a witness of the condition of those who have gone beyond the veil, and we all have reason to glorify him who is our Father and him who is our Redeemer, of whom I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Praise Ye the Lord" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Praise Ye the Lord."

Elder Dean L. Larsen, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, will now address us.

Elder Dean L. Larsen

We welcome the Brethren whom you have sustained this morning as new members of the Seventies Quorums. They are men of faith and devotion

with a broad background of experience in Church leadership. Their call is a reflection of the continuing growth of the Church worldwide.

Beware lest thou forget the Lord

As the tribes of ancient Israel prepared to cross over Jordan to enter the land of Canaan, Moses gave them his final counsel and instructions. They were about to enter a land that Joshua and Caleb had described as “a land which floweth with milk and honey” (Numbers 14:8). It would be a dramatic change in the circumstances of Israel. For a full generation they had known only the desolation of the desert places, depending upon the Lord for their daily subsistence.

Moses felt some concern for the capacity of his people to cope with the abrupt transition they were about to experience. “Hear, O Israel,” he said. “Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven” (Deuteronomy 9:1).

“And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

“And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;

“Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage” (Deuteronomy 6:10–12).

Abundance can be a great test

The concerns expressed by Moses for his people have been repeated by other prophet leaders through all of the gospel dispensations. It has seemed that one of the inevitable side effects that occurs as people apply gospel principles in their lives is that their material circumstances also improve. This

does not suggest that it should be the right nor the expectation of all who accept the gospel of Jesus Christ to become wealthy in the possession of the world's goods. The Lord has made it clear, however, that when his people are obedient, he desires to bless them with the necessities and the comforts of life so that none should live in want.

To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord said:

“I have made the earth rich, and behold it is my footstool, wherefore, again I will stand upon it.

“And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh” (D&C 38:17–18).

Historically, the abundance with which the Lord has blessed his people has proved to be one of their greatest tests. The cycles of their acquiring worldly wealth and their subsequent spiritual decline are well documented in scriptural and historical records.

Moses' counsel about prosperity

Moses' concern for his people proved to be justified in the years following their entry into the land of Canaan. It was when they became settled in this goodly land that they began to take their abundance for granted and to forget the real source of these blessings. Moses had counseled them:

“For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

“A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

“A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

"When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

"Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

"And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

"Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. . . .

"And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:7-14, 17).

Brigham Young's concern about riches

Not long after the early Latter-day Saints had entered the Salt Lake Valley, and as they struggled in their poverty to establish homes and to survive in a land that had been a wilderness, reports came of the discovery of gold in northern California. The news spread to all parts of the country, and fortune hunters passing through the Salt Lake area en route to the gold fields spoke of their hopes for striking it rich in the newly discovered bonanza. It was a great temptation to some of the Saints who were so destitute in their own circumstances.

Brigham Young, sensing feelings that circulated among some of the people, said: "I hope that the gold mines will be no nearer than 800 miles. . . . Prosperity and riches blunt the feelings of man" (Journal History of the Church, 8 July 1849).

And then, in his customary candor, he added at a later time: "The worst fear I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church and go to hell. This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty, and all manner of persecution, and be true. But my greater fear . . . is that they cannot stand wealth" (in James S. Brown, *Life of a Pioneer* [Salt Lake City: Geo. Q. Cannon and Sons Co., 1900], pp. 122-23).

In his inspired wisdom, President Young felt some of the same apprehensions for his people that Moses had felt for the tribes of Israel.

Jacob's counsel about riches

Brigham Young's counsel to the early Saints reflects the sentiments expressed by Jacob in the Book of Mormon. These men felt there was nothing inherently wrong in acquiring wealth. The danger lay in its obscuring the need for acknowledging the Lord's hand in these blessings, and in failing to use the abundance to bless others and to accomplish the Lord's purposes. Jacob said:

"Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.

"But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

"And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted" (Jacob 2:17-19).

The coveting of wealth so often has resulted in avarice, dishonesty, and greed. The acquisition of wealth has frequently produced pride, self-satisfaction, and arrogance.

The Nephite cycle of prosperity

An episode during the time of Alma in the Book of Mormon illustrates the cycle that has so often occurred when people are blessed materially by the Lord and then turn away from him. In the instance referred to, the Nephite people were struggling to overcome the effects of a devastating civil strife and a Lamanite invasion.

Not only had there been great loss of life; the destruction to lands and to property had been sufficient to seriously jeopardize the prospects of recovery. Alma describes conditions in these words:

"But the people were afflicted, yea, greatly afflicted for the loss of their brethren, and also for the loss of their flocks and herds, and also for the loss of their fields of grain, which were trodden under foot and destroyed. . . .

"And so great were their afflictions that every soul had cause to mourn; and they believed that it was the judgments of God sent upon them because of their wickedness and their abominations; therefore they were awakened to a remembrance of their duty.

"And they began to establish the church more fully; yea, and many were baptized in the waters of Sidon and were joined to the church of God" (Alma 4:2-4).

This spiritual reawakening among the people had a dramatic effect. Peace returned to the land. The Church prospered in its rapid growth. Not surprisingly, the people soon began again to enjoy an abundant life.

The spiritual blessings granted by the Lord were accompanied by the acquisition of material wealth. Unfortunately, the Nephites failed to meet this test. Within three years from the time of their earlier tragedy, Alma describes his people in this way: "The people of the church began to wax proud, be-

cause of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes" (Alma 4:6).

Counsel about material prosperity

History repeatedly confirms that the abundance of earthly possessions can be both a blessing and a curse, depending upon the way these things are viewed and used. When we consume them on our own lust, we invoke tragedy.

Wealth is a relative thing. Conditions vary dramatically from place to place in the world today. That which some consider to be the necessities of life, to others would be abundance, and even extravagance. In any set of circumstances, the challenges related to an improvement in material prosperity remain the same. The message that echoes to us from the pages of history and from the counsels of the Lord and his prophets is clear:

- Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven.
- Seek not for riches to consume them on your own lusts.
- Thou shalt not covet.
- Clothe the naked.
- Feed the hungry.
- Relieve the sick and the afflicted.
- Pay tithes and offerings.
- In all things acknowledge the Lord.
- Be grateful.
- Be humble.

The words of Moses to the tribes of Israel have appropriate application for us:

"Fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, . . . thou, and thy son, and thy

son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

"Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 6:2-3).

And "when thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good . . . which he hath given thee" (Deuteronomy 8:10). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Dean L. Larsen, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, has spoken to us.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel," following which we shall hear from Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy.

The chorus and congregation sang "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel."

Elder F. Burton Howard

"Pass it on"

While you will not remember, the last time I stood at this pulpit I spoke about repentance. I have elected to do so again.

In a school yard game, young boys sometimes form a circle, and one hits another on the shoulder and says, "Pass it on." The one who receives the blow obediently transmits it to the next in line and says, "Pass it on." The third recipient promptly punches a fourth, and each in succession thereafter, by "passing it on," tries to rid himself of his pain, and the responsibility for it, by inflicting it on another.

Many of us are like these school-boys. Perhaps without realizing it, as adults we continue to play the same childish game and risk far more than a bruised shoulder in the process. Let me explain what I mean.

Don't blame others for disobedience

Unwillingness to accept the responsibility for and consequences of one's actions is an all too common condition in today's world. Who has not heard of the drunken driver who sues

his host for allowing him to get drunk, or of the accident victim who claims damages from the physician who tries to help him? Perpetrators of the most heinous crimes often plead guilty by reason of insanity or claim that they are victims of society's ills. The homeless blame alcohol. Alcoholics blame genetic deficiencies. Abusers and adulterers blame the broken homes of their childhood. And there are enough who agree with them to ensure that no one need feel terribly guilty for long if they don't want to.

The habit of shifting the burden of guilt onto someone else, while perhaps understandable in a secular setting, has more serious consequences in a spiritual one. There too it has an ancient but not honorable tradition.

Cain blamed God when his sacrifice was not accepted. "I was wroth," he said, "for his offering thou didst accept and not mine" (Moses 5:38).

Laman and Lemuel blamed Nephi for nearly all their troubles (see 1 Nephi 16:35-38). Pilate blamed the Jews when he condoned the crucifixion of the Savior, in whom he found "no fault" (Luke 23:4; see also Matthew 27:24).

Even the very elite have sometimes succumbed to the temptation to blame others for their disobedience or their failure to receive blessings. Aaron blamed the children of Israel when Moses charged him with bringing a great sin upon them by making a molten calf (see Exodus 32:19–24). And Martha may have blamed Mary for depriving her of the Savior's presence on that indelible day in Bethany (see Luke 10:40).

Today the practice continues. We hear at every hand phrases such as "My wife just doesn't understand me," "Loosen up—everybody does it," or "It wasn't really my fault." The second great commandment (see Matthew 22:35–40) is breached routinely by those who say, "He started it" or "She deserved it." Teens and adults alike jokingly attempt to justify behavioral lapses by saying, "The devil made me do it."

When faced with the consequences of transgression, rather than looking to ourselves as the source of the discomfort which always accompanies sin, many of us tend to blame someone else. Rather than getting out of a vicious and senseless circle, we fault our neighbor for our pain and try to pass it on. But to repent we must leave the circle.

Accept responsibility and repent

The first step in the repentance process has always been simply to recognize that we have done wrong. If we are so hedged about by pride, rationalization, machismo, or a misdirected sense of self-esteem as to prevent us from ever admitting that we are part of the problem, we are in trouble. We then may not even know of our need to repent. We will have no idea whether the Lord is pleased with us or not and may become "past feeling" (1 Nephi 17:45). But all men, everywhere, must

repent (see 3 Nephi 11:32). To fail to do so is to perish (see Luke 13:3; Helaman 7:28).

To excuse misconduct by blaming others is presumptuous at best and is fatally flawed with regard to spiritual things, for "we believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" (Articles of Faith 1:2). This means not only that we will not be punished for what Adam did in the Garden, but also that we cannot excuse our own behavior by pointing a finger to Adam or anyone else. The real danger in failing to accept responsibility for our own actions is that unless we do, we may never even enter on the strait and narrow path. Misconduct that does not require repentance may be pleasant at first, but it will not be for long. And it will never lead us to eternal life.

Don't rationalize misconduct

Just as foolish as believing that we can "pass it on" is the idea that the satisfaction of being in the circle, whatever that may be, can somehow excuse any wrongs committed there. This notion is widely shared and is most often expressed by the phrase "The end justifies the means." Such a belief, if left undisturbed and unchecked, can also impede the repentance process and cheat us out of exaltation.

Those who teach it are almost always attempting to excuse the use of improper or questionable means. Such people seem to be saying, "My purpose was to do good or to be happy; therefore, any little lie, or misrepresentation, or lapse of integrity, or violation of law along the way is justified."

In certain circumstances, some say it is okay to conceal the truth, to dig just a small pit for an adversary, to pursue an advantage of some kind—such as superior knowledge or position—against another. "This is just common

practice," or "I'm just looking after Number One," they say. "All's fair in love and war," or "That's the way the ball bounces," they say. But if the means which prompt the saying of these things are wrong, no amount of rationalization or verbal whitewash can ever make them right.

To those who believe otherwise, Nephi said, "Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord" (2 Nephi 28:9).

Some seek to justify their actions by quoting scripture. They often cite Nephi's killing of Laban as an example of the need to violate a law to accomplish a greater good and to prevent a nation from dwindling in unbelief. But they forget that Nephi twice refused to follow the promptings of the Spirit. In the end, he agreed to break the commandment only when he was convinced that "the *Lord* slayeth the wicked to bring forth *his* righteous purposes" (1 Nephi 4:13; italics added) and also (I believe) when he knew that the penalty for shedding blood had been lifted, in that one exceptional case, by Him whose right it is to fix and waive penalties.

Good ends require good means

The truth is that we are judged by the means we employ and not by the ends we may hope to obtain. It will do us little good at the last day to respond to the Great Judge, "I know I was not all I could have been, but my heart was in the right place."

In fact, there is danger in focusing merely on ends. To some who did, the Savior said:

"Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast

out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?

"And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (3 Nephi 14:22-23).

The war in heaven was essentially about the means by which the plan of salvation would be implemented. It forever established the principle that even for the greatest of all ends, eternal life, the means are critical. It should be obvious to all thinking Latter-day Saints that the wrong means can never attain that objective.

The danger in thinking that the end justifies the means lies in making a judgment we have no right to make. Who are we to say that the Lord will pardon wickedness done to attain a perceived greater good. Even if the goal is good, it would be a personal calamity to look beyond the mark and fail to repent of the wrong we do along the way.

See ourselves as we really are

Of course we have the right to strive for happiness. But as we do we should pause every now and then and look to ourselves. We should remember that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). And the sweet peace the gospel brings never comes at all when we justify our misconduct or blame others for our unhappiness. But there is a way out. We need only remember a pointless, irresponsible childhood game, and quietly walk away. Face up, quit, get out, confess, apologize, admit the harm we have done, and just plain walk away.

There are so many important things for us to do in mortality. There is not much time to waste on games. We must obtain essential ordinances. We must enter into and keep sacred covenants. We are to "live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God" (D&C 98:11). We

must love and serve one another. We are to be proved in all things (see D&C 98:14)—even little things like means. There will be trials. There will likely be other circles we will have to leave. How we respond to all of this will turn out to be the real measure of our salvation.

So to those, including myself, who from time to time have said, "I am not at fault—I was compelled by circumstances to do what I did," I say, "That may be so, but there is grave danger here. If there is any doubt at all, let us simply repent." For, in the words of Job, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse" (Job 9:20).

And to those who say, "I may have done a little wrong, but my purpose was good and I believe God will justify my behavior," my response is, "Maybe so, but don't count on it." For in the

137th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 9, we read,

"For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts."

May the Lord bless us to see ourselves as we really are and to repent as needs be, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "On This Day of Joy and Gladness" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy has spoken to us, following which the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "On This Day of Joy and Gladness."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Persian Gulf war

Since our conference last October, many have ridden roller coasters of emotion from the war in the Persian Gulf. Many Latter-day Saints had their lives changed by that conflict. In the military theater of operations, we had over 140 Latter-day Saint groups providing leadership, worship, and fellowship for members of the armed forces. At home, families were separated and in stress. We pay tribute to the Church leaders and members who shouldered extra burdens in looking after the families of our service people. They are still doing so. Stake, ward, quorum, and Relief Society leaders acted and are still acting in the best traditions of brotherly and sisterly service.

During this crisis, our hearts went out to those who were oppressed and

in jeopardy on both sides of the conflict. Week after week, in the leading councils of the Church, in Church meetings everywhere, in our homes, and in public and private gatherings, we prayed for the well-being of those in uniform. We also prayed that the war would be short and that the numbers of dead and wounded would be as small as possible.

Our prayers were answered, and in this national period of thanksgiving designated by presidential proclamation, we join millions of religious people everywhere in prayers of thanks to a merciful Father in Heaven. We offer love and sympathy to the families of those who lost their lives. And we continue to pray that the leaders who preside over the peacekeeping process and the care and repatriation of prisoners and refugees will be wise and

considerate and successful in binding up the wounds of war.

Honoring parents and the aged

Thousands of years ago, on a mountain across the Arabian peninsula from the recent conflict, the Lord God of Israel gave his people ten commandments. The fifth commandment that the Lord gave through the prophet Moses was "honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

This morning I wish to speak about honoring our parents and the aged among us.

The commandment to honor our parents has strands that run through the entire fabric of the gospel. It is inherent in our relationship to God our Father. It embraces the divine destiny of the children of God. This commandment relates to the government of the family, which is patterned after the government of heaven.

The commandment to honor our parents echoes the sacred spirit of family relationships in which—at their best—we have sublime expressions of heavenly love and care for one another. We sense the importance of these relationships when we realize that our greatest expressions of joy or pain in mortality come from the members of our families.

Other manifestations of this commandment include the bearing and care of children, the preparation of family histories, and efforts to see that the ordinances of eternity are performed for our departed ancestors.

The Savior reemphasized the importance of the fifth commandment during his ministry. He reminded the scribes and Pharisees that we are commanded to honor our father and our mother and that God had directed that

whoever cursed father or mother should be put to death (see Leviticus 20:9; Deuteronomy 21:18–21; Matthew 15:4; Mark 7:10). In this day, failing to honor our parents is not a capital crime in any country of which I am aware. However, the divine direction to honor our father and our mother has never been revoked (see Mosiah 13:20; Matthew 19:19; Luke 18:20).

Like many scriptures, this commandment has multiple meanings.

Honoring parents by living righteously

To young people, honoring parents is appropriately understood to focus on obedience, respect, and emulation of righteous parents. The Apostle Paul illuminated that focus when he taught, "Children, obey your parents in all things [I believe he meant all *righteous* things]: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:20).

President Spencer W. Kimball combined the ideas of obedience and emulation in these words:

"If we truly honor [our parents], we will seek to emulate their best characteristics and to fulfill their highest aspirations for us. No gift purchased from a store can begin to match in value to parents some simple, sincere words of appreciation. Nothing we could give them would be more prized than righteous living for each youngster" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 348).

Young people, if you honor your parents, you will love them, respect them, confide in them, be considerate of them, express appreciation for them, and demonstrate all of these things by following their counsel in righteousness and by obeying the commandments of God.

Honoring parents who are dead

To persons whose parents are dead, honoring parents is likely to involve thoughts of family reunions, family histories, temple work, and commitment to the great causes in which departed parents spent their lives.

Caring for aged parents

Middle-aged persons are likely to think of the commandment to honor our fathers and our mothers in terms of caring for aged parents. In a message given a year and a half ago, President Ezra Taft Benson encouraged families "to give their elderly parents and grandparents the love, care, and attention they deserve." He said:

"Remember that parents and grandparents are our responsibility, and we are to care for them to the very best of our ability. When the elderly have no families to care for them, priesthood and Relief Society leaders should make every effort to meet their needs in the same loving way" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, p. 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, p. 6).

Recent years have seen great increases in the numbers and percentage of older people in our population. A recent study estimated that in another ten years, one-seventh of the population of the United States, about 35 million people, will be at least sixty-five years old. At that time, about five million citizens will be age eighty-five or older (see "Consumer Issues and the Elderly," *Deseret News*, 7 May 1990, p. C1).

From time to time, Church leaders hear of grown children who seem to be good Latter-day Saints but are negligent or even maliciously indifferent in caring for their aged parents. Some have encouraged parents to distribute their property and then have put them away in institutions, sometimes with inadequate care and sometimes without

regular visits and expressions of love from their children. I believe this was the kind of circumstance the Lord's spokesman, the prophet Isaiah, thundered against when he commanded, "Hide not thyself from thine own flesh" (Isaiah 58:7).

The best way to care for the aged is to preserve their independence as long as possible. President Benson explained:

"Even when parents become elderly, we ought to honor them by allowing them freedom of choice and the opportunity for independence as long as possible. Let us not take away from them choices which they can still make. Some parents are able to live and care for themselves well into their advancing years and would prefer to do so. Where they can, let them.

"If they become less able to live independently, then family, Church, and community resources may be needed to help them. When the elderly become unable to care for themselves, even with supplemental aid, care can be provided in the home of a family member when possible. Church and community resources may also be needed in this situation" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, pp. 6-7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, p. 7).

When aged parents who are not able to live alone are invited to live with their children, this keeps them in the family circle and allows them to continue their close ties with all members of the family. When a parent lives with one child, the other children should make arrangements to share the burdens and blessings of this arrangement.

When it is not possible for parents to be cared for in the homes of their children, so that some type of institutional care is obtained, their children should remember that institutional care will generally focus on physical needs. Members of the family should

make regular visits and contacts to provide the spiritual and emotional sustenance and the love that must continue in the family relationship for mortal life and throughout all eternity.

In some nations where our members reside, the obligation to care for aged parents is more keenly felt and more faithfully observed than in the United States. I saw this in Asia. But the care of aged parents is still a strongly felt obligation among most Americans. Six out of ten older persons questioned in a recent national survey had weekly personal visits with their children, and three-fourths of them talked on the telephone with their children at least weekly. Two-thirds of those surveyed expect to take care of their elderly parents. (See *Deseret News*, 7 May 1990, p. C1.)

Latter-day Saints have a good record of caring for their aged parents and for older citizens generally. I have seen wonderful examples of this in my own family and among my LDS friends and associates. Many of our General Authorities and their companions have been exemplary in caring for their aged parents.

Old Folks Day

When I was a young boy in a small Utah town, I remember seeing my grandmother overseeing the provision of food, favors, transportation, and entertainment for a large group of elderly in the community. As a counselor in the stake Relief Society presidency, she was making preparations for Old Folks Day.

Most of you have never heard of Old Folks Day. It was a unique Utah Mormon institution. It began in 1875, when Charles R. Savage, the pioneer photographer, persuaded Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter to declare a day for honoring what we now call senior citizens. The first Old Folks Day

transported guests by rail to an outing at Saltair, west of Salt Lake City. A monument honoring that celebration and its founder stands on the southeast corner of Temple Square.

The annual Old Folks Day celebrations were held in nearly every community in Utah. Travel, refreshments, and entertainment were given to all citizens seventy years of age and older. Although this holiday was conducted by the leaders and members of this Church, it was stipulated that "there are none to be excluded because of their religion, and the oldest guest present is the special guest of the occasion whether they be white or black or whatever the complexion of their religious belief" (quoted in Joseph Heinerman, "The Old Folks Day: A Unique Utah Tradition," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Spring 1985, p. 158).

The committee directing these celebrations was dissolved in 1970, and the responsibility for honoring those who had come to be called senior citizens was passed to the stake presidents of the Church. Since that time we have had further increases in the number of senior citizens in our midst, but perhaps not significant increases in the amount of honor accorded them. Fortunately, the advances in medical science that have produced increased longevity have also increased our senior citizens' effective participation in church, community, business, and social events. But the need for honor, especially for our fathers and our mothers, is undiminished.

Honoring parents increases longevity

The fifth commandment is often referred to as the first commandment with a promise: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12). I have wondered about the relationship

between the commandment and the promise. How could honoring our parents increase our longevity?

During almost forty years of marriage, I have observed something that provides at least a partial explanation of how this promise is fulfilled.

In the early days of our marriage, I spent many happy hours in the home of my wife's parents, Charles and True Dixon. There I met June's maternal grandmother, Adelaide White Call. Then a widow about eighty-five years of age, Grandma Call was a survivor of what older people called "the exodus." She had been among those valiant Latter-day Saints expelled from northern Mexico in 1912. Now her sons and daughters were living throughout the United States. In her later years, they helped her locate in Utah County, near June's parents.

During my visits, I saw the gentleness and love and concern with which the Call children and their companions looked after this older parent. They visited her frequently. My wife's mother looked in on her every day and often had her in their home. They made her part of every occasion in which she desired to participate, and they gave her every consideration and respect. They cared for her every need when she was ill. Surely, I said to myself, these Call children honor their mother.

It has been about forty years since I saw that honor given. Now I see its effects. I see June and her brother and sisters honoring their mother as they saw their mother honoring her own mother. Fortunately, True Dixon is blessed with good health and vigor and has no present need for the kind of care her mother required. Still, her children are attentive. There are frequent visits and phone calls and invita-

tions that include her in all the family activities she desires. I believe her days will be longer upon the land because of the attentiveness and companionship of her children, who learned the way to honor a parent by seeing how their own mother honored hers.

I am grateful for this example and for this principle, especially when I anticipate the effect of having our daughters and sons observe how their mother honors her mother. I am sure that when the time comes, my own companion's days will be lengthened upon the land because of the care her children will give to her because of the example she has set for them. A worthy example repeats itself from generation to generation. Truly, righteousness is a beacon and a worthy act is its own reward. As the Lord said, "He who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

In time to come, each of us will be judged by the Lord God of Israel, who commanded us to honor our fathers and our mothers. I pray that each of us will conduct ourselves toward our parents in such a way that we will be guiltless before God at that day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Open Thou Mine Eyes" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve has addressed us, and the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Open Thou Mine Eyes."

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

"Lo, I am with thee"

Less than four months after The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, the leaders were subject to intense persecution. Partial seclusion had become necessary. During this trying period, Joseph Smith had the following revealed to him:

"Behold, thou wast called and chosen to write the Book of Mormon, and to my ministry; and I have lifted thee up out of thine afflictions, and have counseled thee, that thou hast been delivered from all thine enemies, and thou hast been delivered from the powers of Satan and from darkness! . . .

"Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days" (D&C 24:1, 8).

The words "For, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days" were the Lord's voice of gladness to His beloved prophet. His message to Joseph Smith and to us is "You can do it, and I will help you."

A voice of gladness

Recently we read in local newspapers an account of the devastating effects of a fire that completely gutted a low-cost housing apartment. Many people were rushed out into the street for safety. They watched their living quarters and other earthly possessions go up in fire and smoke. One elderly gentleman who had escaped the holocaust was interviewed. When he was asked, "What were you able to save?" he responded with, "Only the things that you see: my clothing." His next comment was touching and significant. It was simply, "Thank God there were no serious injuries or casualties."

What did we hear from this tragedy? A voice of gladness from someone who could have been bitter and angry

with the situation but chose to share a mature sense of values. He was bigger than that which had happened. He saw beyond the present and gave appreciation and hope for conditions and people in the future.

Disappointments, death, losses, or failures are real and difficult to manage but should never cause us to have barbed tongues, lasting resentment, or negative attitudes. The gospel encourages us to develop the capacity to learn from the past and present and see the opportunities that can be ours in the days to come.

From the Doctrine and Covenants we are given this counsel: "Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that bring glad tidings of good things" (128:19).

Bring gladness to others

The Lord would have us mingle our voices of gladness with His to give strength, encouragement, and joy to His children.

I recall as a young boy going with my father to visit an elderly widow living in humble circumstances. We shared a couple of boxes of food with her. When we were leaving, her remarks touched my heart. She said, "Thank you, Bishop, and please come back again, even if it's just to say hello."

This was probably the first time I realized that the food items were appreciated but the words of encouragement and the personal visit were of greater value.

In the world, where there are often voices of pessimism and negative feel-

ings, the voice of gladness is welcome indeed. Some seem to live with doubt, fear of the future, and sorrow for the past. If it is our nature to criticize or demean, we can cause the voices of gladness to be silenced. We need those who bring gladness into our lives. We need those who give encouragement and reflect optimism.

Sincere yet simple words of praise can lift souls and bring gladness. Mark Twain remarked that he could live two months on one good compliment. In the words of the biblical proverbs of Solomon: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11).

Encouragement can be quick and simple, but it is a voice of gladness that is needed by everyone.

Most of our returning military personnel are willing to be examples of voices of gladness as they remind us that some things in life, like precious freedom and liberty, are more important than life itself. Many have had their lives changed permanently, but their voices of gladness overshadow the prevailing interruption and sacrifices they have made for all of us. Hope springs eternal for those who have the vision to trust in and to live by God's inspired principles.

The gospel teachings have brought glad tidings to all the world. The subtle messages remind us of attitudes which can help us face the trials of life with less difficulty. Research has verified the fact that bitterness injures more the person who carries it than the one who caused it.

The hope of young cancer patients

Erma Bombeck has written a book about young cancer patients. As she planned her book, she came to the conclusion that the voices that came from these young people were filled with

humor and optimism which kept "these kids in the mainstream of life. Perhaps laughing and believing in themselves was a major part of their survival" (Erma Bombeck, *I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise* [New York: Harper and Row, 1989], p. xxi).

One sixteen-year-old boy said, "Man, without a sense of humor I wouldn't have made it this far" (Bombeck, p. xviii).

The author interviewed the youths with cancer and read many letters from them. She found one word constantly surfacing: *attitude*.

"They took personal pride in the fact that they were fighting something bigger than they were and stronger than they were—something that might even overpower them. But they still had something their enemies couldn't take away—hope. It is a formidable weapon. . . . When all else fails, pull out the big artillery, HOPE, and hang on" (Bombeck, pp. 5–6).

Words of gladness in the scriptures

Words of hope and gladness are often repeated in the scriptures to help us think and perform positively.

Isaiah says of Jesus Christ: "And when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him . . . ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and . . . he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53:2–3).

But even though His suffering was beyond our comprehension, His voice of gladness reminds us, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus challenges all of us to be happy and optimistic. As the cancer patients learned and medical research has proven: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

Glad voices from those who suffer

Recently during a regional conference in California, a well-trained multi-stake chorus furnished beautiful music. As I listened and watched them, I was impressed with the fact that on the front row were four individuals who were participating with the choir who sang not with their voices but with their hands. I thought to myself on that occasion, how wonderful for a choir director to encourage their participation. Without the advantage of melody or audible lyrics, they were able to stand with pride and a sense of belonging to share their communication of gladness and be an inspiration to all the congregation.

Deference, courtesy, and respect had made their voices of gladness strengthening and comforting.

Thank God for noble souls who can and do weather life's storms with sincere voices of gladness which overshadow the present and make the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ real and strengthening.

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

After a night of intense pain and suffering, one morning a husband stricken with a terminal illness said to his wife with great feeling, "I am so thankful today." "For what?" she asked, knowing well his difficult and trying situation. He replied, "For God giving me the privilege of one more day with you." A voice of gladness is so refreshing when an attitude of despair might be deemed appropriate.

How helpful and rewarding it would be if all of us would likewise thank God for one more day. For what? For the opportunity to take care of some unfinished business, to express appreciation, to repent, to right some wrongs, to influence for good some

wayward child, to reach out to someone who cried for help—in short, to thank God for one more day to prepare to meet Him.

Peter proclaims glad tidings

"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

"Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

"And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

"And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

"And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

"And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

"And all the people saw him walking and praising God" (Acts 3:1-9).

Now hear Peter's proclamation of glad tidings:

"Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" (Acts 3:12).

Peter, through his priesthood power, declared, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

Then the feet of the lame man took the glad tidings of good things to all who were in the temple to hear and see.

Choose a voice of gladness, not gloom

How impressive, encouraging, and meaningful is the attitude of some parents who, when learning of the accidental death of their son while he was serving a full-time mission, were heard to say with perfect sweetness and understanding: "We will soon have another son available as a missionary. His time and service will also be in the hands of the Lord." Sure voices of gladness during tragedy help build women, men, and God's kingdom.

We can choose our reactions to difficulties and challenges. One way to learn how to incorporate the voice of gladness through tragedy or happiness is to learn to apply gospel principles. They never teach us to be overcome by the negative, by gloom, or by cynicism.

From guidelines given to us in the scriptures and by the words of prophets, we learn that life is a teaching experience. Self-pity and discouragement do not come from the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But life can be both bitter and sweet. It is up to us to choose whether we want to reflect the voices of gloom or gladness.

Voices of gladness in the scriptures

The voices of gladness were not always available to the masses. Death by fire was often the punishment for those who endeavored to read Bible manuscripts or to publish those glad works.

Little by little, customs were changed by valiant people. Now we have scriptures and words of prophets for us to study. With the help of the Holy Ghost, it is our opportunity to understand and live by the doctrine of salvation.

The voices of gladness from the scriptures remind us that we don't have to walk through life alone. Christ came that we might have life and have it

more abundantly. "For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after* all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23; *italics* added).

Let us remember that acts of kindness with pure motives and righteous purposes can be and are encouraged to be done in quietness, gentle voices, and in privacy. We can program ourselves to build, encourage, and give strength.

What a voice of gladness was shared when our Savior, Jesus Christ, following torment, ridicule, abuse, and, ultimately, crucifixion, in a voice of mercy, glad tidings, and truth, was able to say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

May I share my witness and testimony that I know God is pleased when we declare glad tidings of truth, righteousness, and His reality. My voice of gladness today is God lives. Jesus is the Christ. Let no one or any situation take this reality from you. I declare this message with a voice of gladness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable and satellite systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

We are especially grateful for the beautiful singing of the Mormon Youth Chorus under the directorship of Robert C. Bowden with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me." The benediction will be given by Elder H. Verlan Andersen of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me."

Elder H. Verlan Andersen offered the benediction.

FIRST DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 161st Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 1991, at 2:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by the Ricks College combined choirs. Kendell Nielsen and James Brague conducted the choirs, and Clay Christiansen was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Hinckley made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this second general session of the 161st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Benson was with us this morning for an hour of the session. We excuse him this afternoon. He will watch this session on television.

We extend our warm greetings to all who are in attendance and to all who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being offered by satellite transmission. We extend appreciation to the owners and operators of the many broadcasting facilities who cooperate and generously give time for this occasion.

We note that Elders David B. Haight, Gene R. Cook, and Marlin K. Jensen are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

The music for this session will be provided by the Ricks College combined choirs, under the direction of Brothers Kendell Nielsen and James Brague, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir will begin this session by singing "How Great the Wisdom and the Love." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock of the Seventy.

The choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

Elder Hugh W. Pinnock offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will sing "Arise, O God, and Shine." Following the singing of the choir, Brother Wilford G. Edling will then read the auditors' report.

May I say that this morning we presented to you the names of Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Cree-L Kofford, Joseph C. Muren, Graham W. Doxey, Jorge A. Rojas, and Julio E. Dávila to serve as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. We invite all of you to sustain them by the uplifted hand. Any who may be opposed.

The choir sang "Arise, O God, and Shine."

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1990

Wilford G. Edling

Dear Brethren:

For the purpose of evaluating the adequacy of controls over receipts and expenditures of the general funds of the Church and its controlled organizations, we have reviewed the system of budgeting, accounting, and auditing, and the related financial statements of the Church for the year ended December 31, 1990, and the manner in which the funds are received and expenditures are controlled.

Expenditures of general Church funds for the year were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of Tithes, composed of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed by revelation of the Lord. The Appropriations Committee, in weekly meetings, administers major expenditures under the budget.

The general fund accounts of the Church are maintained by its Finance and Records Department, which uses modern accounting technology and equipment to keep abreast of the rapidly expanding and varied activities of the Church.

The Auditing Department, which is composed of a staff of certified public accountants and similarly qualified auditors, is independent of all other departments and performs financial audits, operational audits, and audits of the computer systems employed by the Church. These auditing services are performed on a continuing basis for Church departments and other Church-controlled organizations engaged in worldwide operations, includ-

ing missions, schools, administrative offices, and departmental activities.

The audits of the local funds of wards and stakes are performed by stake auditors. The audit procedures are established and the audit reports are reviewed by the Church Auditing Department. Incorporated businesses owned or controlled by the Church for which accounts are not maintained in the Finance and Records Department are audited by the Church internal auditors, independent professional auditing firms, or government regulatory agencies.

Based on our review of the system of financial controls within the Church, together with continuing discussions with personnel of the Finance and Records and Auditing departments, we are of the opinion that budgeting, accounting, and auditing controls are adequate for Church needs and purposes, and that in all material respects the general funds of the Church received and expended during the year ended December 31, 1990, have been controlled and accounted for in accordance with established Church policy and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,
Church Audit Committee

Wilford G. Edling
David M. Kennedy
Merrill J. Bateman
Ted E. Davis

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker. He will be followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Listen to learn

In his invocation for this session of conference, Elder Hugh W. Pinnock prayed that we might listen carefully. Many articles in Church literature have dealt with the important art of listening.¹ They support a proverb that teaches this vital lesson: "Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise" (Proverbs 19:20).² Surely wisdom will come as we *listen to learn* from children, parents, partners, neighbors, Church leaders, and the Lord.

Children

Parents and teachers, learn to listen, then listen to learn from children. A wise father once said, "I do a greater amount of good when I listen to my children than when I talk to them."³

When our youngest daughter was about four years of age, I came home from hospital duties quite late one evening. I found my dear wife to be very weary. I don't know why. She only had nine children underfoot all day. So I offered to get our four-year-old ready for bed. I began to give the orders: "Take off your clothes; hang them up; put on your pajamas; brush your teeth; say your prayers" and so on, commanding in a manner befitting a tough sergeant in the army. Suddenly she cocked her head to one side, looked at me with a wistful eye, and said, "Daddy, do you own me?"

She taught me an important lesson. I was using coercive methods on this sweet soul. To rule children by force is the technique of Satan, not of the Savior. No, we don't own our children. Our parental privilege is to love them, to lead them, and to let them go.

The time to listen is when someone needs to be heard. Children are naturally eager to share their experiences, which range from triumphs of

delight to trials of distress. Are we as eager to listen? If they try to express their anguish, is it possible for us to listen openly to a shocking experience without going into a state of shock ourselves? Can we listen without interrupting and without making snap judgments that slam shut the door of dialogue? It can remain open with the soothing reassurance that we believe in them and understand their feelings. Adults should not pretend an experience did not happen just because they might wish otherwise.

Even silence can be misinterpreted. A story was written of "a little boy [who] looked up at his mother and said, 'Why are you mad at me?' She answered, 'I'm not angry at you. What makes you say that?' 'Well, your hands are on your hips, and you are not saying anything.'"⁴

Parents with teenage youth may find that time for listening is often less convenient but more important when young people feel lonely or troubled. And when they seem to deserve favor least, they may need it most.

Wise parents and teachers, listen to learn from children.

Parents

Children of all ages, learn to listen, and listen to learn from parents, as Elder Oaks taught us this morning. Spiritually or physically, it can be a matter of life and death.

Several years ago I was invited to give an important lecture at a medical school in New York City. The night before the lecture, Sister Nelson and I were invited to dinner at the home of our host professor. There he proudly introduced us to an honor medical student—his beautiful daughter.

Some weeks later that professor telephoned me in an obvious state of grief. I asked, "What is the matter?"

"Remember our daughter whom you met at our home?"

"Of course," I replied. "I'll never forget such a stunning young lady."

Then her father sobbed and said, "Last night she was killed in an automobile accident!" Trying to gain composure, he continued: "She asked permission to go to a dance with a certain young man. I didn't have a good feeling about it. I told her so and asked her not to go. She asked, 'Why?' I simply told her that I was uneasy. She had always been an obedient daughter, but she said that if I could not give her a good reason to decline, she wanted to go. And so she did. At the dance, alcoholic beverages were served. Her escort drank a bit—we don't know how much. While returning home, he was driving too fast, missed a turn, and careened through a guardrail into a reservoir below. They were both submerged and taken to their death."

As I shared my feeling of sadness, he concluded: "My grief is made worse because I had the distinct feeling that trouble lay ahead. Why couldn't I have been more persuasive?"

This experience will not have been in vain if others can listen and learn from it. Children, honor your parents,⁵ even when they cannot give a satisfactory explanation for their feelings. Please have faith in this scripture, which applies to all age-groups: "Hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Proverbs 1:8).

Parents have a divine duty to teach their children to love the Lord.⁶ Children have an equal obligation to "obey [their] parents in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1).⁷

Wise children, listen to learn from parents.

Partners

Husbands and wives, learn to listen, and listen to learn from one another.

I was amused to read of an experience recorded by Elder F. Burton Howard in his biography of President Marion G. Romney: "His good-humored love for Ida was manifested in many ways. He delighted in telling of her hearing loss. 'I once went to see a doctor about her hearing,' he would say. 'He asked me how bad it was, and I said I didn't know. He told me to go home and find out. The doctor instructed me to go into a far room and speak to her. Then I should move nearer and nearer until she does hear. Following the doctor's instructions, I spoke to her from the bedroom while she was in the kitchen—no answer. I moved nearer and spoke again—no answer. So I went right up to the door of the kitchen and said, 'Ida, can you hear me?' She responded, 'What is it, Marion—I've answered you three times.'"⁸

Even with normal hearing, some couples seem not to listen to one another. Taking time to talk is essential to keep lines of communication intact. If marriage is a prime relationship in life, it deserves prime time! Yet less important appointments are often given priority, leaving only leftover moments for listening to precious partners.

Keeping the garden of marriage well cultivated and free from weeds of neglect requires the time and commitment of love. It is not only a pleasant privilege, it is a scriptural requirement with promise of eternal glory.⁹

Wise partners, listen to learn from one another.

Neighbors

Learn to listen, and listen to learn from neighbors. Repeatedly the Lord has said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour" (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19).¹⁰ Opportunities to listen to those of diverse religious or political persuasion can promote tolerance and

learning. And a good listener will listen to a person's sentiments as well. I learned much from Brother David M. Kennedy as we met with many dignitaries in nations abroad. When one of them spoke, Brother Kennedy not only looked eye to eye and listened with real intent, but he even removed his reading glasses, as if to show that he wanted nothing in the way of his total concentration.

The wise listen to learn from neighbors.

Church leaders

Members, learn to listen, and listen to learn from Church leaders. Faithful members love the Savior and honor His servants, having faith in the Lord's declaration that "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

One day in Italy I met a wonderful priesthood leader and his wife. In him I saw a man with great potential. But my language was foreign to them. Through an interpreter, I challenged them to study the English language. They listened obediently and studied diligently. Now six years later, ably sustained by his wife, Carolina, Vincenzo Conforte is faithfully serving his *second* assignment as a mission president, interviewing missionaries well in Italian or in English.

President Ezra Taft Benson has proclaimed the importance of studying the Book of Mormon. People throughout the earth are being blessed as they follow this and other counsel he has given.

Gratefully we thank God for a prophet to guide us in these latter days. But many turn a deaf ear to his teachings, oblivious to his prophetic position. They do so at great risk, for scriptures contain this warning:

"A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you . . . ; him shall ye

hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. . . .

" . . . Every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:22-23).¹¹

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., said, "We do not lack a prophet; what we lack is a listening ear."¹² Words of the Lord are taught by His disciples (see D&C 1:4). Wise members listen to learn from Church leaders.

The Lord

Above all, God's children should learn to listen, then listen to learn from the Lord. On several sacred occasions in the world's history, our Heavenly Father has personally appeared to introduce His divine Son with a specific charge to "*hear him*."¹³

Jesus taught this first and great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37).

Scriptures recorded in all dispensations teach that we show our *love* of God as we *hearken* to His commandments and *obey* them.¹⁴ These actions are closely connected. In fact, the Hebrew language of the Old Testament in most instances uses the same term for both *hearkening* (to the Lord) and *obedience* (to His word).¹⁵

In addition to hearing the word of the Lord obediently, we manifest our love for God through prayer. And listening is an essential part of prayer. Answers from the Lord come ever so quietly. Hence He has counseled us to "be still and know that I am God" (D&C 101:16).

President Spencer W. Kimball said, "It would not hurt us, either, if we paused at the end of our prayers to do some intense listening—even for a moment or two—always praying, as the Savior did, 'not my will, but thine, be done' (Luke 22:42)."¹⁶

In a world scarred by scourges of tyranny and war, many of its inhabitants earnestly pray for inner peace. For example, not long ago a beautiful young mother named Svetlana developed an intense desire to obtain a Bible. But in her city of Leningrad, a Bible was very rare and expensive. Frequently and fervently she prayed for a Bible. Ultimately, she and her husband were impressed to travel with their small child to Helsinki, Finland, with that hope in mind. There one day while walking in a park, she stumbled across an object buried under the cover of autumn leaves. She picked it up and found it to be a Bible written in the Russian language! Excitedly she recounted the story of this great discovery to another mother who was also in the park with her youngster. The second mother rejoiced with Svetlana and added, "Would you like to have *another* book about Jesus Christ?" Svetlana, of course, answered in the affirmative. The other mother provided Svetlana with a copy of a Russian-language edition of the Book of Mormon and invited the family to church. She eagerly embraced the teachings of the missionaries and shortly thereafter joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Then they returned to their home, where they have helped pioneer the work in the Leningrad Branch of the Church.¹⁷

Her experience typifies this promise of the Savior to those who seek Him: "Thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who *hearken* unto my precepts, and *lend an ear* unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more" (2 Nephi 28:30; italics added).¹⁸

While stressing the importance of listening well, I am mindful of those who cannot hear. Many labeled as deaf have received the Spirit "by the hear-

ing of faith" (Galatians 3:2).¹⁹ The example of Rachel Ivins Grant is inspiring to me. She never complained about her own deafness. Though most women in their seventies would be completely worn out while rearing six growing children of another mother, she undertook that task. Rachel's deafness seemed to save her from the wear and tear of noise. Sometimes, when two were arguing, Rachel would burst out laughing. She said they had no idea how funny it was to see their angry faces and hear none of their words.

Before her son, Heber J. Grant, became the seventh President of the Church, she declared, "Of course the greatest trial I have is that I cannot hear, but I have so many blessings I cannot complain, but if we only will live so that we may receive the instructions of God, there is nothing we are called to pass through but will be for our good."²⁰

The Redeemer loves such faithful souls: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers" (1 Peter 3:12).

They qualify for this prophetic promise: "Before they call, I [the Lord] will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24).

To all of God's children, either able to hear or deaf to mortal sound, He offers this reward: "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 55:3).²¹

Your soul will be blessed as you learn to listen, then listen to learn from children, parents, partners, neighbors, and Church leaders, all of which will heighten capacity to hear counsel from on high.

Carefully listen to learn from the Lord through the still small voice—the Holy Spirit—which leads to truth.²² Listen to learn by studying scriptures that record His holy mind and will.²³ Listen to learn in prayer, for He will answer the humble who truly seek Him.²⁴

The wise listen to learn from the Lord. I testify of Him and certify that as we "hearken and . . . hear the voice of the Lord," we will be blessed, "for the hour of his coming is nigh" (D&C 133:16–17), in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Examples include the following:

Marvin J. Ashton, "Family Communications," *New Era*, Oct. 1978, pp. 7–9.

Lynne Baker, "Please Take Time to Listen!" *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1968, pp. 110–13.

Marilyn A. Bullock, "Listening to My Two-year-old," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, p. 70.

Henry B. Eyring, "Listen Together," in *1988–89 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1989], pp. 11–21.

Winnifred C. Jardine, "Listen with All of You," *Ensign*, Feb. 1974, p. 51.

Larry K. Langlois, "When Couples Don't Listen to Each Other," *Ensign*, Sept. 1989, pp. 16–19.

Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, pp. 27–31; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, pp. 19–21.

H. Burke Peterson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, pp. 105–8; or *Ensign*, May 1990, pp. 83–84.

"Giving with Your Ears," *Church News*, 13 Jan. 1985, p. 16.

"Parents, Are You Listening?" *Ensign*, Feb. 1971, pp. 54–57.

2. See also Proverbs 8:32–33; Jacob 6:12.

3. George D. Durrant, "Take Time to Talk," *Ensign*, Apr. 1973, p. 24; see also James 1:19.

4. Florence B. Pinnock, "Let's Listen," *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1964, pp. 872–73.

5. See Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Matthew 15:4; 19:19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:20; Ephesians 6:2; 1 Nephi 17:55; Mosiah 13:20.

6. See Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 4:10; 6:5–7; 11:19; Mosiah 1:4; D&C 68:25, 28; Moses 6:57–58.

7. See also Colossians 3:20.

8. F. Burton Howard, *Marion G. Romney: His Life and Faith* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], pp. 144–45.

9. See Ephesians 5:25, 33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:1; Jacob 3:7; D&C 132:19.

10. See also Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8; Mosiah 23:15; D&C 59:6.

11. See also Jeremiah 5:21; D&C 1:14.

12. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "Not a Prophet—but a Listening Ear," *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1948, p. 685.

13. See Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 3 Nephi 11:7; Joseph Smith—History 1:17; italics added.

14. See Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9; 11:1; 30:16; Joshua 22:5; Nehemiah 1:5; Daniel 9:4; John 14:15; 15:10; 1 John 5:2–3; 2 John 1:6; Mosiah 13:14; D&C 42:2; 46:9; 124:87.

15. That term was שָׁמַע (shāma'), which means "to hear intelligently." The term was used hundreds of times in the Hebrew Old Testament as Israel was counseled to *hearken* to the word of the Lord and *obey* it.

Different terms were used in some instances in the Hebrew text whenever reference was made to hearing or responding *without* implied obedience. Examples:

• "They have ears, but they *hear* not" (Psalm 135:17; see also 140:6; italics added). שָׁמַע (šāma) to give ear—to listen

• "I will *hear*, saith the Lord, I will *hear* the heavens, and they shall *hear* the earth" (Hosea 2:21; italics added). שָׁמַע (šāma) to pay attention—to answer

• "Lift up thy voice, O daughter . . . : cause it to be *heard*" (Isaiah 10:30; see also Psalm 10:17; italics added). שָׁמַע (šāma) to give heed

Still different terms were employed in the Old Testament when referring to obedience *not* to Deity but to other people. Examples:

• "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to *obey* his mother" (Proverbs 30:17; italics added). שָׁמַע (šāma) obedience, to obey

• "The children of Ammon shall *obey* them" (Isaiah 11:14; italics added). שָׁמַע (šāma) audience—obedience

That link between *listening* and *obedience* is found not only in Hebrew but in Latin and Greek. The word *obey* comes from two Latin

roots: the prefix *ob* ("to" or "toward") and the root *audiō, audire* ("to hear" or "to listen"). This root occurs in words such as *audio, audience, and auditorium*. Literally, then, the word *obey* means "to hear or to listen toward," that is, "to comply."

The word for *obey* in Greek, *ὑπακούω* (*hupakouō*), literally means "listen under," from *hypo* ("under") as in *hypodermic*, also "in subjection or subordination," and the root *akouō* ("hear, listen") as in *acoustics*. In New Testament times, its use was gradually broadened to less sacred realms, including expressions such as "children, obey parents" (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20), "wives, [obey] husbands" (1 Peter 3:1), and "servants, obey . . . masters" (Colossians 3:22), and so on.

A parallel pattern is found in the Book of Mormon. Use of terms such as *listen, hear, and hearken*, written at the time of the Old Testament, generally carried the same implication of obedience to Deity. Those terms in Book of Mormon scriptures written *after* the earthly advent of Christ were also broadened to include the more familiar usage, as in the language of the New Testament.

16. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, pp. 4-5.

17. Steven R. Mecham, president of the Finland Helsinki Mission, personal communica-

tion to the author, 26 Apr. 1990. Svetlana's last name is Artemova. The name of the other mother is Raija Kemppainen, wife of Jussi Kemppainen, who at that time was president of the Baltic District of that mission.

18. See also D&C 29:7.

19. For example, see Anne C. Bradshaw, "Listen with Your Heart," *New Era*, Mar. 1989, pp. 28-31.

20. *Woman's Exponent*, 1 and 15 Dec. 1902, p. 53. Earlier, at age sixty-seven, she wrote, "I look for the time when I will be able to hear by the power of God" (*Woman's Exponent*, 15 Aug. 1888, p. 46).

21. See also Mosiah 2:9; Alma 5:41; 36:3.

22. See 1 Kings 19:12; 1 Nephi 17:45; D&C 85:6.

23. See John 5:39; Alma 14:1; 33:2.

24. See Mosiah 9:18; 23:10; Alma 9:26; D&C 19:23; 112:10; Abraham 2:19; Joseph Smith—History, footnote to 1:71, paragraph 5.

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Earl C. Tingey.

Elder Earl C. Tingey

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am thankful for the opportunity to express my love and appreciation to the Lord for the call that came to me last December. I accept the call. I am grateful for the opportunity to bear testimony of Jesus Christ. I will consecrate all of my time, energy, and talent to magnify this calling. I express appreciation to the Brethren; my wife, Joanne; our children; grandchildren; our parents and extended family; and to all of our friends and neighbors who have voiced confidence in my ability to do this work.

The redemption of the dead

I have been called to serve in the Family History Department of the Church, and I would like to speak of that today. Here we see the great work of the redemption roll forth in its decreed course.

I salute the thousands of workers, volunteers, and service missionaries who, as the scriptures say, "wear out [their] lives" (D&C 123:13) to redeem those who are living beyond the veil. Their complete and unselfish service is a true demonstration of the love we should have for the Savior and our fellowmen.

Much has been accomplished over the years. Faithful Saints in years past and today have identified many millions of their ancestors. The Church has assisted by gathering information on nearly two billion individuals who have at one time lived on this earth.

The Church has further provided beautiful temples where worthy Saints may enter and have sacred ordinances performed on behalf of their kindred dead.

The Lord helps when we obey

My brothers and sisters, many things are occurring today to help us accelerate this work. I am impressed that the Lord will help us when we make an effort to do what He has asked of us as counseled by our prophet and other Church leaders.

In 1977, major emphasis was given to the redemption of the dead. Speaking to a meeting of Regional Representatives, Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke of the marvelous capacity of the computer and of how this new technology would hasten the work. He further assured us that the Lord would continue to assist the Church along the way:

"When the servants of the Lord determine to do as He commands, we move ahead. As we proceed, we are joined at the crossroads by those who have been prepared to help us.

"They come with skills and abilities precisely suited to our needs. And, we find provisions; information, inventions, help of various kinds, set along the way waiting for us to take them up.

"It is as though someone knew we would be traveling that way. We see the invisible hand of the Almighty providing for us" (*That They May Be Redeemed* [address delivered at Regional Representatives' seminar, 1 Apr. 1977], p. 2).

Brothers and sisters, the Lord has met His servants at the crossroads.

Many of these tools and skills are now in our hands. Our failure to now do this work cannot be lightly passed over.

FamilySearch™

The most prominent of the new tools which we now have in many of our fifteen hundred family history centers is the computer-aided resource entitled FamilySearch, which has the following features:

First, the Ancestral File™ provides over seven million names linked into family relationships. The identity of the submitting party is also provided, thus facilitating cooperative research.

Second, the Family History Library Catalog™ provides easy access to the Church's Family History Library and its resources.

Third, the International Genealogical Index™ provides data on over 147 million deceased individuals. Many millions of additional names are being added to this index.

And fourth, a new Personal Ancestral File™ computer program will permit members, in their homes, to easily organize their family history records.

Family Records Extraction Program

In addition, over eight hundred stakes are now participating in the new Family Records Extraction Program.

This vital effort, involving over seventy-five thousand volunteers who serve primarily in their homes, will soon allow members to go to their meetinghouses to clear names for temple work rather than waiting for headquarters approval.

Yes, the invisible hand of the Almighty is providing for us, and we should live and act to merit a continuation of His help and blessings.

Growth of the seed planted by Elijah

The Almighty, through the appearance of the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith in 1823, introduced the doctrine and work of the redemption of the dead. Moroni told Joseph that the Old Testament prophet Elijah would return before the second coming of the Lord.

Slightly modifying the Malachi reference to Elijah, Moroni said:

"He [Elijah] shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers" (Joseph Smith—History 1:39).

The word *plant* was introduced by the angel Moroni. What does it mean to plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers? What were the promises made to the fathers?

The promises relate to the covenant of the Lord that He is no respecter of persons and that He has a plan whereby all of His children may have opportunity to return to His presence by being obedient to the laws, principles, and ordinances of the gospel.

To plant these promises in the hearts of the children, and to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, was defined by Elder Mark E. Petersen as follows:

"Malachi plainly outlines the mission of Elijah—to establish a bond of interest between present and past generations . . . to create in the hearts of living men and women an interest in their ancestors" ("Why Mormons Build Temples," *Ensign*, Jan. 1972, p. 49).

The seed planted by the Lord, through Elijah's appearance to Joseph Smith in 1836, was not a full-grown tree, but only a seed. At that time there were no genealogical societies in existence. History confirms that family

research in America generally commenced with the forming of the New England Historical Genealogical Society in Boston in 1844.

Thus, just eight years after that small seed of genealogical interest in our ancestors was planted by Elijah, it began to grow until now, as a result of skills, tools, and computer technology, which have been provided by the Lord, the lowly seed has become a beautiful, fruit-bearing tree.

How to get started

Brothers and sisters, in conclusion, many years ago humble listeners asked Peter, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you" (2:38). To your silent questions, Where should I begin? What should I do? we say, Seek out those who are called to direct this work in your ward or branch. Go to your family history center and the temple. Identify those of your ancestors whose identity may be lost to human memory. Get started now, and the Lord will help you.

I bear humble testimony that this work of the redemption is true. Jesus Christ presides over and directs this work by revealing His will to President Ezra Taft Benson, our living prophet. I pray that we will do this work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Earl C. Tingey has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elders Rulon G. Craven and W. Mack Lawrence, who, with Brother Tingey, were called last December as members of the Seventy.

Elder Rulon G. Craven

Testimony of living prophets

My brothers and sisters, while I served 13½ years as secretary to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, my testimony was strengthened concerning living prophets. The Lord said through the Prophet Joseph Smith, "The Twelve Apostles [are called to be] special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23).

Prophets have a special gift of the Spirit, a prophetic gift. During the time I served as secretary to the Twelve, I observed these men whom our Father in Heaven has called as special witnesses of his Son, Jesus Christ.

The Thursday morning meetings in the upper room of the temple were always a special experience for me. My heart was often filled with emotion as I listened to the members of the Twelve pray to their Father in Heaven, remembering these are the Twelve Apostles, chosen by our Father in Heaven and sustained by the Saints as prophets, seers, and revelators.

Decisions made in love and unity

As President Hunter would lead the Twelve through the agenda, I was continually reminded of section 107, verse 27, of the Doctrine and Covenants, which reads, "And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other."

The members of the Twelve strive to live according to the promptings of the Spirit. They speak their mind. However, they are also good listeners and speak when moved upon by the Holy Spirit. Their posture in quorum meetings is to listen and sense the di-

recting power of the Spirit, which always leads to a unity of decision. I marveled as I watched the directing power of the Spirit touch the minds and hearts of the members of the Twelve, influencing the decision-making process.

Decisions made by the Council of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve are directed by the Spirit because they strive continually to abide by the counsel of the Lord found in section 107, verse 30, of the Doctrine and Covenants, which reads:

"The decisions of these quorums, or either of them, are to be made in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity;

"Because the promise is, if these things abound in them they shall not be unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord" (107:31).

The members of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric are truly men who are striving to be pure in heart. A spirit of righteousness, love, and unity abounds in their quorum meetings.

President Hunter walks again

The Twelve love President Hunter, and President Howard W. Hunter loves the Twelve. President Hunter's gentle, persuasive leadership invites the Spirit of the Lord into all of their meetings. I hope President Hunter will forgive me for relating an experience which portrayed to me the great love the Twelve have for each other, which love brings the Holy Spirit into their quorum meetings.

Many will remember a number of years ago President Hunter was informed that he would not walk again. However, his faith and determination

were greater than that message. Daily, without fanfare and the knowledge of others, he went through some very strenuous physical therapy exercises with determination, faith, and the vision that he would walk again. During those difficult months, his Brethren of the Twelve were praying for him daily in their quorum meetings and in their private prayers.

Months later, on a Thursday morning, I went to President Hunter's office to discuss an agenda item for the temple meeting that morning. I found he left early and was informed that he was walking to the temple. I questioned that information and then hurried to catch up with him. When I caught up with him, he was walking with the help of a walker. We walked together to the elevator and then up to the fourth floor. We went down the hall to the upper room of the temple. When their president walked into that room, the Twelve stood and began to clap their hands. They tenderly watched him walk over to his chair and let his body down into the chair. Then with magnificent love, honor, and tenderness, each of the Twelve went up to him and extended to him an affectionate touch, kiss on the forehead, and a hug, showing their great love and admiration for him. They all sat down, and President Hunter thanked them and said, "I was not supposed to walk again, but with the Lord's help and my determination and, most important, the faith of my Brethren of the Twelve, I am walking again." President Howard W. Hunter is an example of maintaining faith and determination in the face of adversity. The Twelve are examples of maintaining faith and prayer in behalf of those who are experiencing adversity.

Look to the prophets

My brothers and sisters, I share these personal experiences with you because I was there. I have a humble desire to strengthen your faith in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators.

These men, from my close observation, live close to the Lord. I have witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit touch their hearts and minds and give expression to their words. I have marveled at the unity of purpose of the First Presidency and the Twelve in serving the Lord. Christ and his prophets are one. I continually observed the love and sustaining power extended by his two counselors and the Twelve to our prophet leader, President Ezra Taft Benson. My witness from personal observation is that you can have unwavering faith in the united counsel of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. They will lead you in the path of righteousness, happiness, and inner peace.

My wife, Donna, and our children have made it a practice to read, listen to, and follow the counsel of the prophets. We have always been abundantly blessed in our homes, in our occupations, and in our personal lives.

My brothers and sisters, there will yet be perilous and challenging times ahead. I admonish the Saints to look to the prophets, study their words. Teach their words in your family home evenings. Sustain them in private and in public; pray for them in your private and family prayers. And in turn, enjoy in your lives that inner peace that surpasseth understanding.

I leave you my special witness of the reality of our Father in Heaven, that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of all who will come unto him, and that his chosen prophets do walk the earth today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder W. Mack Lawrence

Never in my wildest dreams did I think that one day I would be standing at this pulpit giving a talk. I thought of putting a pillow between my knees so you wouldn't think there was a woodpecker up here working on the pulpit. It's a humbling experience, brothers and sisters, to stand before you, and I pray that the Lord's Spirit will be with us all.

Importance of sacrament meeting

Today I would like to talk about sacrament meeting. Your bishop organizes and oversees the meeting to ensure that it's undertaken in a spirit of reverence, thankfulness, and worship and conducted with dignity, warmth, and the Spirit of the Lord. I hope that each person who attends will be welcomed at the door and will sense a great feeling of love and caring that the bishop has. That is symbolic of the Lord's great, unconditional love for each of us. We should feel wanted, valued, and accepted at these meetings. No one should feel like a stranger.

Sacrament meeting is the most important meeting of the week, the one the Lord has *commanded* us to attend. It's a time to worship the Savior. What does that mean, to worship? It means to reverently show love and allegiance to him, to think about him, to honor him, to remember his sacrifice for each of us, and to thank him.

In sacrament meeting we often do this through prayer, music, talks, scripture, and our testimony. His Spirit should be there. We partake of the sacrament in remembrance of his body and blood, symbolizing his resurrection and atonement. We should think about his life and sacrifice during the passing of the sacrament. Our sacrament meeting should be a time to talk of Christ, rejoice in Christ, preach of Christ, and prophesy of Christ, to paraphrase

Nephi (see 2 Nephi 25:26). It's also a time to learn the doctrines of the Church, to feel the Spirit, and to be spiritually enlightened.

The Lord's instructions

Sacrament meeting is so important that the Lord revealed specific instructions about the meeting to Joseph Smith. That message is recorded in the 59th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;

"Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;

"But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.

"And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full" (D&C 59:9-13).

That our joy may be full. Our experience in sacrament meeting should be filled with joy.

Let me just mention a couple of things that will help us find joy in sacrament meetings. There are many ways.

Come with an attitude of worship

First, *come with an attitude of worshiping the Lord*. Some people don't understand, and they look at worship

service as just another Sunday meeting, a part of a three-hour routine. It is not. It should be a time of true worship for the Savior, a time when we desire to be close to him, to convey our love to him, to feel his Spirit. Our attitudes help determine how meaningful the meeting is to each of us.

Teach children

Number two, *teach your children the significance of the worship service*. We want our children there, and we also want them to learn reverence, which is a form of love for the Savior. (If babies are noisy, take them out of the chapel until they calm down.) We want our children to understand that it is a worship service for Jesus, where we show him we love him. You may be surprised at how much your children understand about this. Alma tells us in the Book of Mormon that "little children do have words given to them many times, which confound the wise and the learned" (Alma 32:23). They can be very sensitive to the Spirit. We love our children.

Sing praises to God

Number three, *sing enthusiastic praises to God*. As we sing wholeheartedly, reaffirming our love for the Savior, we can feel the Spirit. I must admit that I'm the world's worst singer. In junior high school, my music teacher said to me, "Mack, do us a favor and just move your lips when you try to sing." But I still try, and I feel the Spirit when I sing. It's a blessing available to all of us.

Focus on the Savior

Number four, *when you speak to the congregation, include scriptural references, your testimony, and the Savior in your talk*. I have heard of instances

when the Savior is not even mentioned in a sacrament meeting. I hope this is never the case. He is the focus of our sacrament meeting, and all that is said there should bring us closer to him.

The scriptures are our basic commentary on the Savior and his doctrines. Use them regularly in your talks. We discover new treasures in them, and they are crucial to our gospel enlightenment.

And don't be afraid to include your personal feelings about the Savior, his gospel, and instances when you've felt the Spirit. Our testimonies grow when we hear testimonies of others. Some people have stronger testimonies than others, and that's all right. Each of us is growing in the gospel. We should not feel pressured to say things that do not truthfully express our experiences. We should not be ashamed of what we do know, whatever stage our testimony may be in. Share it with others.

Partake of the sacrament

And finally, *remember the Savior as you partake of the sacrament*. Some people have told me that they've heard sacrament prayers so often that they don't even hear them when the sacrament is blessed. Perhaps this is because they don't understand what is being said. Perhaps you might want to pull out your scriptures at the proper time and study these prayers. They contain profound and significant information about our promises to the Lord and his promises to us.

Do you know where to find the sacrament prayers? In the Doctrine and Covenants, the 20th section, or in the Book of Mormon, Moroni chapters 4 and 5. In these sacrament prayers for the bread and for the water, symbolic of the body and the blood of the Savior, you witness (or promise) certain things.

As you partake of the sacrament, you witness that you are willing to take the name of Jesus Christ, the Son, upon you. This means that you are willing to be baptized, to proclaim gospel truths in his name, and to represent him in doing his work here on earth. You also witness that you will always remember him and keep his commandments. Those are serious, sacred commitments. And in return, as you keep your promises, you are blessed that you may always have his Spirit to be with you.

We read in 2 Nephi chapter 25, verse 29, "The right way is to believe in Christ, and deny him not; and Christ is the Holy One of Israel; wherefore ye must bow down before him, and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul."

That we may make sacrament meeting a joyful time for worshipping our Savior, I pray.

I believe with all my soul in Jesus Christ, our elder brother. May we

understand his teachings and follow him, via a spiritual sacrament meeting, prayer, and reading of the scriptures. This is his divine church. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord ushered in the fulness of the gospel in this last dispensation of time. President Ezra Taft Benson is our true and living prophet, and I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elders Rulon G. Craven and W. Mack Lawrence of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

The congregation will now join with the choir in singing "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Francis M. Gibbons of the Seventy will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Francis M. Gibbons

Similarities between the Savior and Joseph Smith

One hundred and forty-seven years ago next June, the Prophet Joseph Smith was murdered in the Carthage Jail by a volley of shots fired by a mob with blackened faces. With him in the cell was a disciple, John Taylor, who shared the terror of this assault and who was gravely wounded but who did not share a martyr's fate with Joseph and his brother Hyrum.

Sometime after the martyrdom, John Taylor, who would become the third President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, wrote this:

"Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in

this world, than any other man that ever lived in it" (D&C 135:3).

This mortal linkage between Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer, invites comparisons of their lives and their characters.

They both came out of a working-class environment. Jesus was the stepson of a carpenter. Joseph Smith's father was a farmer. Neither had wealthy, powerful, or influential relatives or friends. Both experienced the trauma arising from economic stress.

Both came from solid homes of high spirituality. Mary and Joseph had both conversed with beings from the spiritual world. Joseph Smith's father received a remarkable series of visions when Joseph Smith, Jr., was a boy; and

his mother had had an unusual spiritual experience not long before his birth.

Neither Jesus nor Joseph Smith had significant formal schooling; and neither of them, therefore, was a graduate of a great university nor a fellow in a distinguished academic society.

Both of them were highly precocious. At age twelve, Jesus was found teaching the learned rabbis in the temple, who were astonished to find one so young possessed of such vast wisdom and knowledge. In his fifteenth year, Joseph had an experience which enabled him to instruct his family, and others who would listen, about the nature, the power, and the purposes of God, the Eternal Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Both were provincials. Jesus never ventured beyond the environs of the Holy Land during his earthly ministry, while Joseph Smith spent his entire life in a relatively small area in the United States and Canada.

Both were highly controversial figures, boldly attacking the existing order of things. Jesus condemned the scribes, the Pharisees, and the hypocrites, while Joseph condemned a misguided ministry.

Both attracted strong disciples and powerful enemies. It is through the disciples of Jesus and Joseph that their fame and present influence are largely known. Both of them attracted opposition of such bitterness that both were killed by their enemies.

While both had kind and loving natures, both were fearless in enforcing the right. Jesus, for instance, angered by the merchants in the temple, drove them away with a whip. And on more than one occasion, Joseph engaged in physical combat to assert the right.

Both completed their missions at an early age. Jesus was crucified at age 33, while Joseph died as a martyr at age 38^{1/2}.

Both were killed as the result of betrayals by erstwhile disciples.

Both were prayerful by nature. Before his earthly ministry began, the Savior spent forty days in the wilderness engaged in fervent fasting and prayer. And on the Mount of Transfiguration, in Gethsemane, on the cross, and on other occasions he engaged in fervent prayers to his Heavenly Father, pleading for guidance or assistance.

Joseph Smith's ministry actually began with the fervent prayer he offered in the Sacred Grove, which resulted in the Father and the Son appearing to him. Thereafter, his life was marked by repeated prayers offered for divine help in solving the problems he faced, whether great or small.

Their births were foreseen long in advance. The Savior, according to the scriptures, was "Beloved and Chosen from the beginning" (Moses 4:2), even him whom God declared "should come in the meridian of time, who was prepared from before the foundation of the world" (Moses 5:57). Joseph of old, the son of Jacob, or Israel, prophesied that in the latter days a choice seer would be raised up: "And his name shall be called after me," he prophesied, "and it shall be after the name of his father" (2 Nephi 3:15), which is an ancient prophetic reference to Joseph Smith and his father, Joseph Smith, Sr.

Differences between the Savior and Joseph Smith

While the Savior and Joseph Smith shared these and many other qualities, they were very different in basic ways. The main difference lay in the Savior's unusual nature and identity. He functioned on a plane which was beyond the Prophet Joseph Smith's comprehension. Jesus is a member of the Godhead, chosen be-

fore the creation of the world to become the Savior and the Redeemer of mankind. He was the active force in the Creation, and he is the head of the Church. Through the Atonement, he has, in a sense, purchased us so that we are his children. And by becoming members of the Church, we have taken his name upon us.

The various roles he played and the various names by which he is known in the holy scriptures give a hint of the preeminent status of the Savior, compared to Joseph Smith or to any other man. He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Creator. He is our Advocate with the Father. He is our Exemplar. He is often called the Good Shepherd or the Great Judge. He is sometimes referred to as our King, or as the King of Kings; as the Lamb of God; as the Light of the World; as the Lawgiver; or as the Mediator. Sometimes he is called the Messenger of the Covenant, or the Rock of our Salvation; the Chief Cornerstone; the Son of Man; the Anointed One, the Deliverer, or the Man of Sorrows; or the Only Begotten of the Father.

Not only does he fill these varied roles, but with the Father he shares characteristics unknown to mortal men like the Prophet Joseph Smith. He knows all things, and therefore he is omniscient; he has all power, and therefore he is omnipotent; and through the Light of Christ he is omnipresent.

No wonder then that John the Baptist, who up until his time was the greatest prophet of all, said of the Savior that he, John, was not worthy to unloose his shoe's latchet (see John 1:27).

While the Savior's spiritual status is beyond compare, his role as the Only Begotten of the Father does create a common physical ground upon which he meets with the Prophet Joseph

Smith and other men. The Savior was born of a mortal mother but was sired by the Eternal Father. Therefore, he shared an element of mortality with the Prophet Joseph Smith because of his mother, Mary. Yet he also had within him the power to lay down his life, or to take it up again, because of his Eternal Father.

While we honor and revere Joseph Smith as the prophet of the Restoration and seek to emulate his qualities of character, we adore and worship the Savior. That adoration is shown at each sacrament service when we covenant to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, to always remember him, and to keep the commandments which he has given to us, that we may always have his Spirit to be with us (see Moroni 4:3).

The supernal status of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and the preeminent place which he occupies in the eternal scheme of things cause us to stand in awe at what has been called the condescension of Christ, meaning his willingness to step down from his exalted place and to go forth, as the scripture says, "suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; . . . that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities . . . , that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance" (Alma 7:11-13).

Testimony

I bear testimony, obtained through the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. I testify that the Savior is a resurrected being, having a tangible body of flesh and bones, and that his Heavenly

Father, who is also the Father of the spirits of us all, similarly has a tangible body of flesh and bones. I also testify that Jesus Christ is the head of the church to which we belong, and which bears his holy name, and that Joseph Smith, of whom I have spoken, was the prophet through whom the true church of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth by the ministering of angels many centuries after the Apostasy, and to whom was given the priesthood keys and authority necessary to direct the Savior's earthly church.

Finally, I testify that through an unbroken chain, the prophetic keys and authority received by the Prophet Joseph Smith have been transmitted through intervening generations and

are held intact by today's prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, who stands as the earthly head of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, possessing all the keys and authority necessary to help bring about the exaltation of God's children. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Francis M. Gibbons of the Seventy has spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve, who will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, also of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Counsel to young men and women

I speak primarily to the young men and women of the Church throughout the world. Your circumstances and personal challenges vary tremendously, yet each of you is in that period of life when you make decisions that will affect the entire course of your life. I come to you as a friend with a sincere desire to help each one of you obtain the greatest and most lasting benefit from this critical period of testing. I speak as I would to a son or daughter to communicate what I *know* to be true.

I pray that you will understand the importance of three principles we will discuss. May there come promptings to you from the Lord through the Holy Ghost regarding their application in your life.

I recognize that many of you will understand what I say because of decisions already made. I pray that others will be prompted to make the same personal commitments, for this counsel

will have limited value until that is done. I will explain with an example.

Be like an automatic watch

My parents gave me a beautiful watch for high school graduation. I looked at it frequently because of the love it communicated. Each night I carefully cleaned and wound it. As years passed, I often neglected to wind the watch. Consequently, it stopped being useful, often when I most needed it.

Today I use an automatic watch. It is consistent and always gives me the correct time. It is totally dependable. I never need to worry whether I can count on it or not.

I realize that as with watches, there are differences in youth. Some need to be wound up, while others are automatic because of important decisions already made.

I commend you who are automatic, who have committed to be true to the Lord and to live by faith when you cannot see the end from the begin-

ning. When faced with choices, you select the path consistent with the teachings of the Savior. I know you are sometimes criticized by those who call you fanatical, who cannot understand why you don't do what the crowd does. Hold fast to your principles.

You cannot today remotely imagine what that decision to be unwaveringly obedient to the Lord will allow you to accomplish in life. Your quiet, uncompromising determination to live a righteous life will couple you to *inspiration* and *power* beyond your capacity now to understand. To others, if an honest evaluation of your life reveals a continuing dependency on individuals or things that are not good, please listen. I sincerely want to help you. If you understand and use the principles we now review, they will bring you great reward.

Place the Savior at the center

The first principle: *Place the Savior, His teachings, and His church at the center of your life. Make sure that all decisions comply with this standard.*

This principle will see you through periods of testing and growth. Upward growth occurs in cycles that build upon each other in an ascending spiral of capacity and understanding. They are often not easy, but they are always beneficial. As you walk the path of righteousness, you will grow in strength, understanding, and self-esteem. You will discover hidden talents and unknown capacities. The whole course of your life may be altered for your happiness and the Lord's purposes.

Recognize the source of happiness

The next principle: *Recognize that enduring happiness comes from what you are, not from what you have.*

Real joy comes from righteous character, and that is built from a pat-

tern of consistent righteous decisions. When the things that you acquire are used as tools to help others, they won't rule your life. Your righteous decisions determine who you are and what is important to you. They make doing the right things easier. For happiness now and throughout your life, steadfastly obey the Lord no matter what pressure you feel to do otherwise.

Stay morally clean

And now the last principle: *Stay morally clean.*

Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—and I emphasize that means any involvement of the sacred, private parts of the body—is a sin and is forbidden by God. While the world has other standards, you must stay morally clean. There are many reasons. Chief among them is that it is a commandment of God, the violation of which He considers to be serious sin that will bring great suffering. To ensure you keep this sacred commandment, in moments of quiet reflection when you feel the influence of the Holy Ghost, set specific personal standards of what you will do and what you will not do when temptation comes—for it surely will. Then, when you find yourself in the battlefield of life, don't change your standards; don't abandon them no matter how you feel, no matter what pressure is applied.

Satan will use rationalization to destroy you. That is, he will twist something you know to be wrong so that it appears to be acceptable and thus progressively lead you to destruction. Love, as defined by the Lord, elevates, protects, respects, and enriches another. It motivates one to make sacrifices for another. Satan promotes counterfeit love, which is lust. It is driven by a hunger to appease personal appetite. One who practices this deception cares little for the pain and

destruction caused another. While often camouflaged by flattering words, its motivation is self-gratification. You know how to be clean and live a righteous life. We trust you to do it. The Lord will bless you richly and will help you keep clean and pure.

How to keep your resolve

How can you keep your resolve to live worthily? How can you be sure that your resolve will not be eroded by the pressures around you?

Choose good friends, those who have made similar decisions in their lives, those like yourself who are wise enough to live a life of order and restraint. When one gets off track, it is generally because the other kind of friends were chosen. Be surrounded by true friends who accept you the way you are and leave you better because of their association.

Consistently live the truth you already know. Much of the disappointment and tragedy that youth encounter comes from misuse of the increased freedom to act that is necessary for you to grow. Now, when you have increasing responsibility for the decisions you make in life, you will make them wisely because of your unwavering determination to obey the Lord. You will learn that the restraints provided by the teachings of the Lord actually form a platform to greater freedom. If they are hurriedly dismantled in the misuse of increased personal choice, there will result binding chains of transgression.

Don't be found in compromising circumstances.

Seek counsel from those who are worthy.

Pray in faith for help. Go to your Father in Heaven. He wants to help you, but because of your agency you need to take the first step. Important lessons will be learned as you are on your knees. Some will distill in your

mind and heart as you seek to establish the right balance in your life. Powerful personal development will come through urgent prayer offered in faith from a foundation of righteousness.

When all the challenges pour down on you, you will have a quiet inner feeling of support. You will be prompted to know what to do. You can live in a world of turmoil and great challenge and be at peace. You will be inspired to *know* what to do and to have the power or capacity to do it. Remember this promise of the Lord as clarified by President Harold B. Lee: "Ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves [that is, keep my commandments] and ye shall be endowed with power" (D&C 43:16).

I know that the principles we have discussed are true. They have been proven in my own personal life. With my companion, Jeanene, who excels me in every worthwhile quality, I have walked the path shared with you today. I know these truths are correct. I pray that somehow there will come a reinforcement through the Spirit to your mind and heart of their great worth when they are challenged in your life (see D&C 8:2-5).

Test your daily thoughts and acts against the principles we have reviewed. Are you making progress toward them, or have you begun to wander down destructive paths? Life is a workshop where you can test the correctness of the principles you have chosen to guide your life.

Set your course

Now is the time to set your course, to establish fundamental priorities. You will learn to select from many good and bad things those that are righteous and most important. Young women, use the inspiring Young Women Values and the referenced scriptures to help you do this. Young

men, use the scriptures regarding priesthood to give your life focus. I encourage both to use the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*. It will bless you in your resolve to be pure.

As the mighty eagle, you can rise to glorious heights. You can discover truths that will ignite your spirit. Do you believe that? I know you can. As you combine positive experiences of life with eternal doctrinal truths, you will discover what it means to be a divine child of a Father in Heaven who is perfect. As you apply His truths, they will generate vision in your mind and commitment in your heart. You will be inspired and can have power beyond your own capacity. You can qualify through that divine power to be instruments in the hands of God to accomplish what you could not do alone.

You will learn to make reality of your worthy dreams for the future. You will be led to see a vision of your true potential and then, through obedience to correct principles and the consistent, appropriate use of moral agency, begin to convert that potential into reality.

We love you. We need you. We pray for you. You are the instruments the Lord will use in the future. Please pray about what I have said to gain your own witness until you know that it can happen. And then, as you are righteous, it will happen to you.

Be a saving influence

As you live high standards publicly and privately, and even under great pressure adhere to them, you raise the vision of others, helping them realize more of their divine capacity. Like a worthy magnet, you will draw others to a higher standard of life.

The power of your worthy example is increased as you help others caught in the web of transgression and guide them into a harbor of safety

where there is parental strength and priesthood inspiration, where they can repair through repentance the strained and damaged parts of their character. Many yearn to overcome transgressions that bind them to a path they really don't want. While public actions denounce any desire to change, privately they want to change but don't know where to begin. Be that saving influence in their lives. Help them.

Live in the light of truth

In closing, I return to my automatic watch. It is powered by a solar cell and to function must be exposed to light. We are like that. We operate on light and need a constant renewal of that light. If we drift into a path where there is darkness, it can be extraordinarily difficult to come back. You will not have that challenge because you will live in the light of truth.

There is one more blessing that will come from your decision to obey. Of all, it is the most beautiful but the most difficult to talk about. As you stay morally clean and consistently obey the teachings of the Lord, your love for your Savior will deepen, your understanding of your Father in Heaven will broaden, and you will love them more and more, until all you really want to do is to know their will and, with their power, do it.

I know they love you. They know each one of you personally. They know every detail of your life, every thought, every desire to strengthen yourself and to change. Be obedient to them, and they will bless you with the power to be obedient to their teachings. I so testify in love for you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve has just addressed us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, who

will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

The ravages of war

In recent months, peace has been a very prominent topic on the minds of people throughout the world. When world peace was threatened, many countries found themselves engaged in war. The news media have shown vivid images of the ravages, suffering, and destruction of war and the turmoil it causes in individuals. It causes deep anxiety and disrupts families, employment, and schooling. It consumes resources that could be used to better advantage elsewhere. We are most grateful that the Gulf War ended more quickly and with fewer casualties than expected. Our hearts are filled with compassion for families on all sides who lost loved ones and for the innocent victims of war, especially the children. We pray now for a lasting peace when men "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: . . . neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

The value of inner peace

In the scriptures, *peace* means either freedom from strife, contention, conflict, or war, or an inner calm and comfort born of the Spirit that is a gift of God to all of his children, an assurance and serenity within a person's heart. The dictionary definition states that peace is a state of tranquillity or quiet, freedom from disquieting thoughts or emotions, and harmony in personal relations (see *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*).

While we yearn for peace, we live in a world burdened with hunger, pain, anguish, loneliness, sickness, and

sorrow. We see divorce with all of its attendant conflict and heartache, especially among the innocent children caught in the middle. Wayward, disobedient children cause their parents grief and anxiety. Financial problems cause distress and loss of self-respect. Some loved ones slip into sin and wickedness, forsake their covenants, and walk in their "own way, and after the image of [their] own god" (D&C 1:16).

The value of peace within our hearts cannot be measured. When we are at peace, we can be free of worry and fear, knowing that with the Lord's help we can do all that is expected or required of us. We can approach every day, every task, and every challenge with assurance and confidence in the outcome. We have freedom of thought and action, freedom to be happy. Even those incarcerated for lengthy periods of time as war prisoners can be at peace in their own minds. Many of them have learned from their captors that they cannot deprive them of freedom to think, even when the most harsh limitations are imposed. Few, if any, blessings from God are more valuable to our spiritual health than the reward of peace within. In modern-day revelation the Savior said, "But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

Find inner peace through Christ

Despite dismal conditions in the world and the personal challenges that come into every life, peace within can

be a reality. We can be calm and serene regardless of the swirling turmoil all about us. Attaining harmony within ourselves depends upon our relationship with our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and our willingness to emulate him by living the principles he has given us. He has extended to us an invitation:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

The phrase "Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39), which the Savior uttered when he calmed the storm-tossed sea, can have the same calming influence upon us when we are buffeted by life's storms. During the Passover feast, the Savior taught his disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). Referring to the teachings he had given to his disciples, Jesus said: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul gave us one key to finding the peace promised by the Lord. Paul taught, "To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

One faithful mother of a large family learned to find peace by accepting the Savior's invitation to come unto him and find rest. She lived in obedience to the commandments of God and had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then she developed the practice of doing everything within her power to solve problems and meet challenges,

and then, when she felt that she could do nothing more, she would cast her burdens upon the Lord and place the outcome in his hands.

Obedience brings peace

President David O. McKay said, "The peace of Christ does not come by seeking the superficial things of life, neither does it come except as it springs from the individual's heart." He said further that this peace is "conditioned upon obedience to the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . No man is at peace with himself or his God who is untrue to his better self, who transgresses the law of right either in dealing with himself by indulging in passion, in appetite, yielding to temptations against his accusing conscience, or in dealing with his fellowmen, being untrue to their trust. Peace does not come to the transgressor of law; peace comes by obedience to law, and it is that message which Jesus would have us proclaim among men" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1938, p. 133).

Earth life is a period of probation to provide an opportunity for choices. Two mighty forces are pulling in opposite directions. On the one hand is the power of Christ and his righteousness. On the other hand is Satan and the spirits who follow him. President Marion G. Romney said: "Mankind . . . must determine to travel in company with the one or the other. The reward for following the one is the fruit of the Spirit—peace. The reward for following the other is the works of the flesh—the antithesis of peace." Further, he said, "The price of peace is victory over Satan" ("The Price of Peace," *Ensign*, Oct. 1983, pp. 4, 5). We can know which one to follow because God has given everyone the Spirit of Christ to know good from evil and to protect themselves from sin (see Moroni 7:15-18.) We sometimes refer to the Spirit

of Christ as our conscience. If we follow its promptings, we can be free of sin and filled with peace. If we do not, but instead let our carnal appetites control us, we never will know true peace. We will be tossed "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. . . . There is no peace, saith . . . God, to the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20-21). If we damage or violate our conscience by ignoring it, we can lose that gift because we no longer are sensitive to it. We will be beyond feeling, beyond the influence of that Spirit (see 1 Nephi 17:45; Ephesians 4:19).

Though we abhor war, peace nearly always has been more a dream than a reality. During most of the world's history, strife, dissension, and conflict have flourished and displaced peace. The times when peace has reigned, it began in the hearts of righteous, obedient individuals and grew until it engulfed a society. We have at least two scriptural accounts of periods of absolute peace and a third that is yet to come (see Marion G. Romney, "The Price of Peace," p. 5).

Peace among the people of Enoch

The first of these periods of peace was among the people of Enoch, who lived before the great flood. They continued in righteousness, and "the Lord came and dwelt with" them. He "called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness." They "built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion," that, in the "process of time, was taken up into heaven" (Moses 7:16-21).

Peace among the Nephites

The second period of peace followed the ministry of the resurrected Jesus among the Nephites. They abolished the works of evil and obtained the fruit of the Spirit. Quoting from the

Book of Mormon: "The disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ. . . . And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost" (4 Nephi 1:1). Consequently, "there were no contentions and disputations among them" (1:2) "because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness" (1:15-16). "They were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God" (1:17). "And every man did deal justly one with another" (1:2). "And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God" (1:16).

Peace prevailed among the Nephites for almost two centuries. Then some of them deserted the teachings of Jesus Christ and turned to selfish pride and wickedness. Within another two centuries, the Nephite nation that had enjoyed this long period of perfect peace had destroyed itself in savage civil war.

Peace during the Millennium

A third period of perfect peace will come during the Millennium. "Satan shall be bound, that he shall have no place in the hearts of the children of men" (D&C 45:55). As people live the gospel of Jesus Christ, their righteousness will banish Satan from their midst. We look forward to that day of universal peace and justice, when Christ will reign upon the earth.

These three instances show that peace, whether in a city, a nation, or other society, develops from peace that begins within the hearts of individuals as they live by the precepts of the gospel.

The Prophet Joseph's inner peace

We see an example of individual peace amidst strife and contention in the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Near the end of his life, he was at the center of a whirlwind of turmoil and tribulation caused by devious associates, false accusations, and cunning plots against his life. Yet a few days before his death, he said, "I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men" (D&C 135:4). His inner peace sustained him through monumental adversities, even his own martyrdom.

Procrastination prevents peace

Peace is more than a lofty ideal. It is a practical principle that, with conscious effort, can become a normal part of our lives as we deal with matters both large and small. One habit that prevents inner peace is procrastination. It clutters our minds with unfinished business and makes us uneasy until we finish a task and get it out of the way. We are at peace in our Church callings when we do the work at the proper time instead of waiting until the last possible moment. This is true of going to the temple often, performing our home teaching and visiting teaching assignments, preparing lessons and talks, and doing other assignments.

Dishonesty prevents peace

Can anyone's mind be at peace if he or she is unfaithful in even the least degree to marriage vows? How much mental anguish results from a little lying, cheating, or stealing even if they are never discovered? Do we have peace of mind if we knowingly violate traffic laws? Or do we watch nervously for the ever-present policeman? Do we have peace of mind if we are not honest with our employers and do not

give fair value for the pay we receive? Are we at peace if we are less than honest regarding our tax returns?

Radiate peace to others

Latter-day Saints are obligated to seek inner peace not only for the blessing it is to them but so they can radiate its influence to others. In a Christmas message, the First Presidency proclaimed that the Church has a divine commission to establish peace. Church members are to "manifest brotherly love, first toward one another, then toward all mankind; to seek unity, harmony and peace . . . within the Church, and then, by precept and example, extend these virtues throughout the world" ("Greetings from the First Presidency," *Liahona: the Elders' Journal*, 22 Dec. 1936, p. 315).

Repentance brings peace

If sin has deprived us of peace within, we can repent and seek forgiveness of our sins. The Lord said that he "cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven" (D&C 1:31-32). Elder Spencer W. Kimball wrote: "The essence of the miracle of forgiveness is that it brings peace to the previously anxious, restless, frustrated, perhaps tormented soul. In a world of turmoil and contention this is indeed a priceless gift" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], p. 363).

My brothers and sisters, we *can* be at peace if we "let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly" (D&C 121:45). The power is in us as spirit children of our Heavenly Father. He and his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, have provided the way for us to be at peace. We *can* enjoy that peace of God which passeth human understanding (see Philipians

4:7). We can enjoy it personally, within our families, in our communities, in our nations, and in our world if we will do the things that produce it. This peace leads to happiness (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 255-56).

I bear testimony that our Heavenly Father lives and that he knows and loves each one of us. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind, and yes, the Prince of Peace. Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration, and President Ezra Taft Benson is the present prophet, seer, and revelator of the Lord's church. This I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time and be carried to other Church meet-

ing halls across the continent and to some foreign areas.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be tomorrow morning from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We remind all of you that at 2:00 A.M. tomorrow morning, when we hope you will be sound asleep, we change to daylight saving time. So set your clocks tonight. Move your clocks an hour ahead before you retire so that you will be here on time tomorrow morning.

We express our deep appreciation to the Ricks College combined choirs for the beautiful music which they have presented. They will now sing in closing "The Lord Is My Shepherd," after which Elder George I. Cannon of the Seventy will pronounce the benediction.

The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder George I. Cannon offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 161st Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 6, 1991. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was provided by a combined men's choir from BYU. Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was at the organ.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood session. President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching these proceedings in his apartment, sends his love and best wishes to all who are participating in this session and has asked that I conduct the proceedings.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

We note that Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, William R. Bradford, and Monte J. Brough are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders H. Burke Peterson and Hans B. Ringger are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those brethren in outlying areas, we announce that in earlier sessions today, Earl C. Tingey, Alexander B. Morrison, L. Aldin Porter, L. Lionel Kendrick, Monte J. Brough, and Harold G. Hillam were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy; and W. McKenzie (Mack) Lawrence, Rulon G. Craven, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Cree-L Kofford, Joseph C. Muren, Graham W. Doxey, Jorge A. Rojas, and Julio E. Dávila were sustained as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

Elders Derek A. Cuthbert and H. Verlan Andersen received a vote of thanks for their service as First and Second Counselors respectively in the Sunday School General Presidency; and Elders H. Verlan Andersen and Rulon G. Craven were sustained as First and Second Counselors respectively in the Sunday School General Presidency.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a BYU combined men's choir under the direction of Brothers

Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli, with Brother Richard Elliott at the organ.

We will begin with the choir singing "Press Forward, Saints." Following the singing, Elder Ronald E. Poelman of the Seventy will offer the invocation. We would like to ask all of the priesthood assembled to unite in faith and prayer in behalf of one of our number, Elder Derek A. Cuthbert, who lies desperately ill. The prayer of this mighty throng of priesthood brethren will surely ascend to our Heavenly Father and bring to him and his sweet Muriel and family the blessings which they need and which our Heavenly Father would bestow.

The choir sang "Press Forward, Saints."

Elder Ronald E. Poelman offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now favor us with "Lead, Kindly Light," and following the choir number Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light."

Elder L. Tom Perry

Called to serve!

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

"Goe ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded

you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Matthew selected these words as the conclusion to his Gospel—the account of the resurrected Lord charging those appointed to carry on His ministry among the peoples of the world. The charge was clear: they were to teach, baptize, and continue postbap-

tism teaching to ensure that the fruits would remain.

Through the ages of gospel history, the charge, especially to those bearers of His holy priesthood, has always been the same: teach, baptize, and continue teaching to build lasting testimonies in the hearts of as many of our Father in Heaven's children as it is possible for us to reach. We have been called to serve!

Spiritual preparation for a mission

I often greet young priesthood bearers of the Church as we meet them throughout the world with the question, "Future missionary?" Their faces usually brighten with a positive reply. Then I encourage them to start today preparing for that great experience.

What preparation is necessary for this exciting service? First and most important is that the Lord expects it of us. He expects us to be involved in building His kingdom. Our prophets have continually reminded us that every able, worthy young man is expected to serve a full-time mission.

Your preparation must have you ready to sit in front of your bishop and certify to him of your personal worthiness to be a full-time missionary. You will be much more comfortable with the interview with your bishop if he is already your friend.

Elder Perry's mission interview

I will never forget the interview I had with my bishop as I was preparing for my mission. The bishop happened to be my father. We were together a great deal of the time. He could have interviewed me in our home, in the barn, in the field, or in our car, or any other place where we spent time together. Dad wanted to make this a special occasion, one that would be remembered.

One day I received a telephone call from him. He wanted to set up an

appointment with me for an interview. I thought that strange because he had never called me before to set up an appointment for anything. We arranged the time to meet in the bishop's office. When the appointed time arrived, I found his office clean and orderly without papers on the desk, which was strange because in normal circumstances it would be covered with papers. But this time, all that was on the desk were the scriptures. The interview resulted in a little scripture study between myself and my father.

As near as I can remember, the procedure was as follows: He pushed the scriptures over to my side of the desk and asked me to turn to Doctrine and Covenants 59:6 and read: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, . . . nor do anything like unto it."

We then discussed what it meant to be morally clean. The discussion centered on cleanliness of thought. If our thoughts remain clean and pure, we would never commit acts that would prevent us from serving in the mission field. All too common among young men today is the idea that they can sin a little, live it up with the boys, and then settle down for a short season before they are ready to be called so they can qualify themselves for missionary service. What fallacy there is in that philosophy!

The discipline contained in daily obedience and clean living and wholesome lives builds an armor around you of protection and safety from the temptations that beset you as you proceed through mortality. You can leave home with a clear conscience. Now, there may be some of you who have already given in to the ways of the world. The only way to regain your self-respect is the process called repentance. Always remember that with the help of your bishop there is a way back. Do not hesitate to use it!

Next we turned and read from the Doctrine and Covenants, section 89, verses 18 through 21:

"And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

"And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen."

The discussion which followed centered around the importance of keeping our physical bodies healthy, wholesome homes for our eternal spirits. Harmful drugs and drinks destroy both the mind and the body and make us unfit for the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord.

We read other scriptures concerning sustaining the prophets and obedience to living the laws of the Lord. After each discussion, I was required to respond as to whether my life was in harmony with this principle.

Then finally we turned and read together Doctrine and Covenants 110, verses 1 through 4:

"The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.

"We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

"I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am He who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father."

We then talked about the eternal hope that we have in the atonement of our Lord and Savior, and the necessity of partaking of sacred ordinances required for all of our Father in Heaven's children before we can receive the greatest gift he has given to us, the gift of life eternal.

Dad then filled out my missionary recommendation form and had me sign it. Standing, he gave me a warm handshake and a sincere congratulations for being worthy to serve a full-time mission. I left his office with a feeling of exhilaration. I had passed one of the most important tests of my life. I had been deemed worthy to be a full-time missionary, which signified the approval of my father, my bishop, and my Lord and Savior. As I left the office, in my mind I made a commitment to myself that I would always live worthy to pass an interview held with one of my priesthood leaders.

The interview I had with my bishop prepared me for three basic ingredients I needed to serve a mission:

First, I needed gospel knowledge as contained in the scriptures and a testimony as to their truthfulness. Daily prayer and study were essential for my preparation to serve.

Second, personal righteousness is a fundamental requirement.

Third, my bishop's interview created in me even a greater desire to be a full-time missionary.

Temporal preparation for a mission

In addition to the spiritual preparation necessary, there is also a temporal preparation. Financing missions places additional burdens on family resources. This would not be necessary if young priesthood bearers would decide early in life that they would carry this responsibility measurably themselves. The new Missionary Equalization Pro-

gram has removed much of the guesswork about the financial resources which will be required for missionary service.

One of the great blessings of this program is that missionaries and their parents can now project fairly accurately the cost of a mission. Savings accounts can then be planned based on this projection. Early proper planning can help missionaries become self-sufficient in financing their own missions. It also has the benefit of teaching early in life the rewards that come from honest labor.

***Called to Serve* videotape**

To help you prepare for this great opportunity, we have recently completed a stirring video entitled *Called to Serve*. Priesthood leaders in English-speaking areas are being notified of the availability of this videotape. We hope that bishoprics and branch presidents will organize a special meeting to show this videotape to ensure that every young man and his family have an opportunity to see it many times as he prepares for missionary service. Even though I have watched it many times, I still have a lump in my throat every time I have the privilege of seeing it.

As you watch the video screens, you can see scenes from this production. They are now showing different future missionaries receiving that special letter of call from the First Presidency to serve a mission. This will be that great moment you have been preparing for. We hope you will share it with your family and friends. As you read the letter of call which will assign you to one of the great missions of the Church, the excitement of that moment will remain with you for the balance of your lives.

Rewards of missionary service

Time always seems to fly by as you are serving in a mission field. Your days are filled with the spirit of gospel service. I do not want to leave you with the impression that you will not have any hard times, because you will. And that is where growth comes. However, you will see lives change as people embrace the gospel. Your heart will be filled with the joy that comes from teaching the truths of our Father in Heaven that he has established for us to live by here on earth.

Start preparing now

So tonight we encourage you great young priesthood bearers to start both your temporal and spiritual preparation now to be fully worthy and ready to accept your call to wear that special badge of a full-time missionary. Be like one of those great missionaries that you have seen on your TV screen. I can honestly promise you that it will be one of the great experiences of your life. It is impossible to stay even with the Lord. The more you attempt to give to Him, the more He blesses your lives, yea, even one hundredfold. So let us tonight leave here with a battle cry ringing in our hearts:

Called to serve Him, heav'nly
King of glory,
Chosen e'er to witness for his
name,
Far and wide we tell the Father's
story,
Far and wide his love proclaim.
Onward, ever onward, as we glory
in his name;
Onward, ever onward, as we glory
in his name;
Forward, pressing forward, as a
triumph song we sing.
God our strength will be; press
forward ever,
Called to serve our King.
[Hymns, no. 249]

God lives! Jesus is the Christ. We are engaged in His work is my witness to you. May God bless each one of us with the spirit of missionary service is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have heard from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder J. Richard Clarke, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Jacob de Jager of the Seventy.

Elder J. Richard Clarke

Honoring the priesthood

When Bob Barfuss was on his mission, his mother, Mary, prayed each day, reminding the Lord, in detail, of Bob's needs. One day she concluded that maybe she shouldn't take so much of the Lord's time with her long list of concerns. She said, "I just condensed it to, 'Heavenly Father, please bless Bob to honor his priesthood.'"

Brethren, if that simple plea were fully realized in our lives, it would satisfy most needs and prevent most problems. "Bless me, Father, to honor the priesthood." This should be our daily petition.

At a recent stake priesthood meeting, a young man was sustained to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. When congratulated, the boy's response was surprising: "Why? That's no big deal, is it?"

No big deal? If he only knew how big! I wondered how he reached such a conclusion. If I were his father, his bishop, his quorum adviser, how would I feel to hear that response?

We often say impulsive things as youth that we probably would not say with more maturity. I hope this young man is now serving a mission and getting a better idea of what it really means to bear the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Receiving priesthood power

President Benson has said: "The greatest power in this world is the power [of the] priesthood. . . . No greater honor or blessing can come to man than the authority to act in the name of God" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 219). What a privilege! What a trust!

May I offer two suggestions to help us better honor the priesthood:

Live righteously to merit the power of the priesthood.

Aggressively search out opportunities for quorum service.

To have the priesthood conferred upon us does not automatically bless us with power any more than receiving a driver's license makes us a responsible driver. The Lord declared, "The powers of heaven [can] be controlled . . . only upon the principles of righteousness" (D&C 121:36).

The power of the priesthood comes gradually. Even our Savior had to master the flesh and grow "grace for grace" until He received a fulness. (D&C 93:12-13). We may also, if we are true and faithful to our covenants.

"Be ye clean"

However, we may forfeit priesthood power when we commit trans-

gression. Spiritual powers are sensitive and withdraw from evil influences. As Peter warned, we must escape "the corruption that is in the world" (2 Peter 1:4).

I was proud of a young priest, Rick Dove of Tucker, Georgia, who reported his experience at a rock concert. He observed the drinking, dress, profanity, and general crudeness of the young people there. He said, "I suddenly remembered who I am and felt that I was out of place, so I left."

Sometimes we forget who we are. The other day, I stopped at a magazine shop to buy a newspaper. I was shocked to see a man whom I knew well, a high priest, viewing a magazine in the "adults only" section. He was unaware that I saw him. I was quite disappointed. The thought occurred to me: What if I had been his son, who looked to his dad as a hero?

I remembered a conversation between a father and son in Arthur Miller's play *All My Sons*. The son discovers that his father has compromised ethical principles in business. Knowing that losing his son's esteem is one of the greatest losses he could have, the father says, in effect, "Son, I know; I'm sorry. But really, I'm no worse than anyone else."

The son replies, "Dad, I know; but I thought you were better."

For those who bear the priesthood, young men or adults, there is only one standard of moral decency. Any film, television show, music, or printed material unfit for youth is also unfit for parents.

Those who rationalize acceptance of immoral material on grounds of maturity or sophistication are deceived. Those who excuse transgression by saying, "Well, I'm not perfect," may be reminded that conscious sin is a long way from perfection. We would do best to consider this counsel of President Brigham Young: "Be . . . as perfect as [you] can," for that is all we can

do. . . . The sin . . . is [not doing] as well as [you know] how" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:129-30).

The prophet Alma, who suffered "nigh unto death" (Mosiah 27:28) repenting of his rebellion and transgressions, pleads: "Come ye out from the wicked, and be ye separate, and touch not [the] unclean things" (Alma 5:57). To us, who bear His holy vessels, the Lord commands, "Be ye clean" (D&C 38:42).

Potential of priesthood quorums

The priesthood quorum was designed by the Lord to be the finest service fraternity in all the world. If we had the wisdom and faith to utilize the quorum as the Lord envisions it, we would be magnified before Him, and every member of the Church would be blessed. Isn't that a primary purpose of the priesthood—to bless, to encourage, to exalt? The quorum maximizes the good which comes from a synergy of brotherhood and service.

Let me share some examples of the priesthood in action.

A young man with muscular dystrophy

An inspiring funeral was held for eighteen-year-old John Anderson. John was a remarkable young man who courageously battled muscular dystrophy and lost. He was confined to a wheelchair during his Aaronic Priesthood years.

Conspicuous at the funeral were devoted members of his priests quorum. John's influence upon his quorum was profound, and yet he never played a football game, nor went camping with them, nor danced, nor did any of the usual teenage activities. It was his faith and commitment to the Church that touched his quorum members. And something else—John provided his quorum with an opportunity to serve with love.

When John was a deacon, he wanted to pass the sacrament. One boy was assigned to push his wheelchair while John held the tray on his lap. It seemed awkward at first, but soon others were anxious to help him perform his priesthood duty.

By the time John was ordained a priest, he was very weak and could not kneel to bless the sacrament. His quorum found a solution. They placed his wheelchair next to the sacrament table. One would break the bread, then kneel for him, by the wheelchair, and hold a microphone while John pronounced those sacred words. To do this for their brother soon became an honor for each one in the quorum.

They enthusiastically followed his leadership as first assistant in the priests quorum. Because John was unable to realize his dream of becoming an Eagle Scout, the priests raised money to buy a special achievement plaque which was given to him in sacrament meeting. It read: "Presented to John Anderson for outstanding service to your quorum and for being a great example to us all."

Over the years, the young men in John's quorum enjoyed many fun activities, but none had greater impact or taught them more about magnifying their priesthood callings and loving each other than this choice experience they shared with their friend John.

We expect a lot from our Aaronic Priesthood brethren, and, properly trained, they seldom disappoint us. I remember when Dr. Harold Hulme served as bishopric adviser to a deacons quorum. They were invited to tour a hospital. As he introduced his quorum to the nurses, one of them said, "How unusual. The deacons in our church are older men." Dr. Hulme replied, "Well, our deacons are outstanding young men. They can handle it when they are twelve years old!"

A man with thirty-nine brothers

Remember a few years ago when devastating fires burned out of control in Southern California? As fierce winds blew, the public was restricted from the area by police. A few families were allowed to remain and try to save their homes.

Soon a van arrived at one house, filled with brethren from the quorum, carrying their shovels. They were asked, "How did you get past the police barricade?" Response: "It was easy. We just told them our brother lives here."

The count was soon up to thirty-nine brethren who were helping dig a trench for fire protection. A curious police officer appeared and said, "I just want to meet the man who has thirty-nine brothers!"

Elders care for a member's farm

Elder Matthew Cowley once asked an elders quorum president how his elders were getting along as a quorum. "Do you do anything to help one another?" "Oh, yes," was the response. "We've got a member of our quorum in the hospital in New Mexico. He was a vigorous young man, buying a farm, a hard worker with a lovely family. All of a sudden he was stricken." That could have meant the end of his farm and family security.

The elders quorum president said, "That was our loss as much as for his wife and children. So we took over, and we've operated that farm. All he has to worry about is getting well."

Visit to a Las Vegas hospital

Many times we magnify our callings individually, quietly, without fanfare. I'm thinking of an elders quorum president, Kirk Barnett of Las Vegas. Visiting a hospital early one morning,

he was impressed to ask if any other LDS were there. He was told of an elderly grandmother awaiting her first surgery for a brain hemorrhage. She had no family or friends present, no one to encourage her. She was terrified! President Barnett sat with her for two hours. His hand was white from her strong grip. She said she loved him at least twenty times.

Be faithful in Christ

Brethren, we are the sons of God. We have been commissioned of Jesus Christ to bear His holy priesthood

and to build up His church. We must expand our awareness as quorums and as individuals, and increase our caring capacity. Let us live righteously and extend the healing power of the priesthood, through loving quorum service, to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

In his last tender letter to Moroni, Mormon concluded, "My son, be faithful in Christ" (Moroni 9:25). I believe that would be the loving counsel of every father or mother to a son: Be faithful in Christ. So may we be, and honor His priesthood. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jacob de Jager

Brethren, it's good to be with you. To speak in priesthood meeting of general conference is for me literally a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity because I have never before had this privilege in the fifteen years that I have belonged to the Quorum of the Seventy, and it is not likely that I will have another chance to do so. I therefore consider it a personal blessing to address such a vast audience of worthy men holding the priesthood of God.

Change

A great number of you are still single, and many of you are married. To those who are married, I would like to testify, based on my personal experience, that a loving, supportive wife at home is a great source of strength. You probably have heard the saying, "Behind every great man stands a great woman." In the Church we have changed that adage somewhat by saying, "Behind every great man in the Church stands a surprised mother-in-law," because she may say, "Is this the boy who married my daughter? Is he a

bishop now? I can't believe it." Yes, Mother, that boy has matured, has gained experience by taking upon himself greater responsibilities, and has learned to serve the Lord while serving others. In short, he has *changed*!

I would like to talk tonight about *change* because everything around us seems to be changing at an accelerated pace. In the last two years we have observed tremendous changes in Eastern Europe. Also, the recent events in the Persian Gulf region have, understandably so, changed the lives of many people in a dramatic way. It was inevitable that our personal lives as well were influenced by the events around us, and maybe we experienced the discomforting feeling that these changes in the world are beyond our control.

Commitment to priesthood duties

Yet there are important changes everyone should be able to make through proper preparation—changes over which we do have control. Brethren, as priesthood holders we should ask ourselves these questions: Am I

giving enough attention and time to personal change, which will make me a better person in the eyes of the Lord? And am I, as a father and spiritual leader in my own home, giving enough attention and time to my basic duties and responsibilities? These are:

Number 1. To lead and direct my family in regular family prayer and study of the scriptures.

Number 2. To prepare my sons to receive the priesthood and the other members in my family to honor the priesthood.

Number 3. To encourage my family to be worthy to receive the temple ordinances and be faithful to the covenants made.

Number 4. To assist my family members to develop their personal talents and divine gifts to strengthen and serve others.

Number 5. To inspire my family members to keep the commandments of God and endure in faith until the end.

When we really understand, accept, and commit ourselves to these priesthood duties, we prepare ourselves for a miraculous change with eternal consequences.

"Partakers of the divine nature"

Have we not been promised that we "might be partakers of the divine nature"? (2 Peter 1:4). This means that through personal change we develop a desire to live in harmony with the divine teachings of the Lord and to free our minds from all ill feelings toward other people. To do so will make us more worthy, even more perfect.

The old saying "Change is progress" then takes on a special meaning for all of us because repentance is change, conversion is change, perfecting is change. All this is in complete harmony with the desires of our Heav-

enly Father and the loving pleadings of the Redeemer.

As members of the Lord's restored church, we have through divine revelation received a perfect knowledge of what the future holds for us. *The plan of redemption has been revealed to us in all its glory.* It perfectly covers our premortal existence, our earthly journey, and our life hereafter, as recorded in the Book of Mormon.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell has made the following statement about the manner in which we should read the Book of Mormon: "For some Church members the Book of Mormon remains unread. Others use it occasionally as if it were merely a handy book of quotations. Still others accept and read it but do not really explore and ponder it. The book is to be feasted upon, not nibbled" (*But for a Small Moment* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986], p. 28).

Admonitions of Amulek

Let us, therefore, today feast upon the words of Amulek, the missionary companion of Alma the Younger, as recorded in chapter 34 of Alma, starting with verse 30:

"And now, my brethren, I would that, *after ye have received so many witnesses*, seeing that the holy scriptures testify of these things, ye come forth and bring fruit unto repentance.

"Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

"For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

"And now, as I said unto you before, *as ye have had so many witnesses*,

therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.

"Ye cannot say, when you are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (34:30-34; italics added).

I pray, brethren, that we may be ever mindful of these admonitions of Amulek—at home, at work, in the community where we live, in our Church callings—and that we may answer the often-quoted question of Alma, "Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" (Alma 5:14) with a resounding "Yes, we have!"

Prepare for throngs of converts

Brethren, we have to do better, individually and collectively, to strengthen the priesthood base of the Church, to prepare ourselves to carry out our mandate in the next century, which may well show the most significant change in the history of mankind: the change of human hearts everywhere, the true conversion of people in ever-increasing numbers, the rolling forth of the kingdom unto the ends of the earth "as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2).

Our Heavenly Father has made the promise that He will put a new spirit in people and "take the stony heart out of their flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19). The dramatic changes we have experienced in recent years are the beginning of a new era.

In the Regional Representatives' seminar of April 1987, the following vision was shared by Elder Maxwell:

"All these things [must be] done in wisdom and order." (Mosiah 4:27.)

"... Our pioneers have been noted in times past for Mormon irrigation in arid regions. However, our ultimate success in irrigation will be when this Kingdom has grown to a point, numerically and spiritually, when gospel truth and righteousness shall 'sweep the earth as with a flood.' (Moses 7:62.)

"We are in an interlude in Church history when we must grow numerically and spiritually. This interlude precedes a special era when the gospel will be taken to those in the third world. Their response may overwhelm us, unless things are in order where we are already established. We must make ready for these brothers and sisters, because they are ready for us! Even now—in Alma's words—'they [are] in a preparation to hear the word.' (Alma 32:6.)

"God bless us to be 'in a preparation' to take the word."

Brethren, I bear solemn witness that the lines and precepts that I have shared with you tonight are true, that the Book of Mormon is indeed the word of God and the most correct book on earth pertaining to the salvation and exaltation of man.

I know that God lives and that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. I also testify that President Ezra Taft Benson is the Lord's prophet on the earth today. That we all may go out into the world to testify of these simple truths, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders J. Richard Clarke and Jacob de Jager of the Seventy. I hope you will pardon a little justifiable pride that I take in

these two brethren. It was my opportunity to ordain Brother Clarke a bishop many years ago in Boise and my privilege to serve as mission president in Toronto when Brother de Jager and his beloved wife and children entered the waters of baptism.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of

Israel," and following the singing we shall hear from Elder Jack H. Goaslind of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Jack H. Goaslind

Becoming like the Savior

I am deeply grateful for my calling to serve as Young Men General President. This assignment seemed overwhelming when I received it. It has become ever more challenging as I daily gain a greater appreciation of both the marvelous future you young men can have and the obstacles you must surmount to achieve your goals.

Your potential, young men, is described in a Book of Mormon phrase: "the man of Christ" (Helaman 3:29). What is the man of Christ like? Can you deacons, teachers, or priests become such a man, or is that something reserved for an older generation? While my formal title is Young Men General President, I hope that I am actually presiding over a brotherhood of young men of Christ. I'd like to refer to you young men as "*men* of Christ." Even though you are *young* men, you are *men*. I pray that each of us may come to understand the word of God, which will lead us in a strait and narrow course and help us to avoid a lot of suffering and misery in our lives.

Yagottawanna

I wish to discuss one distinguishing quality of the young man of Christ. This quality was expressed in a word that I recently saw printed on a young man's worn T-shirt from a bygone

youth conference. It read, "Yagottawanna." I jokingly guessed it might be an ancient Indian word, but I asked him to explain it to me. He gave me that "you gotta be kiddin'" look but condescended to answer anyway. "Yagottawanna," he said, "means that you have to *want* to do something before you will do it." Of course I knew that all along, but it was good to hear him say it.

Whoever planned that youth conference had the right idea. "Yagottawanna" captures several important gospel principles.

Act out your righteous desires

It reminds me of one of the qualities of godhood. "And there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it" (Abraham 3:17). Isn't it wonderful that we can trust our Father in Heaven to do what he says he will do?

There are two elements to this principle. First, God takes something into his heart. When we take something into our hearts, it usually means that we *feel* something. This is the spirit of revelation (see D&C 8:2-3). It gives an intense feeling of peacefulness or well-being. President Marion G. Romney said that it "comes into our minds and feelings and induces us to do what is right" (*Ye Are a Peculiar People*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 10 Apr.

1956], p. 8); it leads us to do good (see D&C 11:12).

How many of you have heard an inspiring thought, hymn, or story and then had a desire to go do something good? This is not unusual; it is a healthy, spiritual feeling that is essential to our progress. But how often have you *followed through* on those feelings? This brings us to the second part of the equation. When God takes it into his heart to do something, whatever it is, he *does* it. He simply *does* it.

It has been said, "Our feelings were given us to excite to action, and when they end in themselves, they are cherished to no good purpose" (Daniel Keyte Sandford, in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, comp. John P. Bradley, Leo F. Daniels, Thomas C. Jones [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 291). This means that once we have *felt* something, we must *act* in order to hold on to those feelings we experience. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin noted that "individuals who do right and 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' (Matt. 5:6) get and keep alive through their actions the feeling to do right" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, p. 85; or *Ensign*, May 1976, p. 56). In contrast, those who do not act out their righteous desires place themselves in a dangerous position. As C. S. Lewis said, "The more often [a person] feels without acting, the less he will be able ever to act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to feel" (*The Screwtape Letters* [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982], p. 61).

"Yagottawanna" also helps us understand the principle of agency. Youth with sincere desires take initiative. They do good things without waiting to be told. They "do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness" (D&C 58:27). They *act* rather than wait to be *acted upon*. They are in control of them-

selves. Such control is a wonderful feeling. It is a feeling we get when we exercise one of our most precious gifts—that of free agency.

Cultivate righteous desires

"Yagottawanna" also shows an attitude of faith. *Desire* is the beginning of faith. The Lord will bless you "even if ye can no more than desire to believe" (Alma 32:27). If we let it, this desire will grow into a mature faith that can make things happen.

What we desire will ultimately help determine our eternal judgment. Alma said that God "granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life" (Alma 29:4).

Desires change during our lives, sometimes dramatically and quickly, and sometimes gradually. Elder Boyd K. Packer once quoted Lady Astor: "I always dreaded growing old, because then you can't do all of the things you want to. But it isn't so bad—you don't want to!" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, p. 127; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 89). Be aware that things that seem all-important to you now will not matter in years to come. But you can choose now to want things that are in harmony with eternity. For example, you can choose to be righteous rather than waste your time on perishable things; you can choose to serve willingly rather than selfishly. Elder Marion D. Hanks has often quoted the wise saying that "the things that matter most must not be at the mercy of the things that matter least." The choices we make in this life have a very important influence on our eternity.

Worship: an individual responsibility

Proper worship illustrates how "Yagottawanna" works. For example, how many of you have assumed the

bored position during sacrament meeting? You know the position: bent forward at the waist, chin resting on hands, elbows on knees, staring vacantly at the floor. Has it occurred to you that it is your *choice* whether the meeting is interesting or not?

Several years ago I heard about a good brother who described his attitude as President David O. McKay gave the concluding talk of general conference. It was a sultry afternoon, and this was the fifth session he had attended. He was sitting in the balcony, and his mind had a serious wandering problem. He noticed a man sitting in the middle section who had fallen asleep with his head tilted back and his mouth open. It occurred to him that if he were in the roof of the Tabernacle, he could drop a spit wad through one of the vent holes right into the mouth of that sleeping man. What a glorious thought! Following the meeting, he overheard two men talking about their feelings during President McKay's talk. They were visibly moved by what they had heard. He thought to himself, These two brethren were having a marvelous spiritual experience, and what was I doing? Thinking about dropping spit wads from the ceiling!

President Spencer W. Kimball said that worship "is an individual responsibility, and regardless of what is said from the pulpit, if one wishes to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, he may do so. . . . If the service is a failure to you, you have failed. No one can worship for you; you must do your own waiting upon the Lord" ("The Sabbath—A Delight," *Ensign*, Jan. 1978, p. 5).

One youth described how he first experienced the spirit of worship. He had been marginally active through his Aaronic Priesthood years. When he attended sacrament meeting, he usually sat in the back with a group of his friends, and he was less than a model

of reverence. One day, however, he came in a little late, and there were no seats by his friends. He sat alone, and for the first time in his life, he closed his eyes during the prayers, he sang the hymns, he listened to the sacrament prayers, and he paid attention to the speakers. About midway through the first speaker, he found tears welling up in his eyes. With some embarrassment, he carefully glanced around; no one else seemed emotional. He didn't know for sure what was happening to him, but the experience changed his life. It was during that meeting that he really started his spiritual preparation for his mission. He *felt* something, and fortunately, he acted and thus sustained those feelings.

Keep yourself morally pure

I want to especially emphasize one important desire you should cultivate. "Yagottawanna" keep yourself pure, and free from immoral conduct (see Alma 38:12). You can control your passions. I hope you will cultivate the desire to honor young women. Elder M. Russell Ballard told us during last October general conference that young women want to be treated with courtesy (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, p. 48; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, p. 37). The standards outlined in the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* are of great value. These Church standards will become *your* standards when you really cherish them, when you feel something about their value, and when you act in accordance with them. Yes, "Yagottawanna" live these standards.

Blessings of being pure in heart

When you are pure in your heart, when you desire that which is good, true, and beautiful, then you can avoid the pitfalls of life. If you build your foundation upon the "rock of our

Redeemer, who is Christ," then the devil "shall have no power over you" (Helaman 5:12).

You can also be an influence for good so that the gospel message will shine through your countenance. I recently heard of a young woman who invited a group of her friends to bring their dates to her home after a dance. One couple stopped on the way to pick up a videotape to watch. As they played it, the group realized it was an R-rated movie. This young woman became disturbed and excused herself to talk to her parents. They reminded her that R-rated movies are not shown in their home and suggested that someone should turn it off. The young woman said she would do it, and she did. Everyone seemed relieved. This is a simple incident, but it illustrates a point. A young woman who *wanted*

to be good acted on her desires, and a whole group of youth were spared a little bit of evil. Repeated many times over, until they become a pattern, such actions can be an influence that will spread through the Church and through society.

I ask you men of Christ to cultivate, to cherish, and to maintain righteous desires. "Yagottawanna." That's the key to action; it's the key to happiness. It's the key to worshipping the Lord, to developing faith, and to maintaining standards of purity.

I promise you that the Lord will bless you with right attitudes and desires as you pray to him, attend to your duties, keep the commandments, and serve him. Then you young men will truly be men of Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Thomas S. Monson

It will now be my opportunity to speak to you, brethren. As I assume this responsibility I must confess I do so in all humility and with a prayer in my heart that our Heavenly Father will bless me.

My brethren of the priesthood worldwide, you are an inspiring audience. To use a word favored by the youth of today, it is an "awesome" responsibility to speak to you.

A great future

There is a look of determination about you. You know who you are and what God expects you to become. As I consider the number of young men of the Aaronic Priesthood assembled tonight, I see a great future for you.

When I was about nine years old and attending elementary school here in Salt Lake City, all of the youth in the city's schools were asked to fill out a

form indicating what we wanted to be when we grew up. The lists were then to be placed in a waterproof metal box and buried beneath a new flagpole which graced the entrance to the City and County Building grounds. Years later, the box was to be opened and its contents made available.

As I sat with pencil in hand, I thought of the question, "What do I want to be when I grow up?" Almost without hesitation, I wrote the word *cowboy*. At lunch that day I reported to my mother my response. I can almost see Mother now as she admonished me, "You get right back to school and change that to *banker* or *lawyer*!" I obeyed Mother, and all dreams of being a cowboy vanished forever.

One of greater childhood determination was Steve Alford, who plays for the Dallas Mavericks team in the National Basketball Association. He remembers telling his eighth grade

counselor, as she completed a career path form for him, that he was going to be an NBA player. She responded, "I can't put that answer down." Steve Alford replied, "Then leave it blank, 'cause that's what I'm going to do!" And he did.

A royal priesthood

One of the great leaders of our time, President Harold B. Lee, in a devotional address at BYU, spoke of a Latter-day Saint young man who, during World War II, was in England. He had gone to an officers' club where they were holding a riotous kind of celebration. He noticed, off to the side, a young British officer who didn't seem to appreciate the party at all. So he walked over to him and said, "You don't seem to be enjoying this kind of party." And this young British officer straightened himself a few inches taller than he was before and replied, "No, sir; I can't engage in this kind of party because, you see, I belong to the royal household of England." As our Latter-day Saint young man walked away, he said to himself, "Neither can I, because I belong to the royal household of the kingdom of God" ("Be Loyal to the Royal within You," in *Speeches of the Year, 1973* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1973], p. 100).

Perhaps the young man remembered the bold declaration of the Apostle Peter: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Brethren, be loyal to the royal within you.

Ye have done it unto me

My thoughts of late have focused upon the words of the Savior during

the week of the atoning sacrifice, when He said:

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:34-40).

Living the law of the fast

Brethren, we wish to commend you for your faith in living the law of the fast and your generosity in the contribution of your fast offerings. We also compliment you deacons and teachers who assist in collecting the fast offerings in many parts of the world. The welfare program is divinely inspired, and those in need are being assisted by bishops who follow the inspiration of the Spirit and the principles of welfare in responding to those needs.

Beyond the ongoing assistance provided through the use of your regular fast offering contributions—and this assistance is most substantial—I felt tonight you would appreciate being informed of the current status of the special fasts and the donations affiliated with them. The proceeds from the two special fast days in 1985 and

donations to the special relief of the suffering since that time have totaled \$13,145,527. The contributions have been utilized in the following locations: Africa, \$8,662,765, with the balance of the expenditures being distributed in the United States, Latin America, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, with the total expended to date \$11,460,760, and a balance of \$1,684,767.

Let me share with you a little more detail concerning some of the projects and the people who have been blessed through your generosity.

Helping families in rural Guatemala

In the fertile lowlands of eastern Guatemala, near the city of San Esteban, the Church and the Ezra Taft Benson Agriculture and Food Institute are helping poor rural farm families to increase agricultural production. By our teaching techniques for improved soil preparation, fertilization, and irrigation, small farms achieve balanced cropping that provides better nutrition for families and additional feed for livestock.

At the outset, 160 families benefited from this instruction and assistance. Within a short time, the number of families will reach 400. As knowledge and skills are imparted among neighbors, many thousands more stand to benefit.

Released from the confinement of poverty and want, they will then be better able to receive the spiritual gifts He holds in store for them. We, by our efforts to assist them, will better understand His words, "I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matthew 25:36).

Immunizing children in Africa

The children in African nations are receiving immunizations in an effort to eradicate common communi-

cable diseases by the end of the century. A specific project involves a cooperative effort with Rotary International's Polio Plus endeavor. The Church has purchased sufficient polio serum to immunize 300,000 children. Gas and electric refrigerators have been placed in rural health outposts to keep vaccines viable until they are administered to the children. You, my brethren, and your families helped to bring this dream to reality.

Providing dental and medical care

Closer to this tabernacle, caring dentists joined together to provide free dental care to residents of an urban homeless shelter. These dentists, hygienists, and other professionals volunteer their time and skills. The Church has helped to provide the needed dental supplies.

These efforts not only relieve discomfort and pain, they also brighten the smiles, lift the spirits, and gladden the hearts of homeless patients. The words of the Master bring peace to the souls of all who participate in such endeavors: "I was a stranger, and ye took me in" (Matthew 25:35).

In the Philippines, the Church provides assistance to the Mabuhay Deseret Foundation, which aids hundreds of children to receive operations to repair deformed palates and lips and to correct untreated fractures or burns. Children once shunned now live normal lives. The spring of their step and the sound of their joy seem to echo, "I was sick, and ye visited me" (Matthew 25:36).

Donating food and clothing

Generous contributions of wearing apparel to Deseret Industries are being used to clothe men, women, and children around the world. Clothing is sorted, sized, and shipped to loca-

tions as far distant as Romania, Peru, Zimbabwe, and Sierra Leone, as well as to cities in North America. This clothing has warmed and comforted those exiled in refugee centers and orphanages. The bright patterns and sound fabrics considered surplus by the donors are now new and wonderful attire to the aged and impoverished. Meaning is given to the words, "I was . . . naked, and ye clothed me" (Matthew 25:35–36).

The Church's humanitarian efforts are reaching the hungry and homeless of many American cities. Throughout the state of Utah, among the border towns of Texas, Arizona, and California, and into the communities of Appalachia, food and clothing are donated through private voluntary organizations or directly to children's homes, food banks, and soup kitchens. Much of this food starts its long journey on production projects managed by local agent stakes. Food is processed and packaged in Church canneries and distributed through storehouses, where Church welfare recipients and volunteers labor to assist their poor and needy neighbors within and outside the Church. Many could say with feeling, "I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat" (Matthew 25:35).

Providing potable water in Kenya

Far away in the foothills on the western slopes of Mt. Kenya, along the fringe of the colossal Rift Valley, pure water is coming to the thirsty people. A potable water project has changed the lives of 1,100 families. In cooperation with TechnoServe, a private voluntary organization, the Church is assisting in a project that will pipe drinkable water through twenty-five miles of pipes to waiting homes in a fifteen-village area. The simple blessing of safe drinking water recalls the words of the Savior,

"I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink" (Matthew 25:35).

In behalf of the hundreds of thousands who have benefited by your generous fast offering contributions—children who now walk, who smile, who are fed and clothed; and parents who now may live normal lives with their children—I extend to you, the priesthood of this church, the heartfelt expression of so many: "Thank you, and may God bless you."

The need for "living waters"

Two thousand years ago, Jesus of Nazareth sat by a well in Samaria and talked to a woman about living waters:

"Jesus . . . said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13–14).

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ provides all of us this cherished blessing. King Benjamin, in his memorable message, declared, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

Brethren of the priesthood, each of us is so employed. Ours is the responsibility to teach, to lift, to build, and to inspire our fellowmen, for "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10).

There are examples all around us of those who have recognized in others the need, even the thirst, for these "living waters," who have through their own lives and service quenched this thirst and blessed these lives.

James Collier's example of love

An example of true love and inspired teaching was found in the life

of the late James Collier, who had, through his personal efforts, reactivated a large number of brethren in the Bountiful, Utah, area. I was invited by Brother Collier to address those who had now been ordained elders and who, with their wives and families, had been to the Salt Lake Temple to receive those eternal covenants and blessings for which they had so earnestly strived.

At the banquet honoring this achievement, I could see and I could feel the love that Jim had for those whom he had taught and rescued. Unfortunately, Jim Collier at that time was afflicted with a terminal illness and had to persuade the doctors to allow him to leave the hospital to attend this final night of recognition. As he stood at the pulpit, a large smile came over his face. With tear-filled eyes, he expressed his love to the group. There wasn't a dry eye to be found. Brother Collier quipped, "Everyone wants to go to the celestial kingdom, but no one wants to die to get there." Lowering his voice, he continued, "I'm prepared to go, but I will be there waiting on the other side to greet each of you, my beloved friends." He returned to the hospital. His funeral service was held just a few weeks later.

May I conclude with two experiences from my own life: one from boyhood, one from manhood.

Mrs. Shinas: from nemesis to friend

When I was a deacon, I loved baseball; in fact, I still do. I had a fielder's glove inscribed with the name "Mel Ott." He was the Darryl Strawberry of my day. My friends and I would play ball in a small alleyway behind the houses where we lived. The quarters were cramped but all right, provided you hit straight away to center field. However, if you hit the ball to the right of center, disaster was at the door. Here lived a lady who would

watch us play, and as soon as the ball rolled to her porch her English setter would retrieve the ball and present it to Mrs. Shinas as she opened the door. Into her house Mrs. Shinas would return and add the ball to the many she had previously confiscated. She was our nemesis, the destroyer of our fun—even the bane of our existence. None of us had a good word for Mrs. Shinas, but we had plenty of bad words for her. The windows of her house received more special soap treatment on Halloween than did any other. None of us would speak to Mrs. Shinas, and she never spoke to us. She was hampered by a stiff leg which impaired her walking and must have caused her great pain. She and her husband had no children, lived secluded lives, and rarely came out of their house.

This private war continued for some time—perhaps two years—and then an inspired thaw melted the ice of winter and brought a springtime of good feelings to the stalemate. One night as I performed my daily task of hand-watering our front lawn, holding the nozzle of the hose in hand as was the style at that time, I noticed that Mrs. Shinas's lawn was dry and turning brown. I honestly don't know what came over me, but I took a few more minutes and, with our hose, watered her lawn. This I did each night, and then when autumn came, I hosed her lawn free of leaves as I did ours and stacked the leaves in piles at the street's edge to be burned or gathered. During the entire summer I had not seen Mrs. Shinas. We had long since given up playing ball in the alley. We had run out of baseballs and had no money to buy more.

Then early one evening, her front door opened, and Mrs. Shinas beckoned for me to jump the small fence and come to her front porch. This I did, and as I approached her, Mrs. Shinas invited me into her living

room, where I was asked to sit in a comfortable chair. She went to the kitchen and returned with a large box filled with baseballs and softballs, representing several seasons of her confiscation efforts. The filled box was presented to me; however, the treasure was not to be found in the gift, but rather in her voice. I saw for the first time a smile come across the face of Mrs. Shinas, and she said, "Tommy, I want you to have these baseballs, and I want to thank you for being kind to me." I expressed my own gratitude to her and walked from her home a better boy than when I entered. No longer were we enemies. Now we were friends. The Golden Rule had again succeeded.

Shelley's conversion

Brethren, at times those who most need our help appear to be least anxious to receive it. As I departed for the mission field to preside in Toronto, Canada, if anyone had asked me who of all the people I knew I would consider least likely to join the Church, I would have included the name of Shelley, a man I had known for many years. His sweet wife had tried in vain to interest him in the Church. A lovely daughter and precious son had both put forth their best efforts, with no perceptible change. Perhaps Shelley just couldn't express his inner feelings or demonstrate positive emotions. In the ward, every effort had been expended, but to no avail. Shelley remained on the outside.

Perhaps it was the loss of his son to cancer which made the difference, or maybe the friendly conversation of a school crossing guard with whom Shelley visited sometimes in the morning and sometimes in the afternoon. Then again, faithful home teachers in the ward to which Shelley and his family

had moved had helped to bring about the quiet miracle.

After an absence of three years, my family and I returned to our home in Salt Lake City. Time passed, and the next conversation I had with my friend Shelley was after I was called to the Twelve. One evening I received a telephone call from him. In his characteristic direct way, he asked if I would perform the ordinance in the temple which would seal his family for all eternity. I responded, "Shelley, that would be a privilege for me, but first you must become a member of the Church." Can you imagine my surprise when he replied, "I have joined the Church. I now hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and am very active."

What a special blessing, to welcome Shelley, his wife, Eugenia, his daughter, Utahna, and, by proxy, his son, Robert, to a beautiful sealing room in the Salt Lake Temple. The blessings of eternity were bestowed. Just three years later I spoke at Shelley's funeral services. He had progressed from doubt to faith and now had looked upward and gone forward, bidding farewell to mortality and receiving a welcome to paradise. Today he is with his beloved Eugenia, and they are with Robert and wait one day to welcome Utahna. When I reflect on the life of Shelley, I feel a debt of gratitude to that humble crossing guard, to those faithful home teachers, to that patient wife and daughter, and to all who made a difference in the unfolding of eternal blessings for Shelley and his family.

Lay up treasures in heaven

Our Lord and Savior said, "Come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). When we accept His invitation and walk in His footsteps, He will direct our paths. His gentle voice guides us in life's journey and reminds us of our duty:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

May we hear His voice. May we follow His example. May we live His teachings. Then we will be as the Apostle Peter declared, even a "royal priesthood." May each of us earn the tribute spoken of our Lord: He "went about doing good, . . . for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). This is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

I've been very proud of my Brethren tonight. I've been proud of them in the two sessions today. We have heard tremendous things this day as we have listened to these men who have dedicated their lives to the service of the Lord. I almost shrink from the responsibility of talking to this tremendous gathering of priesthood, more than a hundred thousand strong across the world, who are listening, and I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Every man and boy here is a member of a priesthood quorum. What a wonderful thing it is to belong, to be a part of a significant organization, to have a place where one can gain a sense of security and friendship in the most wholesome kind of environment.

Before President Hinckley speaks, we remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which follows must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

Because daylight saving time begins at 2:00 A.M. tomorrow, we encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening.

As you leave the priesthood meeting tonight, we ask that you obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the BYU combined men's choir for the inspiring music this evening.

President Hinckley's closing remarks will be followed by the choir singing "Rise Up, O Men of God," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy.

The state of the Church

On a previous occasion, in October of 1985 in our general priesthood meeting, I endeavored to give a report on the state of the Church, posing a series of questions and then endeavoring to answer them. I did a similar thing in a regional conference not long ago, and I thought I might do something of the same thing this evening.

I am grateful that the report I have to make is encouraging and uplifting. I have endeavored to see that it is reliable in every respect because I know that I have a very serious responsibility of accountability to you, my brethren of the priesthood, as well as to the Lord, whose church this is.

And so, again, I intend to pose a few questions and then endeavor to answer them as truthfully and frankly as I know how.

How is President Benson?

My first question is one that we get all over the Church, wherever we go. That question is *"How is President Benson?"*

I am pleased to report that President Benson is reasonably well for his age. He is now ninety-one. He has lived a life of vigorous activity, filled with heavy responsibility and its attendant stress. The years have taken some toll. He arises and dresses each day, and on some days attends our meetings. It is a delight to have him with us. He was with us this morning, and I am sure the entire Church who saw him appreciated that. He is the prophet of the Lord, put in that place under the divine will of our Father in Heaven for the accomplishment of His eternal purposes. There are serious limitations on what he can do, as might well be expected. But I assure you, my brethren, that nothing of substantial consequence is done without his knowledge and concurrence. I am his counselor, as is President Monson. We have a responsibility to see that the work moves forward. I think we understand the parameters of our callings, and we endeavor to remain within these. With you, we sing with sincerity, "We ever pray for thee, our prophet dear" (*Hymns*, no. 23).

Increasing faithfulness

Question 2: *"How is the Church doing?"*

The Church is doing very well. We are far from that state of perfection for which we work, but we are trying—and we are making substantial progress. We are growing consistently and remarkably. I note that the *1991 World Book Yearbook* shows there are now only six other religious bodies in the United States larger than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

More importantly, there is growing faith and faithfulness among the Latter-day Saints. I am encouraged by what I see. Things are getting consistently better. We have wards and stakes where sacrament meeting attendance runs in the 60-, 70-, and even 80-percent range. I think there is nothing like it in any other organization of substantial size of which I know. I have served as a stake or general officer of this church for more than half a century, and I am confident that never, during all of that time, has a larger percentage of our people been actively engaged in Church responsibility. I submit that this is one of the great success stories of all time. The credit does not belong to us. It is the Lord's success, for this is His work, and we rejoice with Him in that which has been accomplished.

Expanding missionary work

Question 3: *"What is happening with reference to missionary work?"*

The work continues to expand. It has become a truly tremendous undertaking in fulfillment of the commandment of the Lord, a commandment we are faithfully trying to observe. As of the end of the year, as you heard Brother Watson report this morning, there were 43,651 full-time missionaries under call throughout the world. We now have 256 missions worldwide, of which 28 were created in 1990. It is contemplated that 12 more will be created in 1991. We find it necessary to add substantially to the facilities at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah.

Miraculous building construction

Question 4: *"Are we able to construct buildings enough to accommodate the growth of the Church?"*

Approximately 330,000 converts came into the Church during 1990.

This number is sufficient to constitute 110 new stakes of Zion, each with a membership of 3,000. There were more converts in 1990 alone than all of the members of the Church presently residing in the state of Arizona or in the state of Idaho. As you might well expect, we are faced with a constant and pressing need for new facilities.

Five hundred and twenty new chapels were dedicated in 1990. It is interesting to note that 330 of the 520 were constructed in countries outside of the United States and Canada. All of this, I submit, bears witness of the remarkable and wonderful expansion of the Church in many nations of the earth. To me it is a constantly unfolding miracle that we have been able to construct new facilities to accommodate this growth.

Unprecedented growth of temple and family history work

Question 5: *"What about the temple and family history work?"*

It is moving forward on an unprecedented scale. A computerized program is being put into place which will greatly facilitate the accurate preparation of family records. The salvation of the Lord applies to every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth. The exaltation of our Father's children rests upon the completion of required ordinances, if all are to move forward on the road that leads to immortality and eternal life. The determination of accurate family history records and the work which follows in the temples are basic in this vast undertaking which the Lord has placed upon our shoulders.

During 1990 the Toronto Temple was completed and dedicated. Work on the San Diego Temple is now going forward. We presently have forty-four operating temples in the Church. Three of these—the Alberta, the Swiss,

and the London—are temporarily out of service while renovation work is done after many years of heavy use. It is contemplated that the Alberta Temple will be rededicated in June.

We have announced new temples for Ecuador; Colombia; Orlando, Florida; Bountiful, Utah; and most recently St. Louis, Missouri. Architectural work on these is going forward. We expect that others will be announced.

Blessings of Church education

Question 6: *"What about Church education?"*

We now have some 403,000 seminary and institute students enrolled worldwide. Additionally, some 46,500 students are enrolled in Church universities and schools. This is a huge and costly undertaking, but it yields noteworthy benefits in the lives of our youth in terms of spiritual enrichment, moral strength to resist the evil that is all about us, as well as a tremendous increase in gospel scholarship.

Divinely inspired welfare program

Question 7: *"Is there anything new in the welfare program?"*

President Monson has talked to you of some aspects of the welfare program. I may add that the principles under which it operates are as old as the gospel. It is an expression of the Golden Rule: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12).

The care of the poor is in the hands of bishops of wards—those Church officers who are nearest to the members and most intimately aware of their needs. As you well know, the funds to administer such aid come through a simple, divinely inspired program—what we call fast day and fast offerings. The millions of dollars which

are needed for this purpose each year really cost no one anything. It is not a sacrifice for anyone to go without two meals a month and give the equivalent cost, and even more, to his or her bishop for the care of the needy.

Think, my brethren, of what would happen if the principles of fast day and the fast offering were observed throughout the world. The hungry would be fed, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered. Our burden of taxes would be lightened. The giver would not suffer but would be blessed by his small abstinence. A new measure of concern and unselfishness would grow in the hearts of people everywhere. Can anyone doubt the divine wisdom that created this program which has blessed the people of this church as well as many who are not members of the Church?

Budget allowance program

Question 8: *"How has the local unit budget allowance program worked?"*

As you know, we have followed for a year a program under which all operating costs of stakes and wards in the United States and Canada, including construction and maintenance of buildings, as well as the expenses of activity programs, are now met from the tithing funds of the Church.

As you can realize, this has involved a very substantial outlay from the tithing resources. After a year's experience, we have received numerous expressions of gratitude and appreciation. They have come from far and wide. Let me read to you part of a letter from a stake president which recently came to one of our Brethren:

"At the beginning of 1990," he wrote, "when we were introduced to the new budgeting program, there were many members in our stake that were anxious and even a few that were critical. Throughout the year . . . we have

emphasized the importance of conserving the financial resources of our people, along with their energies and time. Further to that, we have tried to focus on areas that could enhance the teaching and fellowshiping of members. . . .

"As we concluded the year 1990, as a presidency, as bishops, and as high councilors, we recognized the prophetic nature of the new budget program. A review of our statistics indicated that at year-end, we had only expended approximately 70 percent of the funds budgeted to us.

"Through normal channels, our stake will be sending the following funds:

"1. approximately \$20,000 of excess funds from the 1990 annual budget, and

"2. \$13,000 for the general missionary funds of the Church."

He then speaks of yet other funds they will send in.

This is characteristic of letters from many stake presidents who have returned excess funds to the Church since the end of the year.

We look forward to the time when this budget program will be extended worldwide.

Management of Church finances

Now this raises question 9: *"What about the management of Church finances?"*

The financial program of the Church—both income and disbursement—is found in sections 119 and 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Except for fast offerings and missionary funds, two statements found in these brief revelations constitute the Lord's law of finance and the management program of the fiscal affairs of the Church.

Section 119 simply states that all members "shall pay one-tenth of all their interest [that which is income] an-

nually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever . . . saith the Lord" (119:4).

Then, concerning the disbursement of the money which comes from the tithing, the Lord has said: "Verily, thus saith the Lord, . . . it shall be disposed of by a council, composed of the First Presidency of my Church, and of the bishop and his council, and by my high council; and by mine own voice unto them, saith the Lord" (D&C 120).

These eighteen men—the Presidency, the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric—constitute the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes. What might be regarded as executive committees of this larger council include the Budget Committee and the Appropriations Committee. The expenditure of all Church funds comes under the purview of these bodies.

In the financial operations of the Church, we have observed two basic and fixed principles: One, the Church will live within its means. It will not spend more than it receives. Two, a fixed percentage of the income will be set aside to build reserves against what might be called a possible "rainy day."

For years the Church has taught its membership the principle of setting aside a reserve of food, as well as money, to take care of emergency needs that might arise. We are only trying to follow the same principle for the Church as a whole.

Some of us, I submit, are old enough to remember vividly the dark times of the Great Depression of the thirties. I hope we shall never see such again. But we know that they are not outside the realm of possibility. We are mindful of the story of Pharaoh's dream of the fat and lean cattle and the full and thin ears of corn (see Genesis 41).

How grateful I am to be able to say to the priesthood of this church that the Church in its ecclesiastical op-

erations has no debt. No temple, no meetinghouse, no seminary or institute facility, no welfare facility, no building or property used in the ecclesiastical operations is under mortgage.

The Church's assets

Question 10: *"Is the Church an organization of great wealth as some have maintained?"*

The Church has substantial assets necessary to its program. These assets are primarily in buildings. They are in ward and stake meeting facilities, in schools and seminaries, colleges and institutes. They are in welfare projects. These assets are in mission homes and missionary training centers, temples and family history archives, as well as related activities and facilities all concerned directly with our mission. But it should be recognized that all of these are money-consuming assets and not money-producing assets. They are expensive to build and maintain. They do not produce financial wealth, but they do much to strengthen and build Latter-day Saints.

We have a few income-producing business properties, but the return from these would keep the Church going only for a very brief time. Tithing is the Lord's law of finance. There is no other financial law like it. It is a principle given with a promise, spoken by the Lord Himself for the blessing of His children.

I repeat what I have said before—when all is said and done, the only real wealth of the Church is in the faith of its people.

The Church's commercial enterprises

Question 11: *"Why is the Church in commercial enterprises?"*

Essentially, the business assets which the Church has today are an outgrowth of enterprises which were be-

gun in the pioneer era of our history when we were isolated in the West. When there was no longer a need for a number of these, they were disposed of. The remaining number are relatively few.

I repeat, the combined income from all of these business interests is relatively small and would not keep the Church going for longer than a very brief period. I add, also, that these commercial properties are tax-paying entities which meet their tax obligations under the laws of the areas where they are located.

The Church's farm properties

Question 12: *"Does the Church own substantial farm properties, as some have indicated?"*

The Church does own a number of farm properties. As you know, we have some welfare properties whose produce is used to supply food for the needy. These are operated strictly for charitable purposes and legally qualify for tax-exempt status.

Then we have some commercial farm properties. I spoke earlier of the reserves of the Church. Prudent management requires that this money be put to use. In that process, we have purchased and hold some good, productive farms. They are well operated under capable management, and they yield a conservative rate of return. We have felt that good farms, over a long period, represent a safe investment where the assets of the Church may be preserved and enhanced, while at the same time they are available as an agricultural resource to feed people should there come a time of need.

Again, all such commercial properties are taxed under the government entities where they are located. They pay not only property taxes, but also income taxes on any profit. So it is with all of the commercial operations of the Church.

The Church's future

The final question, one frequently asked by our young people: *"What is the future of the Church?"*

The charge laid upon the Church is almost beyond comprehension. While yet upon the earth the Lord declared, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

Furthermore, the work of the Church is concerned with the eternal welfare of all generations who have lived upon the earth.

No other organization, in my judgment, faces so great a challenge. That challenge, I am confident, will be met by the growing generation and by generations yet to come. To our youth I say—you young men who are here tonight—great is your responsibility, tremendous is your opportunity.

I am confident that you will be a part of a beautiful pattern of growth and strengthening vitality that will be marvelous to look upon and awesome to experience.

As the Prophet Joseph once said, no man can stop this work from progressing (see *History of the Church*, 4:540).

Many who are clever and deceitful may try to thwart or destroy it, but none will succeed.

And so, to you, my young brethren, tonight I pass the challenge to keep yourselves clean and worthy and to grow in knowledge and understanding, that your part in the future of this great thing which is the work of the Lord may be well performed and add to the building of the kingdom of God in the earth.

I thank every one of you, my brethren. I thank the wonderful and faithful women of the Church—your wives, your mothers, your sisters—this great and remarkable body of women who walk with us in faith and faithful

ness as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We pray for all of you constantly. We are grateful for your prayers and confidence, and humbled thereby. We constantly plead with the Lord that we may be true and faithful to the great and sacred trust which is placed in us.

May the Lord smile with favor upon each of you. May each of us ever

be grateful for His blessings and constantly strive to walk worthily before Him is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Rise Up, O Men of God."

Elder Carlos H. Amado offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 161st Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 7, 1991. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings" without announcement.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 161st annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We are pleased to have with us this morning President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference and has asked that I conduct this session.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Neal A.

Maxwell, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, and John R. Lasater are seated on the stand. We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with John Longhurst at the organ, will provide the music for this session. The choir opened these services by singing "Come, O Thou King of Kings" and will now sing "Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire."

Elder Ted E. Brewerton of the Seventy will then offer the invocation. We ask that all of us join together in a special manifestation of faith in behalf of our beloved associate Elder Derek A. Cuthbert, who lingers with a very serious illness.

The choir sang "Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire."

Elder Ted E. Brewerton offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson,
Second Counselor in the First Presi-

dency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson**Thanks be to God for peace**

This Sabbath day has been designated as a day of thanksgiving, a day of gratitude—even a day of prayer. We pause, we ponder, we reflect on the blessings an all-wise Heavenly Father has bestowed upon us. His children, by bringing peace to the battlefield of war and comfort to the hearts of so many in this wonderful world where we live and which we call home.

Today knees will bow, bells will peal, hearts will swell, and voices will proclaim the glorious message “Thanks be to God.” In the United States of America, a grateful nation and a thankful president will give utterance to the tender feelings felt by all in a world that welcomed peace.

Who among us will ever forget the touching and vivid pictures of husbands and fathers bidding good-bye to weeping wives and wondering children as fond farewells dominated every newscast and printed story. The children cried but did not know why. Wives wept because they did know the danger, the loneliness, the fear that awaited.

With the wave of a hand and a somewhat forced smile, the men and the women of the military went off to war. Their farewell expressions even now ring the conviction of their hearts: “I love my country.” “I’m proud to serve.” “I’ll be home soon.” “Try not to worry.”

But worry they did. Constant bombardment not only by bombs and missiles but by the press and over the television provoked the haunting questions, “Was the downed pilot my hus-

band?” “Was the navigator taken captive my son?”

In her classic poem “The Gate of the Year,” the poetess M. Louise Haskins summed up the feelings of all touched by the conflict and concerned for the safety of loved ones. She penned the comforting lines:

And I said to the man who stood
at the gate of the year:

“Give me a light, that I may tread
safely into the unknown!”

And he replied:

“Go out into the darkness and
put your hand into the Hand of
God.

“That shall be to you better than
light and safer than a known
way.”

[In *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*,
ed. James Dalton Morrison (New
York: Harper and Brothers,
1948) p. 92]

At last the guns fell silent. Aircraft remained grounded. Mobile patrols halted. A quiet calm settled over the battlefield. The din of war succumbed to the silence of peace.

A scene on the cruel desert sands—and a sentence uttered from the heart—spoke volumes. An American soldier looked down at his vanquished enemy prisoner, touched the man’s shoulder, and reassured him with the words, “It’s all right; it’s all right.”

Every man and woman embroiled in that conflict thought of home, of family, and of friends. The embers of longing for loved ones glowed brightly and were found on every face. Love replaced hate, warmth filled every heart, and compassion overflowed every soul.

The words of King Arthur, from Lerner and Loewe's long-running musical *Camelot*, left the stage and found deep meaning on a far distant desert: "Violence is not strength, and compassion is not weakness."

A white ribbon on every branch

The account of a homecoming as related by successful prison warden Kenyon J. Scudder brings to the surface tender feelings held in the heart:

A friend of his happened to be sitting in a railroad coach next to a young man who was obviously depressed. Finally the young man revealed that he was a paroled convict returning from a distant prison. His imprisonment had brought shame to his family, and they had neither visited him nor written often. He hoped, however, that this was only because they were too poor to travel and too uneducated to write. He hoped, despite the evidence, that they had forgiven him.

To make it easy for them, however, he had written to them asking that they put up a signal for him when the train passed their little farm on the outskirts of town. If his family had forgiven him, they were to put up a white ribbon in the big apple tree which stood near the tracks. If they didn't want him to return, they were to do nothing, and he would remain on the train as it traveled onward.

As the train neared his hometown, the suspense became so great that he couldn't bear to look out of his window. He exclaimed, "In just five minutes the engineer will sound the whistle indicating our approach to the long bend which opens into the valley I know as home. Will you watch for the apple tree at the side of the track?" His companion said he would; they exchanged places. The minutes seemed like hours, but then there came the shrill sound of the train whistle. The

young man asked, "Can you see the tree? Is there a white ribbon?"

Came the reply, "I see the tree. I see not one white ribbon, but many. There is a white ribbon on every branch. Son, someone surely does love you."

In that instant, all the bitterness that had poisoned a life was dispelled. "I felt as if I had witnessed a miracle," the other man said. Indeed, he had witnessed a miracle. (See John Kord Lagemann, "Forgiveness: The Saving Grace," *The Reader's Digest*, Mar. 1961, pp. 41-42.)

Yellow ribbons welcome soldiers home

Today a yellow ribbon has replaced one that is white. However, the message is the same: "Welcome home!" Men, women, and children everywhere are tying yellow ribbons around everything. Not only are they being tied around trees, but also around lampposts, street signs, and mailboxes—even around the necks of pets. So overwhelming is the demand for yellow ribbon material that busy suppliers working around the clock cannot meet the need. A classic yellow bow was one which completely girdled a large plane bringing soldiers safely home. I have surmised that each one who tenderly tied a yellow bow was singing, humming, or at least thinking of the words of the song "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree."

In the warm and poignant airport scene of a family awaiting a returning father and husband, smiles and tears of gratitude were everywhere to be found. My eye caught the expression of a small boy holding aloft a stick around which was tied a yellow ribbon. No words could describe the unspoken feeling. It is the welcome home of the heart that brings tears to every eye and peace to every soul.

"Welcome home" replaces "home alone"

Children have the capacity for compassion. They have no fear of expressing their genuine feelings. In the popular movie entitled *Home Alone*, a scene near the end grips the viewer's emotions and causes that familiar lump to fill the throat. The scene takes place in a chapel; the time is Christmas; the two lonely characters are seated next to one another on a church bench. The older man, who lives by himself, is estranged from family and bereft of friends. His next-door neighbor, played by McCaulay Culkin, is the lad left "home alone" by his family, which had departed for a European vacation, inadvertently forgetting this one small family member.

The boy asks the lonely man if he has any family. The gentleman explains quietly that he and his son and his son's family have parted ways and no longer communicate. In the innocence of youth, the boy blurts out the plea, "Why don't you just call your son and tell him you are sorry and invite him home for Christmas!"

The old man sighs and responds, "I'm too afraid he would say no." The fear of failure had blocked the ability to express love and to voice an apology.

The viewer is left to wonder concerning the outcome of the conversation, but not for too long. Christmas comes; the boy's family returns. He is pictured at an upstairs bedroom window looking in the direction of the old man's sidewalk. Suddenly he views a tender scene as the neighbor welcomes his returning son, his daughter-in-law, and their children. Son embraces father, and the old man buries his head against the shoulder of his precious son. As they turn to walk on, the old neighbor looks upward to the bedroom window of the house next door and sees his small friend observing the private miracle of forgiveness. Their eyes meet; their hands express a gentle

greeting of gratitude. "Welcome home" replaces "home alone."

One emerges from the theater with moist eyes. As the brightness of day envelops the silent throng, perhaps there are those whose thoughts turn to that man of miracles, that teacher of truth—even the Lord of lords, Jesus Christ. I know my thoughts did.

The Savior's compassion

I reflected on the Savior's capacity for compassion. In Galilee "there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

"And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean."

"And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed" (Mark 1:40-42).

On this, the American continent, Jesus appeared to a multitude and said:

"Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you. . . .

" . . . And he did heal them every one. . . .

"And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him; and as many as could come for the multitude did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears" (3 Nephi 17:7, 9-10).

Few accounts of the Master's ministry touch me more than His example of compassion shown to the grieving widow at Nain:

"And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

"Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

"And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

"And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

"And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother" (Luke 7:11-15).

Opportunities to show compassion

What power, what tenderness, what compassion did our Master and Exemplar thus demonstrate! We too can bless if we will but follow His noble example. Opportunities are everywhere. Needed are eyes to see the pitiable plight and ears to hear the silent pleadings of a broken heart. Yes, and a soul filled with compassion, that we might communicate not only eye to eye or voice to ear but, in the majestic style of the Savior, even heart to heart.

Within walking distance from this tabernacle is a shelter for the homeless, a dental clinic, a soup kitchen. The compassion of this community is in evidence there each day. The Church and its members join with others not of our particular faith to bless the lives of those in need. A few streets beyond stands the regional bishops' storehouse, stocked with commodities representing your generosity. No one leaves there without food or clothing or without gratitude to God.

Another place of refuge located nearby is Neighborhood House, a non-denominational care center where generous women share their time and

their means to teach preschool children whose single mothers work to provide for their own. This organization also brings joy to the elderly who assemble there to exchange views and to listen to presentations and entertainment. These noble women bring the light of hope to the lives of the depressed, the downtrodden of society, and to children who will be the parents of tomorrow.

Without exception, those compassionate souls who feed the hungry, clothe the weary, and relieve the suffering of fellow beings exclaim, "I have never before felt more blessed, more rewarded, or so at peace." A writer expressed the feeling:

I have wept in the night
For the shortness of sight
That to somebody's need made
me blind;
But I never have yet
Felt a tinge of regret
For being a little too kind.
[Anonymous, quoted by Richard
L. Evans, *Improvement Era*, May
1960, p. 340]

Similar projects are to be found in every community. The need beckons. We as a people need but to respond.

Pass it on

Recently two envelopes arrived at my office, sent by persons who preferred to remain anonymous. Each contained a number of one-hundred-dollar bills and a brief message expressing gratitude to God for His kind blessings and a desire that the money enclosed enable needy persons to receive their temple blessings. If these couples are viewing the conference, I am pleased to report that families in Bolivia and in Portugal will now be able to travel to temples in Lima, Peru, and Frankfurt, Germany, to fulfill this wish and achieve eternal blessings.

Perhaps these compassionate, anonymous donors would appreciate the thoughts of Henry Burton, who wrote the lines:

Have you had a kindness shown?
 Pass it on.
 'Twas not given for thee alone,
 Pass it on.
 Let it travel down the years,
 Let it wipe another's tears,
 'Till in heav'n the deed
 appears—
 Pass it on.
 [In *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*,
 pp. 389–90]

One Sunday morning in a nursing home in the valley, I witnessed the presentation of a beautiful gift as a young girl shared her musical talent with those lonely and elderly men and women who yearned not for food or for clothing but for someone who cared, someone who shared, and someone who provided a “hyacinth” for the soul.

A hush fell over the wheelchair-confined audience as the girl took bow in hand and played on her violin a beautiful melody. At the conclusion, one patient audibly declared, “My dear, that was lovely.” Then she began to clap her hands to express approval. A second patient joined in clapping, then a third, a fourth, and soon everyone applauded.

Together the young girl and I walked out of the nursing home. She said to me, “I have never played better. I have never felt better.” She had been guided by God and led by the Lord. Aches, pains, despair, and sadness had been conquered. Compassion had gained the victory.

Sacrifices for Desert Storm

Today, and in the tomorrows which lie ahead, we shall rejoice in the return to their homes and families of all who served in Desert Storm. They

heard the call of duty. They fought the fight of the brave. They return victorious. To those who lost loved ones in Desert Storm or, for that matter, in any storm of deprivation, our heartfelt compassion goes out to you.

A story that moved across the wires revealed that a Methodist Sunday School teacher was the first U.S. soldier killed. One of the last was a soldier whose dad called her “Angel.” Of the 182 soldiers who died, there were those with cut-short honeymoons. Some left behind expectant wives. Some had put dreams on hold.

Now there is a widow in Virginia who has buried her only son, a young man in western Pennsylvania whose wedding plans have been permanently tucked away, a wife in Alaska soon due to deliver a baby her husband will never hold.

There is no satisfactory answer to the unspoken question, “Of the thousands and thousands of soldiers, why is mine among those not coming back?” Expressed is the lament, “A light from our household is gone; a voice we loved is stilled. A place is vacant in our hearts that never can be filled.” Lamenting the terrible sacrifice of any armed conflict, one writer penned the lines, “War leaves nothing but dead ends on the roads to all our fondest hopes and our brightest dreams” (Dennis Smith, “When Uncle Louis Came Home from Belgium,” *Deseret News*, 11 Jan. 1991, p. C1).

Trust in the Lord for peace

The Holy Bible furnishes a formula which eases the pain and heals the hearts of those who grieve:

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

To all who have loved and lost on either side of this tragic conflict, your grief can be assuaged. There is balm in Gilead. There awaits the promise of a new day. There echoes from a land not far from where your loved ones fell even a promise of peace, spoken by our Lord, the Prince of Peace:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also" (14:2-3).

His love, His promise, His presence is as a yellow ribbon, tied with care and marked with compassion. To your loved ones He has beckoned, "Welcome home." To you He speaks the heavenly and divine assurance: "I am with you; you are never alone."

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

To these words I add my witness: God lives, and His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. Tonight my wife and I shall join millions of you as we kneel in solemn prayer and supplication. We shall acknowledge His holy hand in our lives. And from our hearts will come our expression of gratitude, "Thanks be to God." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer" without announcement.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now speak to us.

President Howard W. Hunter

The organizing of the Church

On the sixth of April, 1830, 161 years ago yesterday, a group of men and women, acting in obedience to a commandment of God, assembled in the house of Mr. Peter Whitmer to organize The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This church, in whose annual worldwide conference we are gathered today and that had been prophesied to be a latter-day marvelous work and a wonder, has come forth from the most humble of beginnings.

Six men comprised the total membership of the Church that day. None

of them laid any claim to special learning or significant leadership. They were honorable people and respectable citizens but were virtually unknown outside of their own immediate neighborhood.

We can get a good picture of the moral and economic atmosphere of the circle of six from the description in the *History of the Church* of one of the local citizens, Mr. Joseph Knight. The history states that he "owned a farm, a grist mill and carding machine. He was not rich, yet he possessed enough of this world's goods to secure to himself and family, not only the necessities, but also the comforts of life. . . . [He]

was a sober, honest man, generally respected and beloved by his neighbors and acquaintances. He did not belong to any religious sect, but was a believer" (*History of the Church*, 1:47). Of such ordinary, honest people was the group composed that assembled in Peter Whitmer's house in Fayette, Seneca County, New York, more than a century and a half ago.

A humble beginning

Most of life's momentous hours are recorded, but what these men did on that humble occasion would not have given the world much reason to take note. What they did, however, ranks among the most important events ever to have transpired since the death of Jesus and his Apostles in the meridian of time.

These humble, ordinary men gathered because one of them, Joseph Smith, Jr., a very young man, had set forth a most remarkable claim. He declared to them and all others who would listen that he had received profound and repeated heavenly communications, including an open vision of God the Father and his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. As a result of these revelatory experiences, Joseph Smith had already published the Book of Mormon, a record of Christ's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of America. Furthermore, the Lord had commanded this young man, by now only twenty-four years of age, to reinstitute the Church that had existed in New Testament times and that in its restored purity should again be designated by the name of its chief cornerstone and eternal head, the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Thus, humbly but most significantly was opened the first scene in the great Church drama that eventually would affect not only that generation of men but the entire human family, including everyone within the sound of

my voice today. A humble beginning, yes, but the claim that God had spoken, that Christ's church was again organized and its doctrines reaffirmed by divine revelation, was the most outstanding declaration made to the world since the days of the Savior himself when he walked the paths of Judea and the hills of Galilee.

Comparison of Joseph Smith and Paul

When men heard that young Joseph Smith was claiming God had manifested Himself to the boy, they mocked him and turned away from him, just as in the Christian era wise and able men in Athens turned away from a singular man ministering in their midst. Yet the fact remains that Paul, in that earlier experience, was the only man in that great city of learning who knew that a person may pass through the portals of death and live. He was the only man in Athens who could clearly delineate the difference between the formality of idolatry and the heartfelt worship of the only true and living God. The Epicureans and Stoics, with whom he had conversed and argued, called Paul a babbler, a setter forth of strange gods. The record states:

"And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?"

"For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. . . .

"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

"For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you" (Acts 17:19-20, 22-23).

Surely from an intellectual standpoint and in terms of formal education, Joseph Smith was as unlearned and wholly untrained in the ministry as Paul was—probably even less learned and trained. Yet something made him very bold in his declarations against the false doctrines pertaining to infant baptism, self-appointed priesthood, predestination, and other erroneous teachings of the day.

“I will be hung in your stead”

As with Paul, many scorned Joseph Smith and scoffed at his teachings when he declared that he had received revelations from the Lord. Others loved him and felt as Willard Richards did when he said: “Brother Joseph you did not ask me to cross the river with you—you did not ask me to come to Carthage—you did not ask me to come to jail with you—and do you think I would forsake you now? But I will tell you what I will do; if you are condemned to be hung for treason, I will be hung in your stead, and you shall go free” (*History of the Church*, 6:616).

How reminiscent of those who loved the Lord when he walked as a man on the shores of Galilee. Even as Jesus was persecuted, stoned, condemned, and finally crucified, some of his disciples felt as Thomas did when he said, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16).

Revelations to Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith was not only a great man, but he was an inspired servant of the Lord, a prophet of God. His greatness consists in one thing: the truthfulness of his declaration that he saw the Father and the Son and that he responded to the reality of that divine revelation. Part of the divine revelation was instruction to reestablish the true

and living church, restored in these modern times as it existed in the day of the Savior’s own mortal ministry. The Prophet Joseph Smith said the Church of Jesus Christ was “organized in accordance with commandments and revelations given by Him to ourselves in these last days, as well as according to the order of the Church as recorded in the New Testament” (*History of the Church*, 1:79).

Faith in God is the foundation

For the first time in eighteen hundred years, God had revealed himself as a personal being. Furthermore, the Father and the Son demonstrated the undeniable truth that they are separate and distinct personages. Indeed, the relationship of the Father and the Son was reaffirmed by the divine introduction to the boy prophet, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Those who were baptized into the Church on the sixth of April, 1830, believed in the existence of a personal God; they believed that his reality and the reality of his Son, Jesus Christ, constitute the eternal foundation upon which this church is built.

Once we accept Christ as divine, it is easy to visualize his Father as being just as personal as he. Christ said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Faith in the existence of a divine and real and living personal God was the first element that contributed to the perpetuity of the Church of Jesus Christ in ancient times, and it is the everlasting foundation upon which The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is built today.

A worldwide church

On April 6, 1830, the Church was officially organized with its six mem-

bers. That action was largely unknown to the world at that time and would come to be known only to the extent that it contained and radiated eternal principles that harmonize with all other truth coming from God, the author of all truth. Only thus, through its truthfulness, could it and would it ever become a marvelous work and a wonder.

Today, from those humble beginnings those many years ago, there are units and members of that church almost literally around the face of the earth. The marvelous progress in transportation and communication has made possible the promulgation of these truths of the restored gospel to the children of men nearly everywhere in the world. Millions in America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the islands of the sea have been able not only to hear but, in millions of cases, to accept and commit to these saving principles of the gospel of truth.

We represent and speak today for a worldwide Church, the organized and established kingdom of God on earth. I bear you my testimony that the church organized in obscurity 161 years ago yesterday is indeed the Church of Jesus Christ. I declare that God lives, that he is a personal God who hears and answers our prayers, that he is the Father he has always declared himself in scripture to be. He is undoubtedly more than we can fully understand him to be, but he is certainly not less than we understand.

I testify that Jesus Christ is his Only Begotten Son, the Savior of the

world, and that the Father and the Son did appear to the Prophet Joseph Smith to initiate this great rolling forth of the latter-day work in our time.

I testify that the boy prophet, who in so many ways remains the central miracle in the 161 years of this church's experience, is living proof that, within God's hands and under the direction of the Savior of the world, weak and simple things should come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones. In this anniversary season of the organization of the Church, I bear testimony of its truthfulness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "See What Love" without announcement.

President Hinckley

We have just heard from President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of Twelve Apostles. The choir then sang "See What Love."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," following which we shall hear from Bishop Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Bishop Henry B. Eyring

We must believe in God

You talk with people every day who say that God does not exist or is far, far away. A woman sat next to me on a plane. I spoke to her. She strained

to understand me. When she spoke, her accent almost overpowered her English. In answer to my question, she told me that she was returning to the place of her birth. She said that the occasion which drew her was a reli-

gious observance of the death of her father, who died many years ago. She had made the flight on the third, the seventh, the thirteenth, and the seventeenth anniversaries of his death. And now she was going again.

I told her that I admired her devotion to her father. She said, quietly, that she believed in the veneration of her ancestors. I asked her if her family had attended church. She smiled and said, "No, only go to church when someone dies." I asked her if she believed in a god. She said, "Yes." I asked her if she thought he was close by. She said, "No. If we should need him we would say, 'come here,' " and she made a beckoning sign with her hand. I asked her who she believed God was. Her soft, tentative answer was, "Well, he is like one of our distant ancestors."

She needed to hear the words you have heard spoken here: Jesus Christ, the fall of Adam, the Atonement, the Resurrection, repentance, eternal life, and the pure love of God. But I realized those words would not touch her. I remembered and understood the power of what Elder Spencer W. Kimball wrote in the beginning of his book *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. You may recall this warning:

"This book presupposes a belief in God and in life's high purpose. Without God, repentance would have little meaning, and forgiveness would be both unnecessary and unreal. If there were no God, life would indeed be meaningless; . . . we might find justification in an urge to live only for today, to 'eat, drink and be merry,' to dissipate, to satisfy every worldly desire. If there were no God there would be no redemption, no resurrection, no eternities to anticipate, and consequently no hope" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], pp. 3-4).

President Kimball's words made me think not how different that woman was from me, but how much we were

alike. God is our ancestor, not distant but close. He is the Father of our spirits; we are his children. But like that woman, we all at times feel far removed from him. Like her, if we are to have the words of the gospel of Jesus Christ touch us, then we must believe in God. We must want to be with him. And we must sense our need to be purified to be with him again.

Drawing close to God

The day will come when we will see him again. President Benson described it this way: "Nothing is going to startle us more when we pass through the veil to the other side than to realize how well we know our Father and how familiar his face is to us" ("Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," in *Speeches of the Year, 1974* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975], p. 313).

While what President Benson said will be true in the future, we need to feel now that God knows us and loves us as individuals. There are times you have felt the closeness of God, your Father, and that you are his child. Those times can come more often. There is a simple way to think about it.

If you want to stay close to someone who has been dear to you but from whom you are separated, you know how to do it. You would find a way to speak to them, you would listen to them, and you would discover ways to do things for each other. The more often that happened, the longer it went on, the deeper would be the bond of affection. If much time passed without the speaking, the listening, and the doing, the bond would weaken.

God is perfect and omnipotent, and you and I are mortal. But he is our Father, he loves us, and he offers the same opportunity to draw closer to him as would a loving friend. And you will do it in much the same way: speaking, listening, and doing.

Pray always

Our Heavenly Father has not only invited us to speak to him, he has commanded it. And, as he has always done, when he commands, he promises too.

In the 19th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord says to you and me:

“Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing—yea, even more than if you should obtain treasures of earth and corruptibleness to the extent thereof.

“Behold, canst thou read this without rejoicing and lifting up thy heart for gladness?

“Or canst thou run about longer as a blind guide?

“Or canst thou be humble and meek, and conduct thyself wisely before me? Yea, come unto me thy Savior. Amen” (19:38–41).

In that scripture and in others, it is clear how often we should speak to God: regularly in words, continually in feelings. When the Savior appeared among the people on this continent after his resurrection, he taught them how to pray. He used the words “pray always.” That doesn’t mean now and then. It doesn’t mean to pray only when you feel like it. Listen to what he said to them:

“Therefore blessed are ye if ye shall keep my commandments, which the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him.

“And as I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church, among my people who do repent and are baptized in my name. Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you” (3 Nephi 18:14–16).

Listen carefully

Now, you and I need to listen with great care. When you heard the scripture I just recited, you heard the words of Christ. I testify that is true. Jesus Christ speaks the words of the Father. You can read the scriptures, listen, and then hear God’s answers to you.

There is another way to listen to God. Many of you will have heard answers to your prayers today. I bear testimony that you have in this conference heard the voices of Apostles and prophets of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord said this of them, as they speak by his direction:

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

“For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever. Amen” (D&C 1:38–39).

It is the Spirit which will bear record to your heart as you read the scriptures, as you hear the Lord’s authorized servants, and as God speaks directly to your heart. You can listen and hear if you believe that the scriptures are accurate when they describe the Holy Ghost this way:

“Yea, thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things, and often times it maketh my bones to quake while it maketh manifest” (D&C 85:6).

Now, I testify it is a small voice. It whispers, not shouts. And so you must be very quiet inside. That is why you may wisely fast when you want to listen. And that is why you will listen best when you feel, “Father, thy will, not mine, be done.” You will have a feeling of “I want what you want.” Then the still small voice will seem as if it pierces

you. It may make your bones to quake. More often it will make your heart burn within you, again softly, but with a burning which will lift and reassure.

You will act after you have listened because when you hear his voice by the Spirit you will always feel that you are impelled to do something. You mustn't be surprised if the instruction seems accompanied with what you feel as a rebuke.

You might prefer that God simply tell you how well you are doing. But he loves you, wants you to be with him, and knows you must have a mighty change in your heart, through faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, humble repentance, and the making and keeping of sacred covenants. That's why the Proverbs record this:

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:

"For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Proverbs 3:11-12).

Repent, obey, and give kindness

As you have listened to God's servants here, you have felt pricked in your heart to do something. You could react with a hard heart: "Why is an imperfect man telling me to repent?" Or you could hear instead the loving invitation of your Heavenly Father, who delighted in you when you were with him and delights in the prospect that you will accept his loving correction.

You will find something else in the pattern of correction you have felt. Do you notice how much of it is an urging to do something for someone else? That is no surprise. God loves his children. They have great needs. Everything belongs to God, so there is not much you can give him, after you have given him a repentant heart. But you can give kindness to his children. If you

were my earthly friend, you would win my heart by being kind to my children. God loves his children more than any earthly parent, so think what your kindness to his children means to him.

God's generosity

With all you will do for your Heavenly Father—if you pray, and listen, and then obey him all your days—you will still find him more generous than you can ever be. Here is how King Benjamin described your problem of exchanging acts of kindness with God:

"And . . . he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?" (Mosiah 2:24).

Retain God's name in your hearts

Now, even the Savior of the world, when he was on the cross, felt his Father far from him. You will have moments, perhaps long moments, of feelings of separation. But you know the way to draw closer to God. King Benjamin taught us the way:

"I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you.

"For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:12-13).

Now, you will still be startled, as President Benson said you would be, to realize how familiar the face of our Heavenly Father is. But when you see him, you will know his voice, because

you will have prayed, listened, obeyed, and come to share the thoughts and intents of his heart. You will have drawn nearer to him.

I pray that we will. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Bishop Eyring.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder James E. Faust

A crown of thorns

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, today I wish to speak of thorns, briars, slivers, and a crown of thorns. I also wish to speak of the exquisite beauty and fragrance to be found in life, and of a crown of glory. I wish that I better understood all of the divine purposes in having to contend with so many painful irritants in this life. Lehi explained one reason: that we will appreciate and savor the goodness and loveliness of the world (see 2 Nephi 2:10–13). Adam was told that the ground is cursed with thorns and thistles for our sakes (see Genesis 3:17–18). Likewise, mortality is “cursed” with the thorns of worldly temptation and the slivers of sin so that we can be tested and prove ourselves. This is necessary for our eternal progression. The Apostle Paul explained, “Lest I should be exalted above measure . . . there was given to me a thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7).

The denial of our own sins, of our own selfishness, of our own weakness is like a crown of thorns which keeps us from moving up one more step in personal growth. Perhaps worse than sin is the denial of sin. If we deny that we are sinners, how can we ever be forgiven? How can the atonement of Jesus work in our lives if there is no repentance? If we do not promptly remove the slivers of sin and the thorns of carnal temptation, how can the Lord ever heal our souls? The Savior said, “Repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may

heal you” (3 Nephi 9:13). It is most difficult for us to pray for those who hate us, who spitefully use us, who persecute us. By failing to take this vital extra step, however, we fail to remove some of the festering briars in our souls. Extending forgiveness, love, and understanding for perceived shortcomings and weaknesses in our wives, husbands, children, and associates makes it much easier to say, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

It seems that no matter how carefully we walk through life’s paths, we pick up some thorns, briars, and slivers. As a young boy, when school was out for the summer and we went to the farm, off came our shoes. The shoes stayed off all summer long except for special occasions. For the first week or two, when our feet were tender, the smoothest pebble or stick would be painful. But as the weeks came and went, the soles of our feet toughened so that they could withstand almost anything in the path except thistles, of which there seemed to be more than any other weed. And so it is with life: as we grow and mature and keep close to Him who was crowned with thorns, our souls seem to get stronger in withstanding the challenges, our resolve hardens, our wills become firmer, and our self-discipline increases to protect us from the evils of this world. These evils are so omnipresent, however, that we must always walk in the paths which are the most free of the thistles of earthly temptation.

As children we used to delight in waving thistledown stalks to watch the seeds float on the wind. Only later did we realize the effects that this had on our own and neighboring gardens. Many of us delight in flirting with temptation, only later to learn how we and others have sown the seeds of our own unhappiness and how we can also affect our neighbor's happiness.

Recognizing and removing thorns

There is a defense mechanism to discern between good and evil. It is called conscience. It is our spirit's natural response to the pain of sin, just like pain in our flesh is our body's natural response to a wound—even a small sliver. Conscience strengthens through use. Paul told the Hebrews, "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). Those who have not exercised their conscience have "their conscience scared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:2). A sensitive conscience is a sign of a healthy spirit.

How are the thorns and slivers of life removed? The power to remove the thorns in our lives and in the lives of others begins with ourselves. Moroni writes that when we deny ourselves of ungodliness, then the grace of Christ is sufficient for us (see Moroni 10:32).

Too often we seek bandages to cover the guilt rather than removal of the thorn causing the pain. How much we resist the momentary pain of removing a sliver even though it will relieve the longer-lasting pain of a festering sore. Everyone knows that if thorns and briars and slivers are not removed from the flesh, they will cause sores that fester and will not heal.

One of the members of our family has a remarkable dog named Ben. A few years ago, on a beautiful fall day, some of us were walking in the fields.

Ben was going back and forth in front of us, sniffing the ground, tail wagging, and obviously enjoying himself. After a while we sat down on a ditch bank to rest and could feel the warmth of the autumn sun caressing us. Ben came limping up to his master and, with a pained look in his eye, held up his front paw. Ben's master gently took his paw into his hands and examined it carefully. Between two of his toes was a thorn. The thorn was carefully removed, and Ben stayed long enough to wag his tail a little more vigorously and receive a few pats on his head. He then ran off, no longer limping nor bothered by the pain. I was amazed that Ben instinctively seemed to know that the thorn needed to come out to relieve the pain and to know where to go to have it removed. Like Ben, we also seem to instinctively look for relief from the thorns of sin that inflict us. In contrast, however, we do not always seek our Master for relief; and many do not yet know who their Master is.

Jesus suffered thorns of affliction

As a carpenter, Jesus would have been familiar with slivers and thorny woods. As a child he would have learned that one rarely gets a sliver when working the wood in the right direction. He would also have known more than any how slivers—small and painful—divert attention from important matters. The scourging of Jesus took place partly with thorns:

"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

"And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

"And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

"And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head" (Matthew 27:27-30).

Perhaps this cruel act was a perverse attempt to mimic the placing of an emperor's laurel upon his head. Thus, there was pressed down upon him a crown of thorns. He accepted the pain as part of the great gift he had promised to make. How poignant this was, considering that thorns signified God's displeasure as he cursed the ground for Adam's sake that henceforth it would bring forth thorns. But by wearing the crown, Jesus transformed thorns into a symbol of his glory. As Emily Dickinson so aptly described it:

One crown that no one seeks
And yet the highest head
Its isolation coveted
Its stigma deified.
[*The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1960), pp. 703-4]

Because he was focused on giving, neither the adulation nor the scorn of the world could deflect him from his mission.

Our Savior knows "according to the flesh" every dimension of our suffering. There is no infirmity he is not familiar with. In his agony he became acquainted with all of the thorns, slivers, and thistles that might afflict us:

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his

people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:11-12).

All irritants of the flesh and the soul should be removed before they fester. However, though they ulcerate and though they torment, they can still be removed, and the healing process will take place. When the infection is healed, the soreness will leave. That process is known as repentance. Repentance and forgiveness are among the greatest fruits of the Atonement. It is not easy to remove the thorns of pride, the thistles of selfishness, the slivers of ego, and the briars of appetite.

Concentrate on flowers, not thorns

In Roselandia, Brazil, outside the great city of São Paulo, there are many acres of beautiful roses. When one stands on a small hill above the rose fields, the aroma is delightful and the beauty is exhilarating. The thorns on the bushes are there, but they in no way lessen the enjoyment of the sight and the smell. I would challenge all to put the thorns, slivers, and thistles we encounter in life in proper perspective. We should deal with them but then concentrate on the flowers of life, not on the thorns. We should savor the smell and beauty of the flower of the rose and the cactus. To savor the sweet aroma of the blossoms, we need to live righteous and disciplined lives in which the study of the scriptures, prayer, right priorities, and right attitudes are integrated into our lives. For members of this church, that focus sharpens inside of our temples. We will all surely encounter some of the thorns, but they are only incidental to the sweet fragrances and exquisite beauty of the blooms. Did not the Savior say: "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matthew 7:16).

Thomas Carlyle, a British writer, stated, "Every noble crown is, and on

Earth will forever be, a crown of thorns" (*Past and Present* [London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1912], 3:173). The ancient Latin phrase *sic transit gloria mundi* means "thus passes away the glory of this world." Earthly rewards can be a sore temptation. In contrast, those who are faithful and are committed to service are promised that they will be "crowned with honor, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life" (D&C 75:5). Thus, neither honors nor trials can defeat. Paul spoke of an incorruptible crown (see 1 Corinthians 9:25), and James spoke of the faithful receiving a "crown of life" (James 1:12). John the Revelator counseled, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11).

"Let him deny himself"

I believe that earthly crowns such as power, the love of money, the preoccupation with material things, the honors of men are a crown of thorns because they are based upon obtaining and receiving rather than giving. So selfishness can make what we think is a noble crown into a crown of thorns beyond our power to endure. When I first started my professional career, one of the senior members in our office asked another senior member for some help on a legal matter. The other man who was asked to help was gifted and able but also selfish. He replied, "What's in it for me?" The "what's in it for me?" philosophy is basically what's wrong with the world. It is surely one of the sharpest points in a crown of thorns.

The call of Jesus Christ to each of us is, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Is it not time that we begin denying ourselves, as the Savior counseled, and surrender and master ourselves rather

than indulge ourselves in a "do my own thing" selfish little world? The question is not so much what we can do, but what God can do through us. Paul said, "If a man therefore purge himself . . . , he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21).

Taking up one's cross and following the Savior is always a commitment to service. When going to school I was very poor. I worked long hours in a canning factory catching steaming-hot cans for twenty-five cents an hour. I learned that selfishness has more to do with how we feel about what we have than how much we have. A poor man can be selfish and a rich man generous, but a person obsessed only with getting will have a hard time to find God. I have come to know that with any privilege comes responsibility. Most privilege carries with it the responsibility to serve, to give, and to bless. God can take away any privilege if it is not used under his omnipotent will. Meeting that challenge to give, to serve, to bless in faithfulness and devotion is the only way to enjoy the crown of glory spoken of by the original Apostles. It is the only way true meaning comes to life. We will be able to receive honors or scorn with equal serenity.

A crown of glory for the faithful

I conclude with the words of Ezekiel, "And thou, son of man, . . . though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid" (Ezekiel 2:6). In our constantly changing world, may we continually cling to those things that do not change: to prayer, to faith, to saving covenants, to love of families, and to brotherhood. By removing the slivers of sin and the thorns of worldly temptation in our lives, and by denying ourselves and taking up our own cross

and following the Savior, we can change a crown of thorns to a crown of glory. I testify, as one of his humble servants called to be his special witness, that he lives. I witness from the depths of my soul that we are engaged in his holy work, to which, if we are faithful, we can be crowned with honor, glory, and eternal life (see D&C 75:5). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Let My Heart Be Pure" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Let My Heart Be Pure."

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude this session by singing "Help Me Teach with Inspiration." The benediction will then be offered by Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church. This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

At one o'clock the Nauvoo Bell and other bells across the nation will ring as part of the three days of national thanksgiving commemorating the end of the Persian Gulf War.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Granddaughters' wedding ceremonies

Ten days ago, I had a beautiful and touching experience in the Salt Lake Temple, the building immediately to the east of this tabernacle. There in that holy sanctuary I had the privilege of sealing in marriage, in two separate but consecutive ceremonies, two beautiful young women who are twins, each to a handsome and able young man of her choice. That evening a double wedding reception was held where hundreds of friends came to express their love and good wishes.

Mothers often shed tears at a wedding ceremony. Sisters also, and sometimes fathers. Seldom do grandparents show any emotion. But these beautiful girls were my own granddaughters, and I must confess that this old grandfather choked up and had a difficult time. I don't understand why. Certainly it was a happy occasion, a fulfillment of dreams and prayers. Perhaps my tears were really an expression of joy and of gratitude to God for these lovely brides and their handsome young husbands.

In sacred promises, they pledged their love and loyalty one to another for time and all eternity.

Marriage is ordained of God

How wonderful a thing is marriage under the plan of our Eternal Father, a plan provided in His divine wisdom for the happiness and security of His children and the continuity of the race.

He is our Creator, and He designed marriage from the beginning. At the time of Eve's creation, "Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: . . .

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:23-24).

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Saints, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11).

In modern revelation the Lord has said, "And again, verily I say unto you,

that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man" (D&C 49:15).

President Joseph F. Smith once declared "that no man can be saved and exalted in the kingdom of God without the woman, and no woman can reach perfection and exaltation in the kingdom of God, alone. . . . God instituted marriage in the beginning. He made man in His own image and likeness, male and female, and in their creation it was designed that they should be united together in sacred bonds of marriage, and one is not perfect without the other" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1913, p. 118).

Surely no one reading the scriptures, both ancient and modern, can doubt the divine concept of marriage. The sweetest feelings of life, the most generous and satisfying impulses of the human heart, find expression in a marriage that stands pure and unsullied above the evil of the world.

Such a marriage, I believe, is the desire—the hoped-for, the longed-for, the prayed-for desire—of men and women everywhere.

Single brethren and sisters

While riding a plane some time ago, I picked up a copy of the *New York Magazine*. As I thumbed through it, I came to a section titled "Strictly Personals." I counted 159 advertisements placed by lonely men and women seeking partners. It was evident that those who had placed the ads had labored to cast themselves in the best light possible. I wish I had time to read some of them to you. You would enjoy them. There was nothing of an unseemly nature. It was easy to sense that behind these witty and clever descriptions was much of sadness and loneliness, a great desire to find an amiable companion with whom to walk the road of life.

My heart reaches out to those among us, especially our single sisters,

who long for marriage and cannot seem to find it. Our Father in Heaven reserves for them every promised blessing. I have far less sympathy for the young men, who under the customs of our society have the prerogative to take the initiative in these matters but in so many cases fail to do so. Strong words have been spoken to them in the past by Presidents of this church.

Marital bliss

Marriage usually means children and family. Can a young mother, having given birth to her first child, doubt the divinity and the wonder and the miracle of it all? Can a young father, looking upon his newborn son or daughter, sense other than that this is a part of the design of the Almighty?

Of course, all in marriage is not bliss. Years ago I clipped these words from a column written by Jenkins Lloyd Jones:

"There seems to be a superstition among many thousands of our young who hold hands and smooch in the drive-ins that marriage is a cottage surrounded by perpetual hollyhocks to which a perpetually young and handsome husband comes home to a perpetually young and ravishing wife. When the hollyhocks wither and boredom and bills appear the divorce courts are jammed. . . .

"Anyone who imagines that bliss is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he has been robbed" ("Big Rock Candy Mountains," *Deseret News*, 12 June 1973, p. A4).

Pain is part of the process

Stormy weather occasionally hits every household. Connected inevitably with the whole process is much of pain—physical, mental, and emotional. There is much of stress and struggle, of fear and worry. For most, there is the

ever-haunting battle of economics. There seems never to be enough money to cover the needs of a family. Sickness strikes periodically. Accidents happen. The hand of death may reach in with dread stealth to take a precious one.

But all of this seems to be part of the processes of family life. Few indeed are those who get along without experiencing some of it. It has been so from the beginning. Cain quarreled with Abel and then did a terrible thing. How great must have been the grief in the hearts of their parents, Adam and Eve.

Love for rebellious children

Absalom was the third son of David, a son favored and loved. David had given him a name which meant "father of peace." But he brought not peace—rather, anger and ambition and sorrow. He killed his brother and conspired against his father. In the midst of his evil actions, in his wicked pursuit for his father's throne, while Absalom rode a mule, his head caught in the branches of an oak tree, and he was left hanging helpless. Joab, nephew of David and captain of the king's army, seizing the opportunity to get rid of this rebellious and traitorous son, pierced his heart with darts. He apparently felt he was doing a favor to the king.

But when David heard of his son's death, even though that son had conspired to destroy him, "the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! . . . [And] the king covered his face, and . . . cried" (2 Samuel 18:33; 19:4).

Through the history of the generations of man, the actions of rebellious

children have been laden with sorrow and heartbreak, but even when there has been rebellion, the strong cords of family life have reached out to encircle the rebellious one.

I know of no more beautiful story in all of literature than that told by the Master as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. It is the story of a heady and greedy son who demanded his inheritance, which he wasted until none was left. Penitent, he returned to his father, and his father, seeing him afar off, ran to him and embraced him and fell upon his neck and kissed him.

The great scourge of divorce

Some of you within the sound of my voice could recount family sorrows in your own experience. But among the greatest of tragedies, and I think the most common, is divorce. It has become as a great scourge. The most recent issue of the *World Almanac* says that in the United States during the twelve months ending with March 1990, an estimated 2,423,000 couples married. During this same period, an estimated 1,177,000 couples divorced. (See *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1991* [New York: World Almanac, 1990], p. 834.)

This means that in the United States almost one divorce occurred for every two marriages.

Those are only figures written on the pages of a book. But behind them lies more of betrayal, more of sorrow, more of neglect and poverty and struggle than the human mind can imagine. Millions of those divorced in this nation are lonely, frustrated, insecure, and unhappy. Millions of single parents are struggling to rear families, carrying burdens beyond their capacity to handle. Millions of children are growing up in single-parent homes from which the parent, usually the

mother, out of necessity is absent much of the time. These "latch-key children" return from school each day to empty houses, where, in many cases, there is inadequate food and only the refuge of the television set. Not only are the children suffering, but all of society is paying a frightful price for their circumstances. As they grow older, the incidence of drugs increases among them. Vast numbers turn to criminal behavior. Inadequately trained, many are unemployed. Some aimlessly squander their lives. Millions have become the "flotsam and jetsam" of society, washed upon the shore by oceans of neglect, abuse, and frustration, helpless to correct their circumstances. *Time* magazine, discussing the problems of New York City, stated that the most serious is the breakdown of the family. Sixty percent of those in New York City public schools, totalling some 600,000, come from one-parent homes. Comparable studies would doubtless bring forth similar statistics for other large cities in America and most of the large cities of the world.

We are building and maintaining more prisons than we can afford. The costs are enormous, almost beyond comprehension.

In an alarming percentage of the cases of those who are warehoused in these facilities, there will be found in their background a broken home where a father abandoned his family and a mother struggled in vain to handle the overpowering odds against her.

Selfishness a major cause of divorce

Why all of these broken homes? What happens to marriages that begin with sincere love and a desire to be loyal and faithful and true one to another?

There is no simple answer. I acknowledge that. But it appears to me

that there are some obvious reasons that account for a very high percentage of these problems. I say this out of experience in dealing with such tragedies. I find selfishness to be the root cause of most of it.

I am satisfied that a happy marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one's companion.

Selfishness so often is the basis of money problems, which are a very serious and real factor affecting the stability of family life. Selfishness is at the root of adultery, the breaking of solemn and sacred covenants to satisfy selfish lust. Selfishness is the antithesis of love. It is a cankering expression of greed. It destroys self-discipline. It obliterates loyalty. It tears up sacred covenants. It afflicts both men and women.

Too many who come to marriage have been coddled and spoiled and somehow led to feel that everything must be precisely right at all times, that life is a series of entertainments, that appetites are to be satisfied without regard to principle. How tragic the consequences of such hollow and unreasonable thinking!

A burdened single mother

Bitter consequences are seen in the lives of children who need but do not have a father who loves them, teaches them, protects them, and leads them along the path of life by example and precept. Let me recount for you something I heard about two years ago in this tabernacle. The occasion was a great gathering of single men and women. Elder Marion D. Hanks conducted a panel discussion. Included in that panel was an attractive and able young woman, divorced, the mother of seven children then ranging in ages from five to sixteen. She said that one

evening she went across the street to deliver something to a neighbor. Listen to her words as I recall them:

"As I turned around to walk back home, I could see my house lighted up. I could hear echoes of my children as I had walked out of the door a few minutes earlier: 'Mom, what are we going to have for dinner?' 'Can you take me to the library?' 'I have to get some poster paper tonight.' Tired and weary, I looked at that house and saw the light on in each of the rooms. I thought of all of those children who were home waiting for me to come and meet their needs. My burdens felt very heavy on my shoulders.

"I remember looking through tears toward the sky, and I said, 'O my Father, I just can't do it tonight. I'm too tired. I can't face it. I can't go home and take care of all those children alone. Could I just come to You and stay with You for just one night? I'll come back in the morning.'

"I didn't really hear the words of reply, but I heard them in my mind. The answer was, 'No, little one, you can't come to me now. You would never wish to come back. But I can come to you.'"

There are so many, so very, very many like that young mother. She recognizes a divine power available to her. She is fortunate enough to have some around to love her and help her, but very many do not have such help. In loneliness and desperation, watching their children drift toward drugs and crime and helpless to stop that drift, they weep and pray.

The Golden Rule is the remedy

There is a remedy for all of this. It is not found in divorce. It is found in the gospel of the Son of God. He it was who said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). The remedy for

most marriage stress is not in divorce. It is in repentance. It is not in separation. It is in simple integrity that leads a man to square up his shoulders and meet his obligations. It is found in the Golden Rule.

Marriage is beautiful when beauty is looked for and cultivated. It can be ugly and uncomfortable when one is looking for faults and is blinded to virtue. As Edgar A. Guest once remarked, "It takes a heap o' livin' in a house t' make it home" ("Home," in *Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest* [Chicago: Reilly and Lee Co., 1934], p. 12). That is true. I can show you throughout this church hundreds of thousands of families who make it work with love and peace, discipline and honesty, concern and unselfishness.

There must be recognition on the part of both husband and wife of the solemnity and sanctity of marriage and of the God-given design behind it.

There must be a willingness to overlook small faults, to forgive, and then to forget.

There must be a holding of one's tongue. Temper is a vicious and corrosive thing that destroys affection and casts out love.

There must be self-discipline that constrains against abuse of wife and children and self. There must be the Spirit of God, invited and worked for, nurtured and strengthened. There must be recognition of the fact that each is a child of God—father, mother, son, and daughter, each with a divine birthright—and also recognition of the fact that when we offend one of these, we offend our Father in Heaven.

Resist Satan's entreaties

There may be now and again a legitimate cause for divorce. I am not one to say that it is never justified. But I say without hesitation that this plague among us, which seems to be growing

everywhere, is not of God, but rather is the work of the adversary of righteousness and peace and truth.

(Due to time constraints, the remainder of this talk was not given from the pulpit. President Hinckley has asked that it be included in the Conference Report.)

You need not be his victims. You can rise above his wiles and entreaties. Get rid of the titillating entertainment, the pornography that leads to evil desires and reprehensible activity. Wives, look upon your husbands as your precious companions and live worthy of that association. Husbands, see in your wives your most valued asset in time or eternity, each a daughter of God, a partner with whom you can walk hand in hand, through sunshine and storm, through all the perils and triumphs of life. Parents, see in your children sons and daughters of your Father in Heaven, who will hold you accountable for them. Stand together as their guardians, their protectors, their guides, their anchors.

God is the designer of the family

The strength of the nations lies in the homes of the people. God is the designer of the family. He intended that the greatest of happiness, the most satisfying aspects of life, the deepest joys should come in our associations together and our concerns one for another as fathers and mothers and children.

God bless the homes of our people. May He bless those homes that there may be loyal and true fathers, and good and wonderful mothers, and obedient and ambitious children reared in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Enos 1:1), I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Help Me Teach with Inspiration."

Bishop Robert D. Hales offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 161st Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 7, 1991. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Robert Cundick at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began:

President Thomas S. Monson

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 161st Annual General Conference of The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To those in the Assembly Hall, we note that Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Carlos E. Asay, and George R. Hill III are seated on the stand.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and accompanied by Robert Cundick, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service by singing "Praise Ye the Lord," and the invocation will then

be offered by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy. We ask that he remember our colleague Brother Derek Cuthbert in that prayer.

The choir sang "Praise Ye the Lord."

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Featherstone. We are pleased to mention that President Benson was here during the session this morning. He waved his greet-

ings to the congregation and is watching the proceedings in his apartment by television.

The choir will now sing "Consolation: I Am a Child of God." Upon the cue from Brother Ottley, we ask the congregation to join in singing the first verse of "I Am a Child of God."

Following the singing, Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "Consolation: I Am a Child of God," and the congregation joined in singing the first verse of "I Am a Child of God."

Elder David B. Haight

The dispensation of the fulness of times

Yesterday, April the 6th, as we have been reminded today, marked the 161st anniversary of the reestablishment of our Lord's church in these latter days. The history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is also a history of the dispensation of the fulness of times.

A dispensation is the dispensing of blessings or afflictions by Deity, as appropriate. A dispensation is also defined as a period when God has revealed his mind and will to man. It "means the opening of the heavens to men; the . . . dispensing to them the word of God; the revealing to men . . . the principles and ordinances of the Gospel; the conferring of divine authority upon . . . chosen ones, by which they are empowered to act in the name . . . [and] authority of God. . . . The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times is the dispensation which includes all others," both in heaven and on earth. It is the dispensation which will fulfill

all of the decrees of a loving Heavenly Father for "the salvation of [all] men and the redemption of the earth itself" (*History of the Church*, 1:xxiii).

An inspired Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, "It is necessary . . . that a . . . welding together of dispensations . . . should take place . . . from the days of Adam even to the present time" (D&C 128:18).

The gospel, of course, is of great antiquity. In the heavenly kingdom it was formed before the foundation of the earth. From the very first, the plan of man's progression and salvation was known. (See *History of the Church*, 1:xxiii–xciv.)

This period of time in which we live, the dispensation of the fulness of times, will see the culmination of all of God's work on the earth. For this reason, we are anxiously engaged in the Lord's work, which includes the performance of certain ordinances for all who have lived and will live upon the earth.

Granite Mountain Records Vault

Just a few minutes' drive to the southeast of where we are, in one of the many beautiful canyons that grace these Wasatch Mountains, stands a huge granite mountain. From the road deep in the canyon floor, most automobile passengers do not see the large, arched portals cut high in the side of the mountain. Few would realize that behind these portals are six large storage rooms cut deep into the solid granite and that in them lie the world's largest collection of genealogical records. These are not ordinary records, but records listing the births, marriages, and deaths of nearly two billion people who have lived on the earth. They are the product of over fifty years of tireless effort the world over by Church representatives, by microfilm camera operators, and by those who care for these records housed row upon row in microfilm cabinets deep in the mountain. The magnitude of this project to gather and preserve these records is awesome to behold.

Why we gather records

"Why do you do this?" some ask. "Why does the Church commit millions of dollars and tens of thousands of hours to this immense but unusual project? Why have such great concern for those who have died?"

Our answer is simple yet profound: "Because we love them. Because they are entitled to the same blessings that we enjoy. Because this is a major part of the heavenly plan for this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, for the blessing of all people."

We gather these records to identify our ancestors. We identify our ancestors so that we may perform for them the saving ordinances of the gospel in holy temples dedicated to that purpose. It is our responsibility, given

to us by the Lord, to help redeem all those of our Father's children who have lived and died without receiving the sacred ordinances of the gospel. Yet all have the opportunity to accept or reject the ordinances performed in their behalf.

Conversation with a British lawyer

Several years ago I was riding on a train from Edinburgh, Scotland, to Glasgow with a noted British lawyer. We had engaged him to present our claim of discrimination by the city council of Glasgow. We were seeking a building permit, which had been repeatedly denied by the city council at the instigation of an opposing ministerial group as not needed inasmuch as there was an abundance of vacant or unused church buildings. We had been granted a hearing before the secretary of state for Scotland, a member of the prime minister's cabinet.

As the early morning train sped toward Glasgow, I asked the distinguished counsel if he had any additional questions about our church. I was concerned about his limited understanding of our expansion, of why we were building modern church buildings and why we had hundreds of missionaries in Great Britain. He assured me that he was quite comfortable in representing us and presenting our case that to him appeared to have merit.

As we discussed other aspects of our growing presence in Great Britain, he said, "I hear, but it couldn't be true, that you baptize for dead people."

I said, "Yes, it is true—not only true that we do it today, but the eternal principle of vicarious service of baptism for the dead was taught during our Savior's earthly ministry."

I explained that all of God's worthy children of all ages can become heirs of salvation in His kingdom. I

briefly reminded the lawyer of Jesus teaching Nicodemus that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

"Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born [again] when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-5).

I also made reference to the early Apostles' teachings regarding Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of all, including Paul's great statement: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" (1 Corinthians 15:29).

The engaged lawyer seemed comfortable. He presented our case effectively. We won our building permit. The chapel now stands in Glasgow, Scotland.

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared:

"Let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation. . . . They without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect" (D&C 128:15).

FamilySearch™

"But how?" you might say. "Even with the millions of rolls of microfilm at my fingertips, even with the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and the hundreds of family history centers located in stake centers and ward meetinghouses scattered across the earth, how can I unlock the secrets hidden away in those microfilms and identify my ancestors?"

Genealogy has long been associated with tedium, painstaking research, and musty books. But no more! Now we have available a modern miracle called FamilySearch. FamilySearch is a powerful, innovative computer system. In response to your typing in a name of one of your ancestors at a keyboard, FamilySearch, in just moments, races through millions of names and finds any that match what you typed. It knows how to match names that are spelled differently but sound the same. It can guide you from one small fragment of sketchy information to full screens of information—dates and places of birth, marriage, and death; and names of parents, children, and spouses.

To store all of this information, FamilySearch uses little compact discs—the same electronic marvels that you see in the record stores. Each disc can store as many as five million names.

FamilySearch includes many different kinds of records: publicly available government records from the military and other agencies as well as the Family History Library's own catalog, an index to completed temple ordinances, and family pedigrees contributed from people the world over. Each of these files is a valuable contribution to our efforts in fulfilling our mandate.

Ancestral File™

One of the most promising and helpful features of FamilySearch is Ancestral File. It has made the world much smaller because it has put total strangers with common ancestry in touch with each other. Suddenly, Church members and nonmembers alike are finding new cousins and thousands of deceased ancestors at the press of a computer key.

By using Ancestral File at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City or at one of the local libraries scattered across the country, you are able to view on a computer screen the pedigrees and family group records of more than seven million people, and the file is continually growing as you and your friends contribute your own data to the file. Many of those listed are your relatives and mine. You can also see on the computer screen the names and addresses of each person who has submitted the information, thereby enabling you to make contact and exchange information and verify the facts.

Some of you may be intimidated or have a fear of using computers. This need not be.

Ellie is twelve. She was planning to go to the Family History Library with her Beehive class. She was a little apprehensive, not having been before. But her father told her not to worry. All she needed to do to get started was to use the computer.

But Ellie smiled. She was sure that her father was joking, and she replied, "Oh, I could never do that. I couldn't even work the computer."

The day arrived for her visit to the library. Ellie and her friend Cami decided to give the computer a try. They quickly learned that if they would read and follow the instructions on the screen, they would do just fine.

It was an excited Ellie who returned home that evening. "So you found some names you recognized?" her father asked. "Oh, yes! At first I looked for Grandpa's name, and I found it. Then I looked for Uncle Steve, and he was there. And then I looked for me, and I was there. I found me! I was right there on the screen! And all of the other family names filled up the whole screen. When can we go again?" she said.

A nonmember in Wisconsin, with other family members, has been stymied by lack of information on her great-grandfather. She decided to try Ancestral File and, after some searching, discovered her great-grandfather, the very one she had been looking for for many years. Shortly she had transferred to her disk several thousand additional names and over 1,300 marriages on this previously "dead-end" line. She too is entering thousands of additional names on other lines to contribute to Ancestral File.

One member from Georgia was able to extend his pedigree back to 1486 using Ancestral File and now has submitted hundreds of names for temple work.

Contributing to Ancestral File

Ancestral File will continue to increase in value as members and nonmembers contribute their family history research in a cooperative effort to identify and link the family of man. It catalogs extended family relationships—a sort of electronic book of remembrance full of pedigree charts and family group records—not only for your family but also the families of tens of thousands of others, indicating where your family line links with countless others.

Simple instructions on how you can contribute your family's accumulated information to Ancestral File are now available at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and at the other centers in various stake centers and ward meetinghouses in the United States and Canada and, shortly, worldwide. Ask your ward family history consultant where the nearest center is to you, find out how to contribute your genealogical data into the computer, and then make that information available to the world.

Unlock the secrets of your ancestry

We know that God our Father is our greatest teacher, and nothing that we might read or hear should quicken our attention like His instructions and counsel. These marvelous new technological developments have been revealed in this dispensation in greater fulness and greater plainness than ever before in the history of the world as far as we know so that His purposes might be speedily brought to pass. The Church, in establishing family history centers, is now bringing these marvelous developments directly to you.

From Buckeye, Arizona, to Birmingham, Alabama; and from Sandpoint, Idaho, to Albany, New York; and from Calgary, Canada, to Montreal, Canada; and soon from Sydney, Australia, to London, England, the Saints will be able to go to a Church meetinghouse near their homes and unlock the secrets of their ancestry.

One of the most thrilling results of being involved in family research and genealogical research is becoming intimately acquainted with our ancestors—their challenges and achievements—and then showing our gratitude by performing for them the ordinances that will allow them to obtain the greatest of all gifts: the gift of eternal life.

Lord of the living and dead

James E. Talmage wrote: "Compliance with the ordinance [of baptism] has been shown to be essential to salvation, and this condition applies to all mankind. Nowhere in scripture is a distinction made in this regard between the living and the dead. . . . All are children of the same Father, all to be judged and rewarded or punished by the same unerring justice, with the same . . . mercy . . . for all inhabitants of earth . . . past, present, and future. . . . He is Lord alike of [all—the] living and dead" (*Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924], p. 145).

"Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand. . . . Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple . . . a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all [acceptance]" (D&C 128:24).

This I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard, also a member of the Council of the Twelve, and he will be followed by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Christmas lighting celebration

During this past Christmas season, I had the privilege of participating in the Washington, D.C., Visitors' Center Christmas lighting celebration. When I turned on the 200,000 lights, they

seemed to dance and sparkle in the trees, with the majestic temple glowing in the background. That night, outside of their Soviet community for the first time, thirty-five children from the Soviet Embassy School performed.

They presented the dances and songs of their homeland beautifully. Following their program, boys and girls who were members of the Church performed for an appreciative audience that included embassy officials from twenty-two nations.

The children who were members of the Church were sitting on risers that had been placed directly in front of the eight-foot *Christus* statue that stands as the focal point of the visitors' center lobby. The Soviet children were sitting with their teachers and parents apart from our youngsters. When I stood to speak, these beautiful young people with their vibrant countenances captured my attention. I asked the Soviet boys and girls to come and sit with our youth. As they did, it was a beautiful sight and an appropriate way to begin the Christmas season. Sweet and pure children from two powerful nations showed an instant love for one another as they were seated at the feet of the *Christus*.

I said to the audience that perhaps the world's troubles could be solved if we could turn over the leadership of nations to the children for a few days. Through love they would find solutions to the misunderstandings, mistrust, and misconduct of adults in the world. I had the clear impression that night that if all men and women could love Jesus Christ as these lovely children do, many world problems could be solved. Sooner, perhaps, than we realize, the fate of nations will be in the hands of today's children. An anonymous author penned it this way:

I saw tomorrow passing on little children's feet
And on their forms and faces her prophecies complete.
And then I saw tomorrow look at me through little children's eyes.
And I thought how carefully I must teach if I am wise!

My dear brothers and sisters, if we are concerned about our tomorrows, we will teach our children wisely and carefully, for in them lie our tomorrows.

Little children are pure and innocent

Have you seen the future when you gazed through the hospital nursery window and saw the bassinet wheeled into your view? You see that beautiful newborn infant for the first time. A new spirit comes into your life as a son or daughter, grandchild, or child of a friend, and you know that your life will never be quite the same again. How often have you had to blink back the tears as you stood in awe and contemplated the miracle of a new life? This newly arrived spirit has come in sweet innocence from the presence of God.

Every human being is a spirit child of God and lived with Heavenly Father before coming to earth. He entrusts his spirit children to earthly parents, who provide a mortal body for them through the miracle of physical birth, and gives to parents the sacred opportunity and responsibility to love, protect, teach, and to bring them up in light and truth so they may one day, through the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ, return to our Father's presence.

These precious souls come to us in purity and innocence. As parents, we assume an immense responsibility for their care and well-being. Parents share this sacred trust with brothers and sisters, grandparents, teachers, neighbors, and all who touch the lives and impress or influence the souls of these precious children. King Benjamin admonished parents many years ago, "But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another" (Mosiah 4:15).

Parents are to teach their children

The critical nature of the first tender formative years cannot be overstated. These little ones are like seedlings in a plant nursery. All look much the same in the beginning, but each one will grow to become independent and unique. Parents are to nourish, tend, and teach their children so they will grow to their full stature and potential.

Parents and teachers should see beyond the little girl in pigtails and should not be misled by the ragged little boy with a dirty face and holes in the knees of his pants. True teachers and leaders see children as they may become. They see the valiant missionary who will one day share his testimony with the world and later become a righteous father who honors his priesthood. The inspired teacher sees pure and beautiful mothers and future presidents of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary, even though today they may be girls who giggle and chatter on the back row in the classroom. Sometimes people say, "Well, boys will be boys!" Not so. Boys will be men, and almost before we know it.

To see our children grow, succeed, and take their places in society and in the Lord's kingdom is an eternal reward worth any inconvenience or sacrifice.

Oh, that every parent could understand that children come from a premortal experience and have possibilities that often are far beyond what we might expect. We should spare no effort to help our children reach their full potential. Is it any wonder that Jesus brought the little children unto himself to teach and bless them? He said, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me" (Mark 9:37). He also said, "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14).

When asked who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, the Savior "called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1-4).

"Can I go too?"

A recent experience illustrates the importance of each of these little children. One Saturday morning I was preparing for an activity with one of my grandsons. But before we could make our exit out the door, I heard another small voice inquiring, "Can I go too, Grandpa?" Did you ever try to say no to such a request? That activity would not have been the same without that someone else who really wanted to "go too." Just as surely, heaven will not be heaven if some of our children who want to "go too" are left behind.

Some may choose not to go. Our Heavenly Father has given them the agency to choose for themselves. We have the task of helping them learn about our Heavenly Father's plan for us, demonstrating our faith in the Lord, and continuing to work with our children in prayerful and patient persuasion.

No sacrifice is too great

To teach our children the gospel of Jesus Christ and to protect them from the influences of a wicked world, love must abide in our homes. We should cherish and care for our children with unwavering dedication. The older we grow, the more precious our family becomes to us. We come to see more clearly that all of the wealth,

honor, and positions of the world pale in significance when compared to the precious souls of our loved ones. You young parents who are beginning your families must guard against seeking financial gain, worldly comforts, or achievement at the expense of your children. You must guard against being so anxious to get to work or to a meeting that you do not have time for your family, especially time to listen to anxious little voices. Always remember this timeless counsel from a prophet of God, President David O. McKay: "No other success can compensate for failure in the home" (J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* [Washington, D.C.: The Southern Co-operative League, 1924], p. 42; quoted by President McKay in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, p. 115).

We cannot and we must not allow the school, community, television, or even Church organizations to establish our children's values. The Lord has placed this duty with mothers and fathers. It is one from which we cannot escape and one that cannot be delegated. Others may help, but parents remain accountable. Therefore, we must guard the sanctity of our homes because that is where children develop their values, attitudes, and habits for everyday living.

Children perceive their own identity much earlier than we may realize. They want to be recognized as individuals. Not long ago as my wife visited with our daughter, her three-year-old son ran to his grandmother. She picked him up and said, "Hi, how are you doing, Babes?" He looked at her and said with a serious voice, "I not a babes, I a dude!" In the vernacular of the day, he was asserting that he was someone special, he had a place, and he belonged.

What a beautiful place this world will be when every father and mother see the importance of teaching their children the principles that will help

them be happy and successful. Parents teach best when they lead by good example; govern their little ones with patience, kindness, and love unfeigned; and have the same spirit of love for children that Jesus exemplified.

In times of need, a father may bless his children through the righteous exercise of his priesthood. Every mother can accept her children from her Father in Heaven as her great source of joy. She will know that because her children are also children of God, no sacrifice is too great to protect them from evil and to surround them with a spirit of love and trust in God.

A young boy prays for help

One of our grandsons, when he was five years old, became confused when his family moved into a new ward. He thought the meetings were over and went outside. When he realized he was alone and could not find the family or their car, he knelt down and prayed for help. Just a few minutes later, one of the counselors in the Primary presidency came out and asked him if he was lost. A Primary teacher had called to her from the door of a classroom and said that someone was missing. The teacher asked the counselor to find out who it was. The counselor felt impressed to look outside and went straight to our grandson. Later, the teacher and counselor both commented on how strong their impressions were that he needed help. We were thankful that his parents and Primary teachers had taught him that Heavenly Father loves him and had taught him to always pray for help.

Teachers should teach with love

Priesthood leaders should select dedicated, spiritually guided Primary teachers. Teachers should teach by love and example after prayerful prep-

aration. A loving teacher each Sunday can calm the fear of new surroundings and help children want to come to Church meetings. One five-year-old girl began to cry as the family was preparing for Sunday meetings. When asked why, she sobbed, "I don't know who my teacher will be." Her class had had several teachers in recent months; the frequent change had disturbed the peace of that tender little soul.

Blocks in a fortress of faith

Our children do not grow to full physical stature suddenly. In like manner, their spiritual growth takes place over time. This development might be compared to erecting a block building. The walls are formed block by block with a strong mortar holding each block to the others. We could give these building blocks names such as bedtime stories, listening to a child pray, tucking a child in bed at night, and a quiet review of the day's activities. Other blocks could be pleasant dinner conversations, praise for tasks well done, birthday parties, and family outings. Others could be doing your chores, being kind to one another, reading from the scriptures together, serving others, and saying I love you. Still other blocks could be learning to work, taking responsibility, respecting elders, singing together, doing homework, attending Primary, and honoring the Sabbath day. Even larger blocks are family home evening, respecting and honoring the priesthood, and family prayer.

A vast array of such beautiful building blocks that are placed carefully can form a fortress of faith that the tidal waves of worldly distraction and evil cannot breach. These blocks are held together with a mortar called love: love of Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ, love of parents, love

for each other, love for choosing the good.

Many children have only one parent at home, and some are left with no parents at all. We all share a responsibility to help fill such voids and to provide sustained assistance and encouragement.

Child abuse is an abomination

On the negative side, we hear disturbing reports of parents or guardians who are so far removed from the Spirit of Christ that they abuse children. Whether this abuse is physical, verbal, or the less evident but equally severe emotional abuse, it is an abomination and a serious offense to God. Jesus left no question about the seriousness of harming children in any way when he said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

Take time for your children

We plead with you to take time for your children and your grandchildren while they are young. Special moments may come only once. Before we are aware, they have grown older, and our best opportunity for teaching them how to live happy and fulfilling lives is past.

I know that we are all spirit children of a loving Heavenly Father, brothers and sisters, every one of us with a glorious destiny if we will humble ourselves as little children and keep the commandments of God. May we be blessed with the Spirit of Christ in our own lives, and may we have his Spirit with us in teaching little children is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Loren C. Dunn

Charity, forgiveness, and respect

There is a quality that can be seen in the lives of most Christians and good men and women everywhere. It not only is demonstrated in their actions but also seems to be a part of their nature. It is a blend of charity, forgiveness, and respect; and it takes into account the realization that God stands at the helm and we are all His children. As a result of this, we have certain obligations to one another.

"Wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love" (2 Nephi 26:30). And the scriptures also teach us, "And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses" (Mosiah 26:31). This quality can be a part of a person's life without compromising principle or commitment to truth.

Joseph Smith respected all people

Not long ago, Father Paul Showalter of Nauvoo shared with us an interesting insight on the Prophet Joseph Smith that came from the early Catholic history of that area.

When the Saints began to settle in Nauvoo and surrounding areas, a French Catholic priest by the name of Father John Alleman, who lived in neighboring McDonough County, needed transportation to visit a sick parishioner. Joseph provided him with ferry service to cross the river and a carriage to his destination.

As an expression of respect, Joseph commented, "The priests attend to their people faithfully and mind their own business, whereas others are continually bothering the Latter-day Saints."

This quality of respect for others, no matter what their belief or religious affiliation, seems to have been a part of the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

He stood for truth and the restored gospel to his dying day, and he had no patience with those who were deliberately wicked or who tried to exercise unrighteous dominion over the Latter-day Saints or, for that matter, anyone else. Still he showed a respect and brotherly concern for others, no matter what their beliefs or their backgrounds, which in many ways was remarkable when one considers the persecution that both he and the early Saints underwent.

He said at one time that he was in possession of the quality of love, and we also read that if he could get the ear of his enemies, he was usually able to win them over. In his dealings with members and nonmembers, he was committed to a principle which can be found in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. . . .

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith" (121:41-42, 45).

Joseph Smith declared the doctrine of the Restoration with great power and force. And never once did he back away from an opportunity to proclaim the truth of this work. He was the forerunner of literally legions of missionaries who have gone throughout the world to proclaim the same truths. Nevertheless, he also said, "I never feel to force my doctrine upon any person; I rejoice to see prejudice give way to truth, and the traditions of men dispersed by the pure principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (*History of the Church*, 6:213).

In the closing days of his life, when Nauvoo was besieged with mobs and challenges both from within and without, he and Hyrum still took the time to write to a Mr. Tewkesbury in Boston, who had become disaffiliated with the Church, inviting him to be restored once again to fellowship. The letter says in part, "Feeling an ardent desire for the salvation of the souls of men, we . . . would, in the sincerity of men of God, advise you to be rebaptized by Elder Nickerson, one of the servants of God, that you may again receive the sweet influences of the Holy Ghost, and enjoy the fellowship of the Saints" (*History of the Church*, 6:427).

Invitation to come back

This same spirit can be found in the First Presidency letter of 1985, which said in part: "We are aware of some who are inactive, of others who have become critical and are prone to find fault, and of those who have been disfellowshipped or excommunicated because of serious transgressions.

"To all such we reach out in love. We are anxious to forgive in the spirit of Him who said: 'I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.' (D&C 64:10.)" ("Policies and Announcements," *Ensign*, Mar. 1986, p. 88). This letter is referred to as the invitation to come back.

Today we live in times of conflict, dissent, differences of opinion, charges, countercharges, disagreements. There is a need for us, perhaps more than ever before, to reach within ourselves and allow the quality of mutual respect, mingled with charity and forgiveness, to influence our actions with one another; to be able to disagree without becoming disagreeable; to lower our voices and build on common ground with the realization that once the storm has passed, we will still have to live with one another.

Senator Humphrey's bouquet of roses

While living in the East some years ago, I read of an experience that took place on the floor of the United States Senate. As I recall, a debate was taking place. The leader of the debate in one party was Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. The floor leader for the other party was Senator Margaret Chase Smith of Maine. As time went on, it was clear that Senator Humphrey's party would win.

On the morning of the vote, Senator Humphrey went out to his garden and cut some red roses. When Margaret Chase Smith arrived at her desk on the senate floor that morning, there was the bouquet of roses. This, of course, did not change Senator Smith's mind concerning the issues, but it was a gesture of respect and appreciation.

In our dealings with one another, no matter what our position might be, we need more roses—and, after Elder Faust's talk this morning, I suppose, roses without thorns.

Coach Sterling Harris of Tooele

I was raised in a community in the western valleys of Utah. The town, Tooele, was settled by pioneers. When precious ore deposits were discovered in the nearby mountains, people came in from southern and eastern Europe who had a different culture and different religious preferences. They came to work in the mines and at the smelter.

They settled just east of town and called their community New Town. From almost the beginning, there was division and suspicion and misunderstanding between the new residents, who brought with them their old-country customs, and the people of the more established community, who were mostly of pioneer stock. The two groups seldom mixed.

One year the high school hired a football coach fresh out of Utah State by the name of Sterling Harris. Coach Harris, as he came to be known, was outgoing and just a little irreverent. He went throughout the old town and the new town and made sure he got all the boys in school and then out for football. He had a nickname for everyone, and after a while it became a sort of status symbol to carry a Sterling Harris nickname.

It wasn't long after that before he had the Gowns and the Whitehouses lined up next to the Savages and the Stepsics, and the Ormes and the Melinkoviches running from the same backfield. He was tough but impartial, and he had about him a presence that made people feel important and want to do their best.

The team came together, and Coach Harris even took them to more than one state championship. But what was more important, in bringing the team together he brought the whole community together. Walls were broken down; people from diverse cultures learned they could build on mutual respect and appreciation. Sterling Harris had become a bridge.

Sterling Harris still lives in Tooele; he is ninety-one years of age. He went on to accomplish many other things in his life, including being superintendent of schools and a leader in the Church, but none was more important than helping a community to unite itself and reestablish the principle of respect for others of different backgrounds and cultures.

In the cities of this world, in the towns, in the neighborhoods, in the homes, we need more Sterling Harris from every walk of life.

Mutual respect can resolve problems

Robert Frost once wrote:

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know

What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall.
["Mending Wall"]

People will always have opposing views, and I suppose there will always be conflict and even misunderstanding. But the principle of mutual respect mixed with charity and forgiveness can lay the foundation for the resolving of differences and the solving of problems.

Was it not the Savior, speaking of the first and great commandment, who said that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, might, mind, and strength and that the second is like unto it, that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves? (see Matthew 22:36-39). The quality of mutual respect is a great quality. It can be found in the hearts of great people, and in this sense we all should be great people. It does not have to compromise truth or principle, but it can create brotherhood and sisterhood and the resolution of many problems.

May the Lord bless us that we may look upon one another in that spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve, followed by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God," following which Sister Janette C. Hales, second counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang
"The Spirit of God."

Janette C. Hales

A pattern for making a sport coat

Many years ago while my children were very young, the nighttime bottles and the daytime diapers seemed as endless as the frozen ground outside our military apartment. When I feel sorry for myself, it helps me to do something for someone else. That winter my need was great, so I needed a grand solution. I decided to make a sport coat for my husband. Having no experience in tailoring, I began by finding the best pattern and materials on the market. With great enthusiasm I took out the pattern guide. My heart nearly failed me. There were pages of instructions—138 steps, as I remember. It was beyond my ability. The next few days I took that pattern everywhere I went. I decided to work on no more than two steps per day so I wouldn't get discouraged. When two steps were completed, I would read the directions for the next day's task. Occasionally I got overanxious and had to unpick, but fortunately mistakes in good materials don't remain if they are carefully removed. A few months later I had created a masterpiece. The pattern had made the miracle possible. Patterns had become very important to me.

A pattern of righteousness

As my awareness of patterns has continued, I have become very appreciative of the Lord's patterns. Patterns for his handiwork are detailed in the scriptures. They describe the building of a tabernacle, an ark, an altar, and temples. The materials are important; the purpose is grand. Then comes that most important pattern of righteousness set by Jesus Christ, "a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Timothy 1:16). In every imaginable setting from

ancient times to modern days, we see this pattern repeated—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Patterns are meant to be repeated. A pattern of righteousness is worthy of duplication, yet there are those who suppose that our righteousness involves climbing some imaginary vertical ladder. We then think we hasten our progress by trying to get above or ahead of others. I believe this is pride. In Alma we are told, "The preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength" (Alma 1:26). Righteousness is reproduced horizontally, not vertically. When we establish a pattern of righteousness in our lives, we commit to our Heavenly Father to do all in our power to help others reproduce this pattern in their lives. This can happen over and over until, as it says in Isaiah, "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:9).

Heavenly Father tells us in the Doctrine and Covenants, "I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived" (D&C 52:14). To avoid deception, we should watch for patterns of righteousness in our lives. I would like to mention three: prayer, scripture study, and service to others.

The pattern of prayer

When we have learned the importance of prayer, the habit of daily prayer can be reproduced in the lives of others by teaching and good example. My youngest daughter said that prayer became more meaningful to her as she watched her older sister kneel by the bed at night when she thought others were asleep. As a student at BYU, I remember kneeling in prayer with

eight roommates each morning at 6:30 and then having breakfast together. Years later, if we missed having prayer with our children, I was sure my old roommates would be concerned. What a great pattern they set for me. Is that happening in homes and apartments today?

A few months ago I was kneeling in prayer with a young family in Albuquerque. I had a wonderful warm feeling as I opened my eyes and looked around that circle. It was as if I imagined families in homes throughout the world having that same experience. Hopefully, if the pattern of prayer is established in our homes, individual family members will help reproduce that pattern for others as my roommates did for me.

The pattern of scripture study

Scripture study helps us increase our understanding of the pattern of righteousness. As we live the words of God, we are told, "He will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept" (D&C 98:12). I am encouraged by the examples of scripture reading I see. I have a daughter who likes to warm her feet before going to bed. I love to see her sitting on the bathroom counter with her feet in a sink of warm water as she reads her scriptures. My two grandsons, ages two and four, report with satisfaction the stickers they receive on their progress charts as they say their prayers and hear scripture stories each day. These fundamental patterns will always need to be taught to our children if righteousness is to continue.

The pattern of service

Giving loving service is another beautiful pattern of righteousness often learned in our homes. The scriptures teach of the importance of

service, and leaders testify of its importance. Harold Glen Clark, the first president of the Provo Temple, wrote a story for his grandchildren called "Good for One Pass into Heaven." Brother Clark wrote:

"I was thinking of what one thing I had ever done that might have pleased the Lord most. Deacons quorum president? Bishop? Patriarch? Temple president?

"Then it came to me what it might be. It was when I was sixteen or seventeen years old. My mother, who often took in the unfortunate, had the care of two grandpas at one time. Someone said to her in jest, 'Why don't you put up a sign, "Grandpas wanted"?' But it wasn't funny because I was assigned to take care of one grandpa, who had to be bathed, dressed and undressed, and helped to the table to eat. Now I was a fun-loving sixteen-year-old, and here I was too many times, nursing Grandpa while a good game of basketball was going on outside.

"Once when my pals were calling me, I was inside doing the tedious chore of taking off his wet pajamas. I was impatient and upset. Then I felt Grandpa's trembling hand on mine. I turned and met his tearful countenance and heard him say, 'God bless you, my boy. You will never regret doing this for me.'

"I was so sorry I had been resentful. . . . To this day, I have a warm glow about this little service I performed for a quite helpless grandpa.

"I suppose doing something for someone else which they cannot do for themselves brings you close to God because that's what He and His Son are doing all the time, out of pure love for us."

Role models of righteousness

Our young people need role models as they establish a pattern of right-

teousness in their lives. As I thought about my commitment to the youth of the Church, words of Elder Boyd K. Packer had added meaning. Elder Packer has spoken of the warnings of Alma and Helaman as they told of the Church in their day. Quoting Elder Packer: "They warned about fast growth, the desire to be accepted by the world, to be popular, and particularly they warned about prosperity. Each time those conditions existed in combination, the Church drifted off course" (Regional Representatives' seminar, 30 Mar. 1990).

Again I was thinking about the youth of the Church. Consider the transition of a young person beginning at the age of twelve and lasting until the eighteenth year. The conditions spoken of in the Book of Mormon are almost always present in the lives of young people—a period of fast growth, a desire to be liked by others, to be popular, and often prosperity. A pattern of personal righteousness which includes prayer, scripture study, and service is the answer to avoiding the dangers spoken of in the Book of Mormon. Nephi knew this when he asked the Lord, "O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness!" (2 Nephi 4:33).

When I looked for a definition of *pattern*, I found it had a Latin origin derived from *pater*, or "father," one who served as a model or pattern to be emulated. Our Savior Jesus Christ set

the pattern and asked us to follow him. Nephi asks, "Can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?" (2 Nephi 31:10).

I am grateful to men and women and people of all ages whose lives help us see this pattern of righteousness. I am thankful for a living prophet. A few days after I was called as a counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, the First Presidency of the Church approached my chair to set me apart and give me a blessing. I realized the prophet of God was about to lay his hands upon my head, and I was in awe. Following the blessing, as I turned to face the prophet, I was quite unprepared for the magnificence of the spirit I felt. I bear testimony that Ezra Taft Benson is a prophet of God and that Jesus Christ is our Savior. He has given us a pattern of righteousness that, when followed, will lead us back to our Heavenly Father. I bear this witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Sister Janette C. Hales, second counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, has just spoken to us. What a pattern she has provided for all of us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Robert E. Wells of the Seventy.

Elder Robert E. Wells

Christ offers spiritual peace

Last Sunday Latter-day Saints joined together with the entire Christian world in remembering and celebrating Easter. We were worshipping our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and honoring his resurrection. We were

also thanking God, as we have done today on this special day of prayer, for the liberation of Kuwait and the hope of lasting peace in the Persian Gulf area with the returning of troops to their homelands.

When Christ was born into this world, angels proclaimed, "Peace on earth, good will toward men" (see

Luke 2:14). Yet in the two thousand years since that proclamation there has been little peace in the world. Even with the successful cessation of major hostilities in the gulf, there still remains an uneasy peace between some nations and great unrest within other nations. Just as Christ's atonement has saved us from both physical and spiritual death, the peace of which the Savior of mankind spoke is also both physical and spiritual.

Today I'd like to speak about this spiritual peace offered by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, when he gave us the beautiful beatitude about peace and peacemakers. The entire sermon is a blueprint for us to use in our personal path towards perfection, as well as a pattern of the many attributes and qualities we must develop in our eternal quest to approach the perfection and peace Jesus personifies.

I like to think of when the sermon was first taught. In my mind's eye, I see a scene of peaceful beauty: I envision an afternoon in early April. The sky is softening toward dusk, with not even a breeze. White, wispy cirrus clouds stand almost motionless in the clear blue sky. And below, on the coast of the Sea of Galilee, soft waves lap against moored fishing boats. A great crowd assembles on the side of the hill. Eager listeners sit on the grass or stand amidst the rocks and early spring flowers. All are hushed and thoughtful as every face is lifted up, every eye looking toward the Lord and every ear listening as the Savior tells them what they need to do in order to have peace in their lives.

Tenderly Christ speaks, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9). Another Bible translator quotes the Savior as saying, "Happy are those who *make* peace" (J. B. Phillips, trans., *The New Testament in Modern English* [New York: Macmillan Co., 1958], p. 9; italics added). Either way, we focus on the strong verb *make* as in "make peace" or

"peacemakers." To follow Christ and bring forth the blessings of heaven, we must actively make peace in the world, in the community, in the neighborhood, and above all, in the home we live in.

In the meridian of time, many expected Christ to take a political stand against Roman rule and offer peace to the oppressed people. Christ did indeed offer peace, but it was not external or political; rather, the peace Christ taught was internal and personal.

President Lee's statement about war

I would like to share an incident which took place during the Vietnam War. There were some who were convinced that the United States was engaged in a noble and justifiable war. However, public opinion was changing, and there was opposition which argued that the U.S. should pull out of Vietnam.

President Harold B. Lee was the President of the Church at the time. While at an area conference in another country, he was interviewed by reporters from the international news services. One reporter asked President Lee, "What is your church's position on the Vietnam War?" Some recognized the question as a trap—one which could not be answered without a very real risk of being misunderstood or misinterpreted. If the prophet answered, "We are against the war," the international media could state, "How strange—a religious leader who is against the position of the country he is obliged to sustain in his own church's articles of faith." On the other hand, if President Lee answered, "We are in favor of the war," the media could question, "How strange—a religious leader in favor of war." Either way, the answer could result in serious problems regarding public opinion both inside and outside the Church.

President Lee, with great inspiration and wisdom, answered as would a man who knows the Savior: "We, together with the whole Christian world, abhor war. But the Savior said, 'In me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation' (John 16:33)." And then the prophet quoted that other comforting scripture from John: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). President Lee then explained: "The Savior was not talking about the peace that can be achieved between nations, by military force, or by negotiation in the halls of parliaments. Rather, he was speaking of the peace we can each have in our own lives when we live the commandments and come unto Christ with broken hearts and contrite spirits." (See Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 70.)

A father's voice brings peace

A tender, sweet story about receiving peace from the scriptures appeared in the January 1991 *Ensign*, submitted by Sister Carole Seegmiller. Using a few excerpts, I quote from her article:

"Dad decided that our family should begin an intensive study of the scriptures to help my brother Bruce prepare for his mission. Dad's goal was to read the entire Book of Mormon before Bruce left, tape-recording our voices as we went along. . . . We would take turns reading a chapter [each]. . . .

"The family finished the Book of Mormon a few months later, . . . so Dad decided we should read and record the four Gospels from the New Testament. I complained this time, telling Dad that I didn't see the point: we could buy audiotapes of professionals reading the scriptures—and they sounded a lot better than we did. Still Dad persisted. 'Carole, one day

these tapes will be a great blessing to us.' . . .

"I began to enjoy these times together with the family. I especially liked to hear Dad share his personal insights about a passage. Soon I began to sense the peace that comes through studying the scriptures. We finished reading the four Gospels shortly before Bruce left for the Missionary Training Center. . . .

"After Bruce left, I noticed how comforting the tapes were to Dad. He often listened to them, partly just to hear Bruce's voice, I thought, since they had been very close. Sometimes at night Dad would fall asleep listening, and I would smile to myself as I heard the familiar click-click-click of the recorder that had run to tape's end. . . .

"When Bruce had been gone for more than a year, Dad died quietly of a heart attack. . . . All of our family members . . . gathered except Bruce, who had determined to finish his mission.

"That evening, after [the funeral], I was feeling low. I went upstairs to Dad's room and dejectedly sat down at his desk. I noticed his well-used tape recorder lying nearby; inside was one of our tapes of the New Testament, which Dad must have listened to the night before he died. I began rewinding the tape, stopping it at random, hoping to find solace in hearing the gentle resonance of Dad's voice. . . . I sat upright as my father spoke from the tape: 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' . . .

"I listened to that passage over and over; the words reached out and wrapped a comforting arm around me. . . .

"Peace did come to us that night. . . . Since then, I have tasted the sweet peace of the New Testament

time and time again. To me, that is its greatest message" ("Our Family's Tape-recorded New Testament," *Ensign*, Jan. 1991, p. 27).

St. Francis of Assisi's prayer

One of the world-famous prayers of St. Francis of Assisi suggests that we can be instruments in the hands of the Savior for bringing personal peace to others. This is the essence of the true "maker of peace."

The prayer reads:

Lord, make me an instrument of
your peace.
Where there is hatred let me sow
love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.
[In John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar
Quotations*, (Boston: Little, Brown
and Co., 1980), p. 138]

How to find personal peace

To be a maker of peace, it helps if we understand what brings peace. Paul says that it is the Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Galatians 5:22). Our closeness to the Lord will, in great measure, determine the peace and comfort and renewed strength that we feel as we invite the Spirit into our lives.

As I was preparing for this occasion, a man phoned. His priesthood leader had requested earlier that I accept his call. Desperately he pleaded, "We need to see someone. We just have to find some peace in our lives." There are probably as many different sources of personal strife and lack of peace as there are people. The roots might be in one's own life or in the life of a loved one. The causes can be sin, failure to live the commandments of God, selfishness, pride, lack of love,

lack of commitment, lack of willingness to make sacrifices for others, or even just being an innocent victim. No matter what the reason, the solution to achieve peace is always the same: Turn to Christ; follow his example; repent of all transgressions. His command to the storm-tossed sea, "Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39), can also apply to his calming influence in our lives as we experience the buffetings of life's storms.

Personal peace and our level of spirituality will increase as we focus on studying and thinking about Christ every day; by loving and thanking Christ more each day for his atoning sacrifice; by daily striving to serve Christ better through becoming more involved in missionary service; by making a greater effort to find his lost sheep, his lost coins, his lost prodigals, and helping them to return to the fold; by making a more concerted effort to be in the temple more frequently; and by researching more diligently our family's history. Is there any peace greater than that of the faithful missionary, the caring shepherd, the dedicated temple patron and worker?

In spite of all the problems in the world today, peace can come to the hearts of each of us as we follow the Savior. Christ is the way to peace, the truth of peace, the life of peace, the source of peace. Look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, talk of Christ, rejoice in Christ, preach of Christ, live as Christ would have us live, and worship him and our Heavenly Father with all your heart, might, mind, and strength.

May peace be with you this day and always is my prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elder Robert E. Wells of the Seventy.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

The spiritually undernourished

Having all been richly nourished by this general conference, it is fitting to focus prescriptively on the few in the Church who remain spiritually undernourished, including those who have grown weary and fainted in their minds (see Hebrews 12:3).

A few of these few have had their faith scorched, such as by the circumstances of wrenching or unrelieved sickness, grinding economic pressures, loss of a loved one, or deep disappointment with a spouse or friend. Adversity can increase faith or instead can cause the troubling roots of bitterness to spring up (see Hebrews 12:15). A few have been overcome by the preoccupying cares of the world—those wearying surface things of life (see Matthew 13:6–7). Emerson's plea is surely appropriate: "Give me truths: for I am weary of the surfaces" ("Blight," in *The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* [New York: Wm. H. Wise and Co., 1929], p. 874). A few are fatigued by unconfessed sins. A few tire from milling about haltingly in the "valley of decision" (Joel 3:14; see also 1 Kings 18:21). A few, foolishly focusing on something other than Jesus, the Sure and True Foundation, are drained by disappointment (see Helaman 5:12).

Whatever the preceding causes, any fainting in our minds brings a loss of spiritual consciousness and, with this, the inclination to charge God foolishly (see Job 1:22).

Be not weary in well-doing

The urgings for us not to weary in well-doing contain prescriptions to avoid such weariness (see Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13; Alma 37:34). We are to work steadily but realistically and only expect to reap "in due season" (Galatians 6:9). We are to serve

while being "meek and lowly" (Alma 37:34), avoiding thereby the wearying burdens of self-pity and hypocrisy. We are to pray always so that we will not faint, so that our performance will actually be for the welfare of our souls, which is so much more than just going through the motions (see 2 Nephi 32:5, 9; D&C 75:11; 88:126).

Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth

Even when righteously chastised or rebuked, we need not faint, for in the correcting is renewing love:

"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:5–6; see also 12:7–8).

One's life, therefore, cannot be both faith-filled and stress-free. President Wilford Woodruff counseled us all about the mercy that is inherent in some adversity: "The chastisements we have had from time to time have been for our good, and are essential to learn wisdom, and carry us through a school of experience we never could have passed through without" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:198).

Therefore, how can you and I really expect to glide naively through life, as if to say, Lord, give me experience, but not grief, not sorrow, not pain, not opposition, not betrayal, and certainly not to be forsaken. Keep from me, Lord, all those experiences which made Thee what Thou art! Then let me come and dwell with Thee and fully share Thy joy!

Perfecting our faith

Serving, studying, praying, and worshipping are four fundamentals in perfecting "that which is lacking in [our] faith" (1 Thessalonians 3:10). If

we cease nurturing our faith in any of these four specific ways, we are vulnerable.

Failure to study, for instance, is to be intellectually and spiritually malnourished. Inspired words do matter, for “when a man works by faith he works by . . . words” (*Lectures on Faith*, 7:3). In a hardening world, the Lord can pierce our consciousness by using “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17; see also Jarom 1:12). However, hearing must be “mixed with faith” (Hebrews 4:2) and with Christian service, as we have heard again and again in this conference.

“For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13).

A lack of deep personal prayer and deep genuine worship also erodes our faith, and we may “faint in the day of trouble” (D&C 109:38).

Much of any weariness is attributable to carrying the heavy natural man. Unlike others we might carry, the natural man is heavy, and he is not our brother!

So much depends upon our individual faith. The Apostles pled, “Lord, Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). No wonder, brothers and sisters, because we are to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Life is so designed that we are to “overcome by faith” (D&C 76:53), not by intellectual acuity or wealth or political prowess.

Nevertheless, seekers after the rewards of faith are often disappointed when they are told to study, serve, pray, and worship. As with leprous Naaman, they apparently expect some great thing which requires no obedience to counsel (see 2 Kings 5:13).

Give place for the seed of faith to grow

Faith brings with it the expanding “evidence of things not seen” (He-

brews 11:1). Some mortals dismiss this real, spiritual evidence because “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him . . . because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). But this provincialism on the part of others should not deprive the rest of us of energizing evidence.

Building faith is often preceded by shaping circumstances, benefiting those who are “in a preparation to hear the word” (Alma 32:6). These beginnings require at least a “desire to believe,” and then comes the exercising of a “particle of faith” (Alma 32:27).

As we “give place” and plant the seed of faith, it grows discernibly. We are invigorated as it enlightens and swells. (See Alma 32:28–30.) We become our own internal auditors, confirming this increase in our faith. It is better to so nourish our faith in what seems to be an ordinary process than to experience extraordinary things only to stumble later over life’s ordinary challenges.

However, in this process of personal experimentation and verification, the several, sacred steps cannot be skipped over: “For ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith” (Ether 12:6).

Moreover, acquiring faith is not a onetime thing: “But if ye neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment, behold it will not get any root; and when the heat of the sun cometh and scorcheth it, because it hath no root it withers away” (Alma 32:38).

Our “neglect,” brothers and sisters, takes so many forms. Similarly, the withering “heat of the sun” is felt in so many ways.

Experience by experience, faith can yield to knowledge “in that thing” (Alma 32:34), meaning the particularized verifications of gospel truths. It was so with the brother of Jared: “He had faith no longer, for he knew”

(Ether 3:19). Brigham Young assured that “every principle God has revealed carries its own convictions of its truth to the human mind” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:149). Jesus clearly declared that “if any man will do his will, he shall know” (John 7:17). However, Jesus described the steady process as being one of “line upon line, precept upon precept” (D&C 98:12).

But we’re all at different points in this process, aren’t we, of desiring, experimenting, verifying, and knowing. Hence “to some it is given . . . to know. . . . To others it is given to believe on their words” (D&C 46:13–14).

While faith is not a perfect knowledge, it brings a deep trust in God, whose knowledge is perfect! Otherwise, one’s small data base of personal experience permits so few useful generalizations! But by searching the holy scriptures, we access a vast, divine data bank, a reservoir of remembrance. In this way the scriptures can, as the Book of Mormon says, enlarge the memory (see Alma 37:8).

Facets of faith

Fully formed faith has several distinct facets. Faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ includes not only faith in their existence but also in their redemptive capacities. The Lord has assured us, “I will show unto the children of men that I am able to do mine own work” (2 Nephi 27:21). Is He ever able! Indeed, “in him all things hold together” (Revised Standard Version, Colossians 1:17). Nevertheless, some doubt that God’s announced purposes will actually triumph.

Faith also includes trust in God’s timing, for He has said, “All things must come to pass in their time” (D&C 64:32). Ironically, some who acknowledge God are tried by His timing, globally and personally!

Faith likewise includes faith in God’s developmental purposes, for “the

Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21). Still, some of us have trouble when God’s tutoring is applied to us! We plead for exemption more than we do for sanctification, don’t we, brothers and sisters.

A reassuring promise is given us in this journey: “And any man that shall go and preach this gospel of the kingdom, and fail not to continue faithful in all things, shall not be weary in mind, neither darkened” (D&C 84:80).

What if blessings do not come?

But what if, from time to time, we appear to be doing all four of these essential things—serving, studying, praying, and worshiping—and still seem to obtain a lesser measure of the promised blessings?

First, check “the equipment”! All four components are needed, and one may be missing or malfunctioning.

Second, go back to a very basic question: Does one really have an inner “desire to believe”? (Alma 32:27). Frankly, some find discipleship constraining and the world appealing. These individuals are merely going through the motions without real intent.

Third, do we naively expect Christ to come to us—instead of our going to Him? Truly He waits “all the day long” with open arms to receive the repentant (2 Nephi 28:32; see also Mormon 6:17). There are no restrictive office hours. But it is we who must arise and go to Him! (see Luke 15:18).

Blessed are the meek, for they shall not be easily offended, which is especially important since “my people must be tried in all things, . . . and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom” (D&C 136:31).

Genuine faith makes increasing allowance for these individual tutorials. In view of these tutorials, God cannot, brothers and sisters, respond

affirmatively to all of our petitions with an unbroken chain of yeses. This would assume that all of our petitions are for that "which is right" and are spiritually "expedient" (3 Nephi 18:20; D&C 18:18; 88:64-65). No petitioner is so wise! Paul even acknowledged that we sometimes "know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Romans 8:26; see also D&C 46:30).

For example, in process of time our personal inconsistencies may be made inconveniently clear. How else shall we see what we lack? Spiritual refinement is not only to make the gross more pure but to further refine the already fine! Hence, said Peter, we should not think a "fiery trial" to be "some strange thing" (1 Peter 4:12).

Enduring the developmental process

Real faith, however, is required to endure this necessary but painful developmental process. As things unfold, sometimes in full view, let us be merciful with each other. We certainly do not criticize hospital patients amid intensive care for looking pale and preoccupied. Why then those recovering from surgery on their souls? No need for us to stare; those stitches will finally come out. And in this hospital, too, it is important for everyone to remember that the hospital chart is not the patient. Extending our mercy to someone need not wait upon our full understanding of their challenges! Empathy may not be appreciated or reciprocated, but empathy is never wasted.

When you and I make unwise decisions, if we have frail faith, we not only demand to be rescued, but we want to be rescued privately, painlessly, quickly—or at least to be beaten only "with a few stripes" (2 Nephi 28:8). Brothers and sisters, how can we really feel forgiven until we first feel responsible? How can we learn from our own experiences unless these lessons are owned up to?

In the trial of faith we may sometimes feel God has deserted us. The reality is that our behavior has isolated us from Him. It is when we first feel the consequences of our mistakes and are just turning away from these, but have not yet turned fully to God, that we may have these feelings of being forsaken.

No part of walking by faith is more difficult than walking the road of repentance. However, with "faith unto repentance" (Alma 34:16), we can push the roadblock of pride away and beg God for mercy. One simply surrenders, worrying only about what God thinks, not about what "they" think.

Growing out of our faith in the Lord is our sustaining of His anointed leaders, as we have done at this April conference. Faithful Church members have what Peter called an "unfeigned love of the brethren" (1 Peter 1:22). Collectively but not perfectly, those sustained do the work to which God has called them. As with Joseph Smith, so it is for his succeeding Brethren. The operative promise persists: namely, the people of the Church will never be turned away "by the testimony of traitors" (D&C 122:3). But the faithful know something about divine determination. They know that the Lord's purposes will finally triumph, for "there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it" (Abraham 3:17). Of that divine determination and divine love I gladly and publicly testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Before hearing the closing remarks of President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, we wish to express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, Ricks College

combined choirs, BYU combined men's choir, and Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference: the doctors, the Church Health Unit nurses, the ambulance services who have been on hand to render service, the ushers, the interpreters whom we don't see but others here listen to their voices, and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference. We are

grateful for the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries. We are also grateful for government and civic and educational leaders who have been here at this conference. We appreciate you.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Go Forth into the World in Peace," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Benjamin B. Banks of the Seventy.

Then this conference will stand adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Elder Derek Cuthbert passes away

We have just received a telephone call that Elder Derek Cuthbert has just passed away. We have been praying for him. He has served faithfully and diligently and well as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, called as a General Authority of the Church some years ago. He was a convert to the Church in Nottingham, England, and has been true and faithful in every respect. He has filled assignments on this continent and in other areas of the world. We extend to his beloved Muriel and their family the love, sympathy, and condolences of the whole Church, and I am sure that as we conclude this conference, President Benson, in a particular way, would like to extend his blessings to the Cuthbert family.

President Benson's love and blessing

Customarily the President of the Church has concluded the conference. Our hearts would have been stirred had President Benson been able to stand before us and speak with power and inspiration as he has done so

many times in the past. Because of conditions incident to his age, he is unable to do so. He has indicated that I should say a few words of benediction in his behalf.

I think he would have me express his love for you, our brothers and sisters, wherever you may be across the world. He would leave his blessing upon you, the blessing of a prophet.

May I give you some of his own words on which to reflect as you leave for your homes.

The Lord has established his kingdom

"I solemnly declare that the Lord has established his latter-day kingdom upon the earth in fulfillment of prophecies uttered by his ancient prophets and apostles. Holy angels have again communed with men on the earth. God has again revealed himself from heaven and restored to the earth his holy priesthood with power to administer in all the sacred ordinances necessary for the exaltation of his children. His church has been reestablished among men with all the spiritual gifts enjoyed anciently.

"All this is done in preparation for Christ's second coming. The great and dreadful day of the Lord is near at hand. In preparation for this great event and as a means of escaping the impending judgments, inspired messengers have gone forth to the nations of the earth carrying his testimony and warning" (in Conference Report, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden Area General Conference, 18 Aug. 1974, pp. 128-29).

"I hope that all of us can see . . . the hand of the Lord moving His kingdom forward to accomplish on an accelerated basis what He designs to accomplish. . . .

"The Lord is now revealing, and will continue to do so through channels He has appointed, everything necessary for the future development and perfection of His Church" (interdepartmental meeting, 16 Mar. 1977).

These words have been the counsel of our President and prophet. I commend them to you as we conclude this great annual conference.

Church Presidents are men of God

To his words I add my own words of testimony as one who has known and worked closely with seven Presidents of the Church, extending over a period

of more than half a century. I know that each of these men has been a man of God, raised up by Him, trained and nurtured, schooled and disciplined for the great and singular and unique callings which have come to them. Our people have been blessed as they have followed their counsel. We will continue to be blessed if we will walk in the paths which they have pointed out and will continue to point out to us.

Now, my beloved brethren and sisters, as we return to our homes, may we carry with us a remembrance of that which we have heard. May God bless you, may His Holy Spirit abide with you in your homes and in your hearts, and may you have reason to kneel before Him with thanksgiving in your prayers as those blessed with the light of His glorious gospel. I'm sure that President Benson would invoke that prayer upon you, and I do so in his behalf and by way of personal testimony and blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Go Forth into the World in Peace."

Elder Benjamin B. Banks offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, sang at the Saturday morning session of the conference.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Ricks College combined choirs, conducted by Kendell Nielsen and James Brague.

At the general priesthood session, music was provided by a BYU combined men's choir. Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli conducted the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by Robert Cundick, John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, and Richard Elliott, Tabernacle organists.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the conference

INDEX

A

Ashton, Elder Marvin J.	21
“Lo, I am with thee”; A voice of gladness; Bring gladness to others; The hope of young cancer patients; Words of gladness in the scriptures; Glad voices from those who suffer; Peter proclaims glad tidings; Choose a voice of gladness, not gloom; Voices of gladness in the scriptures	
Authorities and Officers, The Sustaining of Church	4
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell	103
Christmas lighting celebration; Little children are pure and innocent; Parents are to teach their children; “Can I go too?”; No sacrifice is too great; A young boy prays for help; Teachers should teach with love; Blocks in a fortress of faith; Child abuse is an abomination; Take time for your children	

C

Church Audit Committee Report for 1990	26
Church Authorities and Officers, The Sustaining of	4
Church Statistical Report for 1990	5
Clarke, Elder J. Richard	55
Honoring the priesthood; Receiving priesthood power; “Be ye clean”; Potential of priesthood quorums; A young man with muscular dystrophy; A man with thirty-nine brothers; Elders care for a member’s farm; Visit to a Las Vegas hospital; Be faithful in Christ	
Conference Music, Summary of	122
Craven, Elder Rulon G.	35
Testimony of living prophets; Decisions made in love and unity; President Hunter walks again; Look to the prophets	

D

de Jager, Elder Jacob	58
Change; Commitment to priesthood duties; "Partakers of the divine nature"; Admonitions of Amulek; Prepare for throngs of converts	
Dunn, Elder Loren C.	108
Charity, forgiveness, and respect; Joseph Smith respected all people; Invitation to come back; Senator Humphrey's bouquet of roses; Coach Sterling Harris of Tooele; Mutual respect can resolve problems	

E

Eyring, Bishop Henry B.	85
We must believe in God; Drawing close to God; Pray always; Listen carefully; Repent, obey, and give kindness; God's generosity; Retain God's name in your hearts	

F

Faust, Elder James E.	89
A crown of thorns; Recognizing and removing thorns; Jesus suffered thorns of affliction; Concentrate on flowers, not thorns; "Let him deny himself"; A crown of glory for the faithful	
Fifth Session	98
First Day, Afternoon Session	25
First Day, Morning Session	2
First Session	2
Fourth Session	76

G

General Authorities Present	1
General Priesthood Session	50
Gibbons, Elder Francis M.	39
Similarities between the Savior and Joseph Smith; Differences between the Savior and Joseph Smith; Testimony	

Goaslind, Elder Jack H. 61

Becoming like the Savior; Yagottawanna; Act out your righteous desires; Cultivate righteous desires; Worship: an individual responsibility; Keep yourself morally pure; Blessings of being pure in heart

H**Haight, Elder David B. 99**

The dispensation of the fulness of times; Granite Mountain Records Vault; Why we gather records; Conversation with a British lawyer; FamilySearch™; Ancestral File™; Contributing to Ancestral File; Unlock the secrets of your ancestry; Lord of the living and the dead

Hales, Sister Janette C. 111

A pattern for making a sport coat; A pattern of righteousness; The pattern of prayer; The pattern of scripture study; The pattern of service; Role models of righteousness

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (fifth session) 121

Elder Derek Cuthbert passes away; President Benson's love and blessing; The Lord has established his kingdom; Church Presidents are men of God

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (fourth session) 93

Granddaughters' wedding ceremonies; Marriage is ordained of God; Single brethren and sisters; Marital bliss; Pain is part of the process; Love for rebellious children; The great scourge of divorce; Selfishness a major cause of divorce; A burdened single mother; The Golden Rule is the remedy; Resist Satan's entreaties; God is the designer of the family

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) 70

The state of the Church; How is President Benson?; Increasing faithfulness; Expanding missionary work; Miraculous building construction; Unprecedented growth of temple and family history work; Blessings of Church education; Divinely inspired welfare program; Budget allowance program; Management of Church finances; The Church's assets; The Church's commercial enterprises; The Church's farm properties; The Church's future

Howard, Elder F. Burton	13
“Pass it on”; Don’t blame others for disobedience; Accept responsibility and repent; Don’t rationalize misconduct; Good ends require good means; See ourselves as we really are	
Hunter, President Howard W.	82
The organizing of the Church; A humble beginning; Comparison of Joseph Smith and Paul; “I will be hung in your stead”; Revelations to Joseph Smith; Faith in God is the foundation; A worldwide church	

L

Larsen, Elder Dean L.	9
Beware lest thou forget the Lord; Abundance can be a great test; Moses’ counsel about prosperity; Brigham Young’s concern about riches; Jacob’s counsel about riches; The Nephite cycle of prosperity; Counsel about material prosperity	
Lawrence, Elder W. Mack	37
Importance of sacrament meeting; The Lord’s instructions; Come with an attitude of worship; Teach children; Sing praises to God; Focus on the Savior; Partake of the sacrament	

M

Maxwell, Elder Neal A.	117
The spiritually undernourished; Be not weary in well-doing; Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth; Perfecting our faith; Give place for the seed of faith to grow; Facets of faith; What if blessings do not come?; Enduring the developmental process	
Monson, President Thomas S. (first session)	3
Days of national prayer; The price of peace; Depend on prayer; President Benson’s testimony	
Monson, President Thomas S. (fourth session)	77
Thanks be to God for peace; A white ribbon on every branch; Yellow ribbons welcome soldiers home; “Welcome home” replaces “home alone”; The Savior’s compassion; Opportunities to show compassion; Pass it on; Sacrifices for Desert Storm; Trust in the Lord for peace	

Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 64

A great future; A royal priesthood; Ye have done it unto me; Living the law of the fast; Helping families in rural Guatemala; Immunizing children in Africa; Providing dental and medical care; Donating food and clothing; Providing potable water in Kenya; The need for "living waters"; James Collier's example of love; Mrs. Shinas: from nemesis to friend; Shelley's conversion; Lay up treasures in heaven

Music, Summary of Conference 122**N****Nelson, Elder Russell M. 27**

Listen to learn; Children; Parents; Partners; Neighbors; Church leaders; The Lord

O**Oaks, Elder Dallin H. 16**

Persian Gulf war; Honoring parents and the aged; Honoring parents by living righteously; Honoring parents who are dead; Caring for aged parents; Old Folks Day; Honoring parents increases longevity

Obituaries 5**P****Packer, Elder Boyd K. 6**

Teach doctrine; No room for guilt; Laws of nature sovereign; Never ridicule; She's under there someplace; President Joseph Fielding Smith; Restored to perfect frame; Eternal truths bring perspective; Look after the handicapped; After tribulation come the blessings

Perry, Elder L. Tom 51

Called to serve!; Spiritual preparation for a mission; Elder Perry's mission interview; Temporal preparation for a mission; *Called to Serve* videotape; Rewards of missionary service; Start preparing now

Priesthood Session, General 50

S

Scott, Elder Richard G.	42
Counsel to young men and women; Be like an automatic watch; Place the Savior at the center; Recognize the source of happiness; Stay morally clean; How to keep your resolve; Set your course; Be a saving influence; Live in the light of truth	
Second Day, Afternoon Session	98
Second Day, Morning Session	76
Second Session	25
Summary of Conference Music	122
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	4

T

Third Session	50
Tingey, Elder Earl C.	32
The redemption of the dead; The Lord helps when we obey; FamilySearch™; Family Records Extraction Program; Growth of the seed planted by Elijah; How to get started	

W

Wells, Elder Robert E.	113
Christ offers spiritual peace; President Lee's statement about war; A father's voice brings peace; St. Francis of Assisi's prayer; How to find personal peace	
Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	46
The ravages of war; The value of inner peace; Find inner peace through Christ; Obedience brings peace; Peace among the people of Enoch; Peace among the Nephites; Peace during the Millennium; The Prophet Joseph's inner peace; Procrastination prevents peace; Dishonesty prevents peace; Radiate peace to others; Repentance brings peace	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-first
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 5 and 6, 1991

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-first
Semiannual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
October 5 and 6, 1991

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Copyright © 1992
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
All Rights Reserved
Printed in the United States of America

THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIRST SEMIANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 161st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1991, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 5 and 6, 1991. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 5, 1991, at 6:00 P.M.

President Ezra Taft Benson presided at the Saturday morning and Sunday morning sessions. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of some of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

The First Presidency: Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell,

Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

The Presidency of the Seventy: Dean L. Larsen, Marion D. Hanks, Robert L. Backman, James M. Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, and Carlos E. Asay

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Joe J. Christensen, Gene R. Cook, Jacob de Jager, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn,¹ Jack H. Goasland, John H. Groberg, W. Eugene Hansen, Harold G. Hillam, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, Alexander B. Morrison, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, L. Aldin Porter, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Carlos H. Amado, H. Verlan Andersen, Eduardo Ayala, Benjamin B. Banks, George I. Cannon, Albert Choules, Jr., Spencer J. Condie, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Clinton L. Cutler, Julio E. Dávila, Robert K. Dellenbach, Graham W. Doxey, Lloyd P. George, Francis M. Gibbons, F. Melvin Hammond, Han In Sang, George R. Hill III, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Kenneth Johnson, Cree-L. Kofford, John R. Lasater, W. Mack Lawrence, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, Douglas J. Martin,¹ Gerald E. Melchin, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Jorge A. Rojas, Glen L. Rudd,

¹Elders Vaughn J. Featherstone and Helvécio Martins were excused because of illness.

Gardner H. Russell, Robert E. Sackley, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Douglas H. Smith, Lynn A. Sorensen, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, Henry B. Eyring, and Glenn L. Pace.

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included Regional Representatives, stake presidents and their counselors, temple presidents, bishops, and presidencies and members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood quorums.

Many general, stake, and ward auxiliary officers also attended.

FIRST DAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1991, at 10:00 A.M. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Hark All Ye Nations" without announcement. President Hinckley then made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 161st semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson honors us with his presence this day. He presides at this conference and has asked that I conduct this session.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall,

where Elders Marvin J. Ashton, James M. Paramore, and Douglas H. Smith are seated on the stand. We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except Elders Vaughn J. Featherstone and Helvécio Martins, who are excused because of illness. Elder Han In Sang is also excused because of the death of his mother. We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened this session by singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" The chorus will now favor us with "Awake and Arise."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Awake and Arise."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

President Benson is with us

It is wonderful to have President Benson with us as we open this great world conference of the Church. His smile upon us and the wave of his hand mean much to all of us. Wherever we go, at home or abroad, we receive the same request: "Give our love to President Benson."

President, I am confident I speak for all who participate with us today when I say we respect you, we honor you, we love you as the prophet of the Lord in our time.

In your behalf, I convey your love and blessing upon the Saints everywhere, and likewise your testimony as spoken on previous occasions. These are your own words:

Christ is the light

"No other single influence has had so great an impact on this earth as the life of Jesus the Christ. We cannot conceive of our lives without his teachings. Without him we would be lost in a mirage of beliefs and worships, born in

fear and darkness where the sensual and materialistic hold sway. We are far short of the goal he set for us, but we must never lose sight of it; nor must we forget that our great climb toward the light, toward perfection, would not be possible except for his teachings, his life, his death, and his resurrection" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 19; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 34).

I testify that Christ is the light to all mankind. He has "pointed, marked out and lighted the way. 'Sadly, many individuals and nations have extinguished that light. They have attempted to supplant His gospel with coercion and the sword' " ("Myriad of Lights to Remind of Savior," *Church News*, 4 Dec. 1982, p. 10). But even to those who reject Him, He is "the light [which] shineth in darkness" (John 1:5).

Thank you, our prophet dear, and please be assured of our prayers. May our Heavenly Father continue to bless you.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Contributions of the Smith family

A relatively simple but significant event took place in Nauvoo, Illinois, on the fourth of August this year. After many months of careful planning, the descendants of Joseph Smith, Sr., and Lucy Mack Smith dedicated the refurbished Smith Family Cemetery and opened it to the public.

As I attended the dedicatory services, my thoughts were centered on the remarkable contribution the family of Joseph Smith, Sr., and Lucy Mack Smith made toward the restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I was thinking especially of the Prophet, his brother Hyrum, and their parents.

I believe the Smith family burial plot should have a special meaning to every member of the Church. We all want those who are interred there to rise up on resurrection day in a beautiful garden spot. The Prophet said in a funeral sermon:

"I will tell you what I want. If tomorrow I shall be called to lie in yonder tomb, in the morning of the resurrection let me strike hands with my father, and cry, 'My father,' and he will say, 'My son, my son,' as soon as the rock rends and before we come out of our graves. . . .

"And when the voice calls for the dead to arise, suppose I am laid by the

side of my father, what would be the first joy of my heart? To meet my father, my mother, my brother, my sister; and when they are by my side, I embrace them and they me" (*History of the Church*, 5:361-62).

Each person who has a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ should love and appreciate Joseph Smith, Jr., for he is "the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, [who] has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it" (D&C 135:3).

The ancient prophet Nephi wrote that he was "born of goodly parents" (1 Nephi 1:1). So was the Prophet Joseph Smith; he once declared, "Words and language are inadequate to express the gratitude that I owe to God for having given me so honorable a parentage" (*History of the Church*, 5:126).

Joseph Smith, Sr.

The Lord foreordained his father, Joseph Smith, Sr., who is spoken of in the holy scriptures, to be one of the earthly parents of the Prophet. Joseph of Egypt prophesied that the latter-day seer whom God would raise up to do his work would be "called Joseph" (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 50:33), and his name would "be after the name of his father" (2 Nephi 3:15). The heavenly messenger Moroni admonished young Joseph to go to his father following a glorious night of sacred instruction. In Joseph's words, this messenger "commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received. I obeyed; I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger" (Joseph Smith—History 1:49-50).

Joseph Smith, Sr., was in tune with the Spirit of the Lord. He knew that his young son spoke the truth. He not only believed the boy's words but encouraged him in the work he had been called to do.

Joseph, Sr., endured ridicule and persecution because of his prophet son's experiences and claims. Yet he was unwavering in his loving support and defended his son.

He saw and handled the plates of gold from which the Book of Mormon was translated and testified throughout his life to the truthfulness of that sacred book. His name remains firmly affixed, with those of the other witnesses to the Book of Mormon, in the front pages of that second witness of Jesus Christ. On one occasion he was imprisoned and told he would be released if he would deny the Book of Mormon. Not only did he *not* deny it, but he converted two persons during his thirty-day confinement.

President Lorenzo Snow said: "I do not know that any man among the Saints was more loved than Father Smith; and when any one was seriously sick Father Smith would be called for, whether it was night or day. He was as noble and generous a man as I have ever known" (quoted in LeRoi C. Snow, "How Lorenzo Snow Found God," *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1937, p. 84).

At the time of his death, Joseph Smith, Sr., was described as "a man faithful to his God and to the Church in every situation and under all circumstances through which he was called to pass" (*History of the Church*, 4:192).

Just a few months after Joseph Smith, Sr., passed from this life, the Lord revealed that the Prophet's father was in His presence, and "blessed and holy is he, for he is mine" (D&C 124:19). Indeed, Joseph Smith, Sr., played a vital role in establishing the kingdom of God upon the earth.

Lucy Mack Smith

Perhaps less visible than the Prophet's father, but equally important in shaping and influencing his life, was his mother, Lucy Mack Smith. Although this strong woman gave occasional leadership, her primary role appeared to be support to the family. She gave birth to eleven children and endured faithfully as all but four preceded her in death. During her life, she watched six of her immediate family and one grandson die as a result of ruthless mob violence and persecution.

Lucy prepared herself early in her marriage to raise a prophet. On one occasion she became seriously ill, and the doctors said she would die. Lucy records that she "made a solemn covenant with God that if He would let me live I would endeavor to serve him according to the best of my abilities." After a voice assured her that she would live, she told her mother, "The Lord will let me live, if I am faithful to the promise which I made to him, to be a comfort to my mother, my husband, and my children" (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958], pp. 34-35).

She gave continual encouragement, support, and strength to her son Joseph the Prophet. His mother was the first person with whom young Joseph shared some of his momentous experiences of the Sacred Grove. Years later, he shared with her the joy and relief he felt when the Lord allowed others to view the sacred plates of gold. Lucy wrote that "Joseph threw himself down beside me, and exclaimed, . . . 'You do not know how happy I am: the Lord has now caused the plates to be shown to three more besides myself. They have seen an angel, . . . and they will have to bear witness to the truth of what I have said, for now they know for themselves, that I do not go about to deceive the

people, and I feel as if I was relieved of a burden which was almost too heavy for me to bear'" (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 152).

The Prophet's mother shared also in his sorrows, sufferings, and persecutions. One time a mob took Joseph and his brother Hyrum prisoner and threatened to shoot them. The two brothers were confined under a cloth cover in a wagon. Their courageous mother risked her life and forced her way through the hostile mob to comfort her sons. Joseph and Hyrum could not see their mother and could only extend a hand from under the confining cover. As Lucy's hand and the hands of her sons touched, the wagon drove off, literally tearing the sorrowing mother from her two sons.

Her determination to testify to the restoration of the gospel may have led her to dictate her well-known *History of Joseph Smith*. This was a major undertaking in her day. The book's importance to the Church today is immeasurable! It contains many details of the Prophet Joseph's life that might never have been known otherwise. It stands as a monument to the devotion of Lucy Mack Smith and her family.

Like great parents of all ages, Lucy turned to prayer for divine help to sustain her family. During the march from Ohio to Missouri known as Zion's Camp, Joseph and Hyrum were seriously ill with cholera, and their lives were almost taken. At one point, "Hyrum sprang to his feet and exclaimed, 'Joseph, we shall return to our families. I have had an open vision, in which I saw mother kneeling under an apple tree; and she is even now asking God, in tears, to spare our lives. . . . The Spirit testifies, that her prayers . . . will be answered'" (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 229).

In the exercise of agency and in the divine providence of God, Lucy's sons Joseph and Hyrum ultimately

sealed their testimonies with their blood. As the grieving mother looked upon their lifeless remains, she cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken this family!" As a kind blessing to a faithful mother, the Lord softened her grief and granted to her the peace that only God can bestow. A voice spoke to her soul: "I have taken them to myself, that they might have rest" (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 324).

Hyrum Smith

Hyrum Smith, older brother, friend, and mentor to the Prophet, showed absolute, unequivocal love, loyalty, and allegiance to the Lord and to his younger brother Joseph. Their brotherhood may be unsurpassed. The scriptures tell us, "In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated!" (D&C 135:3).

Of Hyrum, Joseph said, "I could pray in my heart that all my brethren were like unto my beloved brother Hyrum, who possesses the mildness of a lamb, and the integrity of a Job, and in short, the meekness and humility of Christ; and I love him with that love that is stronger than death, for I never had occasion to rebuke him, nor he me" (*History of the Church*, 2:338).

Throughout Hyrum's life, he guarded his younger brother as tenderly as if the Prophet had been his own son. Joseph surely knew the value of true and faithful associates because he had trusted many who later proved to be false.

In addition to Joseph's tribute, the Lord spoke of His love for Hyrum: "Blessed is my servant Hyrum Smith; for I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me, saith the Lord" (D&C 124:15).

Hyrum was unwavering, even in the face of death. Following one period

of great deprivation and persecution, he wrote:

"I thank God that I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled [the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated], and which I had borne testimony to, wherever my lot had been cast; and I can assure my beloved brethren that I was enabled to bear as strong a testimony, when nothing but death presented itself, as ever I did in my life" ("Communications," *Times and Seasons*, Dec. 1839, p. 23).

Lessons from Joseph and Hyrum

From the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum, we can learn many valuable lessons. I share just these two examples today. In a letter dated March 15, 1844, just a few months before his martyrdom, Hyrum wrote:

"Now, therefore, I say unto you, you must cease preaching your miraculous things, and let the mysteries alone until by and bye. Preach faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; repentance and baptism for the remission of sins; the laying on of the hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost; teaching the necessity of strict obedience unto these principles; reasoning out of the scriptures; proving them unto the people. Cease your schisms and divisions, and your contentions. Humble yourselves" (*Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1844, p. 474).

And then from the Prophet Joseph:

"There are those who profess to be Saints who are too apt to murmur, and find fault, when any advice is given, which comes in opposition to their feelings, even when they, themselves, ask for counsel; much more so when counsel is given unasked for, which does not agree with their notion of things; but brethren, we hope for better things from the most of you; we

trust that you desire counsel, from time to time, and that you will cheerfully conform to it, whenever you receive it from a proper source" (*History of the Church*, 4:45).

These inspired statements from Hyrum and Joseph to Church members in their day are certainly appropriate for Church members today. While standing in Nauvoo at the foot of the headstone of these noble men, I had the impression that they would have me counsel all members of the Church to remain anchored to the basic and simple principles of the gospel. Study the scriptures; look to the leaders of the Church for guidance in these troubled times. Brothers and sisters, be careful of the schisms, divisions, and contentions that are among us today. Keep the commandments so the Holy Ghost will be with you in your search for truth and knowledge.

I bear humble witness that Joseph Smith is one of the great, noble ones to come to the earth. He and his brother Hyrum deserve our honor, respect, and gratitude as do other members of their family who assisted with the restora-

tion of the fulness of the gospel. I testify that President Ezra Taft Benson is the prophet of God at this time, and the Apostles and other General Authorities, who are seated on this stand, are ordained of God to preside over the Church. Jesus, our Lord and Savior, stands at the head of the Church. Our Heavenly Father lives and watches over each of His children. To this I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by the chorus singing "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder Robert L. Backman of the Presidency of the Seventy will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Ted E. Brewerton of the Seventy.

Elder Robert L. Backman

While abridging the records of the Nephites, Mormon wrote: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13). This humble yet straightforward declaration ought to express the feelings of all Latter-day Saints—disciples of Christ called to minister in his cause.

Christ—more than a king

Who is this Jesus whom we worship? Above all people on earth, we Latter-day Saints should appreciate the vital significance of Jesus of Nazareth—his role in the plan of salvation,

his virgin birth, his immaculate life, his powerful teachings, his selfless death, his glorious resurrection, his guidance of his Church.

In Lloyd Douglas's book *The Robe* is an imaginative account of the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, riding a donkey. Amid the hysteria of the excited multitude, ignorant of the significance of the event and of its chief Actor, occurs a conversation between two Greek slaves:

"See him—close up?" [asked the uncouth Athenian].

"Demetrius nodded; . . . turning away. . . .

"Crazy?" persisted the Athenian. . . .

"No."

"King?"

"No," muttered Demetrius, . . . "not a king."

"What is he, then?" . . .

"I don't know," mumbled Demetrius, . . . "but—he is something more important than a king" (*The Robe* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947], p. 74).

Jesus Christ is indeed more than a king; he is the Son of God, our Savior, our Redeemer, the Author and Finisher of our faith, King of kings, Lord of lords, Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (see Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 17:14).

That is what the gospel is all about. Without him, without his intervention in our behalf, we would be helpless in the face of Adam's transgression. We are indeed saved by grace "through faith" (Ephesians 2:8), or as Nephi wrote, "It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23).

"All other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages" to the testimony of Jesus—his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 121).

A little girl, misquoting the twenty-third Psalm, put everything in perspective. She said: "The Lord is my shepherd. That's all I want!" What more could anyone want? What could be more desirable than to "look unto [Jesus] in every thought"? (D&C 6:36).

As we ponder our relationship to our Savior, may I paint some sketches of him that have helped me become acquainted with him and serve as standards by which I have tried to measure my life.

A pattern for our lives

He was born of Mary; he had the power to die. He was the firstborn of the Father, the Son of God; he had the power to live and the capacity to live perfectly. We know that Jesus "received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness" (D&C 93:13).

As a youth the Lord "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). During this growth process, he suffered "temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer" (Mosiah 3:7). He experienced all of these things "that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12). There is nothing we experience—no heartache or joy—that he has not experienced more intensely; and his response to such experiences was perfect. He thus established a pattern for our own lives.

During his mortal life, Jesus gave us his gospel and organized his Church. Jesus taught his disciples how to live more abundantly and showed us the way to happiness here and eternal life hereafter.

Miracles

He performed many miracles. They were "an important element in the work of Jesus Christ, being not only divine acts, but forming also a part of the divine teaching. . . . They were intended to be a proof to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. . . . The miracles of healing also show how the law of love is to deal with the actual facts of life. Miracles were and are a response to faith, and its best encouragement" (Bible Dictionary, "Miracles").

Recall the pathos in one of Christ's greatest miracles, the raising

of his friend Lazarus from the dead. The compassionate Savior responded to the pleas of his friends but also delayed his coming in order to use the occasion to teach. "I am glad for your sakes," he said, "that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe" (John 11:15).

The mourning Martha said with childlike faith:

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

"But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

"Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

"Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:21-25).

Mary expressed similar feelings: "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John 11:32). And Jesus, seeing her and others weeping, "groaned in the spirit, and was troubled," and he himself wept (see John 11:33, 35). The depth of caring and compassion is remarkable and warmly inviting. Jesus, with the word of faith and power, said simply, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). And Lazarus did—a life restored and irrefutable evidence of Christ's divinity, forever established as a basis of faith.

Disciples of the living Christ

I exult with Paul: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). Christ has won the victory. Death is conquered; life—eternal life—reigns triumphant. We are disciples of the living Christ. Though his body was laid in a borrowed sepulcher, he was resurrected on the third day, appearing to many.

Imagine yourself in the company of the disciples and other believers on

the day of the Resurrection. Mere hours have passed since you witnessed the horrifying crucifixion of the gentle Nazarene. You have shared hopeless moments of profound sorrow. Confused, knowing not where to turn, how to act, your minds are clouded with mists of despair. Then two disciples join you with word that they have conversed with the Lord on the road to Emmaus. Dare you believe those who report, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon"? (Luke 24:34).

Luke recorded this remarkable event:

"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

"But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

"And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

"And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet" (Luke 24:36-40).

That scene lives in my heart, for it heralds immortality for all of us. It assures us of continued life after death free from mortal pain and sorrow.

His atonement

Jesus took upon himself the sins of all of us in Gethsemane and on the cross. He died that we might live. Who among us has not experienced the pain of sin? Who does not desperately need the balm of divine forgiveness to heal a wounded soul? Lehi taught his son Jacob:

"Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

"Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered" (2 Nephi 2:6-7).

His was a "great and last sacrifice," an "infinite and eternal sacrifice," which none but the sinless Son of God could effect (Alma 34:10).

The way to eternal life has been cleared by the "way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Why should we not accept the invitation to salvation as phrased by Peter, "casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

His commission

"Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth" (2 Nephi 2:8). Jesus displayed a missionary zeal, a fervent desire that all the children of God enjoy the blessings of his gospel. Isn't it interesting that the last chapter of each of the Gospels contains an appeal from the risen Lord to spread the gospel.

On the wall of the main floor of the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City is a magnificent mural depicting Jesus Christ as a resurrected being standing among his eleven Apostles as he gives them a stirring charge to be missionaries to all the world:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Apostles who there stood with the Son of God responded to this call with faith, boldness, and power.

We read that they were "all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). They had seen a resurrected being, had eaten with him, had felt his hands and feet. They knew, and knowing, they testified, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Does that commission extend to us as his disciples? Perhaps we have not seen in person the risen Lord. But the testimony of his chosen witnesses is etched into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We know, and knowing, we too must testify. Is there any question in the mind of any of us that this is one of the chief responsibilities we enjoy by reason of our membership in his Church? I began with Mormon's declaration: "I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13). Such is the calling of each of us.

Give yourself to Christ

What Christ desires from each of us is surrender, complete and total—a voluntary gift of trust, faith, and love. C. S. Lewis captured the spirit of this surrender:

"Christ says 'Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. . . . Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours'" (*Mere Christianity* [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1943], p. 167).

I know that my Redeemer lives

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I express my willingness to so submit myself to my Savior because I trust him, I believe him, and I love him. I say with Job:

"I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Ted E. Brewerton

My brethren and sisters, on this bright and beautiful day, I should like to address the subject of light. The dictionary defines light as something that makes vision possible or something that enlightens or informs.

Two types of light are physical light and spiritual light.

Physical light

Physical light, especially natural light, affects the moods of people. When summer's light begins to fade, days grow shorter, and the winter season looms darkly ahead, natural light becomes a more precious commodity, especially to people who live in extreme northern climates. There, where darkness reigns for up to three months a year and then summer blooms into three months of constant daylight, moods swing with the seasons.

Light does have a profound effect on human mood and behavior. Mounting evidence indicates that people who are feeling a little down and need a lift can get it by going outside in daylight. Walking in the light is a natural mood booster. Many who simply walk for half an hour or more during the daylight hours receive a distinct benefit. (See *The Walking Magazine*, Jan.-Feb. 1989, pp. 28-30.)

Scientists are not entirely certain which wavelengths cause light's mood-boosting effects. Researchers believe that these effects are traceable to light taken in *through the eyes* and not through the skin.

A second medical use of light is light therapy for treating some cancers. Certain chemicals combined with light can destroy cancer cells. Research is under way to identify the best source of light and to determine how to direct it to body areas. (See *Time*, Canadian ed., Nov. 1989.)

Spiritual light

Shifting from these brief remarks about physical light, I should like to consider a kind of light that has infinitely greater power and effect. I speak of *spiritual light*. It comes from God and his gospel. In the scriptures, we find reference to a relationship between the physical light of the sun and spiritual light. We read in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 88, of "the light of truth;

"Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. . . .

"And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;

"Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

"The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed" (D&C 88:6-7, 11-13).

This earth will be a celestial sphere like a sea of glass and fire. The prophet Brigham Young said: "It will not then be an opaque body as it now is, but it will be like the stars of the firmament, full of light and glory: it will be a *body of light*. John compared it, in its celestialized state, to a sea of glass" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:163; italics added).

In section 88 we read:

"And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law—

"Wherefore, it shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it" (D&C 88:25–26).

In section 84:

"For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

"And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit" (D&C 84:45–46).

This word *light* appears 535 times in the scriptures.

Jesus is the Light of the world

Light has a relationship to the Son of God: "And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things" (D&C 88:67).

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. Moroni said, "And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know *the light* by which ye may judge, *which light* is the *light of Christ*, see that ye do not

judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged" (Moroni 7:18; italics added).

John said, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, *I am the light of the world*: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12; italics added).

Our Lord is the Light of the world in at least three ways. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written:

"1. Through the Light of Christ he governs and controls the universe and gives life to all that therein is.

"2. By this same immensity-filling light—and also, to certain faithful ones, by the power of the Holy Ghost!—he enlightens the mind and quickens the understanding.

"3. By his own upright, sinless, and perfect course, in [premortal life], in mortality, and in resurrected glory, he sets a perfect example and is able to say to all men: 'Follow thou me.' (2 Ne. 31:10.)" (*The Promised Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978], p. 208).

In the First Vision, *light* released the boy Joseph from oppressive darkness.

How do we receive light?

How does light enter into us? How do we receive it? "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23).

Commenting on this passage, Elder Bruce R. McConkie states: "Christ is the light; the gospel is the light; the plan of salvation is the light; 'that which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.' As the light of the sun enters the body *through our natural*

eyes, so the light of heaven—the light of the Spirit which illuminates our souls—enters through our spiritual eyes” (*The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979–81], 2:153; italics added).

We cannot live on borrowed light

President Joseph F. Smith said:

“One fault to be avoided by the Saints, young and old, is the tendency to live on *borrowed light*, with their own hidden under a bushel; to permit the savor of their salt of knowledge to be lost; and the light within them to be reflected, rather than original. . . .

“Men and women should become settled in the truth, and *founded in the knowledge of the gospel*, depending upon no person for borrowed or reflected light, but trusting only upon the Holy Spirit, who is ever the same, shining forever and testifying to the individual and the priesthood, who live in harmony with the laws of the gospel, of the glory and the will of the Father. They will then have light everlasting which cannot be obscured. By its shining in their lives, they shall cause others to glorify God; and by their well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], pp. 87–88; italics added).

Conversion of the Stewart family

Light persuades us to do good; it leads us to Christ. It led my family as it has led yours, and it can and will lead all to him.

Archibald Stewart and his wife, Esther Lyle, are my great-great-grandparents. The Stewart family had learned to face persecution and hardship. Their ancestors had been forced to flee from Scotland to Northern Ireland, where they had been promised

protection. But instead of finding peace, they again became victims of persecution at the hands of the Irish Greens. Independence and strong conviction were part of their heritage.

The Stewart family characteristics of love and devotion and a deep religious faith made them receptive to the gospel. When the Mormon missionaries came to the Stewart house, Elizabeth, the third child, immediately felt the truthfulness of their message. She began to study and search for more assurance of the things she felt within. Her feelings and study stirred an immediate response in her old granny, who was the matriarch of the Stewart household. Elizabeth spent many hours telling her granny about the new prophet of God, Joseph Smith, who had brought back to earth the simple, direct message that Christ was alive and had appeared to man. Elizabeth felt a testimony burning within and asked permission to be baptized. Because of the unpopularity of the Mormons, her parents objected. Elizabeth's granny came to her rescue. “Let the child alone,” she said. “I have read all her books, and I do believe the child is right.”

As Elizabeth left her home to go to her baptism, her granny was at her side. The two walked to the river, where the elders had broken a hole in the ice that wintry March day. When the elders came toward Elizabeth to baptize her, her granny stepped up and said, “Watch your manners, child; never step in front of your elders.”

The elders baptized Granny in her street clothes; she even had on her little white cap. She had brought no extra clothes, so she walked home in her wet, frozen clothes. She did not take cold even though she did not change her clothes until the other family members had gone to bed. She said nothing about her baptism to the family but went about her usual tasks as if nothing had happened. After the oth-

ers had gone to bed, she hung her clothing around the fireplace. In the morning when Archibald got up, he saw the clothes drying. He began to joke with the others about Granny having been dipped in the river along with Elizabeth. Granny listened to their fun and then said: "Archibald, if you don't want people to hear, stop shouting so loudly. You can't talk about Granny now, for she can hear better than any of you."

Granny had been virtually deaf for twenty years, but a miracle had restored her hearing at the time she was baptized. From that day until her death, she could hear distinctly. Archibald said laughingly that she heard too much.

Most of the family members soon were baptized in 1841.

The light of the gospel illuminates the path of life to eternity that otherwise would be dark and nondirecting.

We can be like a mirror and direct light even into dark places. We are not

the sources of light; nevertheless, through us light can be reflected to others.

I must return and report my stewardship and *my words* in the heavens when I leave this mortal life. Therefore, I testify with no hesitancy that God lives. Jesus is his holy Son, the One through whom we gain salvation. This is his Church and kingdom, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elders Robert L. Backman and Ted E. Brewerton of the Seventy have spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Elder George I. Cannon of the Seventy.

The chorus and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder George I. Cannon

Make each day a good day

"Behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation. . . . This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; . . . the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors" (Alma 34:31-32).

These words are as applicable today as when expressed by Amulek centuries ago.

Many years ago I clipped an article out of a newspaper. It tells about an elevator boy who was whistling a merry tune on his way up on the elevator one morning. "Why so happy?" a grim-faced, scowling rider asked him.

The boy replied, "I've never lived this day before."

The writer of the article comments: "This boy was wiser than his

years. The only life we can live is today. Yesterday is behind us. However golden the hours, they cannot be lived again, but only remembered. Tomorrow is before us, and however sweet its expectations, the clock must take its patient course before we can test our hope against reality. We can live no more than one day at a time" (Roy Pearson, *Words to Live By*).

Elder Richard L. Evans shared this meaningful thought in "The Spoken Word": "It sometimes seems that we live as if we wonder when life is going to begin. It isn't always clear just what we are waiting for, but some of us sometimes persist in waiting so long that life slips by—finding us still waiting for something that has been going

on all the time. . . . This is the life in which the work of this life is to be done. Today is as much a part of eternity as any day a thousand years ago or as will be any day a thousand years hence. This is it, whether we are thrilled or disappointed, busy or bored! This is life, and it is passing" ("The Spoken Word," *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1967, p. 65).

Today is a day of eternity. I hope each day we are thankful for life, for knowing that we are sons and daughters of God and that the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ is upon the earth. I hope we will have a desire and a determination to make each day a good day.

How can we do this? Here are some suggestions. I encourage you to add others.

Nourish faith and repent

Each day let us nourish our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us follow the inspired message from the Lord's living prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, to read daily from the Book of Mormon and make a study of this book a lifetime pursuit (see Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 57; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 51). We can go to our Father in Heaven in individual prayer. We can kneel each day as a family. How very important it is that we do this. As we attend our meetings on the Sabbath and partake of the sacrament worthily, we can have our Father's Spirit with us every day.

Let us live daily the great saving principle of repentance. We will become more humble and teachable.

Follow the Savior

Each day will be a good day if we will think of the Savior and make Him the center of our lives, for He is "the light, and the life, and the truth of the

world" (Ether 4:12). Following the Savior will help us to be honest. I would like to tell you about a twelve-year-old boy in the Philippines who is following the Savior.

Julius had gone to school without eating any breakfast, and during class his stomach began to make funny sounds. During recess he hurried to a nearby barbecue stand. He took two sticks of meat, ate the food, and went back to class.

When he returned, he discovered he had not given the pesos for the food. Without hesitation he ran back and paid for his snack. When he arrived back at the classroom, he found a very angry teacher. He had forgotten to ask permission to leave. She wanted to know what he had been doing. He told her everything. Then she put her arm on his shoulder and, facing the class, said, "Class, I want you to be honest like Julius." She asked him why he returned the money when he could have kept it.

He answered, "Because I believe in being honest."

"What is your religion?" she wanted to know.

Without hesitation, he said, "I am a Mormon."

"Oh," she responded, "no wonder."

Julius is making each day a good day by always being honest.

Following the Savior will help us to be morally clean. We will respect our bodies and not tamper with drugs, alcohol, or pornography or in any way destroy the great miracle of life which the Lord has given to each of us.

Recently I listened to the words of a stalwart young teenager who told about how some young people in his school have not kept the standards of the Church and have used some of the destructive substances we have been warned against. Friends who know he is a Mormon have asked him why

he doesn't partake of these harmful things. He explained: "I am happy to know that I have not disappointed the Lord and dishonored the priesthood he has given me. Remember, you can lie to yourself, and you can lie to others, but you can never lie to the Lord. He knows what you are doing. . . . To help us along the way, a good guideline is to imagine that Jesus is right beside you all the time. Ask yourself, 'Would Jesus be doing this?' or 'Would He get into this situation?' " (talk given by Brandon Williams, Alamosa Colorado Stake conference, 25 Aug. 1991).

As the Savior becomes the center of our lives, we will be more loving and giving. He has taught by precept and example that if we would truly find ourselves, we must first lose ourselves in serving and helping others.

Serve in the kingdom

I believe one of the best ways to make each day a good one is to help build the kingdom of God. What a blessing it is for each of us to be leaders in righteousness. President Spencer W. Kimball has said, "Membership in the Church is a call to leadership." Let us be good leaders in our homes (this means both children and parents), leaders in our neighborhoods, our schools, our communities, and the Church.

Be happy with ourselves

Each day can be richer and more meaningful if we can be happy with ourselves. Some of the most undesirable feelings are those of envying, coveting, and wishing that we were someone else. We should be grateful for who we are and what we are, and for the talents we have been given. We should be supportive of and grateful for the talents of others, always looking for those divine qualities which are in every person we meet. It is important

that we be ourselves and like ourselves. Someone has said, "A bee may not be an eagle, but it can sure make honey!"

Don't worry

Here is another suggestion: Don't worry about those things which you cannot change. If something can be done, do it. If nothing can be done, don't worry about it. Several years ago, I read an article written about Elder LeGrand Richards. He had just turned age ninety-three. Someone asked him what his secret was for living such a long, happy, and useful life. He said:

"One of my secrets is I don't do a lot of worrying. Some people worry but I have a little slogan that goes like this:

"For every worry under the sun, there is a remedy, or there is none;

"If there be one, hurry and find it, if there be none, never mind it" ("Beloved Elder Richards Recovering," *Church News*, 31 Mar. 1979, p. 4).

Work diligently

I have one more suggestion. I share this counsel from President Ezra Taft Benson: "If we want to keep the Spirit, we must work. There is no greater exhilaration or satisfaction than to know, after a hard day of work, that we have done our best. . . . Ours is a gospel of work—purposeful, unselfish and rendered in the spirit of the true love of Christ" (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], pp. 483–84).

Each day is a day of eternity

Each day we live is a day of eternity.

Let us make each day a good day by—

- Nourishing faith.
- Growing through repentance.
- Following the Savior.
- Serving in the kingdom.

- Being happy with ourselves.
- Not worrying.
- Working diligently.

I pray, with Alma, that each day we would “humble [our]selves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that [we] may not be tempted above that which [we] can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering;

“Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that [we] shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in [our] hearts, that [we] may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest” (Alma 13:28–29).

Expressions of gratitude

Today, my heart is full of gratitude as my service as a Seventy comes to a close.

I am grateful for my good wife, Isabel, who has so lovingly and unselfishly served by my side and whose example has shown me how to make each day a good one. I express thanks to our children and their eternal companions and our grandchildren for their support, steadfastness, and righteousness.

I have learned from the examples of the First Presidency and the Council

of the Twelve the meaning of discipleship to the Savior.

With the Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric, I have shared the joy of brotherhood.

To all the members and missionaries with whom I have been privileged to serve in Asia, the Philippines, Micronesia and Guam, Great Britain, and the Southwest Area of the United States, I say thank you. You are examples of making every day a good day.

Above all, I express my gratitude and love to my Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the life, light, and truth of the world. I leave my witness that He is our Savior and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang “Nearer, My God, to Thee” without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder George I. Cannon of the Seventy has given us that sound advice and that stirring testimony, and the Mormon Youth Chorus sang that grand old hymn “Nearer, My God, to Thee.”

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My brethren and sisters, I’m sure that all of us have been honored to be in the presence of President Ezra Taft Benson, the President of the Church, our prophet. I’ve loved him and respected him all of my life, as I’m sure you have.

Fruits of the gospel

Throughout the ages, the Lord has referred to his people, those who love

him and keep his commandments, in words that set them apart. He has called them a “peculiar treasure” (Exodus 19:5), a “special people” (Deuteronomy 7:6), “a royal priesthood, an holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9). Scriptures refer to such people as Saints. As the Savior taught, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).

In sharp contrast to those who live by gospel principles, I see accounts of people who either ignore or don’t un-

derstand these principles. Some do not live the gospel standards and live in sin, evil, dishonesty, and crime. The result is untold misery, pain, suffering, and sorrow.

I am reminded of the Savior's teachings when he declared:

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:24-27).

This analogy teaches us an important lesson. We cannot have the fruits of the gospel without its roots. Through revelation, the Lord has established those roots—distinctive principles of the fulness of the gospel. They give us direction. The Lord has taught us how we should build our lives on a solid foundation, like a rock, that will withstand the temptations and storms of life.

May I give you some of the major principles of the gospel.

The Godhead

One distinctive principle is a true concept of the nature of the Godhead: "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Articles of Faith 1:1). The Godhead consists of three separate, distinct personages who are one in purpose. The Father and the Son have tangible bodies of flesh and bone, while the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit.

God truly is our Father, the Father of the spirits of all mankind. We are his literal offspring and are formed in his image. We have inherited divine characteristics from him. Knowing our relationship to our Heavenly Father helps us understand the divine nature that is in us and our potential. The doctrine of the fatherhood of God lays a solid foundation for self-esteem. The hymn titled "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301) states this doctrine in simple terms. Can a person who understands his divine parenthood lack self-esteem? I have known people who have a deep, abiding assurance of this truth and others who understand it only superficially and intellectually. The contrast in their attitudes and the practical effect of these attitudes in their lives are remarkably apparent.

Knowing that Jesus Christ is the firstborn Son of God in the spirit and the Only Begotten Son in the flesh gives a far more noble and majestic view of him than if he were just a great teacher or philosopher. He is our Lord, the Redeemer of all mankind, our Mediator with the Father. Because of his love for us, he has atoned for the sins of the world and has provided a way for the faithful to return to our Heavenly Father's presence.

"He is the greatest Being to be born on this earth—the perfect example. . . . He is Lord of lords, King of kings, the Creator, the Savior, the God of the whole earth. . . . His name . . . is the only name under heaven by which we can be saved.

"He will come again in power and glory to dwell on the earth, and will stand as Judge of all mankind at the last day" (Bible Dictionary, "Christ").

He stands as the head of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We should be everlastingly grateful to him. We should love him with all our hearts and should follow his example.

The Holy Ghost, the third member of the Godhead, is a revelator (see *History of the Church*, 6:58); he reveals the word of God. He provides the convincing witness that the gospel is true and gives a person a testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ. He guides us in our choices and in our search for truth.

Resurrection

Next I turn to our assurance of a literal resurrection, the uniting after mortal death of the spirit with a body of flesh and bone. Jesus, the first on this earth to be resurrected, made the Resurrection a certainty for all mankind. This reality is a center point of hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:19–22).

I have seen the contrast between those who have spiritual confidence in the Resurrection and others who are confused and uncertain about our post-mortal condition. I was inspired by one mother who faced the untimely death of a two-year-old daughter with serenity, despite her deep sorrow. She attributed the peace she felt to her faith in a merciful God and in life everlasting. She was confident that this sweet child was encompassed in the arms of God's love and that she and her daughter would be together again.

Parenting

In the Lord's plan, parents are to teach their children during the impressionable and formative years when they develop attitudes and habits that last a lifetime. President Brigham Young wisely recognized that "the time of youth and early manhood is the proper time" to gain mastery over bodily appetites and passions. He warned that "the man who suffers his passions to lead him becomes a slave to them, and such a man will find the work of emancipation an exceedingly difficult one"

(*Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, ed. Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 130). We can be so grateful for principles that provide positive, spiritual reinforcement for parental teachings and that direct young people away from the pitfalls that Satan has strewn along the path of adolescence and young adulthood.

Word of Wisdom

The Word of Wisdom was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1833. This revelation has been scrutinized and ignored, attacked and defended, ridiculed and praised. Meanwhile, faithful Saints have observed it as a token of their obedience to God. For many years, they could obey it only on faith, in much the same spirit that Adam offered sacrifice. An angel asked him, "Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me" (Moses 5:6). Early members of the Church obeyed the Lord's counsel without the benefit of present medical knowledge, which has validated the physical benefits of their obedience. We now know by scientific evidence what the Saints have known by revelation for 158 years.

Imagine the results we would see if the total populace were to live this law of health and never abuse their bodies with alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and other harmful substances. What magnitude of decline would we see in automobile accidents, illness and premature death, fetal defects, crime, squandered dollars, broken homes, and wasted lives resulting from alcohol and other addictive drugs? How much would lung cancer, heart disease, and other ailments caused by cigarette smoking decrease? The fruits of this commandment bring innumerable blessings.

Members of the Church have obviously been blessed with health and spirituality by being obedient to this commandment.

Welfare principles

A sure indicator of true religion is a concern for the poor of the earth. This leads us to provide for their needs by acts of charity. I quote James: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep . . . unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

Stated simply, charity means subordinating our interests and needs to those of others, as the Savior has done for all of us. The Apostle Paul wrote that of faith, hope, and charity, "the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13:13), and Moroni wrote that "except ye have charity ye can in no wise be saved in the kingdom of God" (Moroni 10:21). I believe that selfless service is a distinctive part of the gospel. As President Spencer W. Kimball said, welfare service "is not a program, but the essence of the gospel. *It is the gospel in action*. It is the crowning principle of a Christian life" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, pp. 123-24; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 77).

The Church does substantial but perhaps little-known humanitarian work in many places in the world. Our ability to reach out to others is made possible only to the extent that we are self-reliant. When we are self-reliant, we will use material blessings we receive from God to take care of ourselves and our families and be in a position to help others.

Comment on the principle of self-reliance may seem merely to echo the obvious, but it runs counter to the trends in our society that shift responsibility to others. Many Saints have been spared suffering because they have lived by this principle.

The foundation of self-reliance is hard work. Parents should teach their children that work is the prerequisite to achievement and success in every worthwhile endeavor. Children of legal age should secure productive employment and begin to move away from dependence on parents. None of us should expect others to provide for us that which we can provide for ourselves.

Missionary work

Missionary work was a distinct part of the Savior's mortal ministry. This is also true today. The Savior commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). His disciples, especially Paul, proclaimed the gospel message widely in the years following the Savior's crucifixion. In 1831 the Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith, "The voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated" (D&C 1:2).

Today more than 44,000 missionaries are working to fulfill the divine mandate to preach the gospel. They bless the people they teach by acquainting them with the fulness of the restored gospel. They bless themselves by the dramatic growth and maturity that come during a mission. Every worthy young man should go on a mission. Also, worthy young women and couples of the Church can give invaluable service in the mission field. They all serve as the emissaries of the Lord. We thank them most sincerely.

Chastity

Another distinctive characteristic of the gospel is the adherence to the Lord's law of chastity. From ancient

times to the present, the Lord has commanded his people to obey this law. Such strict morality may seem peculiar or outdated in our day when the media portrays pornography and immorality as being normal and fully acceptable. Remember, the Lord has never revoked the law of chastity.

Temple marriage vows increase the depth of faithfulness between husband and wife.

Obedience to the law of chastity would diminish cries for abortion and would go a long way toward controlling sexually transmitted disease. Total fidelity in marriage would eliminate a major cause of divorce, with its consequent pain and sadness inflicted especially upon innocent children.

Of course, members of the Church have their share of faults and weaknesses, but we see abundant evidence that living the gospel does help the Saints to become better. As more people commit themselves to living the gospel with all their heart, might, mind, and strength, they will be examples to their families and friends.

How blessed we are to understand and to have the privilege of living by the sacred, eternal principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are true. They will lead us along the only safe course to happiness, which is "the object and design of our existence" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 255).

Advice and promise

In conclusion, let me offer this advice and promise. Never be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Partake of the sacrament worthily. Always remember our Lord and Savior. Never defame his sacred name. Do not ridi-

cule the sacredness of the holy priesthood and the ordinances of the gospel. If you honor this counsel, the spirit of rebellion will never come into your hearts. You will be blessed as was Alma, who said:

"I have labored without ceasing . . . that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste. . . .

"Yea, . . . the Lord doth give me exceedingly great joy in the fruit of my labors;

"For because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted" (Alma 36:24-26).

In addition, if you will sustain the Lord's anointed, your confidence in them will wax strong. Your families and your posterity will be blessed and strengthened. The abundant fruits of the gospel will enrich your lives. Peace and unity will fill your hearts and homes.

My brothers and sisters, your leaders of the Church love you and labor to bring you the fruits of the gospel that you may taste as we have tasted. May you feel that marvelous joy of God's love and his blessings in your life I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Shout the Glad Tidings" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve has spoken to us, and the chorus has sung "Shout the Glad Tidings."

President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

President Howard W. Hunter

The gospel is for all people

The gospel of Jesus Christ, which gospel we teach and the ordinances of which we perform, is a global faith with an all-embracing message. It is neither confined nor partial nor subject to history or fashion. Its essence is universally and eternally true. Its message is for all the world, restored in these latter days to meet the fundamental needs of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people on the earth. It has been established again as it was in the beginning—to build brotherhood, to preserve truth, and to save souls.

Brigham Young once said about such a broad and stimulating concept of religion: "For me, the plan of salvation must . . . circumscribe [all] the knowledge that is upon the face of the earth, or it is not from God. Such a plan incorporates every system of true doctrine on the earth, whether it be ecclesiastical, moral, philosophical, or civil: it incorporates all good laws that have been made from the days of Adam until now; it swallows up the laws of nations, for it exceeds them all in knowledge and purity; it circumscribes the doctrines of the day, and takes from the right and the left, and brings all truth together in one system, and leaves the chaff to be scattered hither and thither" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:148).

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we seek to bring all truth together. We seek to enlarge the circle of love and understanding among all the people of the earth. Thus we strive to establish peace and happiness, not only within Christianity but among all mankind.

The human race is one family

In the message of the gospel, the entire human race is one family de-

scended from a single God. All men and women have not only a physical lineage leading back to Adam and Eve, their first earthly parents, but also a spiritual heritage leading back to God the Eternal Father. Thus, all persons on earth are literally brothers and sisters in the family of God.

It is in understanding and accepting this universal fatherhood of God that all human beings can best appreciate God's concern for them and their relationship to each other. This is a message of life and love that strikes squarely against all stifling traditions based on race, language, economic or political standing, educational rank, or cultural background, for we are all of the same spiritual descent. We have a divine pedigree; every person is a spiritual child of God.

In this gospel view there is no room for a contracted, narrow, or prejudicial view. The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "Love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race" (*History of the Church*, 4:227).

In 1907 the First Presidency presented to the general conference a declaration which includes this statement: "Our motives are not selfish; our purposes not petty and earth-bound; we contemplate the human race, past, present and yet to come, as immortal beings, for whose salvation it is our mission to labor; and to this work, broad as eternity and deep as the love of God, we devote ourselves, now, and forever" ("An Address: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the World," appendix to Conference Report, Apr. 1907, p. 16).

In the gospel view, no man is alien. No one is to be denied. There is no underlying excuse for smugness, arrogance, or pride. Openly scorning the pettiness and intolerance of rival religious groups, the Prophet Joseph Smith said in an editorial:

"While one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of men, causes 'His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' He holds the reins of judgment in His hands; He is a wise Lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, 'according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil,' or whether these deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India" (*History of the Church*, 4:595-96).

God gives truth to all men

Mormonism, so-called, is a world religion, not simply because its members are now found throughout the world, but chiefly because it has a comprehensive and inclusive message based upon the acceptance of all truth, restored to meet the needs of all mankind.

We believe there is a spiritual influence that emanates from "the presence of God to fill the immensity of space" (D&C 88:12). All men share an inheritance of divine light. God operates among his children in all nations, and those who seek God are entitled to further light and knowledge, regardless of their race, nationality, or cultural traditions.

Elder Orson F. Whitney, in a conference address, explained that many

great religious leaders were inspired. He said:

"[God] is using not only his covenant people, but other peoples as well, to consummate a work, stupendous, magnificent, and altogether too arduous for this little handful of Saints to accomplish by and of themselves. . . .

"All down the ages men bearing the authority of the Holy Priesthood—patriarchs, prophets, apostles and others, have officiated in the name of the Lord, doing the things that he required of them; and outside the pale of their activities other good and great men, not bearing the Priesthood, but possessing profundity of thought, great wisdom, and a desire to uplift their fellows, have been sent by the Almighty into many nations, to give them, not the fulness of the Gospel, but that portion of truth that they were able to receive and wisely use" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1921, pp. 32-33).

An inclusive approach toward nonmembers

The restored gospel is a message of divine love for all people everywhere, based upon the conviction that all humans are children of the same God. This primary religious message was beautifully expressed in a statement of the First Presidency on February 15, 1978, as follows:

"Based upon ancient and modern revelation, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gladly teaches and declares the Christian doctrine that all men and women are brothers and sisters, not only by blood relationship from common mortal progenitors but also as literal spirit children of an Eternal Father."

Latter-day Saints have a positive and inclusive approach toward others who are not of our faith. We believe they are literally our brothers and sisters, that we are sons and daughters of

the same Heavenly Father. We have a common genealogy leading back to God. But more than that, we also seek the true and the beautiful wherever it may be found. And we know that God has blessed all his children with goodness and light in accordance with the conditions in which they find themselves.

In our humble efforts to build brotherhood and to teach revealed truth, we say to the people of the world what President George Albert Smith so lovingly suggested:

"We have come not to take away from you the truth and virtue you possess. We have come not to find fault with you nor to criticize you. We have not come here to berate you because of things you have not done; but we have come here as your brethren . . . and to say to you: 'Keep all the good that you have, and let us bring to you more good, in order that you may be happier and in order that you may be prepared to enter into the presence of our Heavenly Father' " (*Sharing the Gospel with Others*, comp. Preston Nibley [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1948], pp. 12-13).

Ours is a perennial religion

In summary, then, the validity, the power of our faith is not bound by history, nationality, or culture. It is not the peculiar property of any one people or any one age. As Joseph Smith once said, it is "above the king-

doms of the world" (*History of the Church*, 5:526).

Ours is a perennial religion based on eternal, saving truth. Its message of love and brotherhood is lodged in scripture and in the revelations of the Lord to his living prophet. It embraces all truth. It circumscribes all wisdom—all that God has revealed to man and all that he will yet reveal. Of that eternal revelation I bear testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, for your wise and inspired words.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable and satellite systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold," and the benediction will then be given by Elder Richard P. Lindsay of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold."

Elder Richard P. Lindsay offered the benediction.

FIRST DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1991, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second

Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by the Missionary Training Center mixed choir. Douglas Brenchley conducted the choir, and Richard Elliott was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Monson made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to the second general session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference on television and who was with us at the opening session this morning.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance and to all who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission. We express appreciation to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems for their cooperation in making these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

We note that Elders Russell M. Nelson, Lloyd P. George, and Robert

K. Dellenbach are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall next door.

The music for this session will be provided by the Missionary Training Center mixed choir, under the direction of Brother Douglas Brechley, with Brother Richard Elliott at the organ.

This splendid choir will begin this session by singing the favorite hymn of President Spencer W. Kimball, "I Need Thee Every Hour." The invocation will be offered by Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder Joe J. Christensen offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Called to Serve," after which President Gordon B. Hinckley will present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "Called to Serve."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Thank you for the beautiful music. I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may

manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

Since April conference Elders Han In Sang, Stephen D. Nadauld, and Sam K. Shimabukuro have accepted calls to serve as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in sustaining these Brethren in these callings, please manifest it. Any who may feel otherwise.

With gratitude for their service as General Authorities for the past 5½ years, it is proposed that we release the following as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: H. Verlan Andersen, George I. Cannon, Francis M. Gibbons, and Gardner H. Russell. These Brethren have rendered tremendous faithful, devoted, and unselfish service. All who wish to join in a vote of appreciation may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release Elder LeGrand R. Curtis as First Counselor and Elder Robert K. Dellenbach as Second Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency and that we release Elder H. Verlan Andersen as First Counselor and Elder Rulon G.

Craven as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency. All who wish to express appreciation for these Brethren may do so.

It is also proposed that we sustain Elder Robert K. Dellenbach as First Counselor and Elder Stephen D. Nadauld as Second Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency and that we sustain Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., as First Counselor and Elder Clinton L. Cutler as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency. All in favor please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general officers of the Church as presently constituted. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, our beloved brothers and sisters, for your continued vote of love and confidence.

President Monson

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

He will then be followed by Elder Julio E. Dávila of the Seventy.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Spiritual communication comes as a feeling

A testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a witness that the Book of Mormon is true, comes in a delicate, refined spiritual communication. It is described in the scriptures as light (see D&C 88:11, 67), as burning in the bosom. It is best described as a *feeling* (see 1 Nephi 17:45).

Ordinarily a testimony comes when we seek for it with a sincere heart and real intent (see Moroni 10:4). "If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive reve-

lation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal" (D&C 42:61).

No message appears in scripture more times, in more ways than "Ask, and ye shall receive." (Matthew 21:22; James 4:3; 1 John 3:22; 1 Nephi 15:11; Enos 1:15; Mosiah 4:21; D&C 4:7; and Moses 6:52 are examples.) While we may invite this communication, it can *never* be forced! If we try to force it, we may be deceived.

Enos, who was "struggling in the spirit," said, "Behold, the voice of the Lord came into my *mind*" (Enos 1:10; italics added). While this spiritual communication comes into the *mind*, it comes more as a feeling, an impression, than simply as a thought. Unless you have experienced it, it is very difficult to describe that delicate process.

The witness is not communicated through the intellect alone, however bright the intellect may be.

"The natural man," Paul told us, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:13-14).

Both the intellect and the spirit

Recently the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve Apostles issued a statement alerting members of the Church to the dangers of participating in circles which concentrate on doctrine and ordinances and measure them by the intellect alone.

If doctrines and behavior are measured by the intellect alone, the essential spiritual ingredient is missing, and we will be misled.

Personal testimony is confirmed to us initially and is reaffirmed and enlarged thereafter through a harmonious combining of both the intellect and the spirit.

A testimony is profoundly personal and occurs in response to very private prayers and pleadings. Nevertheless, the Lord has told us, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20; see also D&C 6:32).

There is safety in learning doctrine in gatherings which are sponsored by proper authority. Some members, even some who have made covenants in the temple, are associating with groups of one kind or another which

have an element of secrecy about them and which pretend to have some higher source of inspiration concerning the fulfillment of prophecies than do ward or stake leaders or the General Authorities of the Church. Know this: There are counterfeit revelations which, we are warned, "shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22).

The Lord commanded: "Assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves. . . . Continue in prayer and fasting. . . . Teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. . . . And my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand" (D&C 88:74-80).

Reverence and revelation

When we meet to learn the doctrines of the gospel, it should be in a spirit of reverence. It is about *reverence* and how it relates to *revelation* that I wish to speak.

Inspiration comes more easily in peaceful settings. Such words as *quiet*, *still*, *peaceable*, *Comforter* abound in the scriptures: "Be *still*, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10; italics added). And the promise, "You shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the *peaceable* things of the kingdom" (D&C 36:2; italics added).

Elijah felt a great wind, an earthquake, a fire. The Lord was not in any of them; then came "a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12).

Helaman said of that voice of revelation: "It was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul" (Helaman 5:30).

It was Nephi who reminded his brothers that an angel "hath spoken

unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past *feeling*, that ye could not *feel* his words" (1 Nephi 17:45; italics added).

For the past several years we have watched patterns of reverence and irreverence in the Church. While many are to be highly commended, we are drifting. We have reason to be deeply concerned.

The world grows increasingly noisy. Clothing and grooming and conduct are looser and sloppier and more disheveled. Raucous music, with obscene lyrics blasted through amplifiers while lights flash psychedelic colors, characterizes the drug culture. Variations of these things are gaining wide acceptance and influence over our youth.

Doctors even say that our physical sense of hearing can be permanently damaged by all of this noise.

This trend to more noise, more excitement, more contention, less restraint, less dignity, less formality is not coincidental nor innocent nor harmless.

The first order issued by a commander mounting a military invasion is the jamming of the channels of communication of those he intends to conquer.

Irreverence suits the purposes of the adversary by obstructing the delicate channels of revelation in both mind and spirit.

Reverence in Sunday meetings

Our sacrament and other meetings need renewed attention to assure that they are truly worship services in which members may be spiritually nourished and have their testimonies replenished and in which investigators may feel the inspiration essential to spiritual conversion.

Our meetinghouses are designed so that we may enjoy socials, dancing,

drama, even sports. All of these are important. But these auxiliary activities should be subdued when compared with what the world is doing. Music, dress, and conduct associated with them are quite different from what is appropriate in the chapel or classroom on the Sabbath day.

When we return for Sunday meetings, the music, dress, and conduct should be appropriate for worship. Foyers are built into our chapels to allow for the greeting and chatter that are typical of people who love one another. However, when we step into the chapel, we *must!*—each of us *must!*—watch ourselves lest we be guilty of intruding when someone is struggling to feel delicate spiritual communications.

Leaders sometimes wonder why so many active members get themselves into such predicaments in life. Could it be that they do not feel what they need to feel because our meetings are less than they might be spiritually?

Irreverent conduct in our chapels is worthy of a reminder, if not reproof. Leaders should teach that reverence invites revelation.

The reverence we speak of does not equate with absolute silence. We must be tolerant of little babies, even an occasional outburst from a toddler being ushered out to keep him from disturbing the peace. Unless the father is on the stand, he should do the ushering.

Music in worship services

Music is of enormous importance in our worship services. I believe that those who choose, conduct, present, and accompany the music may influence the spirit of reverence in our meetings more than a speaker does. God bless them.

Music can set an atmosphere of worship which invites that spirit of revelation, of testimony. We are told in

the handbook that "music and musical texts are to be sacred, dignified, and otherwise suitable for a Latter-day Saint meeting" (*General Handbook of Instructions*, 1989, p. 2-5) and that "organs and pianos are the standard instruments used in sacrament meetings. Other instruments, such as orchestral strings, may be used when appropriate, but the music must be in keeping with the reverence and spirituality of the meeting. Brass and percussion instruments generally are not appropriate" (*Handbook for Church Music*, p. 17).

An organist who has the sensitivity to quietly play prelude music from the hymnbook tempers our feelings and causes us to go over in our minds the lyrics which teach the peaceable things of the kingdom. If we will listen, they are teaching the gospel, for the hymns of the Restoration are, in fact, a course in doctrine!

I have noticed that an increasing number of our leaders and members do not sing the congregational songs. Perhaps they do not know them or there are not enough hymnbooks. We should sing the songs of Zion—they are an essential part of our worship. We must not neglect the hymns nor the exalted anthems of the Restoration. Read the First Presidency's introduction in the hymnbook. The Lord said, "My soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads" (D&C 25:12). Do not let our sacred music slip away from us, nor allow secular music to replace it.

When music is presented which, however appropriate for other occasions, does not fit the Sabbath, much is lost. From the *Bulletin*: "Some religiously oriented music in a popular style can be uplifting and motivating for some of our members but may lack the dignity and propriety suitable for a worship service. Also, music which

might be suitable in a concert setting may not be appropriate for a worship service" (*Bulletin*, Sept. 1986, p. 1).

A choir which favors secular music above sacred music on the Sabbath becomes a chorus. In that respect, they teach the ways of men and, in doing so, miss the opportunity to inspire and deny the power that they might otherwise have. The Spirit does not ratify speech nor confirm music which lacks spiritual substance.

Now, someone will surely write to remind me that I have not been trained as a musician and will tell me of the stimulation that comes to them from listening to the great music of the world. I understand that. But not all great music nor all popular religious music meets the special criteria of the sacred music of worship, of the Sabbath, of revelation.

There is something else: We are drifting from the use of reverential words in our prayers. Familiar terms such as *you* and *yours* are replacing *thee* and *thine* in prayer. Teach the children and gently inform new members that we use reverential terms when addressing our Heavenly Father in prayer.

Increase in spiritual power

No one of us can survive in the world of today, much less in what it soon will become, without personal inspiration. The spirit of reverence can and should be evident in every organization in the Church and in the lives of every member.

Parents, stake presidencies, bishops, auxiliary leaders, teachers: Maintain a spirit of reverence in meetings; encourage participation in congregational singing and the use of reverential terms in prayers.

While we may not see an immediate, miraculous transformation, as surely as the Lord lives, a quiet one will take place. The spiritual power in the

life of each member and in the Church will increase. The Lord will pour out his Spirit upon us more abundantly. We will be less troubled, less confused. We will find revealed answers to personal and family problems without all the counseling which we seem now to need.

It was Nephi who taught: "Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."

"Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark."

"For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3-5).

And in the spirit of reverence, I bear testimony that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that the Holy Ghost—our comforter, our teacher—will come to us if we will maintain a spirit of reverence, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Packer, for that much-needed counsel.

Elders Julio E. Dávila and Graham W. Doxey, who were sustained at April conference as members of the Seventy, will now address us.

Elder Julio E. Dávila

Elder Dávila's conversion

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is very significant for me to follow Elder Boyd K. Packer this afternoon because just twenty-three years ago, his son Alan, then a missionary in Colombia, arrived with his companion to our home in Bogotá. That was our first contact with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Today I want to pay tribute to the missionaries, their parents and supporters, and to the leaders and members of the Church who, with their love and patience, made it possible for my wife, Mary, and me to join the Church and who continue supporting us in the process of conversion.

At the time the missionaries came to teach us, I was going through some trials and had many sorrows and concerns, and I needed to make some important decisions in my life. However, at the beginning I was not aware that their message of the restoration of

the gospel of Jesus Christ and of his Church was the answer and solution to my needs. I didn't realize that those young messengers were sent to me by my Heavenly Father.

Now I understand his mercy because he sent to us his Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who through the miracle of his atonement sacrificed his life for our salvation, broke the bands of death, defied the grave, and invited us to follow him.

Somehow it was not easy for them to start teaching us, but after many visits and discussions I was touched by the Spirit, and I agreed to be baptized, as well as my beloved wife. But I established some "don'ts" or conditions: don't call me "brother"; I will not attend all the meetings; I don't want to be assigned to pray nor to give talks in the meetings; I will not accept any callings; and never ask me to talk to my relatives or friends about the Church; and so forth.

Conversion is a process

I testify that conversion is a process. I am sure that the missionaries were praying and fasting for the change of my mind because as soon as we started to attend the meetings, I began criticizing many temporal things at the meetinghouse, such as the crooked pictures on the walls. The branch president, a fine and wise man, appointed me as the pictures supervisor, this being my first calling in the Church. Incidentally, I have never seen that position in the handbooks, but it served me very well to start my involvement in the service of the Lord.

My advice to leaders, members, and new converts looking for retention and reactivation is to let every man and woman participate in the preparation of this world for the second coming of our Savior; receive with joy the callings and releases that come from the Lord through inspired leaders; be co-workers with God in “bring[ing] to pass the immortality and eternal life of man,” as we learn in Moses 1:39. We must be sure that all the people are having the opportunity to give of their time, talents, skills, and facilities to help others find the truth.

My first encounter with preaching the gospel was also exciting. In a park near my office in Bogotá, I saw a multitude, and since I had some time, I went down to see what was happening. My surprise was great when I saw the missionaries with displays about the Church and with copies of the Book of Mormon. They recognized me and asked me to stand in the middle of the park with a banner saying, “Be happy; be a Mormon.” I stood for a while in that place. I was a Mormon, but at that moment I was not so happy! But I started to feel better about my ability as a missionary, losing my fear to talk with people about the Church. I let go of my own restrictions—so many “don’ts,”—and realized that this is the

Church of love and service, of sacrifice and blessings, of happiness and eternal life. My message to the missionaries, to the people that are investigating the Church at this time, and to the members is, “Don’t give up; continue looking for the best results in this wonderful work.”

After our baptism, many relatives, including our parents, several brothers and sisters and their families, followed our example and joined the Church, serving in priesthood and auxiliary leadership positions, serving full-time missions, and performing ordinances of salvation and exaltation for our kindred dead and for ourselves.

Eighteen years ago my wife and I were sealed in eternal marriage in the Salt Lake Temple, and the following year we were sealed as a family with our daughters, Liana and Maritza, in the Los Angeles Temple. For all these things, I express my gratitude to my Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Conversion is understanding truth

I can say with President Harold B. Lee: “As you can see, one is converted when he sees with his eyes what he ought to see; when he hears with his ears what he ought to hear; and when he understands with his heart what he ought to understand. And what he ought to see, hear, and understand is truth—eternal truth—and then practice it. That is conversion” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 92).

President Ezra Taft Benson, at an area conference in Sweden in 1974, said: “It is not on the pinnacle of success and ease where men and women grow most. It is often down in the valley of heartache and disappointment and reverses where men and women grow into strong characters” (in Conference Report, Denmark, Finland,

Norway, and Sweden Area Conference 1974, p. 70).

I know the meaning of repentance and forgiveness as part of the process of conversion through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I have partaken of the blessings stated in Moroni, chapter 6, verses 1 to 4:

"And now I speak concerning baptism. Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were baptized; and they were not baptized save they brought forth fruit meet that they were worthy of it.

"Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins.

"And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.

"And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the

people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith."

Brothers and sisters, I testify to you that God lives and loves us; that he sent to the world his Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer; that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God who was foreordained and raised up for the restoration of all things in this dispensation; that President Ezra Taft Benson is our living prophet, appointed by the Lord to guide us in the true Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and that the Book of Mormon and the Bible are testaments of Christ, the Messiah. That we may see, hear, and understand these things and practice them, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Graham W. Doxey

My brothers and sisters, I am humbled as I face this new responsibility. However, I am encouraged with the warm and strong brotherhood I feel from these Brethren seated here.

My experiences include, like Nephi, "having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught" (1 Nephi 1:1). Next I was blessed to marry a beautiful wife, a queenly saint; therefore, I am receiving some secondary education. My internship training started as we were blessed with children. And our wonderful grandchildren have become our postgraduate education. It is my prayer and my trust in this regard that, once gained, "whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection" (D&C 130:18).

The voice is still small

President Spencer W. Kimball, a man with unique experience in all levels of Church leadership, described the subject that has been on my mind since this speaking assignment came. I apologize to Elder Packer. I realize that I was prompted by the Spirit—I know that he is—and I have found my thoughts going in much the same direction that his went. President Kimball said:

"The burning bushes, the smoking mountains, . . . the Cumorahs, and the Kirtlands were realities; but they were the exceptions. The great volume of revelation came to Moses and to Joseph and comes to today's prophet in

the less spectacular way—that of deep impressions, without spectacle or glamour or dramatic events.

“Always expecting the spectacular, many will miss entirely the constant flow of revealed communication” (in Conference Report, Munich Germany Area Conference 1973, p. 77).

Dramatic and miraculous answers to prayer may come, but they are the exceptions. Even at the highest levels of responsibility in this kingdom of God which is being built up upon the earth, *the voice is still small*.

In the Bible we read of the account of an earlier prophet who was rejected and discouraged. The word of the Lord came to Elijah when the children of Israel had forsaken their covenant and thrown down altars and slain prophets. He was told to “go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

“And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11–12).

Listening is a challenge today

My testimony is that the Lord is speaking to you! But with the deafening decibels of today’s environment, all too often we fail to hear him. I remember as a youth having the experience of being in company with an older man who had lost much of his hearing ability. He had no hearing aid and was continually asking that we speak louder so that he could be part of the conversation. He would say, “Talk louder; speak up; I can’t hear you.”

That was before the days of television and CDs and boomers and

blasters. I was interested in someone’s observation: “With TV and radio and tapes, what young person has time to listen to reason?” Listening is a challenge for us all today.

Time to listen. The *ability* to listen. The *desire* to listen. On religious matters, too many of us are saying, “What did you say? Speak up; I can’t hear you.” And when he doesn’t *shout* back, or cause the bush to burn, or write us a message in stone with his finger, we are inclined to think he doesn’t listen, doesn’t care about us. Some even conclude there is no God.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, “Every common bush [is] afire with God; But only he who sees, takes off his shoes” (*Aurora Leigh*, book 7, lines 822–23).

The questions are not “Does God live? Does God love me? Does God speak to me?” The critical question is, “Are you listening to him?” Have you removed your shoes? It is the same for you as it was for Elijah, as it is with the modern-day prophets: *The still, small voice is still small*.

Aids to our hearing are available. How can we filter out the heavy decibels of darkness that surround us? Let me mention three of the more obvious ones.

Revitalize your weekly worship

Number 1: Revitalize your weekly worship. When you sing the hymns, for instance, ponder the meaning of the words, enjoy the spirit of the music. Sing with enthusiasm without regard to your tones. You will have a good feeling, and your spirit will be enlivened; and as you join with the Saints in the songs of the heart, the Lord promises to answer this with blessings upon your head (see D&C 25:12).

Next, *partake* of the sacrament. Don’t merely *take* the sacrament.

Think of the covenants you are re-making. Truly witness unto the Father that you will take upon yourself the name of his Son, even Jesus Christ. Recommit yourself to always remember him, to keep the commandments which he has given you. Your obedience will entitle you to have his Spirit to be with you. If this sacred ordinance has become commonplace in your worship, if you let your mind wander elsewhere during this weekly opportunity for spiritual renewal, if you just *take* the bread and water as it passes with no thought or recommitment in your life, then you have turned off a significant aid to your hearing.

Pray to know God's will

Number 2: Pray to know God's will, not to "get things." Too often, because of our selfish desires, after a cursory "Thank you, Lord," we consume our prayer time in the listing of things we want, even of things we think we need. We must be willing to release the death grip which we have on things, which have become as a security blanket in our lives. Count the many hundreds of needed missionary couples who would be serving in the field if that firm grip on the familiarities of home and of children and grandchildren could be loosened. The Lord is prepared to perform the miracle that will follow, which miracle is that both they and you will survive, even grow, with an eighteen-month separation.

We must learn to pray with meaning, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." When you are able to do this, his whisperings to you will be loud and clear. The Prophet Joseph Smith, after five months of extreme suffering in the dungeon of Liberty Jail, experienced it, and he said, "When the heart is *sufficiently contrite*, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, My

son, peace be unto thy soul" (*History of the Church*, 3:293; italics added).

Immerse yourself in the scriptures

Hearing aid number 3 has to do with the scriptures. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord tells us that he speaks to us through the scriptures. Of course, just reading words without our minds being centered on the message is not really listening. In section 18 we read:

"And I, Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, have spoken it.

"These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man:

"For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you, . . .

"Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words" (18:33-36).

And thus, what to many seems to be the monologue of prayer actually becomes a dialogue with God as we immerse ourselves in the scriptures.

The Lord is speaking to you

As it was with Elijah, so it is today. God is not in the earthquake nor in the winds and fires of war, but he speaks to us in a voice that is small. With President Kimball, I, too, testify that it is this constant flow of revealed communication which continues to direct this Church through our prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, and through his Counselors, and through the Twelve Apostles. It comes to the Seventy and to the Presiding Bishop. It comes to the stake presidents, and to the bishops and to the quorum and Church officers throughout the world. It speaks to our missionaries; it comes to heads of families. I further witness that this still, small voice is speaking personally to you.

Please be *still* and *listen!* The Psalmist said, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

I know that he lives. He loves you. He wants you to follow him, and to follow him not because of any spectacular showmanship on his part, but simply because you love him—simply! I bear my solemn witness that he lives and is near you and that we are being led by his living prophet in these last days. All of which I do in the holy name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Julio E. Dávila and Graham W. Doxey of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing that favorite hymn "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Cree-L Kofford, who was also sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Cree-L Kofford

Standing at this historic pulpit with memories of those men and women who have stood here before me filling my thoughts, I am reminded of the admonition given to Moses when he was told, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5).

I pray that as I stand upon this holy ground I may do so with my shoes from off my feet.

Trial to receive your inheritance

I desire to teach you concerning matters of eternal significance. In doing so I shall speak allegorically, which simply means that I will teach by using a story which has symbolic meanings.

In an allegorical sense, I am here today as a member of the trial team assembled by your chief advocate. We have now received the legal action in which each of you has been named as a party defendant. I and others of the trial team have reviewed the pleadings carefully and have confirmed that the real purpose of opposing counsel is to prove that you are *not* eligible to receive your ultimate inheritance. Our

adversary's trial team is even now working tirelessly to assemble the facts necessary to bring about your defeat.

By virtue of motions made, heard, and previously decided, we have been compelled to produce on behalf of each of you all records relating to your business and personal transactions. These include a schedule of your neighbors, friends, and business acquaintances. Additionally, full disclosure concerning your spouse, your children, your parents, and members of your extended family has been made.

You should know that our adversary is prepared to spend such time, effort, and money as is necessary to deprive you of your inheritance. They have already expended untold millions of dollars in preparing their case against each of you. They have hired gifted, talented, and experienced people to work for them. They intend to win!

Fortunately, you are represented by the *most* skilled, capable, and diligent counsel I have ever seen. It's amazing to watch him as he argues on your behalf before the Supreme Judge.

Judgment waits until life's end

For example, our adversary brought a motion seeking an order that some of you have already forfeited your rights to your ultimate inheritance and therefore a summary judgment should be entered against you. I must admit he was brilliant in his presentation. For a time it seemed to me that he would prevail. Many of the court personnel were nodding their heads in seeming agreement with him. His argument was powerful.

Citing several of you by name, he said: "If these defendants have lived this long and have not yet taken serious steps to qualify for their ultimate inheritance, why should we waste further time of the court? Let us simply enter judgment against them now and be done with it." So powerful was his presentation that many in the public gallery applauded when he concluded.

You could have heard a pin drop when your chief advocate arose. The suspense in the courtroom was electrifying. What arguments could he possibly make that would overcome those just presented? I wish you could have been there.

In contrast to the bombastic and cynical arguments of opposing counsel, your advocate began your defense as a trickle and built to the force of a mighty river. Humbly, softly, meaningfully, and compellingly, he pled your case. I knew the impact he was having when I saw tears streaming down the cheeks of many in the courtroom. I don't remember all of his arguments and logic, but I do remember him saying that man is a little lower than the angels (see Psalm 8:5) and that the worth of souls is great (see D&C 18:10). In one of the most majestic moments, his eyes filled with compassion and his voice quivering with indignation, he admonished, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" (John 8:7).

He went on to argue that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32) and closed with a breathtaking summary in which he said no one has the right to judge the sum total of a man's life until that life has been lived.

There was silence in the room when he finished, silence broken only by the voice of the Supreme Judge announcing his decision: "Motion of counsel for the plaintiffs is denied. The issues sought to be summarily decided here are better left until trial of this matter on the merits," he said.

Questions you will be asked

Now, in preparation for your appearance on the witness stand, you should be advised that in the law we have what are known as threshold questions. These are simply questions that are the point of beginning or the starting place. The threshold question in your trial is, "Do you love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind?" (see Matthew 22:37). If the answer is no, there will be a motion for judgment against you. That motion will be granted.

On the other hand, if you answer yes, opposing counsel will immediately test the validity of your answer with the question, "Do you keep his commandments?" (see John 14:15). A negative response will reveal your fraud, and you will stand judged by your own testimony. If your answer is in the affirmative, there will then follow hours, perhaps days of questions, each designed to prove that you do not, in fact, keep his commandments. Among those questions will be the following:

1. Do you love your neighbor as yourself? (See Matthew 22:39.)
2. Do you place worldly pursuits or personal pleasures above your service to God? (See Exodus 20:3.)

3. Do you take the name of the Lord God in vain? (See Exodus 20:7.)

4. Do you keep the Sabbath day holy? (See Exodus 20:8.)

5. Do you honor your father and mother? (See Exodus 20:12.)

6. Do you commit adultery or fornication? (See Exodus 20:14.)

7. Do you steal? (See Exodus 20:15.)

8. Do you bear false witness? (See Exodus 20:16.)

9. Do you covet? (See Exodus 20:17.)

Remember, opposing counsel and his trial team will be fully conversant with your conduct and behavior. Witnesses will have been subpoenaed by them to testify against you. Your neighbors will present their testimony concerning your conduct with them. Those who have observed your Sabbath day activity will be called to the stand. On each point where you are vulnerable, witnesses will be produced to contradict your sworn testimony.

As your counsel, we will, of course, be equally well prepared. Your chief counsel will produce every witness favorable to you and elicit from them every fact which may be used on your behalf.

Life's facts can still be created

However, one thing is clear—the ultimate outcome of your case is dependent upon the facts which you provide. There's an old adage among trial lawyers that says, "We don't make the

facts; we only present them." The facts which represent your life are the facts that will ultimately determine your victory or your defeat.

That is one of the reasons I have come today. I have been asked to see that you are clearly informed concerning this matter and to urge you, where necessary, to create facts which will allow the Supreme Judge to find on your behalf. Fortunately for you, your life's facts *can* still be created. No matter how long you have lived, no matter how many mistakes you have made, your life's story *can* still be changed. It *can* still be written. It is not too late. Please, I plead with you, help him to help you win your ultimate inheritance.

Now before closing, I should like to express my deep love to Ila, who is my sweetheart and my heartbeat. I honor her and the womanhood which she so elegantly represents. I love our five children, who are my best friends, and our twelve grandchildren, who regularly teach me the joy of unconditional love, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy.

Elder Joseph C. Muren, who was also sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will be our next speaker, and he will be followed by Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Joseph C. Muren

Elder Muren's conversion

My conversion to the gospel and my baptism into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began some thirty-seven years ago. I was in my first year of university studies when Elder

Henry Eddington of Shoshone, Idaho, and Elder Eleazer Asay of Orem, Utah, began to teach me of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

I was intrigued with the discussions. I found that my intellect was

stimulated by the new vistas of knowledge presented by these two mature representatives of the Church who had been called later in life to serve missions.

Elder Eddington was leading the discussion that last evening together before I was to return to the university. He had been reviewing why there was a need for a restoration, and then he paused and bore solemn testimony of the truthfulness of their message. Then he reached over, touching my knee with the only hand that he had, and said, "And now you will know it is true." The Spirit of God came into my body as a fire. It felt as if it would consume me. It left me physically exhausted but totally assured that the Church was true. Now I knew for myself.

Receiving a testimony

It was nearly thirty years later while I was on an assignment in Idaho that I was approached by a sister who inquired, "Brother Muren, would you be available tomorrow, Saturday, to come to our home for lunch?" She continued without waiting for an answer. "I am Velma Holsinger, the daughter of Henry Eddington, one of the elders who taught you the gospel in California. I have in my possession my father's missionary journals, and I have marked those pages which deal with your conversion."

The next day I arrived promptly and anxiously read through the marked pages. I was most interested in those passages which dealt with the experience that allowed me to know of the truthfulness of the gospel.

Elder Eddington had carefully recorded in his journal that he and Elder Asay had held a special fast and had prayed that day so that "young Joe Muren might know for himself."

The Book of Mormon records well what occurred to me that evening in

1954. As those servants of the Lord "did minister with power and with great authority," it was not possible that I could disbelieve their words (see 3 Nephi 7:17-18).

As the years have passed, I have recognized more fully that it was not just a spiritual experience of the moment, but rather, I was a recipient of a testimony, a gift from Heavenly Father, that when nourished and cherished would have lasting effects upon me every day of my life.

Why the Church sends out missionaries

Now, as we look behind me at this array of missionaries, we are often asked by nonmembers why the Church continues to send out the Elder Asays and the Elder Eddingtons—the tens of thousands of missionaries every year. They inquire, "Why do you send them even to those nations which already know of the Bible and Jesus Christ?" Why did Elder Asay, in his sixties, leave his bride of many years to serve a mission in California? Why did Elder Eddington, a retired teacher and principal, not remain in Idaho and enjoy his family during those "golden years"?

Again the answer is clear in the scriptures. After the Lord had been crucified, He returned to the earth to bear witness of His resurrection and to give a sacred charge to His Apostles. From the twenty-eighth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, we read: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (28:19-20).

Today, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues with this sacred charge—that is, to go and to teach all nations to observe all things

whatsoever He, the Savior, has commanded us (see Matthew 28:20). These thousands of missionaries who have been called by a prophet are visual evidence that our Heavenly Father has not forgotten His children. We bear witness to the world that He lives, that He knows each one of us individually. He has a plan, a divine plan, to bring you and to bring me back into His presence. The Savior has returned to the earth by way of modern-day prophets all of those teachings, all of those ordinances, and His holy priesthood to bring happiness in this life and eternal joy in the life to come—a plan with solutions, a divine plan with guidance to all of the challenges of this life.

Again, the question is asked: “Why do we have more than forty thousand missionaries serving in the world?” Because Heavenly Father loves us. These men and women are His servants! They are His representatives! They come with a message that truly represents what the world needs and wants.

You can know for yourself

You too can know! Yes, you too can know for yourself! For those of you that have already received a witness of the truthfulness of the gospel, I encourage you to cherish that testimony. It is so delicate! It is so fragile! It needs to be nourished with prayer, with the reading of the scriptures, and being at the right place at the right time. I promise you and bear witness that your testimony will grow, and you can have a mighty effect on those with whom you associate.

Now, there are friends of mine here today who are not members. I know you search for the truths which Heavenly Father has given us. You need to know that you are His children, and we invite you to allow the Elder Eddingtons and the Elder Asays of the Church today to teach you how the Church was returned to the earth in these latter days.

Heavenly Father offers to you through His servants a new life. The scriptures call it a rebirth. Not only did the Lord Jesus Christ tell His apostles to “go . . . and teach,” but to baptize them “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

I bear testimony, paraphrasing the words of Peter in his second epistle, that we do not follow cunningly devised fables when we make known unto you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 2:16).

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ did return to the earth in 1820. They did restore the priesthood of God and His plan of salvation to a modern-day prophet, Joseph Smith. I know that! I cannot deny what I have felt and what I have seen. I bear this witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard the remarks of Elder Joseph C. Muren of the Seventy. What a timely message for this missionary chorus to hear.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder James E. Faust, also of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

With you, I rejoice in the testimony and talent of these new Brethren.

Importance of repentance

For some months, I’ve tried to emphasize repentance, one of the most

vital and merciful doctrines of the kingdom. It is too little understood, too little applied by us all, as if it were merely a word on a bumper sticker. Since we have been told clearly by Jesus what manner of men and women we ought to become—even as He is (see 3 Nephi 27:27)—how can we do so except each of us employs repentance as the regular means of personal progression? Personal repentance is part of taking up the cross daily (see Luke 9:23). Without it, clearly there could be no “perfecting of the Saints” (Ephesians 4:12).

Besides, there is more individuality in those who are more holy.

Sin, on the other hand, brings sameness; it shrinks us to addictive appetites and insubordinate impulses. For a brief surging, selfish moment, sin may create the illusion of individuality, but only as in the grunting, galloping Gadarene swine! (see Matthew 8:28–32).

Repentance is a rescuing, not a dour doctrine. It is available to the gross sinner as well as to the already good individual striving for incremental improvement.

Repentance requires both turning away from evil and turning to God (see Deuteronomy 4:30; see also Bible Dictionary, “Repentance”). When “a mighty change” is required, full repentance involves a *180-degree turn*, and without looking back! (see Alma 5:12–13). Initially, this turning reflects progress from telestial to terrestrial behavior, and later on to celestial behavior. As the sins of the telestial world are left behind, the focus falls ever more steadily upon the sins of omission, which often keep us from full consecration.

Real repentance involves not a mechanical checklist but a checkrein- ing of the natural self. Often overlap-

ping and mutually reinforcing, each portion of the process of repentance is essential. This process rests on inner resolve but is much aided by external support.

Recognition of wrong

There can be no repentance without *recognition* of wrong. Whether by provocation, introspection, or wrenching remembrance, denial must be dissolved. As with the prodigal son who finally “came to himself” (Luke 15:17), the first rays of recognition help us begin to see “things as they really are” (Jacob 4:13), including distinguishing between the motes and beams. Recognition is a sacred moment, often accompanied by the hot blush of shame.

Remorse

After recognition, real *remorse* floods the soul. This is a “godly sorrow,” not merely the “sorrow of the world” nor the “sorrowing of the damned” when we can no longer “take happiness in sin” (see 2 Corinthians 7:10; Mormon 2:13). False remorse instead is like fondling our failings. In ritual regret, we mourn our mistakes but without mending them.

There can be no real repentance without personal suffering and the passage of sufficient time for the needed cleansing and turning. This is much more than merely waiting until feelings of remorse subside. Misery, like adversity, can have its special uses. No wonder chastening is often needed until the turning is really under way! (see D&C 1:27; Helaman 12:3).

Real remorse quickly brings forth positive indicators, “fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8; see also Acts 26:20; Alma 5:54). In process of time, these fruits bud, blossom, and ripen.

Confession

True repentance also includes *confession*: "Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers" (Ezra 10:11). One with a broken heart will not hold back. As confession lets the sickening sin empty out, then the Spirit which withdrew returns to renew.

Support from others is especially crucial now. Hence, we are directed to be part of a caring community in which we all "lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5). Did not the citizens of the unequaled City of Enoch so improve together "in process of time"? (Moses 7:21; see also 7:68–69).

All sins are to be confessed to the Lord, some to a Church official, some to others, and some to all of these. A few may require public confession. Confessing aids forsaking. We cannot expect to sin publicly and extensively and then expect to be rescued privately and quickly, being beaten with only a few stripes (see D&C 42:88–93).

Forsaking of sinning

In real repentance, there is the actual *forsaking* of sinning. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (Ezekiel 18:30). A suffering Korihor confessed, "I always knew that there was a God" (Alma 30:52), but his turning was still incomplete; hence, "Alma said unto him: If this curse should be taken from thee thou wouldst again lead away the hearts of this people" (Alma 30:55).

Thus, when "a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them" (D&C 58:43).

Genuine support and love from others—not isolation—are needed to sustain this painful forsaking and turning!

Restitution

Restitution is required too.

"Because he hath sinned, . . . he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found" (Leviticus 6:4).

Sometimes, however, restitution is not possible in real terms, such as when one contributed to another's loss of faith or virtue. Instead, a subsequent example of righteousness provides a compensatory form of restitution.

Repentance is difficult

In this rigorous process, so much clearly depends upon meekness. Pride keeps repentance from even starting or continuing. Some fail because they are more concerned with the preservation of their public image than with having Christ's image in their countenances! (see Alma 5:14). Pride prefers cheap repentance, paid for with shallow sorrow. Unsurprisingly, seekers after cheap repentance also search for superficial forgiveness instead of real reconciliation. Thus, real repentance goes far beyond simply saying "I'm sorry."

In the anguishing process of repentance, we may sometimes feel God has deserted us. The reality is that our behavior has isolated us from Him. Thus, while we are turning away from evil but have not yet turned fully to God, we are especially vulnerable. Yet we must not give up but, instead, reach out to God's awaiting arm of mercy, which is outstretched "all the day long" (Jacob 5:47; 6:4; 2 Nephi 28:32; Mormon 5:11). Unlike us, God has no restrictive office hours.

No part of walking by faith is more difficult than walking the road of repentance. However, with "faith unto repentance," we can push roadblocks out of the way, moving forward to beg

God for mercy (see Alma 34:16). True contrition brings full capitulation. One simply surrenders, caring only about what God thinks, not what "they" think, while meekly offering, "O God, . . . make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee" (Alma 22:18). Giving away all our sins is the only way we can come to know God.

In contrast, those who hold back some of their sins will be held back. So will those who refuse to work humbly and honestly with the Lord's appointed. Partial disclosure to appointed leaders brings full accountability. The Prophet Joseph said, "We ought to . . . keep nothing back" (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], p. 7).

We all need repentance

Reflective of our total progression, repentance is not solely for renouncing transgression. For instance, Moses was a righteous and remarkable man. Nevertheless, he needed to change his leadership style for his welfare as well as the people's (see Exodus 18:17-19). Moses succeeded because he was the most meek man upon the face of the earth (see Numbers 12:3). Blessed are the meek, for they are neither easily offended by counsel nor aggravated by admonition. If we were more meek, brothers and sisters, repentance would be much more regular and less staled at.

Our deficiencies of style usually reflect an underdeveloped Christian attribute, as when a chronically poor listener exhibits a lack of love or meekness. You and I are too quick to forgive ourselves in matters of style.

Even when free of major transgression, we can develop self-content-

ment instead of seeking self-improvement. This was once true of Amulek, who later acknowledged, "I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know; therefore I went on rebelling against God" (Alma 10:4-6).

Given the relevancy of repentance as a principle of progress for all, no wonder the Lord has said to His servants multiple times that the thing of greatest worth would be to cry repentance to this generation! (see D&C 6:9; 14:8; 15:6).

Things that impede repentance

Still other things stubbornly impede repentance, such as our not being reprov'd early on when we might have been less proud and more able to recognize our need to change (see D&C 121:43). In such situations, truly "no man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4).

Or we may be too filled with self-pity, that sludge in which sin sprouts so easily, or too invested in self-reinforcing behavior to turn away from it.

Or we can be too preoccupied with "pleasing . . . the carnal mind" (Alma 30:53), which always insistently asks, "What have you done for me lately?" We can also be too unforgiving, refusing to reclassify others. Yet "he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin" (D&C 64:9). We cannot repent for someone else. But we can forgive someone else, refusing to hold hostage those whom the Lord seeks to set free!

Ironically, some believe the Lord can forgive them, but they refuse to forgive themselves. We are further impeded at times simply because we have not really been taught why and how to repent.

Blessings that follow repentance

As we do repent, however, special assurances await:

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

"All his transgressions . . . shall not be mentioned unto him" (Ezekiel 18:22).

"I, the Lord, remember [their sins] no more"! (D&C 58:42).

Along with all the foregoing reasons for our individual repentance, Church members have a special rendezvous to keep, brothers and sisters. Nephi saw it. One future day, he said, Jesus' covenant people, "scattered upon all the face of the earth," will be "armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory" (1 Nephi 14:14). This will happen, but only after more members become more saintly and more consecrated in conduct.

There are some tutoring lines in one of our favorite hymns:

Come unto Jesus, ye heavy laden,
Careworn and fainting, by sin
oppressed.

He'll safely guide you unto that
haven

Where all who trust him may
rest. . . .

Come unto Jesus; He'll ever heed
you,
Though in the darkness you've
gone astray.

His love will find you and gently
lead you
From darkest night into day.
[Hymns, no. 117]

Brothers and sisters, we need never mistake local cloud cover for general darkness. The Atoning Light of the world saw to that. It was for our sake that perfectly remarkable Jesus was perfectly consecrated. Jesus let His own will be totally "swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7). If you and I would come unto Jesus, we must likewise yield to God, holding nothing back. Then other soaring promises await!

The prophet Mormon declared that Jesus waits "with open arms to receive [us]" (Mormon 6:17), while the unrepentant and the unconsecrated will never know that ultimate joy described by Mormon, who knew whereof he spoke, of being "clasped in the arms of Jesus" (Mormon 5:11).

May God help each of us to so live now in order to merit that marvelous moment then is my prayer for myself—for all of us—in the holy name of the Great Redeemer, even Jesus Christ, amen!

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters and friends, for some time I have pondered what I might speak about today. I seem to have been led in my thinking by a concern that so many in our generation are missing great blessings by not honoring the Lord's day.

Sundays as a young boy

I confess that as a young boy, Sunday was not my favorite day. Grandfather shut down the action. We didn't have any transportation. We couldn't drive the car. He wouldn't even let us start the motor. We couldn't ride the

horses or the steers or the sheep. It was the Sabbath, and by commandment the animals also needed rest. We walked to Church and everywhere else we wanted to go. I can honestly say that we observed both the spirit and the letter of Sabbath worship.

By today's standards, perhaps Grandfather's interpretation of Sabbath day activities seems extreme, but something wonderful has been lost in our lives. To this day, I have been pondering to try to understand fully what has slipped away. Part of it was knowing that I was well on the Lord's side of the line. Another part was the feeling that Satan's influence was further away. Mostly it was the reinforcement received by the spiritual power which was generated. We had the rich feeling that the spiritual "fulness of the earth" (D&C 59:16) was ours, as promised by the Lord in section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Scriptural teachings about the Sabbath

Ever since Adam's day, the divine law of the Sabbath has been emphasized repeatedly over the centuries more than any other commandment. This long emphasis alone is an indication of its importance. In Genesis we learn that God himself set the example for us in the creation of the earth:

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

"And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Genesis 2:1-3).

In biblical times this commandment to rest and worship was so strict that a violation of it called for the death penalty (see Exodus 31:15).

Even the earth was given a sabbath rest: "But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard" (Leviticus 25:4).

The Sabbath was referred to in the Old Testament days as a blessed and hallowed day (see Exodus 20:11), as a symbol of a perpetual covenant of faithfulness (see Exodus 31:16), as a holy convocation (see Leviticus 23:3), as a day of spiritual celebration (see Leviticus 23:32).

Jesus reaffirmed the importance of the Sabbath day devotion, but he introduced a new spirit into this part of worship. Rather than observe the endless technicalities and prohibitions concerning what should and should not be done on the Lord's day, he affirmed that it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath (see Matthew 12:12). He taught us that "the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matthew 12:8) and introduced the principle that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). He performed good deeds on the Sabbath, such as healing the man with palsy (see Mark 2:1-12) as well as the man with the paralyzed hand (see Matthew 12:10-13). So the divine mandate of Sabbath day observance in our day is now more of a manifestation of individual devotion and commitment rather than a requirement of civil law.

The great modern-day revelation on Sabbath day worship is contained in section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;

"Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;

"But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.

"And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full" (D&C 59:9-13).

This great commandment is culminated with a promise: "Verily I say, that inasmuch as ye do this, the fulness of the earth is yours, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which climbeth upon the trees and walketh upon the earth" (D&C 59:16). To have the benefit of all of God's creations is a very significant promise.

Keeping the Sabbath day holy

Keeping the Sabbath day holy is much more than just physical rest. It involves spiritual renewal and worship. President Spencer W. Kimball gave excellent counsel on Sabbath day observance. He said:

"The Sabbath is a holy day in which to do worthy and holy things. Abstinence from work and recreation is important but insufficient. The Sabbath calls for constructive thoughts and acts, and if one merely lounges about doing nothing on the Sabbath, he is breaking it. To observe it, one will be on his knees in prayer, preparing lessons, studying the gospel, meditating, visiting the ill and distressed, sleeping, reading wholesome material, and attending all the meetings of that day to which he is expected. To fail to do these proper things is a transgression on the omission side" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], pp. 96-97).

Over a lifetime of observation, it is clear to me that the farmer who observes the Sabbath day seems to get more done on his farm than he would if he worked seven days. The mechanic will be able to turn out more and better products in six days than in seven. The doctor, the lawyer, the dentist, the scientist will accomplish more by trying to rest on the Sabbath than if he tries to utilize every day of the week for his professional work. I would counsel all students, if they can, to arrange their schedules so that they do not study on the Sabbath. If students and other seekers after truth will do this, their minds will be quickened and the infinite Spirit will lead them to the verities they wish to learn. This is because God has hallowed his day and blessed it as a perpetual covenant of faithfulness (see Exodus 31:16).

On February 1, 1980, when the First Presidency announced the consolidated Sunday meeting schedule, the following counsel was given:

"A greater responsibility will be placed upon the individual members and families for properly observing the Sabbath day. More time will be available for personal study of the scriptures and family-centered gospel study.

"Other appropriate Sabbath activities, such as strengthening family ties, visiting the sick and homebound, giving service to others, writing personal and family histories, genealogical work, and missionary work, should be carefully planned and carried out.

"It is expected that this new schedule of meetings and activities will result in greater spiritual growth for members of the Church" ("Meeting Schedule Approved," *Church News*, 2 Feb. 1980, p. 3).

It is hoped that priesthood leaders and members of the Church will honor the spirit of more family togetherness on Sunday.

Miracles related to the Sabbath

The children of Israel were miraculously sustained in the wilderness for over forty years. They received manna from heaven daily except on the Sabbath. The manna had to be gathered and used the day it fell, or it became wormy and would stink (see Exodus 16:20, 30). But on the sixth day, prior to the Sabbath, twice as much manna fell as on the other days (see Exodus 16:5). The children of Israel were instructed by the Lord to gather twice as much so that it would last for two days because the manna did not fall on the Sabbath day. When they did this, a third miracle happened. On the Sabbath day the manna gathered the day before did not stink, and there were no worms in it, for it was preserved for Sabbath day use (see Exodus 16:24).

Over the centuries, other stories of miraculous happenings relating to Sabbath day observance have been preserved. One is the story of the cobbler working under one of the megalithic stones in Avebury, near Stonehenge, England:

"'One Sunday,' wrote John Saunders in his journal for August 13, 1712, 'a cobbler was mending of shoos under one of these great stones. The minute he rose the stone fell down and broke in pieces on the very ground where he sat which made him see the great providence of God in preserving him alive and so deter him from braking the Sabbath for which reason he never more worked on the Sabbath day'" (Michael Pitts, *Footprints through Avebury* [Dorchester, England: The Friary Press Limited, 1985], pp. 31-32).

A more recent miracle occurred at the Wells Stake Welfare Tannery some years ago where hides of animals were tanned into leather. On regular work days, the hides were removed from the vats and fresh lime placed in the vats, after which the hides were returned to

the lime solution. If the hides were not turned on holidays, they would spoil. But the change was never made on Sunday, and there were no spoiled hides on Monday. Explained J. Lowell Fox, the supervisor of the tannery at the time:

"This brought a strange fact to our minds: holidays are determined by man, and on these days just as on every week day, the hides need to have special care every twelve hours. Sunday is the day set aside by the Lord as a day of rest, and He makes it possible for us to rest from our labors as He has commanded. The hides at the tannery never spoil on Sundays. This is a modern-day miracle, a miracle that happens every weekend!" (*Handbook for Guide Patrol Leaders* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964], p. 37).

Why should we honor the Sabbath?

Why has God asked us to honor the Sabbath day? The reasons I think are at least threefold. The first has to do with the physical need for rest and renewing. Obviously God, who created us, would know more than we do of the limits of our physical and nervous energy and strength.

The second reason is, in my opinion, of far greater significance. It has to do with the need for regeneration and the strengthening of our spiritual being. God knows that left completely to our own devices without regular reminders of our spiritual needs, many would degenerate into the preoccupation of satisfying earthly desires and appetites. This need for physical, mental, and spiritual regeneration is met in large measure by faithful observance of the Sabbath day.

The third reason may be the most important of the three. It has to do with obedience to commandments as

an expression of our love for God. Blessed are those who need no reasons other than their love for the Savior to keep his commandments. The response of Adam to the angel who asked Adam why he made a sacrifice unto the Lord is a model for all. Responded Adam, "I know not, save the Lord commanded me" (Moses 5:6).

The prophet Samuel reminds us, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

In this day of increasing access to and preoccupation with materialism, there is a sure protection for ourselves and our children against the plagues of our day. The key to that sure protection surprisingly can be found in Sabbath observance: "And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day" (D&C 59:9).

Who can question but that sincere Sabbath observance will help keep ourselves unspotted from the world? The injunction to keep the Sabbath day holy is a continuing covenant between God and his elect. The Lord told Moses and the children of Israel: "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations . . . for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever" (Exodus 31:13, 16-17).

Choosing Sabbath activities

The Mosaic injunctions of Sabbath day observance contained many detailed do's and don'ts. This may have been necessary to teach obedience to those who had been in captivity and had long been denied individual freedom of choice. Thereafter, these Mosaic instructions were carried to many unwarranted extremes which the Savior condemned. In that day the technicalities of Sabbath day observance

outweighed the "weightier matters of the law" (Matthew 23:23) such as faith, charity, and the gifts of the Spirit.

In our time God has recognized our intelligence by not requiring endless restrictions. Perhaps this was done with a hope that we would catch more of the spirit of Sabbath worship rather than the letter thereof. In our day, however, this pendulum of Sabbath day desecration has swung very far indeed. We stand in jeopardy of losing great blessings promised. After all, it is a test by which the Lord seeks to "prove you in all things" (D&C 98:14) to see if your devotion is complete.

Where is the line as to what is acceptable and unacceptable on the Sabbath? Within the guidelines, each of us must answer this question for ourselves. While these guidelines are contained in the scriptures and in the words of the modern prophets, they must also be written in our hearts and governed by our consciences. Brigham Young said of the faithful, "The spirit of their religion leaks out of their hearts" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:83). It is quite unlikely that there will be any serious violation of Sabbath worship if we come humbly before the Lord and offer him all our heart, our soul, and our mind (see Matthew 22:37).

What is worthy or unworthy on the Sabbath day will have to be judged by each of us by trying to be honest with the Lord. On the Sabbath day we should do what we have to do and what we ought to do in an attitude of worshipfulness and then limit our other activities. I wish to testify unequivocally concerning the blessings of Sabbath day worship in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the Missionary Training Center mixed choir for the inspiring music we have heard

this afternoon and to each speaker who has lifted our hearts toward heaven.

The choir will now sing in closing "A Marvelous Work." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Merlin R. Lybbert of the Seventy.

The choir sang "A Marvelous Work."

Elder Merlin R. Lybbert offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 5, 1991. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus. Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was at the organ.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood meeting. We are part of a huge congregation gathered in various halls across the continent and in some other lands. President Benson, who is watching these proceedings in his apartment, sends his love and best wishes to all of us.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square, the BYU Marriott Center, and

locations in many countries throughout the world.

We note that Elders L. Tom Perry, Harold G. Hillam, and Gerald E. Melchin are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Spencer J. Condie and LeGrand R. Curtis are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those brethren in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon four of our faithful brethren who served for 5½ years were released—Elders H. Verlan Andersen, George I. Cannon, Francis M. Gibbons, and Gardner H. Russell. We extend to them our gratitude for the devoted and selfless service which they have given.

Elders LeGrand R. Curtis and Robert K. Dellenbach were released as Counselors in the Young Men General Presidency, and Elders Dellenbach and Stephen D. Nadauld were sustained as First and Second Counselors respectively. Elders H. Verlan Andersen and Rulon G. Craven were released as Counselors in the Sunday School General Presidency, and Elders Hartman Rector, Jr., and Clinton L. Cutler were sustained as First and Second Counselors respectively.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus under the direction of Brothers Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "The Morning Breaks," following which Elder W. Eugene Hansen of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "The Morning Breaks."

Elder W. Eugene Hansen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "I Feel My Savior's Love." Following the choir number, Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "I Feel My Savior's Love."

Elder David B. Haight

I thank the Lord for this wonderful opportunity to be with you here tonight, you who hold the priesthood. I pray that my words will be appropriate, clearly heard, and understood.

Talk directed to the Aaronic Priesthood

Some of you here tonight have just turned twelve years of age and are brand-new deacons. Many of you are thirteen or fourteen or sixteen or older. But I want to speak especially to you of the Aaronic Priesthood, and others of you may listen if you desire.

Some of you have just had a birthday. I just had a birthday—my eighty-fifth. You enjoyed your birthday party, and I had a wonderful time at mine. You had your *young* friends around you, and I had my *old* friends around me. There is, however, a vital difference between us—I have had seventy-plus years of experience and learning beyond yours. I have been abundantly blessed with a most challenging, exciting, and wonderfully productive life—a lifetime of witnessing a world in action.

There have been many disappointments and heartaches but *always* opportunities, new horizons, and blessings beyond measure. I've also learned some important lessons and truths—one, the Scout motto "Be prepared" is for real.

Football game in 1923

I grew up in a small country town in Idaho. Football came to our school later than most. It was 1923. We had neither equipment nor a coach. But the great day arrived when our high school principal was able to buy twelve inexpensive football outfits—but not football shoes with cleats. We used our basketball shoes. Our chemistry teacher was recruited to be our coach because he had once witnessed a *real* game.

He taught us a few simple plays and how to tackle, and then we were ready to play—or so we thought. We set off for our first game with Twin Falls, the previous year's Idaho state champions.

We dressed and went out on the field to warm up. Their school band started to play (they had more students in the band than we had in our entire high school), and then through the gates came their team. They kept coming and coming—all thirty-nine of them, fully equipped and shoes with cleats. The twelve of us, a full team of eleven plus one all-round substitute, watched in amazement.

The game was most interesting! To say it was a learning experience is rather mild. After just two plays, we had no desire to have the ball, so we kicked it and they scored. Whenever they got the ball, they would run a baffling play and score. Our goal was to get rid of the ball—it was less punishing.

In the final minutes of the game, they became a little reckless and a wild pass fell into the arms of Clifford Lee, who was playing halfback with me. He was startled, not knowing for sure what to do—that is, until he saw them thundering after him. Then he knew what to do and boy, was he fast! But he wasn't running for points; he was running for his life! Clifford made a touchdown. Six points went up on the scoreboard. The final score—106 to 6! We really didn't deserve the six points, but with our bloody shirts and socks and cuts and bruises, we took them anyway.

A learning experience? Of course! An individual or a team must be prepared. Success or achievement depends upon preparation.

Years of preparation

The Aaronic Priesthood years are critical years of preparation. The Lord knew young men would need these valuable teen years to prepare for life—precious years with meaningful, never-to-be-forgotten spiritual experiences. You will face some crucial deci-

sions, but hopefully you will take advantage of the seasoned experience and counsel of your loving parents and concerned priesthood leaders.

Committed young people

In 2 Timothy in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul is jailed in a dark, dreary dungeon awaiting execution for his belief in Jesus Christ and teaching His gospel. Pouring out his troubled soul and firm conviction, he pleads in a letter written to his dear young friend Timothy to be faithful to the truths that have been taught to him and to remember “the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6). Paul had personally blessed and ordained Timothy and now urged him to be strong and not ashamed of his testimony of our Lord, come what may.

The Apostle Paul was fearless and never wavered in his testimony of Jesus. His faith and determination lifted him from being a tentmaker to become a teacher, a missionary, leader, and organizer of Christian branches. He most certainly wasn't a sissy nor weak. People of great faith know what is right and do it. They have uncompromised determination and commitment and are capable of enduring pressure or hardship. Paul knew what was right, and you know what is right. When you take courage like Paul and do what you know is right, nothing will stop your progress but yourself.

“Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality. It is . . . words that speak boldly of your intentions; and . . . actions which speak louder than . . . words. It is . . . coming through time after time after time, year after year after year. It is what character is made of.”

Oh, how this world needs committed, determined, and courageous young

people—young men with a righteous conviction—who will help bind up its wounds and teach faith, hope, and truth! Where will these young people come from? They will come from the ranks of the young men and women of this Church—that's where.

The Lord asked, "Unto what were ye ordained?" and then answered, "To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even . . . to teach the truth" (D&C 50:13-14).

President Spencer W. Kimball stated that "you are the sons of God. You are the elect of God, and you have within your [grasp] the possibility to become a god and pass by the angels . . . to your exaltation"—possibilities which seem beyond ordinary imagination, yet the promises are divine (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 496).

Personal foundation stones

As the foundation of the Salt Lake Temple was being laid, with footings sixteen feet wide, President Brigham Young discovered the workmen were using a soft stone. The work was halted, the soft stone taken out and replaced with giant blocks of granite. He declared, "We are building this temple to stand through the millennium" (quoted in LeGrand Richards, Conference Report, Oct. 1971, p. 83; or *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, p. 81).

"Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing," the Lord admonishes, "for ye are laying the foundation of a great work" (D&C 64:33).

You Aaronic Priesthood holders are setting your personal foundation stones in place—stones of granite, character stones that hopefully will last forever. Your foundation stones should include principles taught by the Savior of faith, prayer, obedience, honesty, truth, and accountability for your ac-

tions. And, of course, a keystone of your foundation will be the priesthood—the power and authority of God delegated to you to act in matters pertaining to salvation, with its accompanying obligations and blessings.

You are a member of a quorum of the priesthood with officers of your peers—with duties, powers, and responsibilities. You are learning how Church members reach out to rescue and assist those who drift away or have a sorrow or a hurt. You are beginning to develop a sensitivity for Christlike service to others that brings joy to one's soul.

God our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ determined—just imagine!—that Joseph Smith was old enough at fourteen to begin his instruction that would bring about the mighty work of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Joseph saw the living God! He saw the living Christ! He was trusted with a heavenly task, and he completed it. You, too, are old enough to be trusted with ever-increasing tasks.

Choose to do right

You young Aaronic Priesthood men are old enough to know right from wrong, to know about Satan and his evil influence. *Satan* is a Hebrew name for the devil. It means adversary—one who wages open war with the truth and those who obey truthful principles. Satan chose the evil course from the beginning. His greatest aim, as taught by Moses and Enoch, is to get men to worship him (see Moses 1:12; 6:49). He has had great success. As the professed god of this world, Satan has the adoration and worship of those who live after the manner of the world. All forms of wickedness and evil and rebellion against God's holy purposes are of the devil. However, we are tested and challenged and must work out our salvation

in the presence of evil. Nephi taught, "It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). We have our agency to choose right from wrong, good from evil. But just because evil exists does *not* mean that we must partake of it. You cannot do wrong and feel right.

Members of our Church know that tobacco and beer and alcohol, in all of their forms, have been condemned by the medical and scientific world as well as by God for the use of man. Civil laws of control are generally weak and difficult to enforce. With our inspired understanding, our most effective control over these poisonous products comes from ourselves.

Even though San Francisco 49ers quarterback Steve Young was the only Mormon in his high school in Connecticut, he reported that there was no drinking with his group of friends, despite intense pressure from classmates (see *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 Sept. 1991, p. D3).

You are old enough to know the serious consequences and chain of events that leads from the drinking of beer to hard liquor—leading to the loss of mental control and often to automobile accidents, loss of respect, and sexual immorality.

Some young women have stated to the news media that they are pressured by young men into sexual involvement, even threatened with unpopularity if they don't cooperate. They surely couldn't be referring to you, could they?

You young men are the protectors of your sisters and of the girls with whom you associate. Your duty to them and to yourself is to be morally clean and sexually pure before the Lord. Movies and television scenes often imply moral cleanliness is old-fashioned and not in tune with this modern world, but commandments cut into the stone tablets by the finger of God have

not changed. The Lord declared, "Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery," and later added, "nor do anything like unto it" (D&C 59:6). The commandments are clear and understandable and uncompromising.

Lucifer is smart and cunning and understands weaknesses, so he can destroy. Emotions and passions are God-given but controllable.

Good people believe in you

My father died when I was only nine. As I was growing up, I would often think, "What would my father think of me?" or "How could I ever disappoint my mother?" She taught me and believed in me. I was no longer a little child but an emerging man, so I needed to act accordingly.

And so it is with you. Good people believe in you. We believe in you, your parents and brothers and sisters believe in you, and God expects the best from you. You must believe in yourself.

Don't give in when the going is rough, for you are laying the foundation of a great work, and that great work is your life, the fulfillment of your dreams. Never underestimate what you can become or how your talents may eventually be used.

Don't let others set your standards

I don't ever remember a time in my young life when I had to go through the trial of breaking in a brand-new pair of shoes. They were already broken in by the time I got them as hand-me-downs.

We hear that some young men not only request a pair of new shoes for school, but another for sports, and another for church. But not just any athletic shoe will do. They must have a special designer label or be a special advertised brand. Your jeans have to be 501s or Guess or Calvin Klein. Have

you fall into a trap of peer pressure that requires a certain look for you to be included in the "in" crowd, whether or not your parents can afford such demands?

Do others set *your* standards—what you will wear and what you will do and not do? Believing young men and women with standards and values make these decisions for themselves and let others follow. Why aren't we, as Latter-day Saints with our high ideals, the examples, the peer leaders setting the standards and criteria that others follow?

The brand of clothes and the shoes you wear and the gadgetry, probably not affordable by your parents, have absolutely no bearing on what you will eventually become. Our actions, our personal behavior, and our attitude determine our character and future.

The world needs someone to look up to—like you. A national leader remarked, "There comes a time when we must take a stand—when we draw a line in the dust and say, 'Beyond this line, we do not go.'"

Govern yourselves by correct principles

Your preparation should include your personal conversion to the gospel truths of this work—knowing who the Savior is and who you are and why He loved you enough to make the atoning sacrifice for you.

Sounds difficult? I promise you that you can know, but only if you desire, with humble prayer and careful study of the scriptures. The Lord taught, "Search the scriptures . . . which testify of me," and "ponder upon the things which I have said" (John 5:39; 3 Nephi 17:3).

Your continuing preparation is to be worthy to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, keeping yourself clean and

honorable and praying for strength and courage to withstand the evil temptations that surely come to every young man. If a mistake is made, discuss it with your bishop immediately. Do not let mistakes get an upper hold on you. Change bad behavior to good—and *do it now*. This is called repentance.

I hope you have already made a commitment to yourself and to your Heavenly Father that you will serve a full-time mission. The Lord needs your service, and you need the unmeasured blessings.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, in answer to a query about this remarkable organization, said, "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves" (quoted by John Taylor, in *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, p. 339). I promise you, young priesthood holders, that if you will follow that counsel to govern yourselves by correct principles—principles you learn at home, through the scriptures, modern-day prophets, and the Holy Ghost—your decisions will be made with confidence and ease. And though fierce winds may be whipping the trees, your roots will be deeply entrenched in the ground.

I am a living witness of our Eternal Heavenly Father's love and mercy. He lives as does His Son, our Savior. This is His holy work, I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Elder David B. Haight, aspiring winner of the Heisman trophy, but who has given us a great talk as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Dennis B. Neuen-schwander, who was sustained at April conference as a member of the Seventy.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

Does Christ come first in our lives?

Good evening, brethren. It's a pleasure to be with you tonight. A few weeks ago in a testimony meeting with General Authorities, President Gordon B. Hinckley made this observation: "It is easy to be a Mormon and accept the theology. It is difficult to be a Christian and follow Christ in word and deed."

President Hinckley's challenging words came with renewed force to my mind later when I was reading a book by Michael H. Hart entitled *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*. To my surprise and disappointment, Mr. Hart ranks Jesus Christ third on his list of people who have had the greatest effect on the course of human history. The author's reason for placing Jesus third in importance is as follows:

"The impact of Jesus on human history is so obvious and so enormous that few people would question his placement near the top of the list. Indeed, the more likely question is why Jesus . . . has not been placed first."

The author acknowledges that the teachings of Jesus Christ are "surely among the most remarkable and original ethical ideas ever presented. If they were widely followed, I would have had no hesitation in placing Jesus first in this book" ([New York City: Hart Publishing Co., 1978], pp. 47, 50).

What a searing and likely very true observation: If Jesus' teachings were widely followed, Mr. Hart would have no hesitation in placing Jesus first!

With these thoughts in mind, I feel it is appropriate for us to ask, "Where do we rank Jesus Christ in our lives?" Does He come first, as He should? Perhaps a more significant question would be, "Where would we rank ourselves as followers of Jesus' teachings?" Do we live as Christians in word and deed?

This is especially important for us because as bearers of the priesthood we have had bestowed upon us authority and power to officially act in the name of Jesus Christ. We have the sacred obligation and privilege to bear His name with dignity. Of all men on the earth, we are to keep His influence foremost in our lives, to bring a consistency in what we preach and in our conduct. As we do so, we will become converted and strengthen each other, and His teachings and all that His life represents will have their rightful influence and honor among mankind.

Followers of Christ help a family

One morning several years ago I was driving with my family to Disney World in Florida. Our four young daughters were excited as we approached the turnoff to that famous park. The laughter and happy chatter stopped suddenly, however, as our rented station wagon sputtered and chugged to an unexpected stop on the exit ramp. Many cars sped by us in the rush-hour traffic as I tried unsuccessfully to get the car running again. Finally, realizing there was nothing more we could do, we got out of the stalled car and huddled together off the road for a word of prayer.

As we looked up from our prayer, we saw a smiling, handsome man and his son maneuver their bright red sports car through the lanes of traffic and pull off the road beside us. For the remainder of the morning and into the afternoon, these men assisted us and cared for our needs in many kind and helpful ways. They took us and our belongings to the receiving area at the park. In their small car, it took several trips. They helped me locate a tow truck for the stranded car; they drove me to the rental agency to get a replacement vehicle. Then, because there

was some delay, they drove back to where my family waited to let them know where I was. They bought refreshments for them and then waited with my family until I returned several hours later.

We felt that these men were truly an answer to our prayer, and we told them so as we said good-bye and tried to thank them. The father responded, "Every morning I tell the good Lord that if there is anyone in need of my help today, please guide me to them."

We ranked those men very high as followers of Christ that day. Their influence remains with us still. There have been many days since then and possibly equally as many other people uplifted and influenced by daily acts of Christian kindness of that father and his son.

Everyday acts of Christian service

Acts of Christian service should be part of our everyday agenda. In the book of Acts, chapter 10, verse 38, it is said of Jesus that He "went about doing good." Jesus taught us how to do good: love our neighbors; forgive others; care for the poor, the needy, the afflicted, the lonely. It is inspiring to see that the Lord has organized His Church to also do these same things—to care for the needs of others through various assignments.

These planned acts of service generated through Church programs are important and commendable. They are the mark of a Christian people. The Church has a function in service and renders assistance that cannot be provided by individuals alone. These opportunities of the Church as an institution, however, cannot fulfill the responsibility you and I have for personal acts of Christlike kindness. These lift our soul and renew our relationship with our Heavenly Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

President Spencer W. Kimball said, "The major strides which must be made by the Church will follow upon the major strides to be made by . . . individuals" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, p. 114; or *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 82).

Perhaps the greatest of Christian acts are those we never hear about. They are deeds done quietly, spontaneously, anonymously, without expectation of recognition or compensation. Christian acts begin with Christlike thoughts in our hearts. Then Christ's teachings and His characteristics will be reflected naturally in our actions. Soon there will be more friendly smiles, more kindly words, more courteous responses from us—all seemingly small, insignificant acts, yet they can have a great impact in all our lives. President Rex Lee of BYU has said, "Christlike niceness is . . . the cornerstone of [Christ's] teachings" (address given at a Brigham Young University devotional, 10 Sept. 1991).

A junior-high-age youth hurried home from school one day with steps lighter and quicker than usual, rushed into the house, and called, "Guess what? Someone said hi to me today!"

If a smile or a hello or simple kindness can bring happiness and joy into someone's life, how great is our potential to brighten this world with the influence of "Christlike niceness."

I know a young priest, Jason, who faithfully and quietly attends to his aging grandmother's needs. He stops by her home regularly to care for her yard, wash windows, or run errands. Sometimes he'll prepare something for her to eat if he sees she hasn't been eating enough that day. One Saturday when she wasn't feeling well, he took his friend to play Monopoly at her home so she wouldn't be alone.

Young men and brethren, honoring womanhood is also part of following Christ. His show of understanding toward Mary and Martha, his respect and concern for his mother and the honor bestowed on her demonstrate that Christian men are to be considerate, honest, courteous, caring toward women. The designation "a Christian gentleman" should be a desired title of every man—young or old—who bears the priesthood.

Following Christ requires sacrifice

Niceness and kindness represent one level of Christlike service, but there are other levels. Sometimes we are asked to give more than we feel we are capable of giving or more than we really want to give. We may feel burdened with expectations and responsibilities. It is then we learn that following Christ also requires sacrifice, commitment, and courage.

The father of a young family who was asked to serve as a mission president gathered his children around him. He explained to them that the prophet had emphasized that the call was a call to the entire family. He asked each of the children if they would be willing to leave their new home, their friends, their school and go three years to an unknown place in the mission field. In that tender moment, each child agreed to willingly support this call to serve.

Several days later, the father, sensing that his fourteen-year-old son was unusually solemn and quiet, sat down with him to ask what was on his mind. The boy confided that he was worried about having to quit school at such a young age to serve as a full-time missionary. He didn't know if he was ready to wear a suit and tie every day. He said, "I kinda wanted to be a boy a little longer." Of course, the son had misunderstood. These duties were not expected of a young man his age. Yet

he had been willing to do them if that was what the Lord required.

What would Jesus have me do?

Knowing what the Lord requires of us and also having the desire to follow Him doesn't always assure that it will be easy. I believe it would help to ask the questions my best friend always asks when faced with a difficult decision or challenge: "What would the Lord have me do? Would I do it for the Lord?"

A young woman I know felt saddened and frustrated because a friend had made unkind, untrue remarks about her. It distressed her that those who heard the false accusations would believe them. She wanted others to know the truth, and she wanted her friend to realize how much hurt her words had caused. The young woman thought of ways to confront her friend in an effort to have the truth known. The situation weighed heavily upon her until finally she thought, "What would Jesus do?" She decided that Jesus would show love toward her friend. And that is just what this young woman did.

Once she let the teachings of Jesus influence her decision and guide her actions, that which bothered her seemed not to matter. She didn't have to worry about it anymore. She said that she felt a big burden was lifted from her. What had been hard to endure became easier to resolve when a Christian attitude of forgiveness was taken.

When we place Jesus first in our lives, He will guide our decisions and give us the strength to avoid temptations. One day I received a phone call from my grandson Joel, who will soon be a deacon. He was having a difficult time making a decision. He had been invited to go with a group of students from his school to Sea Camp in San

Diego, California. It sounded very exciting to a young boy! There would be behind-the-scene experiences at Sea World—watching the trainers and helping to feed the sea animals. His dilemma was that the camp would be on a weekend, with scuba diving and beach exploring on Sunday.

His parents had discouraged him in going but had allowed him to make his own choice, believing he would choose what was right. He had assured them that although he couldn't attend church on Sunday, he would not swim. He said, "I can sit on the beach and be surrounded by God's creations. Heavenly Father couldn't feel bad about that, could He?"

Joel wanted to know what Grandpa Rex thought he should do. I answered with the question, "Joel, what do you think Jesus would want you to do?" His voice was a little choked up as he answered, "Grandpa, I don't think He would be very happy with me if I do that on Sunday. Do you?"

It hadn't been an easy decision to make, but it was the right one. We all have many difficult choices to make each day. There are many enticements that, if followed, will lead us away from Christ. The movies and videos we choose to watch, the entertainment we seek, the music we listen to, the styles we wear, and the language we speak are all influenced by the strength of our desire to follow Christ. In making these decisions, we may feel it is too hard to be left out or to miss out on what the world thinks is okay. Yes, "it is difficult to be a Christian and follow Christ in word and deed." When we do follow Him, however, we will feel the peace and assurance that come from making right choices. He will provide the courage necessary for those times when we have to stand alone.

Moroni was a true Christian

In the Book of Mormon Alma records the powerful account of Moroni, chief commander of all the armies of the Nephites. It is the account of one who stood alone and of the force for good he became. With his armor girded about him, his headplate, breastplate, and his shields fastened upon him, his banner of liberty raised on a pole above him, he "bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should a band of Christians remain to possess the land—

"For thus were all the true believers of Christ, who belonged to the church of God, called by those who did not belong to the church."

Alma continues: "And those who did belong to the church were faithful; yea, all those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians as they were called, because of their belief in Christ who should come.

"And therefore, at this time, Moroni prayed that the cause of Christians . . . might be favored" (Alma 46:13–16).

I pray that we, who have taken upon us His name and His marvelous priesthood authority and power, may also gladly take upon us the commitment to rank Jesus Christ first in our thoughts and also in our deeds, that we will find "the Spirit of the Lord . . . has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). This will enable us to rank ourselves as true followers of Jesus—as true Christians. Such actions will provide us and those we serve with spiritual strength to endure. That we may do this, and find the happiness and peace that lightens burdens and makes following Him easier, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander

My dear brethren, what a wonderful feeling it is to be in the presence of worthy priesthood holders tonight! Among us are many young men. Though some of you are still waiting for your nineteenth birthday, others have already received your call to serve a full-time mission. It is to you that I would like to direct a few of my thoughts this evening.

Receiving a mission call

On May 15 of this year, an event occurred in our home that is repeated literally hundreds of times per week in Latter-day Saint homes throughout the Church. After a period of anxious anticipation, a letter from the prophet containing a mission call for our son Bradley arrived. This was the third such letter that we have received in our family, but each time really is the first time. The letter arrived on a day when mission business had me away from home, so the unopened letter sat on Brad's desk in the mission home in Vienna, Austria, until late that night. Finally the moment arrived, and we were all gathered together—Mom, Dad, younger brother Stephen, and, of course, Bradley.

As in many families, there is also a sort of tradition in our family that accompanies the opening of a mission call. Each of us handled the envelope, turning it in our hands and holding it up to the light as if we could somehow discern its contents. Each of us took a piece of paper and recorded our own predictions for Bradley's call: Japan, New Zealand, and France. Then there was the inevitable fumbling at opening the envelope, extending the excitement for all of us. The letter was at last in Brad's hands: "Dear Elder Neuenschwander, you are hereby called to serve as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You

are assigned to labor in the Poland Warsaw Mission."

Tears flow easily at such moments, perhaps for different reasons. Mom's eyes are moist at the thought of another son leaving the nest and facing the world. Dad recalls so vividly a day long ago when he received his call to serve in Finland. Stephen understands that this last departure of older brothers means that he will finally be the oldest at home, but his tears also mean a quiet commitment that his letter will not be far behind.

There were phone calls to returned missionary brothers at home in America, each happy but playfully disappointed that Brad's call was not to New Mexico or Munich, where they had served. Grandparents were thrilled that yet another grandson was worthy to serve the Lord.

Busy days of preparation began. July 10 came all too soon, and it was time for Brad to leave. Bidding farewell to a missionary son, as many of you know, at the MTC definitely does not get easier with practice.

In our quiet moments, Brad and I spoke of his mission. For four years he had watched missionaries come and go through the mission home. Some had even gone to Poland. Yet there are things I would share with him and with you as this great missionary experience now becomes his.

You make your mission successful

Your mission will be exactly what you decide to make it. Your excellent mission president, President Whipple, and good missionary companions will help you along the way, but keep in mind that you are the central and decisive factor in the success of your own mission. Your young but strong shoulders bear the responsibility of the call

you willingly and happily accepted. You have seen missionaries in a variety of countries and circumstances. You have also observed that in rather similar situations one missionary is successful, another a little less so. The difference lay in the attitude and desire of the individual missionary. Make the inevitable challenges of missionary work stepping-stones for your own spiritual growth. Determine now that nothing will keep you from magnifying with honor your missionary call.

Simplify your life

As most missionaries, Brad, you come from school years, rich in their variety of choice and activity. But your success as a missionary will depend, in part, on your ability to simplify your life and focus on the purpose of your call. You now move from a life centered on your own needs to one concerned with the welfare of others. Some missionaries struggle, not wanting to let go of the past and consequently never fully committing themselves to the labor at hand. There is no way a successful missionary can have one foot in the world and one in his missionary labors. Successful missionaries make that transition. They leave behind everything that may distract them from their primary purpose. Resist bringing extra luggage with you into the mission field, both in your suitcase and in your mind.

Be teachable

Whatever calling you hold in the Church, someone will always preside over you. That person will teach and encourage you in your responsibilities. Brad, be wise enough and humble enough to learn from them. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught us new mission presi-

dents in 1987 that if we would learn to be silent, the Brethren could teach us a lot. I considered it good advice, and I have learned since that in the mission field as well as in all Church callings a person who can be taught is also one who can be trusted.

Be obedient

Mission rules are important in the same way commandments are important. We all need to keep them, understanding that they give us strength, direction, and limits. The smart missionary will learn the intent of the rules and make them work for him. Your mission is a time of discipline and single-minded focus. You will be required to go without some things common to your current life-style: music, TV, videos, novels, even girls. There is nothing wrong with any of these things, Brad, but then again, there is nothing wrong with food either, unless you are fasting, in which case even a teaspoon of water is improper.

Stay with the scriptures

Missionaries sometimes feel they need doctrinal reference books to enhance their understanding of the gospel. Believe me, Brad, they are not necessary for your gospel study in the mission field. Make the scriptures the basic doctrinal textbook of your mission. The Lord has told his elders:

"Teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit;

"And ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power, that ye may give even as I have spoken" (D&C 43:15-16).

You will find the Lord to be a man of his word. The promise he extends to you as a missionary is true.

Respect the title you hold

There are few men in the Church who are referred to as Elder, but one is you—a full-time missionary. Respect that title, Brad; refer to it with reverence. Many men have brought honor to it, including your brothers. You do the same.

Keep a proper perspective

The real success of a mission is not measured on a chart—it is etched in your heart and in the hearts of those whose lives are eternally changed because of you. Share your testimony often. I have seen nothing in a missionary that exerts more power and positive influence than the bearing of pure and simple testimony. Your testimony is the first step in the conversion of those whom you teach. Have courage to invite others to change their lives and come to Christ through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel.

The Lord taught the Nephites: “Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may

stand spotless before me at the last day. Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel” (3 Nephi 27:20–21).

Bless the lives of others with your priesthood and your presence.

Brad, love every minute of your service to those wonderful Polish people. Love their country, their food, customs, language, and heritage. They will enrich your life and understanding.

The work in which you are engaged is true. You are teaching the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the promise of salvation to all who will listen and accept your message. Of this I bear my witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elders Rex D. Pinegar and Dennis B. Neuen-schwander of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will join in singing “How Firm a Foundation,” following which we shall hear from Elder Jorge A. Rojas, who was also sustained as one of the Seventy at the April conference.

The choir and congregation sang “How Firm a Foundation.”

Elder Jorge A. Rojas

I see there are many fathers and sons together. May I ask you to join me in something we all do at home very often? Thank you.

Preparing for a bishop's interview

Hello, my son. How are you? How was your day at school? Good. Any calls? The bishop? An interview with you? Well, that's OK. Bishops have interviews all the time with young boys—just like the ones we have. We talk, we

listen, we learn from each other, we have a great time. No. It's the same thing. Don't worry. It's going to be all right.

Let's see, you'll be twelve next month, and he wants to have an interview with you. I wouldn't miss this for anything. Yes, he'll ask you questions about school and friends, the Word of Wisdom. Do you make your bed every morning? Do you take a shower every day? No, I'm not kidding you. He'll talk about those things. I'm serious. He'll

ask: "Are you praying to your Heavenly Father every day? Are you reading the scriptures? Do you love the Lord?" Do you? Do you, my son? That's good.

Covenants and ordinances

He'll talk about covenants and ordinances. No, no—*cov-e-nants*, covenants and ordinances. That's a good question. I knew you'd ask me that. Oh, they are like, you know, covenants and ordinances. Come over here.

You just told me you love Heavenly Father. I do too, my son. Now, Father in Heaven loves us. He knows you and your brothers and sisters. He knows all of us by name. And He loves us so much that He is waiting for us. He wants us to go back to Him.

In order to go back, we need to love and have faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord said a very important thing to all of us: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Now, that's a very, very important thing to know. *No one goes back without His help.* Very important.

But then He said something else: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). So we love Him by keeping His commandments. And He loves us by helping us go back. Now that's an agreement between Him and us. It's a very sacred agreement. Sacred agreements between Him and us are called covenants.

Remember your baptism? You first agreed to have faith in Him, repent of your sins, and live a good, righteous life. And He agreed to help you go back. That was the agreement; that was a covenant you both made.

But then you had to make the agreement official—just like you do when you write down an agreement on paper. But to make it official, to make it stand, you both sign your name on

that written agreement. When you want to make an agreement with the Lord official, you don't sign a document—you perform an ordinance. Ordinances are also very sacred.

Living up to the agreement

After the covenant, or agreement, is made and after the ordinance is performed, there is yet a third, vital element. You must live up to the agreement. This third element is also very sacred because the other two now depend entirely on your performance. What good will a covenant do (I agree to do something) or an ordinance (I hereby sign the agreement) if you ultimately *don't comply with it*? Understand?

The first covenant and ordinance the Lord requires is baptism. Baptism puts us on the starting line—the starting line of that road that will take us back to His presence. As we walk along this road, there are other covenants we must accept and other ordinances we must receive. But remember the third important element for each one of them: *We must live up to each new covenant we make.*

The priesthood covenant and ordinance

I think the bishop wants to talk to you about another covenant and ordinance you now need to make with the Lord. It is called priesthood. Son, the priesthood will bless your life. The bishop will make sure you understand so you'll be able to make the priesthood covenant with the Lord. Once you make the covenant, you will need to receive the ordinance. I will then be so happy, my son, to perform the ordinance and ordain you a deacon.

This will help you stay on that road that will take you back to His presence. It will be necessary for you to

keep growing and moving forward on that road. Two years later, you will need additional help. If you remain worthy, you take another step; you'll then be ready to become a teacher in the priesthood. That will require that you make another covenant, and then I will again perform the ordinance and ordain you a teacher. Two years later, if everything is well, again another step, and I will ordain you a priest.

Soon after that, you will be ready to now receive the higher priesthood, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and be ordained an elder. My son, when you receive the higher priesthood, you will have all the priesthood there is. You will then be ready to do what you've always wanted to do: be a missionary for the Lord Jesus Christ.

By then you will better understand and be grateful to the Lord for all those steps you have taken, the preparation you've received, and for the help He has given you all along the way to finally be able to come to the house of the Lord, the temple. There, my son, you will be able to accept the highest covenants and receive the most sacred ordinances. There, too, you will be reminded of the third element. Remember? After you accept covenants and receive ordinances, *you must live up to the covenants you made*. That is how we love our Lord: by keeping His commandments.

Are you ready for that interview with the bishop? Good.

A review

We now need to review the things we talked about today and express our gratitude to Heavenly Father. Do you want to review it or offer a prayer?

All right. You review it, and I'll pray.

Yes. We must love the Lord. *If we love Him, we keep His commandments*. Very good. His commandments are that we first, accept covenants; second, receive ordinances; and third, live up to the things we promised Him. That was excellent. Son, I love you.

Let's fold our arms, bow our heads, close our eyes, and pray.

Our dear Father in Heaven, we thank thee for thy many blessings—for the restoration of the gospel, which makes possible that we have the Book of Mormon, thy holy priesthood, and living prophets to guide us. We are grateful for the atonement of Jesus Christ, for immortality and the possibility of eternal life. Help us to make it a real probability as we come unto Christ through sacred covenants and ordinances. Please forgive our sins. And help us always recognize thy hand all around us and always, always keep thy commandments, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Jorge A. Rojas of the Seventy has spoken to us.

It will now be our pleasure to listen to President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

One cannot gaze into the faces of this vast congregation of men assembled in the historic Tabernacle and envision the unseen audiences meeting

in other locations throughout the world without feeling your strength, recognizing your faith, and knowing of your spiritual power, even the power of the priesthood.

Called to serve

All of us are familiar with the beautiful account found in Matthew:

“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

“And they straightway left their nets, and followed him” (Matthew 4:18–20).

Brethren, we too have been called to follow Him as fishers of men, laborers in the vineyard to build boys and mend men and bring all unto Christ. We are stirred in our souls as we repeat the words of the well-known refrain:

Called to serve Him, heav’nly King
of glory,
Chosen e’er to witness for his
name,
Far and wide we tell the Father’s
story,
Far and wide his love proclaim.
[Hymns, no. 249]

It is no small thing to extend to another a call to serve; neither is it insignificant to receive such a call. President Spencer W. Kimball often taught, “Let there be no ‘ditch bank’ appointments in this Church.” Calls to serve are to be preceded by careful thought and earnest prayer. As the Lord declared, “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10).

Service to young men

Some of you are called to serve the young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. These precious young men come in all sizes and with varying dispositions and different backgrounds. Yours is the privilege to know them individually and to motivate and lead each youth in his quest to qualify for

the Melchizedek Priesthood, a successful mission, a temple marriage, a life of service, and a testimony of truth.

Let us remember that a boy is the only known substance from which a man can be made.

Nobody knows what a boy is
worth;

We’ll have to wait and see.

But every man in a noble place

A boy once used to be.

A proper perspective of our young men is absolutely essential for those called to serve them. They are young, pliable, eager, and filled with unlimited energy. Sometimes they make mistakes. I remember a meeting where we of the First Presidency and the Twelve were reviewing a youthful mistake made by a missionary. The tone was serious and rather critical when Elder LeGrand Richards said: “Now, brethren, if the good Lord wanted to put a forty-year-old head on a nineteen-year-old body, He would have done so. But He didn’t. He placed a nineteen-year-old head on a nineteen-year-old body, and we should be a bit more understanding.” The mood of the group changed, the problem was solved, and we moved on with the meeting.

The years in the Aaronic Priesthood are growing years. They are years of maturing, learning, developing. They are years of emotional highs and lows, a period when wise counseling and proper example by an inspired leader can work wonders and lift lives.

The quorum meetings of the Aaronic Priesthood provide you advisers and members of bishoprics with ideal opportunities to teach and train these young men in gospel scholarship and in dedicated service. Be examples worthy of emulation. Youth need fewer critics and more models to follow. “Teach ye diligently,” said the Lord, “and my grace shall attend you” (D&C 88:78).

Purposes of Church athletics

These young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, many of whom are assembled here tonight, have a vital interest in athletics. The Church recognizes this fact and provides through its activities and athletic programs an opportunity for participation and growth. The enormous financial investment in physical facilities made by the Church, with the anticipation that all may benefit, can provide fellowship and brotherhood as well as the development of athletic skills. These goals, however, are defeated if winning the game overshadows participation in the game. Young men come to play—not to sit on the bench. Ours is the privilege to provide this opportunity.

I remember in my youth a basketball team from the Twenty-fifth Ward of the Pioneer Stake that had ten young men participating. A wise leader decided not to play just the five best, with the other five substituting here and there. Rather, he formed two teams with balanced ability and age. One team of five played the first and third periods, while the remaining team of five played the second and fourth periods. It was not a contest between bench warmers and active players, but a situation where morale was high, playing time was equal, and games were played and won in the right spirit. No participant in Church-sponsored athletic contests should warm the bench for the entire game.

Value of Scouting

Scouting is another area of vital interest to young men. Much has been said in the media of late regarding Scouting. Let me affirm that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has not diminished in any way its support of the Scouting movement. President Spencer W. Kimball de-

clared that the Church endorses Scouting "and will seek to provide leadership which will help boys keep close to their families and close to the Church as they develop the qualities of citizenship and character and fitness which Scouting represents. . . .

"We've remained strong and firm in our support of this great movement for boys and of the Oath and the Law which are at its center" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, pp. 50-51; or *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 36).

President Ezra Taft Benson described Scouting as "a noble program," saying, "It is a builder of character, not only in the boys, but also in the men who provide the leadership" (. . . *So Shall Ye Reap* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1960], p. 138).

Brethren, if ever there were a time when the principles of Scouting were vitally needed—that time is now. If ever there were a generation who would benefit by keeping physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight—that generation is the present generation.

A few years ago a Scouting skill saved a life—in my own family. My nephew's son, eleven-year-old Craig Dearden, successfully completed his requirements for Scouting's swimming award. His father beamed his approval, while mother tenderly placed an affectionate kiss. Little did those attending the court of honor realize the life-or-death impact of that award. Later that very afternoon, it was Craig who spotted a dark object at the deep end of the swimming pool. It was Craig who, without fear, plunged into the pool to investigate and brought to the surface his own little brother. Tiny Scott was so still, so blue, so lifeless. Recalling the life-saving procedures he had learned and practiced, Craig and others responded in the true tradition of Scouting. Suddenly there was a cry, breathing, movement, life. Is Scouting rele-

vant? Ask a mother, a father, a family who know a Scouting skill saved a son and brother.

We can succeed in our callings

Many of you are serving as members of bishoprics, of high councils, and as officers in priesthood quorums. At times, your tasks may seem overwhelming, and discouragement may creep into your lives. Our Heavenly Father has inspired your call and desires that you succeed. Through His beloved Son, our Savior, we learn:

"Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.

"Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work" (D&C 4:2-3).

In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord counseled: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

"Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind" (D&C 64:33-34).

Through humble prayer, diligent preparation, and faithful service, we can succeed in our sacred callings. Some priesthood bearers are gifted with the ability to reach out to the less active and renew the faith and rekindle the desire to once again return to the fold. Give such specially endowed brethren an assignment which will utilize this talent. Other brethren have the ability to work with youth, to win their respect, prompt their determination to overcome temptation, and lead with love these choice young spirits as they travel along that pathway which, when followed, provides eternal life. The Lord will hear your prayers and guide your decisions, for this is His work in which we are engaged.

I have frequently said that there is no feeling to surpass that feeling which engulfs us when we recognize that we have been on the Lord's errand and He has allowed us to help fulfill His purposes.

Promptings to serve

Every bishop can testify to the promptings which attend calls to serve in the Church. Frequently the call seems to be for the benefit not so much of those to be taught or led as for the person who is to teach or lead.

As a bishop, I worried about any members who were inactive, not attending, not serving. Such was my thought one day as I drove down the street where Ben and Emily lived. They were older—even in the twilight period of life. Aches and pains of advancing years caused them to withdraw from activity to the shelter of their home— isolated, detached, shut out from the mainstream of daily life and association.

That day I felt the unmistakable prompting to park my car and visit Ben and Emily, even though I was on my way to a meeting. It was a sunny weekday afternoon. I approached the door to their home and knocked. Emily answered. When she recognized me, her bishop, she exclaimed: "All day long I have waited for my phone to ring. It has been silent. I hoped that the postman would deliver a letter. He brought only bills. Bishop, how did you know today is my birthday?"

I answered, "God knows, Emily, for He loves you."

In the quiet of their living room, I said to Ben and Emily: "I don't know why I was directed here today, but our Heavenly Father knows. Let's kneel in prayer and ask Him why." This we did, and the answer came. Emily, who had a beautiful voice, was asked to sing in the

choir—even to provide a solo for the forthcoming ward conference. Ben was asked to speak to the Aaronic Priesthood young men and recount a special experience in his life when his safety was assured by responding to the promptings of the Spirit.

She sang. He spoke. Hearts were gladdened by the return to activity of Ben and Emily. They rarely missed a sacrament meeting from that day to the time each was called home. The language of the Spirit had been spoken. It had been heard. It had been understood. Hearts were touched and lives saved.

As priesthood leaders, we soon discover that some of our work, though not recorded on any written report, is of vital significance. The visits to the homes of quorum members, blessing the sick, helping a member with a project, or comforting grieving hearts when a loved one passes on are all sacred privileges of priesthood service. True, they may not be recorded on a written report, but more important, they find lodgment in the soul and bring joy to the heart. They are also known of the Lord.

Should our load seem heavy or the results of our efforts discouraging, we may well recall the words of President Kimball to some who noted his undeviating devotion to his calling even in his advancing years: "My life is like my shoes—to be worn out in service" ("He Is at Peace," *Ensign*, Dec. 1985, p. 41).

Example of Jiri Snederfler

I trust that all young men here tonight are preparing now to serve a full-time mission in the service of the Lord. ElRay L. Christiansen often said, "Your mission is the mold in which your life will be cast." Prepare to serve worthily, with an eye single to the glory of God and His purposes. You will

never know the full influence of your testimony and your service, but you will return with gladness for having had the privilege of responding to a sacred call to serve the Master. You will be forever loved by those to whom you bring the light of truth. Your teachings will be found in their service. Your examples will be guides to follow. Your faith will prompt courage to meet life's challenges.

Let me provide an example. When I first visited Czechoslovakia, accompanied by Hans B. Ringger, long before the freedom bell sounded, I was met by Jiri Snederfler, our leader through this dark period, and Sister Olga Snederfler, his wife. I went to their home in Prague where the branch met. Displayed on the walls of the room in which we assembled were picture after picture of the Salt Lake Temple. I said to Sister Snederfler, "Your husband must truly love the temple."

She responded, "I, too; I, too."

We sat down for some soup Sister Snederfler had prepared, after which she brought out a treasure trove: an album containing individual pictures of the missionaries who were serving there in 1950 when the government edict came for the mission to be closed. As she slowly leafed through the pictures of different missionaries, she would say, "Wonderful boy, wonderful boy."

Brother Snederfler has been a courageous Church leader in Czechoslovakia and has been willing to put everything on the line for the gospel. When the opportunity came that we would seek recognition for the Church in that country, the government leaders, then Communist, said: "Don't send an American. Don't send a German. Don't send a Swiss. Send a citizen of Czechoslovakia."

There were ominous implications in that particular statement because to have admitted that you were a church

leader during this period of the prohibition of religion was tantamount to possible imprisonment. And yet, this call came to Brother Snederfler to be the designated person to go before the government and to forthrightly state that he was the leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for all of Czechoslovakia and that he was seeking recognition for his church. He later told me that he had been somewhat frightened and had asked for the prayers of his brothers and sisters in the Prague Branch. He went to his sweet wife, Olga, and said to her: "I love you. I don't know when, or if, I'll be back, but I love the gospel, and I must follow my Savior."

With that spirit of faith and devotion, Brother Snederfler went before the government officials and acknowledged that he was the leader of the Church and that he was there to seek a restoration of the recognition the Church had enjoyed long years before. In the meantime Elder Russell M. Nelson had been working tirelessly to bring about the desired decision. Later, Brother Snederfler heard the good news: "Your church is again recognized in Czechoslovakia." How eager Brother Snederfler was to tell his dear wife and the other stalwart members of the Church the wonderful news that once again missionaries could come to Czechoslovakia and the Church could provide a haven for freedom of worship in that nation. It was a happy day for Czechoslovakia.

Where are Jiri and Olga Snederfler today? Just last month they responded to their calls to serve as temple president and matron of the Freiberg Germany Temple, where faithful members of the Church in Germany, Czechoslovakia, and surrounding nations attend. These two saintly souls find themselves each day in the Lord's house they so dearly love.

And what of Richard Winder, one of the former missionaries of whom

Olga Snederfler exclaimed, "Wonderful boy, wonderful boy"? He is now the president of the Czechoslovakia Prague Mission, responding to the call to him and his wife, Barbara, to reopen the work in that country.

Great shall be their reward

To the Snederflers, the Winders, and to all who willingly respond to the sacred call of service comes the commendation of the Lord: "I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory" (D&C 76:5-6).

Called to know the richness of his blessing—
Sons and daughters, children of a King—
Glad of heart, his holy name confessing,
Praises unto him we bring.
Onward, ever onward, as we glory in his name;
Onward, ever onward, as we glory in his name;
Forward, pressing forward, as a triumph song we sing.
God our strength will be; press forward ever,
Called to serve our King.
[Hymns, no. 249]

May we ever be found serving faithfully, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson, for your challenging and inspirational remarks. Those attending the Sunday morning session tomorrow are reminded that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00

and you should be in your places by 9:15.

We express our appreciation to the combined men's choir who have sung so beautifully tonight. Following

my remarks they will conclude by singing "God of Our Fathers," following which the benediction will be offered by Elder Horacio A. Tenorio of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we have had an excellent meeting. Much has been spoken worthy of remembrance and application in our lives. I endorse and commend to you what the Brethren have said. I hope that every man and boy, wherever you may be, may leave this meeting tonight with a greater desire and a stronger resolution to live more worthy of the divine priesthood which each of us holds.

Two anniversaries

I speak to you in a somewhat personal tone, not to boast but by way of testimony and in a spirit of gratitude.

This conference marks two personal anniversaries for me. Thirty years ago at the October conference I was sustained a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Ten years ago I was sustained as a Counselor in the First Presidency. I am deeply grateful to you and your families for your sustaining hands and hearts and prayers. Thank you. I confess I have never felt adequate to these tremendous callings. I suppose that every man and woman in this Church has those feelings in whatever office or calling he or she may be asked to serve.

Growth of the Church

I received a letter the other day from a grandson serving a mission in Poland. He is laboring with Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander in an area where they are trying to open the work. It is difficult. He wrote, "I am presi-

dent of a branch with four members, and I feel so inadequate."

I need not remind any of you, even you who are deacons, that it is an awesome thing to be clothed with the holy priesthood and to have the responsibility, great or small, to assist God our Eternal Father in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of His sons and daughters of all generations. No one of us can comprehend the magnitude and full meaning of that responsibility. But with our limited knowledge, we know we must be faithful and diligent in carrying forward our duty.

Remarkable and miraculous things happen when we do so. May I remind you of the rich and wonderful fruits of your labors over a period of years. I hesitate to use statistics, but these represent the results of your service and the mighty blessings of the Lord.

In the thirty years since I was ordained an Apostle, the membership of the Church has grown from 1,800,000 to a present estimated membership of 8,040,000, or an increase of 441 percent.

The number of stakes has grown from 345 to 1,817. That represents a 527 percent increase. Admittedly, we are creating smaller stakes and more of them in an effort to improve efficiency of administration. Nonetheless, in the time during which many of us have served, we have seen a miracle.

I have seen in the season of my Apostleship the corps of full-time missionaries grow from 10,000 to approximately 45,000, for an increase of 425

percent, with a comparable growth in missions from 67 to 267, or a 398 percent growth.

Now these are statistics, not particularly interesting in table form, but tremendously significant in the lives of millions of the sons and daughters of God our Eternal Father who live in 135 nations and territories scattered across the earth where the Church is established.

When I think of these things, I feel like standing and shouting hallelujah. But more appropriately, I feel to kneel and say in humility, thanks be to God and His beloved Son, our Redeemer, for the growth of this Their work, and thanks be to my brothers and sisters, young and old, you who have been faithful and diligent in your duty in causing this to happen. This has been a joyful thing to observe.

Experience with sorrow

But during these ten years that I have served in the Presidency, I have also experienced much of sorrow. It is out of this experience that I wish to speak a little further. For a full decade now I have participated in the task of sitting in judgment on the worthiness of those who plead to come back into the Church after having been excommunicated. In every case there had been a serious violation of Church standards of conduct. In most cases there had been adultery, and in the majority of cases, husbands were the offenders. Disciplinary action had been taken against them. As months passed they longed for what they previously had. A spirit of repentance came into their hearts.

As one of these men said to me, "I really never understood nor appreciated the gift of the Holy Ghost until it was taken from me."

Unhappiness of women

I have spoken on three or four occasions to the women of the Church during the past ten years. I have received in response to these various talks a substantial number of letters. I have kept some of them in a file marked "Unhappy Women."

These letters have come from many areas. But they are all written in the same tone. I wish to read you a portion of one of them which was received only last week. The writer has granted me permission to do so. I will not disclose any names.

Said she: "I met my husband when he was a freshman. He was from a very active family with many years of service in the Church. He was so enthused about serving a mission. I thought we shared the gospel as our most important value in this life. We both enjoyed music and nature and had a high priority on gaining knowledge. We dated a few months, easily fell in love, and wrote to one another while he served an honorable mission. When he came back home, he got back into school and we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. We followed the counsel of Church leaders and began our family. I had been attending [the university] on an Honors at Entrance scholarship, but I became pregnant and sick and left school to devote my time and energy to my husband and infant son.

"For the next eighteen years I supported my husband while he finished school, got some work experience, and started his own business. We both served in leadership positions in the Church and community. We had five wonderful children. I taught the children the gospel, how to work, how to serve, how to communicate, and how to play the piano. I baked bread; canned peaches, apples, tomatoes; sewed dresses and quilts; cleaned house; and

tended my flowers and vegetables. In many ways it seemed that we were an ideal family. Our relationship was sometimes sweet and sometimes difficult. Things were never perfect because I am not a perfect woman and he is not a perfect man, but many things were good. I did not expect perfection; I just kept trying.

"Then came the crash. About a year ago he decided that he never loved me and that our marriage was a mistake from the beginning. He was convinced that there was nothing in our relationship for him. He filed for divorce and moved out. 'Wait,' I kept saying. 'Oh, no. Stop! Don't do this. Why are you leaving? What is wrong? Please, talk to me. Look at our children. What of all our dreams? Remember our covenants. No, no! Divorce is not the answer.' He would not hear me. I thought I would die.

"Now I am a single parent. What an enormous load of heartache, pain, and loneliness is behind that statement. It explains so much trauma and so much anger from my teenage sons. It explains so many tears from my little girls. It explains so many sleepless nights, so many family demands and needs. Why am I in this mess? What did I choose wrong? How will I ever get through school? How will I get through this week? Where is my husband? Where is the father of my children? I join the ranks of tired women whose husbands leave them. I have no money, no job. I have children to care for, bills to pay, and not much hope."

I do not know if her former husband may be in this audience somewhere. If he is listening, I may receive from him a letter justifying what he has done. I know there are two sides to every issue. But somehow, I cannot understand how a man who holds the holy priesthood and who has entered into sacred and binding covenants before the Lord could justify abandoning his

responsibilities for his wife of eighteen years and the five children who exist because of him and of whose flesh and blood and heritage they have partaken.

The problem is not new. I suppose it is as old as the human race. Certainly it existed among the Nephites. Jacob, brother of Nephi, speaking as a prophet to his people, declared:

"For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands.

"... Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you" (Jacob 2:31, 35).

Discipline a violent temper

Permit me to read from another letter. Said the writer: "My husband is a good man with many outstanding qualities and character traits, but underneath it all there is a strong streak of authoritarianism. . . . His volatile temper flares up often enough to remind me of all the potential ugliness of which he is capable.

"President Hinckley, . . . please remind the brethren that the physical and verbal abuse of women is inexcusable, never acceptable, and a cowardly way of dealing with differences, especially and particularly despicable if the abuser is a priesthood holder."

Now, I believe that most marriages in the Church are happy, that both husbands and wives in those marriages experience a sense of security and love, of mutual dependence, and an equal sharing of burdens. I am confident that the children in those homes, at least in the vast majority of them, are

growing up with a sense of peace and security, knowing that they are appreciated and loved by both of their parents, who, they feel, love one another. But I am confident, my brethren, that there is enough of the opposite to justify what I am saying.

Who can calculate the wounds inflicted, their depth and pain, by harsh and mean words spoken in anger? How pitiful a sight is a man who is strong in many ways but who loses all control of himself when some little thing, usually of no significant consequence, disturbs his equanimity. In every marriage there are, of course, occasional differences. But I find no justification for tempers that explode on the slightest provocation.

Said the writer of Proverbs, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous" (Proverbs 27:4).

A violent temper is such a terrible, corrosive thing. And the tragedy is that it accomplishes no good; it only feeds evil with resentment and rebellion and pain. To any man or boy within the sound of my voice who has trouble controlling his tongue, may I suggest that you plead with the Lord for the strength to overcome your weakness, that you apologize to those you have offended, and that you marshal within yourselves the power to discipline your tongue.

To the boys who are here, may I suggest that you watch your temper now, in these formative years of your life. As Brother Haight has reminded you, this is the season to develop the power and capacity to discipline yourselves. You may think it is the macho thing to flare up in anger and swear and profane the name of the Lord. It is not the macho thing. It is an indication of weakness. Anger is not an expression of strength. It is an indication of one's inability to control his thoughts, words, his emotions. Of course it is easy to get angry. When the weakness of anger takes over, the strength of rea-

son leaves. Cultivate within yourselves the mighty power of self-discipline.

Sacredness of marriage covenants

Now I move to another corrosive element that afflicts all too many marriages. It is interesting to me that two of the Ten Commandments deal with this: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" and "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:14, 17). Ted Koppel, moderator of ABC's "Nightline" program, is reported as saying the following to a group of students at Duke University concerning slogans that were proposed to reduce drugs and immorality:

"We have actually convinced ourselves that slogans will save us. . . . But the answer is *NO!* Not because it isn't cool or smart or because you might end up in jail or dying in an AIDS ward, but *NO* because it is wrong, because we have spent 5,000 years as a race of rational human beings, trying to drag ourselves out of the primeval slime by searching for truth and moral absolutes. In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder. It is a howling reproach. What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not *The Ten Suggestions*" (address given at Duke University, 10 May 1987).

Think about that for a moment. What Moses brought down were Ten Commandments, written by the finger of Jehovah on tablets of stone for the salvation and safety, for the security and happiness of the children of Israel and for all of the generations which were to come after them.

Altogether too many men, leaving their wives at home in the morning and going to work, where they find attractively dressed and attractively made-up young women, regard themselves as young and handsome and as an irresistible catch. They complain that their wives do not look the same as they did twenty years ago when they married them. To which I say, "Who would, after living with you for twenty years?"

The tragedy is that some men are ensnared by their own foolishness and their own weakness. They throw to the wind the most sacred and solemn of covenants, entered into in the house of the Lord and sealed under the authority of the holy priesthood. They set aside their wives who have been faithful, who have loved and cared for them, who have struggled with them in times of poverty only to be discarded in times of affluence. They have left their children fatherless. They have avoided with every kind of artifice the payment of court-mandated alimony and child support.

Do I sound harsh and negative? Yes, I feel that way as I deal with case after case and have done so over a period of time. Wrote Paul, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). In that same epistle, he said to Timothy, "Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).

Now I recognize that there may be some few cases where conditions of the marriage are totally intolerable. But these cases are in the minority. And even in these cases, where a marriage has been undertaken and children are brought into the world, there is a responsibility, binding and with accountability before God, to provide care for those for whose lives the father is responsible.

The complaint of a husband, after eighteen years of marriage and five children, that he no longer loves his wife is, in my judgment, a feeble excuse for the violation of covenants made before God and also the evasion of the responsibilities that are the very strength of the society of which we are a part. The finding of fault with consequent divorce is usually preceded by a long period in which little mistakes are spoken of in harsh and angry language, where tiny molehills of difference grow into great mountains of conflict. I am

satisfied that the more unkindly a wife is treated, the less attractive she becomes. She loses pride in herself. She develops a feeling of worthlessness. Of course it shows.

A husband who domineers his wife, who demeans and humiliates her, and who makes officious demands upon her not only injures her, but he also belittles himself. And in many cases, he plants a pattern of future similar behavior in his sons.

No enduring happiness without women

My brethren, you who have had conferred upon you the priesthood of God, you know, as I know, that there is no enduring happiness, that there is no lasting peace in the heart, no tranquility in the home without the companionship of a good woman. Our wives are not our inferiors.

Some men who are evidently unable to gain respect by the goodness of their lives use as justification for their actions the statement that Eve was told that Adam should rule over her. How much sadness, how much tragedy, how much heartbreak has been caused through centuries of time by weak men who have used that as a scriptural warrant for atrocious behavior! They do not recognize that the same account indicates that Eve was given as a helpmeet to Adam. The facts are that they stood side by side in the garden. They were expelled from the garden together, and they worked together side by side in gaining their bread by the sweat of their brows.

Now, brethren, I know I have spoken of a minority. But the depth of the tragedy which afflicts that minority, and particularly the victims of that minority, has impelled me to say what I have said. There is an old adage that says, "If the shoe fits, wear it."

What I have spoken I have said with a desire to be helpful and, in some

cases, in the spirit of a rebuke followed by an increase of love toward those whom I may have rebuked.

Beauty of happy marriage

How beautiful is the marriage of a young man and a young woman who begin their lives together kneeling at the altar in the house of the Lord, pledging their love and loyalty one to another for time and all eternity. When children come into that home, they are nurtured and cared for, loved and blessed with the feeling that their father loves their mother. In that environment they find peace and strength and security. Watching their father, they develop respect for women. They are taught self-control and self-discipline, which bring the strength to avoid later tragedy.

The years pass. The children eventually leave the home, one by one. And the father and the mother are again alone. But they have each other to talk with, to depend on, to nurture, to encourage, and to bless. There comes the autumn of life and a looking back with satisfaction and gladness. Through all of the years there has been loyalty, one to the other. There has been deference

and courtesy. Now there is a certain mellowness, a softening, an effect that partakes of a hallowed relationship. They realize that death may come anytime, usually to one first with a separation of a season brief or lengthy. But they know also that because their companionship was sealed under the authority of the eternal priesthood and they have lived worthy of the blessings, there will be a reunion sweet and certain.

Brethren, this is the way our Father in Heaven would have it. This is the Lord's way. He has so indicated. His prophets have spoken of it.

It takes effort. It takes self-control. It takes unselfishness. It requires the true essence of love, which is an anxious concern for the well-being and happiness of one's companion. I could wish nothing better for all of you than this, and I pray that this may be your individual blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God of Our Fathers."

Elder Horacio A. Tenorio offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 6, 1991. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Robert Cundick and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Truth Eternal" without announcement.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 161st semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked me to conduct this session.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Richard G. Scott, Marion D. Hanks, and Lynn A. Mickelsen are seated on the stand. We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brothers Robert Cundick and John

Longhurst at the organ, will provide the music for this session. The choir opened these services by singing "Truth Eternal" and will now sing "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father," following which Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father."

Elder Eduardo Ayala offered the invocation.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Call to help handcart companies

My beloved brethren and sisters, how blessed we are to meet together in peace in these comfortable and happy circumstances. As I have thought of this October general conference and of the inspired talks we have heard and will hear, my mind has gone back to the events of this same first Sunday of October 135 years ago when a similar meeting was convened here on Temple Square.

We did not have this great Tabernacle at that time. Our people then met in the Old Tabernacle, which stood just to the south of us. It was Sunday, October 5, 1856. On Saturday, the day before, a small group of missionaries returning from England arrived in the valley. They had been able to make relatively good time because their teams were strong and their wagons light. Franklin D. Richards was their leader. They immediately sought out President Brigham Young. They told him that hundreds of men,

women, and children were scattered along the trail that led from the Missouri River to the Salt Lake Valley. Most of them were pulling handcarts, two companies of these, with two smaller companies following behind with ox teams and wagons. The first group was probably at this time in the area of Scotts Bluff, more than four hundred miles from their destination, with the others behind them. It was October, and they would be trapped in the snows of winter and perish unless help was sent.

Brigham Young had known nothing of this. There was, of course, at that time no rapid means of communication—no radio, no telegraph, no fast mail. He was then fifty-five years of age. The next morning, the Sabbath, he stood before the people in the Tabernacle and said:

"I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak. . . . It is this. On the 5th day of October, 1856, many of our brethren

and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, 'to get them here.' . . .

"That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people. . . .

"I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen. I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them. Also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, besides those that drive the teams. . . .

"I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. *Go and bring in those people now on the plains*" (quoted in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* [Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1960], pp. 120-21).

The next morning anvils were ringing in the blacksmith shops as horses were shod and wagons were repaired and loaded.

The following morning, Tuesday, October 7th, "sixteen good four-mule teams and twenty-seven hardy young men headed eastward with the first installment of provisions. The gathering of more to follow, was pushed vigorously" (Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, p. 124).

"By the end of October, two hundred and fifty teams were on the road to give relief" (Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, p. 125).

There have been many eloquent sermons preached from the pulpits on Temple Square, but none more eloquent than those spoken in that October conference of 135 years ago.

Story of Ellen Pucell Unthank

Now let me leave that for a moment and pick up the story from another position.

A few weeks ago, it was my privilege to dedicate a monument to the memory of Ellen Pucell Unthank. It stands on the campus of Southern Utah University in Cedar City, Utah. It is a bronze figure, beautiful and engaging. It is of a little nine-year-old girl, standing with one foot tiptoe, her hair blowing back in the wind, a smile on her face, eagerly looking forward.

Ellen Pucell, as she was named, was born in a beautiful area of England where the hills are soft and rolling and the grass is forever green. Her parents, Margaret and William Pucell, were converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From the time of their baptism in 1837 until the spring of 1856, they had scrimped and saved to go to the Zion of their people in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains of America. Now that was possible if they were willing to pull a handcart one thousand miles across a wilderness. They accepted that challenge, as did hundreds of their fellow converts.

Margaret and William took with them their two daughters, Maggie, fourteen, and Ellen, nine. They said good-bye to loved ones they would never again see in mortality. Near the end of May they set sail from Liverpool with 852 of their convert associates. My wife's grandmother, thirteen-year-old Mary Goble, was a part of that company and, I like to think, played with those little girls aboard ship.

After six weeks at sea, they landed at Boston and took the steam train to Iowa City. They had expected their handcarts and wagons would be ready. They were not. There was a serious and disastrous delay. It was not until late in July that they began the long march, first to Winter Quarters on the

Missouri and from there to the Rocky Mountains.

The Pucells were assigned to the Martin Handcart Company. The Goble family, my wife's forebears, became a part of the Cluff Wagon Company, which followed the handcarts to give help if needed.

With high expectation they began their journey. Through sunlight and storm, through dust and mud, they trudged beside the Platte River through all of the month of September and most of October. On October 19, they reached the last crossing of the Platte, a little west of the present city of Casper, Wyoming. The river was wide, the current strong, and chunks of ice were floating in the water. They were now traveling without sufficient food. Bravely they waded through the icy stream. A terrible storm arose with fierce winds bringing drifting sand, hail, and snow. When they climbed the far bank of the river, their wet clothing froze to their bodies. Exhausted, freezing, and without strength to go on, some quietly sat down, and while they sat, they died.

Ellen's mother, Margaret, became sick. Her husband lifted her onto the cart. They were now climbing in elevation toward the Continental Divide, and it was uphill all the way. Can you see this family in your imagination?—the mother too sick and weak to walk, the father thin and emaciated, struggling to pull the cart as the two little girls push from behind with swirling, cold winds about them, and around them are hundreds of others similarly struggling.

They came to a stream of freezing water. The father, while crossing, slipped on a rock and fell. Struggling to his feet, he reached the shore, wet and chilled. Sometime later he sat down to rest. He quietly died, his senses numbed by the cold. His wife died five days later. I do not know how or where their frozen bodies were buried in that

desolate, white wilderness. I do know that the ground was frozen and that the snow was piled in drifts and that the two little girls were now orphans.

Rescue party arrives

Between 135 and 150 of the Martin company alone perished along that trail of suffering and death. It was in these desperate and terrible circumstances—hungry, exhausted, their clothes thin and ragged—that they were found by the rescue party. As the rescuers appeared on the western horizon breaking a trail through the snow, they seemed as angels of mercy. And indeed they were. The beleaguered emigrants shouted for joy, some of them. Others, too weak to shout, simply wept and wept and wept.

There was now food to eat and some warmer clothing. But the suffering was not over, nor would it ever end in mortality. Limbs had been frozen, and the gangrenous flesh sloughed off from the bones.

The carts were abandoned, and the survivors were crowded into the wagons of the rescuers. The long rough journey of three hundred, four hundred, even five hundred miles between them and this valley was especially slow and tedious because of the storms. On November 30, 104 wagons, loaded with suffering human cargo, came into the Salt Lake Valley. Word of their expected arrival had preceded them. It was Sunday, and again the Saints were gathered in the Tabernacle. Brigham Young stood before the congregation and said:

"As soon as this meeting is dismissed I want the brethren and sisters to repair to their homes. . . .

"The afternoon meeting will be omitted, for I wish the sisters to . . . prepare to give those who have just arrived a mouthful of something to eat, and to wash them and nurse them. . . .

"Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles; some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted . . . we want you to receive them as your own children, and to have the same feeling for them" (quoted in Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, p. 139).

The two orphan girls, Maggie and Ellen, were among those with frozen limbs. Ellen's were the most serious. The doctor in the valley, doing the best he could, amputated her legs just below the knees. The surgical tools were crude. There was no anesthesia. The stumps never healed. She grew to womanhood, married William Unthank, and bore and reared an honorable family of six children. Moving about on those stumps, she served her family, her neighbors, and the Church with faith and good cheer and without complaint, though she was never without pain. Her posterity are numerous, and among them are educated and capable men and women who love the Lord whom she loved and who love the cause for which she suffered.

We became acquainted with God

Years later, a group in Cedar City were talking about her and others who were in those ill-fated companies. Members of the group spoke critically of the Church and its leaders because the company of converts had been permitted to start so late in the season. I now quote from a manuscript which I have:

"One old man in the corner sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it. Then he arose and said things that no person who heard will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity.

"He said in substance, 'I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about.

Cold historic facts mean nothing here, for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. A mistake to send the handcart company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife was in it, and Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have cited was there too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church because every one of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives, for we became acquainted with him in our extremities'" (manuscript in my possession).

That speaker was Francis Webster, who was twenty-six years of age when with his wife and infant child he went through that experience. He became a leader in the Church and a leader in the communities of southern Utah.

Our Redeemer's sacrifice

Now, my brothers and sisters, I have spent a long time telling that story, perhaps too long. This is October of 1991, and that episode of 135 years ago is behind us. But I have told it because it is true and because the spirit of that saga is as contemporary as is this morning.

I wish to remind everyone within my hearing that the comforts we have, the peace we have, and, most important, the faith and knowledge of the things of God that we have were bought with a terrible price by those who have gone before us. Sacrifice has always been a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The crowning element of our faith is our conviction of our living God, the Father of us all, and of His Beloved Son, the Redeemer of the world. It is because of our Redeemer's

life and sacrifice that we are here. It is because of His sacrificial atonement that we and all of the sons and daughters of God will partake of the salvation of the Lord. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). It is because of the sacrificial redemption wrought by the Savior of the world that the great plan of the eternal gospel is made available to us, under which those who die in the Lord shall not taste of death but shall have the opportunity of going on to a celestial and eternal glory.

In our own helplessness, He becomes our rescuer, saving us from damnation and bringing us to eternal life.

In times of despair, in seasons of loneliness and fear, He is there on the horizon to bring succor and comfort and assurance and faith. He is our King, our Savior, our Deliverer, our Lord and our God.

Those on the high, cold plains of Wyoming came to know Him in their extremity as perhaps few come to know Him. But to every troubled soul, every man or woman in need, to those everywhere who are pulling heavy burdens through the bitter storms of life, He has said:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

A mission of saving

Now, I am grateful that today none of our people are stranded on the Wyoming highlands. But I know that all about us there are many who are in need of help and who are deserving of

rescue. Our mission in life, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be a mission of saving. There are the homeless, the hungry, the destitute. Their condition is obvious. We have done much. We can do more to help those who live on the edge of survival.

We can reach out to strengthen those who wallow in the mire of pornography, gross immorality, and drugs. Many have become so addicted that they have lost power to control their own destinies. They are miserable and broken. They can be salvaged and saved.

There are wives who are abandoned and children who weep in homes where there is abuse. There are fathers who can be rescued from evil and corrosive practices that destroy and bring only heartbreak.

It is not with those on the high plains of Wyoming that we need be concerned today. It is with many immediately around us—in our families, in our wards and stakes, in our neighborhoods and communities.

Put aside our selfishness

"And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18).

If we are to build that Zion of which the prophets have spoken and of which the Lord has given mighty promise, we must set aside our consuming selfishness. We must rise above our love for comfort and ease, and in the very process of effort and struggle, even in our extremity, we shall become better acquainted with our God.

Let us never forget that we have a marvelous heritage received from great and courageous people who endured unimaginable suffering and demonstrated unbelievable courage for the cause they loved. You and I know

what we should do. God help us to do it when it needs to be done, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Behold, the Tabernacle of God" without announcement.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Behold, the Tabernacle of God."

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Tabernacle Choir's European tour

In June of this year, Sister Nelson and I had the great privilege of accompanying the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on its historic concert tour in Europe. We are grateful to the First Presidency for that assignment. Much has been written regarding the success of the choir and of its favorable influence that will yet continue. Members and friends of the Church worldwide join with me in expressing appreciation to the officers, staff, directors, accompanists, and all vocalists for their wonderful service. I won't mention anyone by name; I will simply refer to them all as members of the choir.

I'll not comment as a music critic would. While musical experts of the world focus on what choir members can do, I would like to focus on what choir members can be. This I do because I witnessed in choir members great examples that can inspire and improve the lives of each of you who honestly strives to emulate the Lord who said, "I am the light; I have set an example for you" (3 Nephi 18:16; see also John 13:15). So we should strive to learn from His example—and from the good example of those who love and follow Him.

Attributes of disciples

Members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir are not superhuman. They

are ordinary people with ordinary frailties. But therein lies the power of their example. They believe this promise from the Lord: "Because thou hast seen thy weakness, thou shalt be made strong" (D&C 135:5).

Before attending their first rehearsal, choir members brought with them not only musical education and talent but qualities of personal righteousness. Before singing to their first audience, they were blessed by another promise from our Savior:

"Ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls" (Alma 17:11).

Have you not learned that strength comes to an ordinary soul when given an extraordinary calling? The choir has! Indeed, each member seemed to be imbued with a real sense of mission, striving for those ten traits that missionaries are expected to possess and practice:

"Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence" (D&C 4:6).

Those are attributes the Lord deserves from His disciples. Because each of us is to be "an example of the believers" (1 Timothy 4:12), I would like to address those ten topics as members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir "were

our examples" (1 Corinthians 10:6) in many memorable ways.

Faith

Their great faith was strengthened by the faith of our leaders. I pay tribute to the First Presidency and to leaders of the choir who had the foresight to plan as they did and when they did. How bold and inspired they were to conceive this tour many months—even years—before Europe's unwelcoming walls began to crumble! The Brethren had the faith to believe that the choir could sing in cities such as Warsaw, Budapest, Prague, Leningrad, and Moscow long before such dreams seemed plausible. Then in January 1991, hopeful plans were seriously threatened when war erupted in the Persian Gulf. Even then, our leaders decided against canceling the tour. They knew of its potential for good and had faith that countless obstacles could be overcome. Often they prayed that the choir's tour might be successfully accomplished.

Those prayers were answered!

Think of the timing. In one thousand years of Russia's existence, its first popular national election ever to be held occurred in June 1991. Six days later, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir performed in Moscow! That very night after the strains of "Come, Come, Ye Saints" (see *Hymns*, no. 30) had resounded from the Bolshoi Theater, the vice president of the republic announced that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had been granted recognition in the Republic of Russia. On the eve of a supreme crisis that was yet ahead, Russian people heard songs of faith, courage, hope, and love.

That faith of our Church leaders filled the hearts of members, families, and friends of the choir as well. Real were the risks of separation of husbands and wives, of parents and chil-

dren. Hundreds of dependents were temporarily deprived of moms or dads for almost a month. Thanks be to all who cared for those families—in faith. If each of us could muster that same faith in the service we are called to render, we would also be blessed.

Virtue

Virtue radiated from the choir. Each member seemed to exemplify President Brigham Young's counsel:

"Learn the will of God, keep his commandments and do his will, and you will be a virtuous person" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 194).

They applied the word of God (see Alma 31:5) not only in song but in sermons of example. After one concert, I was greeted by an individual who expressed gratitude in an unusual way. He said, "I am thankful for the choir's message."

I asked, "What message did you receive?"

His answer: "The choir was trying to teach me a better way to live."

That comment seemed profound to me. What inspired him to feel such a force for good? Was it complicated classical music or the excellence of its rendition? I doubt it. I believe it was more likely communication by the Spirit, which allowed both the giver and receiver to be edified (see D&C 50:21–22). And very possibly, the spirit of the listener was moved most by melodies soft and simple, sung with sweet sincerity. When the choir sang "The Lord's Prayer," for example, audiences were hushed and attentive. They seemed to understand, without fully knowing either the language or the history of the song.

The virtue of choir members brought blessings to their own lives.

When the tour was completed and each was safely home, I thought of this promise from the Lord: "If thou art faithful and walk in the paths of virtue before me, I will preserve thy life" (D&C 25:2). That same promise applies to me and to you.

Knowledge

Knowledge is essential to competent service for any missionary. So it was with members of the choir in this tour to eight nations. To communicate more effectively, the choir sang in ten languages! In these times of changing political views, much study was also required to determine which songs should be sung and which should not be sung.

But their quest for knowledge did not begin or end with music. They eagerly studied the culture, history, and ways of the people they had come to serve. On a moment's notice, their knowledge of the gospel had to be retrieved when questioned by the media or interested individuals.

In these lands that have known so much of hardship and strife, choir members echoed the scriptural hope "that perhaps they might bring [others] to the knowledge of the Lord their God, . . . that they might also be brought to rejoice in the Lord their God, that they might become friendly to one another, and that there should be no more contentions in all the land" (Mosiah 28:2).

Members of the choir knew "that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness" (Alma 24:30), lives would never again be the same.

Just think of the good you can do if you accept a difficult challenge and pursue knowledge—then use it to bless others as did the choir!

Temperance

"To knowledge," the Apostle Peter wrote, add "temperance" (2 Peter 1:6). Temperance suggests sobriety and self-restraint in action. It reminds one of covenants made.

Members of the choir were always temperate and well-disciplined, not from without but from within. Completely obedient to the Word of Wisdom, they were blessed with health and strength. Keeping a schedule that left little time for leisure, their grueling pace allowed them to perform for audiences that otherwise might have been excluded.

Repeatedly, scriptures teach that we be "temperate in all things" (1 Corinthians 9:25; Alma 7:23; 38:10; D&C 12:8). Temperance can protect each of us from the aftermath of excess.

Patience

Patience is one of the most practiced attributes of choir members. Checking into a hotel with a group of five hundred travelers and more than a thousand pieces of luggage provided practice in patience nearly every day. One dear sister never did receive her baggage. Her patience flowered into ingenuity as she attempted to feel fresh with the same clothing day after day.

Patience is a divine attribute. The Book of Mormon invites us to "come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men" (Mosiah 4:6).

Although choir members are not perfect, each one seemed to epitomize scriptural counsel to "continue in patience until ye are perfected" (D&C 67:13). If they can do it, each of us can also develop that precious talent of patience.

Brotherly kindness

Brotherly kindness was a hallmark of this tour. Never did I hear a disparaging remark. Especially did I watch those heroic members of the choir with serious physical disabilities. Some have severe visual handicaps and can read music only with their fingers. Others walk solely with the aid of crutches or appliances. Their great courage was superbly matched by the courtesy of companions who gave much that all might triumph together. Indeed, they typified this scriptural analogy:

"The whole body fitly joined together . . . according to the effectual working . . . of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

Brotherly kindness overcomes the rudeness of selfish intent. Each of us can develop brotherly kindness at home, at school, at work, or at play.

Charity

The Book of Mormon defines charity as the pure love of Christ (see Moroni 7:47). It further teaches that the "Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love" (2 Nephi 26:30; see also Ether 12:34).

I saw choir members extend that love to countless souls. For those in need, members quietly contributed money, food, and goods. They shared freely of their precious time and talent without any thought of personal acclaim or recompense. Truly, "charity never faileth" any of us (1 Corinthians 13:8; Moroni 7:46).

Humility

The choir's humility seemed to increase throughout their journey. Though their mounting successes gave

them much to be proud of, members grew into this scriptural pattern:

"They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts" (Helaman 3:35).

Choir members became "subject one to another" (1 Peter 5:5) and imparted "the word of God, one with another" (Alma 1:20) as true disciples do. They were humble and teachable as submissive Saints should be (see Mosiah 3:19; D&C 105:12). Their examples of humility should ennoble our souls.

Diligence

Diligence was demonstrated by all members of the choir but extraordinarily so by one precious mother whom I shall never forget. Just five days after the choir had left America, I was asked to inform her that her beautiful thirty-seven-year-old daughter had died after a long illness. The leaders of this sorrowing mother offered means for her to return home from Europe. She declined the offer. She and her family had already anticipated this possibility. Their decision had been made. It was not to be interpreted as a pattern for anyone else to follow, but for her alone. Her children and grandchildren had pleaded that she remain on assignment. So she continued in all diligence, never missing a single concert! She nobly fulfilled this scriptural counsel: "Therefore be diligent . . . in whatsoever difficult circumstances [you] may be" (D&C 6:18).

Her example can bless each of you, just as it did her family and me.

Godliness

Godliness is an attribute that seems as difficult to define as it is to

attain. Scriptures refer to "the mystery of godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16; D&C 19:10). Because it is so special, I have chosen to speak of it last.

Simon Peter counseled us "to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:11-12).

"The power of godliness is manifest" in the ordinances of the priesthood (D&C 84:20). Godliness is not a product of perfection; it comes of concentration and consecration.

Godliness characterizes each of you who truly loves the Lord. You are constantly mindful of the Savior's atonement and rejoice in His unconditional love. Meanwhile you vanquish personal pride and vain ambition. You consider your accomplishments important only if they help establish His kingdom on earth.

Love so amazing, so divine

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir's songs helped to convey their uncommon spirit of godliness. From their hearts the choir sang one number which bore testimony of love so amazing, so divine. Tears moistened the faces of more than a few as they expressed personal feelings of conversion and commitment to godliness. This song which the choir will soon sing includes these verses penned by Isaac Watts:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God!
All the vain things that charm me
most,
I sacrifice them to his blood. . . .

Were the whole realm of nature
mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!
["Love So Amazing, So Divine"]

Such are lessons taught by those who "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). Unitedly members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir testify of the living Lord and of His Church restored in these latter days, as do I. May God bless us to lift our lives by their example I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Love So Amazing, So Divine" without announcement.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the choir singing "Love So Amazing, So Divine."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top," following which we shall hear from Elder Charles Didier of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang
"High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Charles Didier

Political and economic changes

During the last two years, we have seen many significant international political events followed by dramatic con-

sequences and changes for the world and also for the Church. We are also witnessing events that, perhaps not as visible but certainly as tangible, pro-

foundly affect the quality of individual lives and families, followed by even more far-reaching consequences and changes specifically in relation to God, churches, and religious behavior. These changes have caused a significant shift in traditional or religious values toward world practices, and this is well described in one verse of modern revelation: "They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world" (D&C 1:16).

If we fail to recognize the personal spiritual challenge of political and economic changes and constant new threats to the moral and spiritual stability of individuals and families, we will fail to recognize the needs and requirements to adapt to these new conditions by finding within ourselves a firm and true foundation that will determine a firm and true behavior.

A testimony is our foundation

What is the true foundation that should motivate us to act accordingly? Elder Heber C. Kimball once said: "Let me say to you, that many of you will see the time when you will have all the trouble, trial and persecution that you can stand, and plenty of opportunities to show that you are true to God and his work. This Church has before it many close places through which it will have to pass before the work of God is crowned with victory. . . .

" . . . The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. If you do not have it, how can you stand?" (quoted in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945], pp. 449-50).

What is meant by "the light within himself"? That is a testimony, the true

foundation that should determine true behavior.

President Harold B. Lee said, "The real strength of the Church is to be measured by the individual testimonies to be found in the total membership of the Church" (in Conference Report, Mexico and Central America Area General Conference 1972, p. 117). Based on this quote, we might also say that the real strength of an individual is to be found in his testimony and in living it.

If the measure of strength and the stability or true foundation of an individual and his subsequent conduct lies in a testimony and we do not fully recognize its importance, or do not understand what it really means, or cannot or will not bear it or share it with others, and if we cannot teach it or explain it to others, maybe we ought to explore the deep, spiritual meaning of it and the blessing of obtaining, maintaining, and sharing a personal, individual testimony.

A testimony is knowledge

Early in the scriptures, the sacredness of the word *testimony* is illustrated when Adam was told that "all things are created and made to bear record of me" (Moses 6:63). It was vital for Adam to have a knowledge of our Father and his Son, and that has not changed in our time and will never change. This applies as well to the principle of gaining a testimony and knowing what it is. It is knowing by the power of the Holy Ghost that God lives and is the same yesterday, today, and forever (see D&C 20:12) and that "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). A testimony is not only a witness that Jesus is the Christ, but also a statement or affirmation of the fact that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the

Son; a conviction that the Book of Mormon has a divine origin and is another testament of Jesus Christ; and a knowledge that the Church of Jesus Christ, with its gospel and holy priesthood, was in truth and fact restored.

Joseph Fielding Smith defined it this way: "A testimony of the gospel is a convincing knowledge given by revelation to the individual who humbly seeks the truth" (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., 5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957-66], 3:31).

Steps to obtain a testimony

What are the essential steps to obtain a testimony? First, to humbly seek the truth, to have a desire to know by exercising belief or faith. When we obtain any blessing from God, such as an answer to prayer or a convincing knowledge, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated (see D&C 130:21). Here, then, are the required standards of the law: ask in the name of Christ and exercise faith in him, have a sincere heart, humbly seek the truth, be receptive, discard preconceived religious concepts, and cleanse yourself from the sins of the world. You must adhere to the rules, tune in correctly to receive the proper signal, and, once in harmony with the Holy Ghost, you may know the truth of all things. This represents a spiritual gift available from God, not to be denied but to profit us. It is permanently available, never to be taken away except by our unbelief or unwillingness to humbly seek the truth.

The second step is to know by revelation, where Spirit speaks to spirit. It is one thing to be able to say, "I believe, I think, I hope that the gospel is true," but it requires personal revelation and personal acknowledgment and recognition to declare, "I know that the Church is true."

Alma gives us a perfect example of this convincing knowledge that he received by revelation. In four verses we learn about this light within himself. First, the assurance of his testimony: "Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true" (Alma 5:45). Second, the source of his testimony: "They are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God" (5:46). Third, the process of gaining his testimony: "I have fasted and prayed" (5:46). Fourth, the evidence of his testimony: "The Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me" (5:46). Fifth, the origin of his testimony: "The words which have been spoken by our fathers are true" (5:47). Sixth, the power of his testimony: "I say unto you, that I know of myself . . . that Jesus Christ shall come" (5:48). This convincing knowledge or testimony would not be complete without also accepting the responsibility of carrying such a testimony. And Alma further stated, "I am called . . . to preach . . . to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again" (5:49).

Keys of revelation

Let us now examine the keys of the spirit of revelation.

Key number 1 is to know for yourself. Do not be dependent on someone else.

Key number 2 is to know by the power of the Holy Ghost. Do not look at reason, logic, or the philosophies of men and theories of the world.

Key number 3 is to know by searching the scriptures and the revelations given and published in our day by the prophets—the First Presidency and the Twelve. Do not listen to apostate, unauthorized voices or speculation.

Key number 4 is to know by asking your Heavenly Father in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ. Do not turn to public discussions and forums. The purpose of having and using certain keys is always very simple: to open the right door with a particular key. The purpose of these spiritual keys is to open spiritual doors, one by one, to come to a plain testimony as described by the prophets. When children first start to read, they look at the letters and ask what they are. After a time they can recognize the letters by their names and put them together to form a word. And then a miracle happens. They can read a word, then a sentence, then a book. The steps of gaining a testimony follow the same pattern. We want to know; we begin with what we know; and when we know, we further enrich our knowledge by sharing and practicing what we know.

Testimonies can be lost

Once a testimony is in place, just like a fire that needs fuel and oxygen to burn, it needs to be fed and tended or it will burn out and die. A dying testimony corresponds, in fact, to a forthcoming denial of Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Nephi taught, "For the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not; for by denying him ye also deny the prophets and the law" (2 Nephi 25:28).

Unfortunately, there are those who gain testimonies and then deny them and lose them. How does this happen? If you follow the steps to obtain a testimony, you do exactly the opposite to deny it or lose it. Do not pray; the door to revelation will be closed. Do not be humble but listen to your own superior voice. Do not participate in the ordinances of the gospel but follow the practices of the world. Do not follow Church leaders but be critical of them. Do not listen to prophets and follow their counsel but interpret their

declarations according to your own desires. Do not obey the commandments but live according to your own appetites and desires.

These are only a few of the most evident problems leading to a loss of testimony. As ashes represent the evidence of a dying fire, the demise of a testimony is characterized by spiritual ashes, such as a lack of gospel appetite, charity, and purpose, as well as having feelings of apathy, bitterness, and emptiness. Spiritual ashes might be all that are left of what was once a burning, loving, meaningful, and uplifting testimony.

Bearing of testimonies

To maintain and strengthen a testimony, prophets have always reminded us to bear it and share it. Elder Spencer W. Kimball stated, "To hold his testimony one must bear it often and live worthy of it" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1944, p. 45). Make it known after you know, make its power evident after you know, and live accordingly after you know.

To have a testimony and to share it provides a firm foundation for us to stand on and a way to control our lives in this constantly changing world.

A precious possession

When Moses received the tables upon which the words of the covenant were written, they were called the tables of testimony and were to remain in the ark as a reminder of the covenant between the Lord and his children. Moses and his people had quite a convincing knowledge.

When Joseph Smith received his vision, he also knew. It was an indelible testimony. In his own words, "For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it" (Joseph Smith—History 1:25).

These testimonies were true foundations to be built upon and followed by obedience and good works. What about us? Are we any different when we have received a testimony of the covenant? Perhaps we now begin to perceive and understand the importance of a testimony and the strength that can be derived from it, with its mortal and eternal consequences. It is definitely a most precious possession, something to be desired now and forever because it determines our life here and eternal life hereafter.

President Benson, our living prophet, stated: "A testimony is one of the few possessions we may take with us when we leave this life. . . . A testimony of Jesus means that you accept the divine mission of Jesus Christ, embrace His gospel, and do His works; it means you accept the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith and his

successors" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, pp. 88-89; or *Ensign*, May 1982, p. 62).

A living prophet has spoken. It is now time for us to stand and be true to our testimonies. May I add my testimony to yours and bear my solemn witness, searched in all humility and acquired by the power of the Holy Ghost, that I know personally that God lives; that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer; that this Church is true and is led by a living prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. This I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Charles Didier of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Nephi's self-reliance

Lehi and his family, after wandering in the wilderness for eight years, came to a land they called Bountiful because it was a place of much fruit and wild honey. They came to a great sea, and they rejoiced unto the Lord because He had preserved them. After they had been in the land Bountiful for a space of many days, the Lord spoke to Nephi and said, "Arise, and get thee into the mountain" (1 Nephi 17:7).

Nephi obeyed the Lord; he went into the mountain and prayed. And the Lord commanded Nephi, "Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters" (1 Nephi 17:8).

Then Nephi asked the Lord, "Whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to

construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?" (1 Nephi 17:9).

The Lord instructed Nephi where he could find ore, but then Nephi was on his own. In 1 Nephi, chapter 17, we read:

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make a bellows wherewith to blow the fire, of the skins of beasts; and after I had made a bellows, that I might have wherewith to blow the fire, I did smite two stones together that I might make fire. . . .

"And it came to pass that I did make tools of the ore which I did molten out of the rock" (17:11, 16).

This is one of the more interesting stories we have in the scriptures because it tells of an instance in which the Lord provided help but then stepped aside to allow one of His sons

to exercise his own initiative. I have sometimes wondered what would have happened if Nephi had asked the Lord for tools instead of a place to find the ore to make the tools. I doubt the Lord would have honored Nephi's request. You see, the Lord knew that Nephi could make the tools, and it is seldom the Lord will do something for us that we can do for ourselves.

Importance of self-reliance

The Lord does help when we go to Him in times of need, especially when we are committed to His work and respond to His will. But the Lord only helps those who are willing to help themselves. He expects His children to be self-reliant to the degree they can be.

Brigham Young instructed the Saints, "Instead of searching after what the Lord is going to do for us, let us inquire what we can do for ourselves" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widdsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 293).

Independence and self-reliance are critical to our spiritual and temporal growth. Whenever we get into situations which threaten our self-reliance, we will find our freedoms threatened as well. If we increase our dependence on anything or anyone except the Lord, we will find an immediate decrease in our freedom to act. As President Heber J. Grant declared, "Nothing destroys the individuality of a man, a woman, or a child as much as the failure to be self-reliant" ("Address," *Relief Society Magazine*, Oct. 1937, p. 627).

Never before in my life has the doctrine of self-reliance been more needed to be preached and encouraged for the benefit of the Saints. We live in a time of rapid change. Governments are rising and falling. Industries

are blooming and then all too soon becoming obsolete. New discoveries in science are soon overshadowed by new findings. Unless we are continuously expanding our understanding and vision, we too will become out-of-date. Research tells us that individuals entering the labor market today will be forced to find three to five different career paths during their productive years.

What must we do to become more self-reliant?

A family tradition

My parents established a family tradition in our home which was fun for me in my early years and has become even more meaningful as I reflect back on it as the years have passed. On the first birthday of each child, the family would gather in the living room. In the center of the living room floor, our parents would place articles for the one-year-old child to select. The selection to be made might indicate an interest the child would pursue in life. The articles were the Bible, a child's bottle filled with milk, a toy, and a savings bank filled with coins. The child was placed on one side of the room and the family on the other side. Family members would encourage the child to crawl toward the objects and make a selection. This was all in fun, of course.

I was told that I selected the bank and went into finance as my profession. I watched my brother Ted select the scriptures, and he pursued law as his chosen profession. Over the years he has relied on the scriptures as a basis for his judgments. My youngest brother, Bob, was the well-rounded member of the family. He crawled over, sat down on the Bible, put the bottle of milk in his mouth, and then held the toy in one hand and the bank in the other.

Spiritual nourishment

Now I propose to you that in this entertaining family activity we can find the most fundamental principles of self-reliance. First, the scriptures represent our need for spiritual nourishment. In the scriptures, the Lord reveals His will to His children. From the very beginning of time, He has instructed His prophets to record His communications with them for the benefit of His children. The holy scriptures declare eternal values; they are the firm foundation on which we can build a successful mortal experience. We become more self-reliant when we study the holy scriptures, which teach the principles that provide a divine center to our lives here in mortality.

We should be comforted by the fact that we have the best text which has ever been written or ever will be written as our guide. We can turn to 2 Kings, the fifth chapter, and learn about obedience. We can study the life of Job and learn integrity. King Benjamin's address in Mosiah teaches industry. The life of Joseph, as told in Genesis 39, tells us what we should do when our standard of morality is being tested.

These are just a few examples of the lessons we could learn from the holy scriptures. They are lessons which have stood the test of time. Our challenge is to make them come alive in the hearts and minds of our families as we assume the responsibility to teach them.

Temporal self-reliance

Second, the bottle filled with milk symbolizes the physical body's need for nourishment. Our welfare services program has taught us by using the spokes of a wheel to define the essential elements of temporal self-reliance. The elements contained in the wheel are

education; physical health; employment; home storage; resource management; and social, emotional, and spiritual strength.

This summer my wife and I had the opportunity to visit an eighty-year-old man who certainly demonstrated each of these elements in his life. He was born in a small Idaho town and worked long hours on the farm to finance his education. He spent his professional life teaching English and Spanish in a small high school. To set aside funds for missions and the education of his large family, he grew strawberry and raspberry crops to be picked and sold to the local markets. This labor occupied his summers.

Because these fruits were so labor-intensive, few people had the ambition to grow them. They were much-wanted crops. The demand was always there for as many berries as he could produce. He was never satisfied with the productivity of his crops, so he studied new varieties in an attempt to find the best producers. His backyard was literally an experimental farm for testing the variety of bushes that produced the sweetest and most abundant fruit in his particular climate. His studies yielded increased productivity. The labor kept him in good physical health. The fields of berries furnished automatic employment for his children each summer. The berries delivered to the market could be exchanged not only for cash but also for commodities to be used in their home storage. He managed his resources to build a beautiful home and supply the needs of his family.

This man loved to watch the Lord's system of multiplying and replenishing the earth, which gave him social, emotional, and spiritual strength. Now retired from active teaching, he continues to grow his berries, not for profit but for satisfaction. Six mornings each week during the berry harvest

season, you will see him leading a parade of ten to twelve cars out of the city toward his berry patch. Families come to add to their home storage by picking the berries. I asked him the price per case if we supplied our own labor. He answered: "I don't know. My pay is seeing the look on people's faces as they leave the field holding the fruits of their labors in their arms."

I am convinced there are thousands of ways for families to build self-reliance by working together in productive pursuits. Perhaps a good family home evening discussion could produce some ideas to help make your family unit more temporally self-reliant.

Proper use of resources

Third, the toy I mentioned earlier represents the acquisition of things of the world. We are bombarded today with powerful media to acquire now and pay later in what are purported to be painless monthly installments. We live in an impatient world where everyone wants everything now. The acquisition of worldly goods seems to foster an appetite for more rather than any kind of lasting satisfaction.

Using our resources and worldly goods wisely and extending their life will help us become more self-reliant. I watched a young family move this summer, and I was intrigued by the labels on the boxes coming out of the storage room. They read, "Clothing—Girls—2 years old," "Clothing—Girls—3 years old," and so on up. Clearly, this family had a well-conceived plan to maximize the usage of purchased items of clothing.

We live in a world blessed with so much abundance. Let us be certain that the resources with which we are blessed are never wasted.

Financial well-being

Finally, the fourth item—the bank. It is a symbol of our financial well-being. I learned a great lesson early in my business career. My boss called me into his office. I could tell he had something on his mind. He said, "Give me a definition of interest." Of course, I reached back in my training and gave him a definition I had learned from a textbook. He said, "No, no, no, that's not the one I want. You listen and remember this one: Thems that understands it, earns it; and them that don't, pays it."

Now it doesn't take a genius to understand that before you can collect interest, you must first have some savings. Having savings while continuing to increase one's standard of living requires understanding of one simple practice and then religiously applying it. After paying your tithing of 10 percent to the Lord, you pay yourself a predetermined amount directly into savings. That leaves you a balance of your income to budget for taxes, food, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc. It is amazing to me that so many people work all of their lives for the grocer, the landlord, the power company, the automobile salesman, and the bank and yet think so little of their own efforts that they pay themselves nothing.

Be prudent, wise, and conservative in your investment programs. It is by consistently and regularly adding to your investments that you will build your emergency and retirement savings. This will add to your progress in becoming self-reliant.

The principle of self-reliance is spiritual as well as temporal. It is not a doomsday program; it is something to be practiced each and every day of our lives. May we continue to hold fast to the eternal truths of self-reliance is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Jesus, Savior" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Twelve, has just provided us a most

timely message, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Jesus, Savior."

Following my remarks the Tabernacle Choir will conclude this session by singing "How Gentle God's Commands." The benediction will be offered by Elder Clinton L. Cutler of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

Jesus loved children

From the book of Matthew we learn that after Jesus and His disciples descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, they paused at Galilee, then came to Capernaum. The disciples said unto Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:1-6).

I think it significant that Jesus loved these little ones who so recently had left the preexistence to come to earth. Children then and children now bless our lives, kindle our love, and prompt our good deeds.

Our sacred opportunity

Is it any wonder that the poet Wordsworth speaks thus of our birth: "Trailing clouds of glory do we come From God, who is our home" (William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood").

Most of these little ones come to parents who eagerly await their arrival, mothers and fathers who rejoice to be a part of that miracle we call birth. No sacrifice is too great, no pain too severe, no waiting too long.

No wonder we are shocked when a wire story originating from a city in America informs that "a newborn girl who was wrapped in a paper bag and dumped in a garbage can is under close observation at a hospital. The child is doing well. 'She's a real beautiful, healthy baby,' a hospital spokesman said Wednesday. Police said the infant was discovered after trash men emptied the garbage can into the back end of their dump truck and saw something move in the debris. Authorities are looking for the mother."

It is our solemn duty, our precious privilege, even our sacred opportunity to welcome to our homes and to our hearts the children who grace our lives.

Our children have three classrooms of learning which are quite distinct one from another. I speak of the

classroom at school, the classroom in church, and the classroom called home.

Classroom at school

The Church has always had a vital interest in public education and encourages its members to participate in parent-teacher activities and other events designed to improve the education of our youth.

There is no more important aspect of public education than the teacher who has the opportunity to love, to teach, and to inspire eager boys and girls and young men and young women. President David O. McKay said: "Teaching is the noblest profession in the world. Upon the proper education of youth depend the permanency and purity of home, the safety and perpetuity of the nation. The parent gives the child an opportunity to live; the teacher enables the child to live well" (*Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953], p. 436). I trust we shall recognize their importance and their vital mission by providing adequate facilities, the finest of books, and salaries which show our gratitude and our trust.

Each of us remembers with affection the teachers of our youth. I think it amusing that my elementary school music teacher was a Miss Sharp. She had the capacity to infuse within her pupils a love for music and taught us to identify musical instruments and their sounds. I well recall the influence of a Miss Ruth Crow who taught the subject of health. Though these were depression times, she ensured that each sixth-grade student had a dental health chart. She personally checked each pupil for dental health and made certain that through public or private resources, no child went without proper dental care. As Miss Burkhaus, who taught geography, rolled down the maps of the world and with her pointer

marked the capital cities of nations and the distinctive features of each country, language, and culture, little did I anticipate or dream that one day I would visit these lands and peoples.

Oh, the importance in the lives of our children of teachers who lift their spirits, sharpen their intellects, and motivate their very lives!

Classroom at church

The classroom at church adds a vital dimension to the education of every child and youth. In this setting each teacher can provide an upward reach to those who listen to her lessons and feel the influence of her testimony. In Primary, Sunday School, Young Women meetings and those of the Aaronic Priesthood, well-prepared teachers, called under the inspiration of the Lord, can touch each child, each youth, and prompt all to "seek . . . out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). A word of encouragement here and a spiritual thought there can affect a precious life and leave an indelible imprint upon an immortal soul.

Many years ago, at a Church magazines awards banquet, we sat with President and Sister Harold B. Lee. President Lee said to our teenage daughter Ann: "The Lord has blessed you with a beautiful face and body. Keep the inside just as beautiful as the outside, and you will be blessed with true happiness." This master teacher left with Ann an inspired guide to the celestial kingdom of our Heavenly Father.

The humble and inspired teacher in the church classroom can instill in her pupils a love for the scriptures. Why, the teacher can bring the Apostles of old and the Savior of the world not only into the classroom but also into the hearts, the minds, the souls of our children.

Classroom of the home

Perhaps most significant of all classrooms is the classroom of the home. It is in the home that we form our attitudes, our deeply held beliefs. It is in the home that hope is fostered or destroyed. Our homes are the laboratories of our lives. What we do there determines the course of our lives when we leave home. Dr. Stuart E. Rosenberg wrote in his book *The Road to Confidence*: "Despite all new inventions and modern designs, fads and fetishes, no one has yet invented, or will ever invent, a satisfying substitute for one's own family."

A happy home is but an earlier heaven. President George Albert Smith asked: "[Do] we want our homes to be happy[?] If we do, let them be the abiding place of prayer, thanksgiving and gratitude" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1944, p. 32).

Handicapped children

There are those situations where children come to mortality with a physical or mental handicap. Try as we will, it is not possible to know why or how such events occur. I salute those parents who without complaint take such a child into their arms and into their lives and provide that added measure of sacrifice and love to one of Heavenly Father's children.

This past summer at Aspen Grove Family Camp, I observed a mother patiently feeding a teenage daughter injured at birth and totally dependent upon Mother. Mother administered each spoonful of food, each swallow of water while holding steady the head and neck of her daughter. Silently I thought to myself, "For seventeen years, Mother has provided this service and all others to her daughter, never thinking of her own comfort, her own pleasure, her own food." May God

bless such mothers, such fathers, such children. And He will.

Powerful emotions

Parents everywhere realize that the most powerful combination of emotions in the world is not called out by any grand cosmic event, nor is it found in novels or history books, but merely by a parent gazing down upon a sleeping child.

When doing so, the truth of the words of Charles M. Dickinson come to mind:

They are idols of hearts and of households;
They are angels of God in disguise;
The sunlight still sleeps in their tresses,
His glory still gleams in their eyes;
These truants from home and from Heaven,
They have made me more manly and mild;
And I know now how Jesus could liken
The kingdom of God to a child.
["The Children"]

Tiny Tim

In our daily experiences with children, we discover they are most perceptive and often utter profound truths. Charles Dickens, the author of the classic *A Christmas Carol*, illustrated this fact when he described the humble Bob Cratchit family assembling for a rather meager but long-anticipated Christmas dinner. Bob, the father, was returning home with his frail son Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Tiny Tim "bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame." Bob's wife asked of him, "'And how did little Tim behave?' . . .

"'As good as gold,' said Bob, 'and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful,

sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see' " (*Christmas Carol and Cricket on the Hearth* [New York: Grosset and Dunlap, n.d.], pp. 50-51).

Charles Dickens himself said, "I love these little people, and it is not a slight thing when they who are so fresh from God love us."

Gifts from children

Children express their love in original and innovative ways. On my birthday a few weeks ago, a precious little girl presented me with her handwritten birthday card and enclosed in the envelope a tiny toy padlock which she liked and thought I would enjoy receiving as a gift.

"Of all the dear sights in the world, nothing is so beautiful as a child when it is giving something. Any small thing it gives. A child gives the world to you. It opens the world to you as if it were a book you'd never been able to read. But when a gift must be found, it is always some absurd little thing, pasted on crooked, . . . an angel looking like a clown. A child has so little that it can give, because it never knows it has given you everything" (Margaret Lee Runbeck, *Bits & Pieces*, 20 Sept. 1990).

Such was Jenny's gift to me.

Barry Bonnell and Ricky

Children seem to be endowed with abiding faith in their Heavenly Father and His capacity and desire to answer their sweet prayers. It has been my personal experience that when a child prays, God listens.

Let me share with you the experience of Barry Bonnell and Dale Mur-

phy, well-known professional baseball players formerly with the Atlanta Braves baseball club. Each is a convert to the Church, Dale Murphy having been baptized by Barry Bonnell.

"An experience occurred during the 1978 season that Barry described as 'life changing.' He was struggling terribly, batting about .200. Because of his poor performance, he was down on himself and felt miserable. He really didn't want to go when Dale Murphy asked him to come along to the hospital, but he went anyway. There he met Ricky Little, a stalwart [Atlanta] Braves' supporter, but a youngster afflicted with leukemia.

"It was readily apparent that Ricky was near death. Barry felt a deep desire to think of something comforting to say but nothing seemed adequate. Finally, he asked if there was anything they could do. The youngster hesitated, and then asked if they would each hit a home run for him during the next game. Barry said [later], 'That request wasn't such a hard thing for Dale, who in fact hit two homers that night, but I was struggling at the plate and hadn't hit a homer all year. Then I felt a warm feeling come over me and I told Ricky to count on it.' " That night, Barry hit his only home run of the season. (Jim Ison, *Mormons in the Major Leagues* [Cincinnati: Action Sports, 1991], p. 21). A child's prayer had been answered; a child's wish had been fulfilled.

Abuse of children

If only all children had loving parents, safe homes, and caring friends, what a wonderful world would be theirs. Unfortunately, all children are not so bounteously blessed. Some children witness their fathers savagely beating their mothers, while others are on the receiving end of such abuse. What cowardice, what depravity, what shame!

Local hospitals everywhere receive these little ones, bruised and battered, accompanied by bald-faced lies that the child “ran into the door” or “fell down the stairs.” Liars, bullies who abuse children, they will one day reap the whirlwind of their foul deeds. The quiet, the hurt, the offended child victim of abuse and at times incest must receive help.

A district judge, in a letter to me, declared: “Sexual abuse of children is one of the most depraved, destructive, and demoralizing crimes in civilized society. There is an alarming increase of reported physical, psychological, and sexual abuse of children. Our courts are becoming inundated with this repulsive behavior.”

The Church does not condone such heinous and vile conduct. Rather, we condemn in the harshest of terms such treatment of God’s precious children. Let the child be rescued, nurtured, loved, and healed. Let the offender be brought to justice, to accountability for his actions and receive professional treatment to curtail such wicked and devilish conduct. When you and I know of such conduct and fail to take action to eradicate it, we become part of the problem. We share part of the guilt. We experience part of the punishment.

Blessing of the Nephite children

I trust I have not spoken too harshly, but I love these little ones and know that the Lord loves them too. No more touching account of this love can be found than the experience of Jesus blessing the children as described in 3 Nephi. It tells of Jesus healing the sick, teaching the people, and praying to Heavenly Father for them. But then let me quote the precious words:

“[Jesus] took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

“And when he had done this he wept again;

“And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

“And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; . . . and the angels did minister unto them” (3 Nephi 17:21–24).

Modern-day miracle

You may ask, “Do such things occur even today?” Let me share with you the beautiful account of a grandmother and a grandfather now serving a mission and the manner in which their little grandson was blessed. The missionary grandfather wrote:

“My wife, Deanna, and I are now serving a mission in Jackson, Ohio. One of our big concerns as we accepted a mission call was our family. We would not be there when they had problems.

“Just before we went on our mission, our grandson R. J., who was two-and-a-half years old, had to have surgery to correct a crossed eye. His mother asked me to go with them because R. J. and I are real buddies. The operation went well, but R. J. did cry before and after the surgery because none of the family could go into the operating room, and he was afraid.

“About six months later, while we were still on our mission, R. J. needed the other eye corrected. His mother phoned and expressed her desire for me to be there to go with them for the second operation. Of course, distance and the mission prevented me from being with him. Deanna and I fasted and prayed for the Lord to comfort our grandson during his operation.

“We called shortly after the surgery was over and found that R. J. had

remembered the previous experience and did not want to leave his parents. But as soon as he entered the operating room, he quieted down. He lay down on the operating table, took off his glasses for them, and went through the operation with a calm spirit. We were very thankful; our prayers had been answered.

"A couple of days later, we called our daughter and asked about R. J. He was doing fine, and she related this incident to us: In the afternoon after the operation, R. J. awakened and told his mother that Grandpa was there during the operation. He said, 'Grandpa was there and made it all right.' You see, the Lord made the anesthesiologist appear to that little boy as though he were his grandpa, but his grandpa and grandma were on a mission 1,800 miles away."

Grandpa may not have been by your bedside, R. J., but you were in his prayers and in his thoughts. You were cradled in the hand of the Lord and blessed by the Father of us all.

My dear brothers and sisters, may the laughter of children gladden our hearts. May the faith of children soothe our souls. May the love of children prompt our deeds. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). May our Heavenly Father ever bless these sweet souls, these special friends of the Master, is my humble and earnest prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "How Gentle God's Commands."

Elder Clinton L. Cutler offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 6, 1991. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Donald Ripplinger conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks as the meeting began:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Ezra Taft Benson was with us this morning. We regret that he is not with us this afternoon. He is watching this session in his apartment.

Elders James E. Faust, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, and F. Melvin Hammond are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir will furnish the music for this session. They will be directed by Donald Ripplinger and accompanied by Richard Elliott. May I say that Brother Robert Cundick accompanied the choir this morning as

they rendered beautiful music for us. That is the last session of conference that Brother Cundick is likely to accompany. He is retiring after nearly twenty-seven years of very faithful and devoted service. He is a great organist, a tremendous professional, and, above all, a man who loves the Lord and the Lord's work, with a heart for rendering service wherever he can be of use. We wish Brother and Sister Cundick every good thing in the future.

The choir will begin this service by singing "With All the Power of Heart and Tongue," and the invocation will then be offered by Bishop Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir sang "With All the Power of Heart and Tongue."

Bishop Glenn L. Pace offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "All Glory, Laud, and Honor." Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "All Glory, Laud, and Honor."

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

Feeble knees means fearful

There is a phrase used four times in the standard works which has always intrigued me. It is the expression "feeble knees."

By definition, *feeble* means weak, not strong, without force, easily broken, frail.

When Frederick G. Williams was called to be a Counselor to Joseph Smith, he was given this charge: "Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

Coupled with the word *strengthen*, which is to make or become stronger, the phrase led me to contemplate the meaning of these words.

Early on, I assumed "feeble knees" meant weak or exhausted. However, the context of its use in Isaiah (see Isaiah 35:3-4) suggests that it may have a somewhat richer mean-

ing, something more like fearful. I actually favor this latter interpretation. Today we often hear such expressions as "weak in the knees" or "knocking knees" to denote fear.

In Doctrine and Covenants 81:5, the verse might be interpreted as the Lord's urging Frederick G. Williams to provide strength to the weak ("succor the weak"), to provide encouragement to those who are exhausted or discouraged ("lift up the hands which hang down"), and to give courage and strength to those with feeble knees and fearful hearts.

In March of 1832 when this section was revealed, Church members had reason to be fearful. In Hiram, Ohio, where the Prophet Joseph Smith was living, there was a rising tide of hostility against the Saints. Joseph and Sidney Rigdon were brutally attacked by a mob of fifty men.

Those who would destroy at the present time no longer use tar and feathers; they taunt and fault.

Strengthen feeble knees

Today, almost 160 years later, there is no doubt in my mind that the admonition to strengthen feeble knees is more apropos than ever.

Who among us has not experienced feeble knees or fear and uncertainty over the responsibilities we encounter in this mortal existence?

What of the father, for example, who works long hours to provide for his family only to find at the end of each month that his income only barely meets his expenses? Is he likely to experience the fear that an unforeseen expense might upset his family's delicately balanced, already strained budget? Does he ever fear that he might not be able to adequately provide for his family's necessities?

And what of the parents who find themselves rearing an unhappy and nonconforming child? Do they ever experience doubt and fear that they might not be providing the right counsel, discipline, and rules? Do they ever fear they might not be able to provide enough unconditional love to their child? Do they ever fear that the child may be lost eternally because of their parenting?

What of the single parent who is rearing children by himself or herself? Does that parent ever fear that he or she will be overwhelmed by the myriad responsibilities, particularly since these challenges must be met alone?

It would seem that no one escapes some uncertainty, insecurity, doubt, and even fear. This mortal existence is invariably challenging and unpredictable. An honest person who is acquainted with the characteristics of life cannot ever be completely confident that his circumstances will not change unexpectedly.

How do we deal with the inevitable moments of fear or feeble knees? It is vital that we not face them alone.

Always it is helpful and comforting to be able to confide in a loving and trusted friend or relative who empathetically listens to our uncertainties. We often find that our confidant has experienced similar fears, and we may even share in his wise counsel.

Life is never easy, and we cannot escape our own case of feeble knees from time to time. It is thus essential that we love and support one another.

As we look for ways to strengthen friends and loved ones who may have feeble knees, it would be well to examine ourselves. Do we have feeble knees, wherein by word and action we can weaken ourselves and our associates?

Let me share a few of today's subtle trends and enticements that can cause our knees to become feeble. None of these is going to cause apostasy by itself, but as the conduct continues, our knees may lose the strength we need to face the realities and fears of life.

Avoid personal interpretations

In Doctrine and Covenants 11:22, we read, "Study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men." Nowhere are we advised to dilute the doctrines of the gospel with personal amendments. Our view is limited, and our personal strength is dependent on understanding and following His word.

Some of us may be inclined to study the word with the idea in mind that we must add much where the Lord has said little! Those who would "add upon" could well be guided by the anchor question: Do my writings, comments, or observations build faith and strengthen testimonies? Oftentimes we can cause confusion and misdirection in our lives and in the lives of others if we promote the startling and unorthodox. Feeble knees are strengthened by

those who lead with purpose rather than with personal interpretations.

Observe the Sabbath

Some today are losing the reinforcement that comes from observing the Sabbath. They say: "Sunday is my day off. I will do as I please. I can worship without having the day structured for meeting attendance or meaningful family and neighbor relationships."

Sometimes the freedoms and blessings of the Sabbath can be lost by attitudes that allow selfishness and lack of personal involvement in tried-and-true patterns. Sabbath days can be lost an hour at a time. Sabbath days can be lost an outing at a time.

Avoid contention

Controversy and contention are other weakening habits. If Satan can succeed in creating in us the pastime of arguing, quarreling, and contention, it is easier for him to bind us with heavier sins which can destroy our eternal lives. Anger is a poor substitute for self-mastery and compassionate service.

Be honest

In recent days all of us have witnessed many who have weakened themselves even to the point of falling completely as they have sacrificed the leading principles of honesty and integrity in order to climb an artificial ladder of accomplishment. No lasting great personal heights are ever reached by those who step on others to try to push themselves upward.

It is not surprising to learn that people who tell white lies soon become color-blind.

Despite the endless examples of scandals in business, religion, and government, honesty and integrity are still the ingredients to strengthen knees.

Work hard

A coach of the East St. Louis, Illinois, High School took a group of young men and turned them into champions. A St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* sports editor wrote:

"This is a story Hollywood wouldn't believe: kids growing up in America's biggest urban disaster, slugging it out, year after year. No money, no fancy facilities, just a coach who still believes pride and hard work can mean something."

The coach told his players, "Life isn't always fair, but we can still expect excellence from ourselves."

He insisted on hard work from all of his players, the stars included. His team won more than many championships. (See Eugene H. Methrin, "The Stuff of Champions," *Reader's Digest*, Oct. 1991, p. 83.)

On our last trip to Great Britain, I had a chance to visit with an eighteen-year-old young man who has had close association with many missionaries in the field. As I was going to speak to a large number of missionaries in the next few days, I asked this friend what he thought was the most important trait missionaries needed in order to be successful. His answer was simple. "They must know how to work. Many come on a mission never knowing how to work." It has been my experience over the years that feeble knees are not a by-product of work and commitment to goals.

As this eighteen-year-old has observed, we can strengthen feeble knees of others and ourselves by going to work.

Many of us today have a tendency to seek instant strength, instant pleasure, instant acceptance, instant relief, instant answers, instant change, instant success, instant knowledge, instant wealth, omitting day-by-day effort and work. We become discouraged and get more feeble kneed if goals are not reached immediately. Work is a necessary pattern in the solid life.

Avoid criticizing others

Often we hear, "Be a light, not a judge." Yet we assume the right to point out flaws in others or dwell on our own weaknesses. Constant criticism can wear one down and weaken knees. As we look closely at family members, friends, and leaders, we will see their human limitations.

An old fable, and one of my favorites over the years, tells this story:

A Japanese scholar each evening talked with workmen from a factory. One night he told the men that he would bring them something of beauty on the morrow. One man asked the scholar to bring him a rose, another asked for a branch, and the third requested a lily. The next evening he handed out the rose, the branch, and the lily.

"There is a thorn on my rose," said the first man. The second complained, "There is a dead leaf on my branch." "There is a clump of dirt on my lily," cried the third.

The scholar took all his gifts back and said, "You had a beautiful rose and saw only the thorn; you had a lovely green branch and saw only the dead leaf; and on the glorious lily you saw only the clump of dirt."

In each of us there may be a thorn in our character, a dead leaf clinging to our reputation, or a bit of dirt in our past. If we dwell on past mistakes, we will certainly become weak kneed and fearful.

When we point out faults or mistakes others may have made, in no way will we strengthen their feeble knees or hold up hands that hang down.

William James wrote, "The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook" (*The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols. [New York: Dover Publications, 1950], 2:369).

Joseph Smith said, "I told them I was but a man, and they must not expect me to be perfect; if they expected perfection from me, I should expect

it from them; but if they would bear with my infirmities and the infirmities of the brethren, I would likewise bear with their infirmities" (*History of the Church*, 5:181).

How far we have come since the accepted adage for children was "spare the rod and spoil the child." Now both in business and in the home, we are encouraged to catch people doing something good and then give honest praise.

We strengthen and build by pointing out the good traits of a person and cause fear and weakness by being unduly critical.

I am in agreement that tact is rubbing out another's mistakes instead of rubbing them in.

A scripture says it this way:

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31-32).

God's work will go forward

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

With this kind of declaration from a prophet of God, whose knees need to remain feeble?

May God help us to strengthen the feeble knees of ourselves and those about us by daily improvement in our attitudes and examples, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve.

We shall now hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Twelve, and he will be followed by Sister Aileen H. Clyde, Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Joy and misery

One of the greatest of all God's revelations is Father Lehi's teaching that "men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25). Joy is more than happiness. Joy is the ultimate sensation of well-being. It comes from being complete and in harmony with our Creator and his eternal laws.

The opposite of joy is misery. Misery is more than unhappiness, sorrow, or suffering. Misery is the ultimate state of disharmony with God and his laws.

Joy and misery are eternal emotions whose ultimate extent we are not likely to experience in mortality. In this life we have some mortal simulations, which we call happiness or pleasure and unhappiness or pain. In the midst of these emotions is suffering. Some suffering comes from our own sins or those of others, but much suffering is simply an inevitable part of the mortal condition, like an accidental injury.

Experience of Joshua Dennis

An example of our two emotional extremes occurred two years ago. As part of an outing, a group of Latter-day Saint Boy Scouts entered an abandoned mine in the mountains not far from here. Somehow, young Joshua Dennis was separated from the group and became lost in the mine. Anyone who has ever lost something valuable will remember that terrible feeling. The pain is most extreme when we have lost a loved one. Joshua's family

and friends feared their loss might be permanent.

Search efforts were organized. For days, many good people dropped everything they were doing to search for the one who was lost. Many shared the pain of his loss. Then, miraculously, he was found. Prayers were answered, and the mercy of a loving Heavenly Father was manifest in the happiness of family and friends reunited with the one who was lost. The pain of loss turned to the overwhelming joy of reunion. (See "Hidden Treasure," *Ensign*, Aug. 1991, pp. 30-35.)

Few experiences illustrate mortal feelings of joy better than the recovery of something precious we fear we have lost. The scriptures illustrate this experience. In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd invited his friends to rejoice with him, for he had "found [his] sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6). "Likewise," Jesus explained, "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7). In another parable, a father rejoiced in the return of a prodigal son, explaining, "For this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32).

Misery comes from losses

These experiences are symbolic of our eternal journey. The Fall has separated us from our heavenly home. We must choose which way we will go. Satan, who was separated from God and permanently lost, would like to see our

separation become permanent also. Father Lehi taught that Satan's purpose is to make men miserable. "Because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, [Satan] sought also the misery of all mankind" (2 Nephi 2:18; see also 2:27). Those who yield to his enticings are on the way to the same miserable destiny as he. Shut out from the presence of God, they will be in "a state of misery and endless torment" (Mosiah 3:25; see also 2 Nephi 2:5). As the Lord said about the wicked, "misery shall be their doom" (Moses 7:37).

Much of the misery encouraged by Satan comes from losses. Satan experienced that kind of misery when he lost his first estate. Now he tries to inflict similar losses on those who have proceeded to mortality, the second estate. Satan encourages a loss of virtue, a loss of integrity, a loss of reputation, a loss of ideals, a loss of wholesome associations, and even a loss of life.

Joy comes from wholeness

In contrast, our Heavenly Father created us to resist and to overcome such losses, to be whole, to have joy. He wants us to return to him, and he has provided a way for that reunion to be achieved. No wonder we say that his gospel is "a voice of mercy from heaven; . . . a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy" (D&C 128:19).

Our Creator wants us to be happy in this life. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "happiness is the object and design of our existence" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 255). The things of the earth were created for our happiness. Modern revelation tells us that "all things which come of the earth . . . are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart" (D&C 59:18).

Even on the Sabbath, a day of worship, the Lord expects us to have "a glad heart and a cheerful countenance" (D&C 59:15). A prophet has called the gospel plan "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8).

How do we seek joy?

How do we seek happiness or joy? King Benjamin invited his people to consider "the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold," he said, "they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven . . . [to] dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41).

Father Lehi explained that if Adam and Eve had not gone through the process we call the Fall, they would have remained forever in their initial state of innocence, "having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin" (2 Nephi 2:23).

Our first parents recognized this principle. When the Holy Ghost fell upon them and bore record of the Father and the Son, Adam blessed the name of the Lord, declaring that "because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy" (Moses 5:10). With inspired insight, Eve explained the purpose of life and the source of joy:

"Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient" (Moses 5:11).

When I think of happiness or joy in this life, I begin with some experiences that are simple and basic. I see the expression on the face of a one-year-old taking those first steps. I remember a two-year-old immersed in a soft ice-cream cone. I think of a child loving a puppy or a kitten.

If the more mature have not dulled their physical or spiritual sensitivities by excess or disuse, they can also experience joy in what is simple and basic—in flowers and other growing things, in a sunrise or sunset or other beauties of nature, in wholesome companionship.

Another source of happiness and mortal joy is the accomplishment of worthy goals, simple things like physical exercise or more complex goals like the completion of an arduous task.

Other goals have eternal significance. Their completion produces joy in this life and the promise of eternal joy in the world to come. A few weeks ago Elder Rex D. Pinegar and I saw an example of this as we visited the beautifully renovated temple in Cardston, Alberta. In the brides' room stood a lovely young woman in her wedding dress. She was there because she had made righteous choices. The look in her eyes and the expression on her face were a perfect embodiment of joy.

Fulness of joy

But despite all we can do, we cannot have a fulness of joy in this world or through our own efforts (see D&C 101:36). Only in Christ can our joy be full. This is why the angel proclaimed: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day . . . a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10–11).

We are able to have a fulness of joy only when spirit and body are inseparably connected in the glorious resurrection to celestial glory (see D&C 93:33; 76:50–70). That joy, of course, comes only through the mercy of the Holy Messiah, whose resurrection broke the bands of death and whose atonement unlocks the reservoir of mercy by which we can be cleansed of our sins and come into the presence

of God to receive the fulness of the Father.

We joyously proclaim that "there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah" (2 Nephi 2:8). God's mercy is the only source of the ultimate and eternal joy, which restores every loss, dries every tear, and erases every pain. Eternal joy transcends all suffering. In this life and in the life to come, that joy comes about through the Resurrection and the remission of sins.

Remembering his early life, Alma told how his sins caused him to be "tormented with the pains of hell" (Alma 36:13). He said he was "racked, even with the pains of a damned soul" (Alma 36:16). At length he remembered his father's teachings about the Savior, who would atone for the sins of the world. He cried out, "O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me" (Alma 36:18).

The miracle of forgiveness was wrought in his life, and the bitter pain of sin was replaced by the sweet joy of redemption. In his words, "Oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!" (Alma 36:20).

Alma learned the eternal truth that the pain and misery that come from sin can only be erased by repentance. Physical pain ends with death. Spiritual pain, or misery, is everlasting, unless we repent.

The Book of Mormon tells of an entire people who received a remission of their sins and "were filled with joy" and "peace of conscience" (Mosiah 4:3). King Benjamin reminded them that they had "received a remission of [their] sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in [their] souls" (Mosiah 4:11).

The joy that follows the remission of sins comes from the Spirit of the

Lord (see Mosiah 4:3, 20). It is a fulfillment of the Lord's promise that "I will impart unto you of my Spirit, . . . which shall fill your soul with joy" (D&C 11:13). As the Apostle Paul taught, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Galatians 5:22). It comes in the same way to everyone—to rich and poor, to the prominent and the obscure. In conferring his greatest gift of mercy through the Atonement, God is not a respecter of persons.

Wickedness never was happiness

In contrast, those who yield to the enticing of Satan may, as the scripture says, "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25), but that kind of pleasure can never lead to lasting happiness or eternal joy. The spirit and influence of Satan bring feelings of confusion, contention, darkness, disorder, anger, hate, and misery.

Persons who pursue Satan's way are certain to have Satan's misery. Unless they repent they will "remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself" (2 Nephi 9:9). As Alma said to his wayward son, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Our personal experiences and almost every newscast and newspaper remind us of the unhappiness and pain suffered on this earth. Some of this is traceable to sin. Many letters sent to Church headquarters describe the pain people inflict upon one another, often within those family relationships that should be the source of life's greatest joy.

We have seen the pain of parents when their children stray from the path of truth. We have seen the pain that comes when a wife abandons her family and flies off to seek pleasure in forbidden paths, like a moth to a flame. We have seen the pain that comes in those more numerous instances when a husband abandons his wife and chil-

dren in his self-destructive search for pleasure.

Other unhappiness results from the lust for power and wealth. A few weeks ago some of my Brethren and I visited a country that had been ruled for decades by an oppressive dictatorship, recently overthrown. We saw the conditions produced by rulers who had gratified their lusts at the expense of their people. Their palaces stood in shameful contrast to the workers' apartment houses built without indoor plumbing. Everywhere we saw the ugly effects of the neglect of public services. Truly, the Proverbs say, "When the wicked . . . rule, the people mourn" (Proverbs 29:2).

The consequences of wickedness are far-reaching. They continue from generation to generation. The pitiful victims of physical and sexual and emotional abuse are more susceptible to Satan's manipulations. They are more likely to perpetuate these ugly transgressions within their own family relationships. Like highly contagious physical ailments, the spiritual diseases of lust and greed and corruption spread their evil effects, and Satan rejoices in the unhappiness and pain they cause in each succeeding generation.

Brothers and sisters, old and young, I plead with each of you to remember that wickedness never was happiness and that sin leads to misery. Young people, do not seek happiness in the glittering but shallow things of the world. We cannot achieve lasting happiness by pursuing the wrong things. Someone once said, "You can never get enough of what you don't need because what you don't need won't satisfy you."

Young and old, turn your eyes and your hearts away from the deceptive messages of the media. There is no happiness in alcohol or drugs, only enslavement. There is no happiness in violence, only pain and sorrow. There

is no happiness in sexual relations and physical familiarities outside the bonds of marriage, only degradation and increased momentum along the way to spiritual death.

There is no lasting happiness in what we possess. Happiness and joy come from what a person *is*, not from what he or she *possesses* or *appears to be*. Youth, hold fast to your standards. Study and use that saving pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*.

Righteousness fosters righteousness

Righteousness fosters righteousness. The effects of righteous examples are felt for generations to come. Good parenting produces youth who make good parents. Just as many of us have been strengthened by the noble examples of our pioneering ancestors in many lands, so the righteous choices and sacrifices of our day can bless our families and our friends and our nations for all the years to come.

We appreciate the work of our *Church News* and our Church maga-

zines, which share worthy and wholesome examples for the strengthening of all. We are saddened by the negative examples highlighted in the media and in many other public communications. Examples are powerful. We should use them to build up, not to tear down.

I testify to you of the lasting happiness and ultimate joy of those who exercise faith in God and keep his commandments. I urge each of you to seek the joy that comes from keeping the commandments of God and exerting a righteous influence for the benefit of those we love.

I testify to the truth of God's promise that the faithful "shall enter into the joy of [the] Lord, and shall inherit eternal life" (D&C 51:19). I testify of God the Eternal Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, the authors of the great plan of happiness and mercy. I pray that we may do those things that are required for happiness and peace in this life and for joy and eternal life in the world to come, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Aileen H. Clyde

What is charity?

One of the great blessings of my childhood was that my mother spent significant time reading to me and my younger brother Howard. She had a great sense of the importance of good books, and she used them to teach and entertain us. This all served to expand our limited young lives to matters far beyond our daily experience. The reading had begun when I was a runabout preschooler and Howard, who had been born with severe physical disabilities and could not run about, needed special attention. The blessing for me was that I got special attention too.

The books were wide-ranging and grew in sophistication as we grew. I re-

member nursery rhymes, poetry, folktales from Russia, the adventure in *Thunder Cave*—and the scriptures. Together we read parables, incidents such as the woman at the well, even the great abstractions.

One day Mother read:

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. . . .

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

"Charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7–8; see also Moroni 7:45–46).

Howard interrupted the reading, as he often did, with a question: "What

is charity?" He wanted to know the meaning of what we had just heard; I was still caught up in the way it sounded. I only wanted to go on with the reading, but I could tell Mother was pleased with his inquisitiveness. She taught us then and later that good questions can be important if we are truly searching to understand and that sometimes good answers that are good enough may take a lifetime of looking. Then she put down the New Testament and read from the Book of Mormon:

"But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him [or her]" (Moroni 7:47).

There it was in one verse—the concentrated essence of a much larger whole, a definition given for a profound yet available truth. What I heard that day was clearly beyond my childhood comprehension, but the spirit of love was there and was as real as any of the other details of my young life.

Who is my neighbor?

The scriptures give us examples of other questioners whose queries taught them new ways to think about love. In the twenty-second chapter of Matthew, Christ was asked by a Pharisee who wanted to trick him, what was the *greatest* commandment. Christ answered:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . .

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

In Luke's record, the lawyer who had asked the question wanted to know more. Perhaps he feared he might waste his love, so he asked, "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). And Christ gave the parable of the good Samaritan as an answer. The Samaritan saw what others with eyes had walked by without

seeing. He did what he *could* do that no one else *would* do, and he dignified himself and put us all in awe of him because we didn't expect the Samaritan to be our neighbor. (See Luke 10:30–37.) We wouldn't tempt Christ by asking him whom we should love or serve, but I think occasionally we wonder if we really know.

It is interesting to me that Jesus chose a Samaritan as an example of love unfeigned for the Pharisees. They were so remarkable for their observance of the letter of the law that this teaching must have caused at least some of them to see in new ways and with new spirit the freedom to love that Christ was offering them. That is the challenge for us—to allow Christ's teachings, magnified by the Holy Spirit, to guide us to *his* ways of seeing and being.

Understanding charity is not easy

Now, understanding charity or being charitable is not easy. And our scriptures have not indicated that it would be. Even "charity suffereth long" requires our thoughtful interpretation. The suffering that may come from loving is the result of our great caring. It comes because another matters to us so much.

To avoid that kind of suffering, we would have to avoid what gives us life and hope and joy—our capacity to love deeply. As an antidote against the suffering that will surely come as we have loved ones die, or see them struggle or be misled, or have them misunderstand us or even betray us, we can find relief in charity to others. We accepted bearing one another's burdens and mourning with those who mourn as we accepted Christ in our baptism (see Mosiah 18:8–9). His spirit and power will comfort us as we extend ourselves in help and love to those who need us.

If charity is not always quick to our understanding, it may occasionally be quick to our misunderstanding. It is not charity or kindness to endure any type of abuse or unrighteousness that may be inflicted on us by others. God's commandment that as we love him we must respect ourselves suggests we must not accept disrespect from others. It is not charity to let another repeatedly deny our divine nature and agency. It is not charity to bow down in despair and helplessness. That kind of suffering should be ended, and that is very difficult to do alone. There are priesthood leaders and other loving servants who will give aid and strength when they *know* of the need. We must be willing to let others help us.

Examples of charity

A striking feature of the effect of a deepened understanding of Christ's love is how such comprehension dignifies and lifts the individual to action. Julia Mavimbela, a Church member in Soweto, South Africa, tells how her conversion brought her from bitterness at her life's circumstances to faith and strength to help those around her and beyond her. She taught gardening to relieve hunger, and she organized women for peace to calm their strife-torn country.

In Thailand in the late 1970s, Sister Srilaxana worked as a translator of the scriptures five days a week and then traveled throughout her country at her own expense each weekend, visiting fledgling Relief Societies. These followers of Christ did what it was in their souls to do to serve God's children. They did what their individuality permitted, and their examples invite us to do the same.

Relief Society's mission

Charitable, compassionate service is the central mission of our Church's

Relief Society organization. We are now nearly three million members worldwide, and we rejoice in our great, diversified sisterhood. We know that our society, which marks its 150th anniversary next year, has accomplished much good. We have learned that we can do *many* things together that would be impossible if we worked alone. But our major focus as a society is to bless the individual woman as she grows in her knowledge of Christ's gospel and reflects her knowledge by the choices she makes to serve others in righteousness.

At last October's conference, Bishop Glenn L. Pace admonished all of us to look around us to do what we could as individuals to relieve pain or loneliness or injustice in our own communities. He promised that if we did a compassion would enter our hearts, and through the Holy Ghost sanctification could take place within our souls and we would become more like our Savior (see Conference Report, Oct. 1990, pp. 7-10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, pp. 8-10).

I pray in all humility that our faith in God may move us to such action and that we may thus know by the Holy Spirit the meaning of charity so that we can exercise it in our lives, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Sister Clyde of the Relief Society General Presidency. She was preceded by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve.

We shall now stand and sing together "O Ye Mountains High."

Elder Francis M. Gibbons, who was released yesterday after serving more than five years as a member of the Seventy, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "O Ye Mountains High."

Elder Francis M. Gibbons

As one door closes and another opens in my life, I am grateful, my brothers and sisters, to be with you here this afternoon in this historic building from whose pulpit all of the prophets of the restored Church save Joseph Smith only have spoken and borne testimony. I could ask for nothing better than to pray that the Spirit which actuated them will be with me as I speak briefly this afternoon.

Foundation of prayer

The foundations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are anchored in prayer. It was, for instance, the fervent prayer of Joseph Smith that opened the door to the restoration of the gospel. The foundational scripture in the first chapter of James which prompted Joseph to go to the grove to pray clearly defines the conditions under which God will respond to his children. There it is written that we must "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:6). The scripture then adds this postscript: "For let not that man"—that is, the man that wavers—"think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:7).

Beyond this seminal scripture, which contains the key to unlock the treasure house to God's knowledge and wisdom, there are others which further define the principle of prayer and its application in our lives. For example, it is written in Alma 34:27: "Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you." Thus, when we are not actually engaged in the formal act of prayer, we should al-

ways have a prayer in our heart, wherever we are or whatever we are doing.

Secret prayer

Another key scripture on prayer, which goes beyond admonition to the realm of command, is found in Doctrine and Covenants, section 19, which reads: "And again, I command thee that thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private" (19:28).

We may ask, "Why has God seen fit to make it a command that we pray both vocally and in secret?"

Obviously, secret prayer is necessary in many cases where it is awkward or infeasible to pray vocally. So, if we are in a social or a business setting and need comfort or direction, a resort to secret prayer is often our only alternative.

But a more significant reason for praying secretly is found in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 6, where it is written: "Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart" (6:16).

Other scriptures broaden this concept to include not only God, but those whom God inspires. So Zeezrom, the crafty lawyer who was taught by Alma and Amulek, became "convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy" (Alma 12:7).

It is clear then that Satan and his followers, who have been cast out of God's presence and are dead to His Spirit, are excluded from those who, by the spirit of prophecy and revelation, may know the thoughts and the intents of our hearts. So, in his wisdom and

mercy, God has provided a channel of communication between him and his children on earth that Satan, our common enemy, cannot invade. This is the channel of secret prayer. The significance of this to the Latter-day Saint is profound, for by this means we are able to communicate with our Heavenly Father in secrecy, confident that the adversary cannot intrude.

Several years ago, a young man who was in love with a beautiful girl sought my counsel. He was reluctant to marry her because her parents had fallen into apostasy. He said the girl's mother had told him she knew the Church was false. When he asked how she knew that, she said a voice once whispered to her to go into a nearby bookstore. She did so and there found a bitter anti-Mormon book from whose reading she concluded that the Church was false. Had this sister understood the gospel, she should have prayed in secret, relating her experience and asking God to reveal whether her conclusion was correct, in the manner prescribed in the ninth section of the Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 9:8-9).

David Whitmer reported that the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil" (quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:163). But while Satan can convey thoughts, he does not know whether these thoughts have taken root unless they are reflected either in words or in actions.

Be wise in word and action

All this suggests that we should be wise in what we say and do. We should also be wise in the way we guard precious things that are revealed to us through the Spirit. For example, when

President Heber J. Grant was a young man presiding in the Tooele Stake, Patriarch John Rowberry gave him a special blessing. Afterward, the patriarch said to President Grant, "I saw something that I dared not mention." President Grant later recorded it was made known to him at that moment that he would one day be the President of the Church. He never discussed this revelation with anyone, never recorded it, and revealed it only after it was an accomplished fact. (See Francis M. Gibbons, *Heber J. Grant: Man of Steel, Prophet of God* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], p. viii.) How wise he was, for had he revealed it to others, his enemy Satan would have known and with that knowledge could have created unimaginable difficulties for him.

Often, we talk too much. We say things that need not be said or should not be said, for in saying them, we may open a crevice which enables Lucifer to wedge his way into our lives. We learn from 2 Nephi that Satan "seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). Satan and his followers are persistent in their quest to drag us down to their level. They will use any device or artifice to accomplish their end. If they know, for example, of revelations such as the one given to President Grant or if they see from our words or actions evidence of animosity or hatred or discord among us, they may capitalize on them in ways which will be detrimental to us. Wisdom suggests, therefore, that we suppress words and actions which might enable Satan to harm us or whose tendency might be to create discord or enmity.

For many years, we knew and admired a couple who on the face of it seemed happy and well-adjusted. It came as a surprise when it was learned that their relationship was filled with

discord and bitterness caused by almost constant bickering and faultfinding between them. By this means, the couple had eroded away the bonds of love which originally bound them together and in the process had shattered each other's self-esteem and had opened the door for Satan to enter.

How much better it is to follow the admonitions of the Savior, to speak with kindness and love and to create in our homes havens from the turmoil of the world, which is constantly stirred up by the intrigue of our common enemy. And how much better it is to emphasize and to focus on positive

rather than negative things so as to build up and to protect each other and to minimize the opportunity for the intrusion of satanic influences in our lives, which I pray we may all do in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Francis M. Gibbons.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders H. Verlan Andersen and Gardner H. Russell, who also were released yesterday after completing more than five years as General Authorities.

Elder H. Verlan Andersen

Righteous Nephite society

This conference brings to an end one of the most rewarding and enjoyable experiences my sweet companion and I have ever shared together and for which I desire to express my most profound gratitude. Most of our time was spent among the wonderful people of Latin America, whom we came to love so deeply, and I desire to make reference to a miracle which occurred among their ancestors many years ago which seems to be one of the greatest events in the history of the world. It was the miracle Christ wrought in transforming their societies from much sin and suffering to total righteousness and happiness.

It will be remembered that for six hundred years prior to the advent of the Savior, the Nephite and Lamanite races had been almost constantly at war one with another. Although there were periods of peace and prosperity, upon becoming wealthy the people became proud and wicked, were punished, and the process would start again (see Helaman 12:1-4). These cycles of human folly were relatively short and seemed to occur every five or ten years.

However, when the Lord appeared, he established one unified society in which there was no sin, no crime, and no wars. These conditions continued to prevail in some areas for around three hundred years. The record describes the affairs of the people thus:

"And . . . there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

"And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God" (4 Nephi 1:15-16).

Importance of parental teaching

What would one not give to live in a society like that? As we know, the people eventually returned to their evil ways, and the Nephites became so proud and wicked they had to be destroyed. But how were those races able to live as a celestial society for so long? We might also ask, "How will it be possible during the Millennium for the people to remain righteous for almost a

thousand years?" The answer seems to be the same in both cases, and I believe that it consists in this: Parents teaching their children the gospel, and doing so especially during that early period of their lives when they cannot be tempted.

Evidence that this was so among the Nephites and Lamanites is found in a miracle the Lord performed with respect to their little children. He separated the children from their parents, taught them greater things than he had taught the multitude, and then the children taught these greater things to their fathers (see 3 Nephi 26:14-16). Does not this event help us to understand the miraculous change in that society?

Let us assume that the Lord, after having demonstrated the superior spiritual capabilities of children, instructed the parents to follow his example and that they did so. Would not the children, having been taught properly, have continued to live righteously after reaching maturity? And in the process of training them, would not the parents have become equally humble and righteous? How otherwise can we explain this astounding historical event?

With respect to the Millennium, the Lord has given this information regarding the parents who will live in that society:

"And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation" (D&C 45:58).

Obviously, the parents who will inherit the earth will be those who have learned to raise their children without sin unto salvation.

Teach children light and truth

Mormon, who wrote the account of the miracle among the Nephite and Lamanite children, wanted to give us

more details of the event, but the Lord forbade it, saying, "I will try the faith of my people" (3 Nephi 26:11). Does that miracle try our faith? It is not difficult to believe that Christ taught profound gospel truths to sinless children, whose spiritual powers as developed in the pre-earth life were equal to or superior to those of their parents. Our test of faith seems to be in believing our children of today are as able to understand spiritual truths as were the Nephite and Lamanite children of yore and in putting this belief into practice. Indeed, the Lord has commanded members of the Church of these latter days to do this very thing. Let us consider three revelations given in the early days of the Church which seem to bear this out.

In Doctrine and Covenants, section 29, the Lord states that "little children . . . cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me; . . . that great things may be required at the hand of their fathers" (29:46-48). What are these "great things" required of fathers during the time when their children cannot be tempted?

Doctrine and Covenants, section 68, suggests an answer. In that revelation the Lord specifically commands parents in Zion to teach their children to understand doctrine when eight years of age and states that if this is not done, "the sin be upon the heads of the parents" (68:25).

In another revelation given in May 1833, the Lord chastised each of the leading brethren of the Church for having failed to bring up their children in light and truth and otherwise set their homes in order (see D&C 93:41-50). Although no specific time period during which this should be done is mentioned, at the time the revelation was given all four of the brethren reprimanded were relatively young fathers with small children in their homes.

In this revelation the Lord points out that children in their infant state are innocent before God but that Satan takes away light and truth from them because of disobedience and the tradition of their fathers. To prevent this, he commands parents to bring up their children in light and truth. (See D&C 93:38–40.)

Although the Lord chastised the leading brethren, and indeed all parents in Zion, for parental delinquency, he indicated that repentance is possible. But he also said that if we did not repent, we would be removed out of our place. (See D&C 93:41–50.)

Not only do the scriptures instruct us on when teaching is best done (see D&C 68:25–32; Deuteronomy 8:5–9) but also on what should and should not be taught (see Moroni 7:14–19; 2 Nephi 9:28–29) and who should and should not do the teaching (see 2 Nephi 28:14, 31; Mosiah 23:14).

Essential part of God's plan

The early teaching of children by parents offers the solution to many problems which otherwise may afflict our lives. Is not this the ounce of prevention which will eliminate the need for many pounds of cure with respect to our youth? Is there a better way to create and promote marital harmony than for a husband and wife to fully cooperate in carrying out this their most important stewardship in time or eternity? What could bring greater satisfaction and meaning into the lives of grandparents or others than to establish the family tradition of training chil-

dren during their years of innocence? And finally, how can we more easily overcome pride than by teaching children, whose humility we must emulate in order to enter the kingdom of heaven? The proper teaching of children is truly one of the most essential parts of God's plan for our happiness.

When our Heavenly Father sends one of his spirit children into a home, it is as if he says to the parents: "John, Mary, here is my most priceless possession—the soul of a little child. As you can see, he is helpless and completely dependent upon you even for life itself. You are now given the privilege of molding his life as you think best. Please teach him that I am his Father and that Jesus is his Savior and that we want him and you to return and live with us when mortality is over. Remember that I am always available to guide you in rearing this child of ours if you will but seek my help. I hope you will do so often. Your Heavenly Father."

In a marvelous discourse given to the fathers in Israel, President Benson reminded us that our most important calling in time and eternity is that of husband and father (see *To the Fathers in Israel* [pamphlet, 1987]). I go now to spend my full time in the Andersen area of the Church, a calling from which I pray I shall never be released.

It is my prayer that each of us will recognize and fulfill well our sacred duty of bringing up children in light and truth that we may merit eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Gardner H. Russell

Elder Russell's mission call

The other day as I watched the videotape *Called to Serve*, my eyes moistened in instant tenderness as

each new missionary opened and read aloud with his family the official call to a full-time mission, signed by the President of the Church. I recalled my own mission call to Argentina. After sharing

the excitement of my call with my parents, I sought out my mentor, who was not a member of the Church, a former U.S. senator, to share the news of my call with him. He was not impressed and let me know in no uncertain terms that if I insisted on serving a mission, upon my return all the good jobs would be taken and I would never amount to anything. I was disappointed but realized that he saw my future only as the world perceives.

Years later I realized that my mission had prioritized my life toward family, service, and gospel principles. As an added bonus, I was far ahead of most of my former classmates in worldly achievements.

The call is an eternal miracle

Somehow I understood even then that the call to full-time service in the Church is an unchanging, eternal miracle. Later I learned it is unique, and the call drives the Lord's Church, ever vitalizing and strengthening it every minute of the day.

The call to missionary service rarely comes when it is convenient or easy to serve. I never tire of hearing the testimony of President Ezra Taft Benson of his prompt acceptance of the call to serve a full-time mission, by letter from the living prophet of that time. The return address of the letter was simply Box B, Salt Lake City.

Married men were called to serve full-time missions even into this century. On the wall of my parents' bedroom, there hung a framed, faded newspaper clipping with a photograph of my father in the high collar and bowler hat of his time. "Married two-and-a-half years and never said a word to each other" was the caption. He left for the Australia Mission shortly after his wedding and had no verbal communication with my mother until he returned.

Among early converts who served missions in their mature years, leaving their families to do so, was my Great-grandfather Snow, who received a mission call to England and served well.

Yes, the call is an eternal miracle, never changing.

Mission calls are rarely convenient

Joseph Smith, like Moses, Abraham, Jacob, and other prophets before him, was called by name by the Lord. He related, "One of them spake unto me, *calling me by name* and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17; italics added).

Shortly after he was called to restore the original Church, a small handful of priesthood holders, many of them heads of families, received calls to go into the mission field in the United States and the world to bring thousands unto Christ. From this effort came a solid and diversified base for the restored Church.

The Prophet did not ask any of those called if they wanted to serve or if it was convenient. Each received an official call as our Heavenly Father directed. They believed the call was from the Lord and that "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

Mission calls are rarely made at a convenient time. When my call came to full-time service as mission president to the nations of Uruguay and Paraguay, there were commitments of civic and business nature. All were overcome miraculously. The call was accepted. As a member of the Seventy, after more than five years I can still, as the hymn says, scarcely take it in (see "How Great Thou Art," *Hymns*, no. 86). There is the same feeling of awe and humility today in the call as there was the day we were called. Let me pay

a tribute to Sister Russell. She shares this awe with me and has always been valiant in her love of Jesus Christ.

Army of full-time missionaries

As a Church, we have been fairly obedient in accepting calls from our Heavenly Father, believing as we do that the call from him takes precedence over all others—witness the army of 45,000 full-time missionaries in several hundred missions worldwide.

Many young men and women decide at an early age to serve missions if called. Some follow family tradition. Others are recent converts who accept the call to serve full-time missions. They, in turn, set a pattern and tradition for future generations.

In many wards and stakes, the call is held to be so sacred that every young man and many young women accept the call to serve full-time missions. In others, the great majority of young men accept mission calls. These are true missionary wards and stakes. The only question their future missionaries ask is, “*When* shall I receive the call to serve a full-time mission?” and not *whether* I should or should not serve.

Anything your Father asks

In several Saturday evening sessions of stake conferences in the United States, Mexico, and Central America, I have asked this question: “Please indicate by the raised hand if you would do *anything* our Heavenly Father asks you to do, no matter what, if you *only knew* that the Lord himself were asking you to do it.” A forest of hands shot up.

If it is true, and it *is* true, that all faithful members of the Church will do whatever our Heavenly Father asks them to do, perhaps the calls should be even more bold and direct. I have noticed that bishops the world over some-

times ask this kind of question of future missionaries: “John, have you thought about a mission?” The young man might say to himself, “Is it possible for a young man in this Church not to think about a mission?”

Whether it be to a young man, young woman, or married couple, the next question by the bishop often is, “Would you like to serve a mission?” This may be all right, but remember, nobody asked any of the early missionaries of the Church whether they would like to serve or if it would be convenient.

I thrilled at recently observing a good bishop arrange an appointment with a future missionary, a faithful young man, and in the ensuing interview get to know him and share the Spirit with him. He then asked if the young man would be willing to do whatsoever the Lord asked, then stated words to this effect: “In prayer my counselors and I have gone to our Heavenly Father, and he has indicated to us that you are to serve a full-time mission. What do you say to your Heavenly Father?” The response was positive. Then the bishop talked to the future missionary about what to do with his new car, his girlfriend, his education—questions that must be resolved before he is called.

Embrace the miracle of the call

At present, less than half of our faithful young men from the United States and Canada serve missions; in the rest of the world one or two of ten are called. Once we as leaders and parents embrace the eternal miracle of the call in all its force and magnificence, untold thousands more will serve full-time missions.

Our Heavenly Father might not call us by name, but his called and ordained servants will call us to serve for

a period—by name and in *his* name and by *his* inspiration and revelation. May we all have a deeper insight into the divine nature and meaning of the call, this great eternal miracle, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have listened to Elders H. Verlan Andersen and Gardner H. Russell.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Asking the Lord for help

Life in today's world can be at times so complicated and the challenges so overwhelming as to be beyond our individual capacity to resolve them. We all need help from the Lord. Yet there are many individuals who don't know how to receive that help. They feel their urgent pleas for help have often gone unattended. How can that be when He Himself has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 4:7)?

Such difficulty results either from not following His spiritual law for providing help or from not recognizing help when it comes. Well did James observe, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (James 4:3).

True, the Lord has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive" (D&C 4:7). But He also declared, "Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me" (D&C 9:7).

It is evident that He intends that we do our part. But what specifically are we to do? No one would expect to receive a result from physical law without obeying it. Spiritual law is the same. As much as we want help, we must expect to follow the spiritual law that controls that help. Spiritual law is not mysterious. It is something that we can understand. The scriptures define it in significant detail. I will cite key

scriptures that teach how to ask for help, then summarize the spiritual law they clarify.

Scriptural teachings

The Savior declared, "I, the Lord, am bound *when ye do what I say*; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10; italics added).

John taught, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments*, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22; italics added).

Nephi counseled, "Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will *not harden your hearts*, and *ask me in faith*, believing that ye shall receive, *with diligence in keeping my commandments*, surely these things shall be made known unto you" (1 Nephi 15:11; italics added).

The Lord has the power to bless us at any time. Yet we see that to count on His help, we must consistently obey His commandments.

Enos recorded, "I cried unto him continually, for he had said unto me: Whatsoever thing ye shall *ask in faith*, believing that ye shall receive *in the name of Christ*, ye shall receive it" (Enos 1:15; italics added).

Mormon wrote, "Behold, I say unto you that *whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing*, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him; and *this promise is*

unto all, even unto the ends of the earth" (Mormon 9:21; italics added).

The Savior taught:

"Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore *ask in faith*. *Trifle not* with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not" (D&C 8:10; italics added).

"And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, *which is right*, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you" (3 Nephi 18:20; italics added).

"Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, *that is expedient for you*" (D&C 88:64; italics added).

"If ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done. But know this, *it shall be given you what you shall ask*" (D&C 50:29–30; italics added).

These teachings of Jesus Christ emphasize that it matters very much *what* we ask for and *how* we ask for it. I testify that when we seek His will and do it, we will obtain the greatest blessings in life.

Sincere gratitude is fundamental, for "in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21).

Now, to summarize, blessings come when we—

- Ask the Father in the name of Christ.
- Diligently keep His commandments.
- Ask with faith in Christ.
- Ask for that which is right.
- Harden not our hearts.
- Express gratitude.

Help through priesthood blessings

One way the Lord helps us is through priesthood blessings. When a worthy priesthood bearer is led to pronounce specific blessings, we can be

greatly comforted. Yet there is no guarantee of outcome without effort on our part. Appropriate use of priesthood authority opens a channel of help where the outcome is consistent with the will of the Lord. The blessing resolves those things which are beyond our own capacity to influence either personally or with the help of others. Yet we must do our part for the blessing to be realized. We must strive to be worthy and to exercise the requisite faith to do what we are able. Where it is intended that others help, we must use that help also. It is through the combination of our doing what is within our power to accomplish and the power of the Lord that the blessing is realized.

Once I was awakened by a call from an anxious mother. Her premature child was not expected to survive the night. She asked for a priesthood blessing. As I approached the suffering child, the mother stopped me, looked into my eyes, and asked, "Are you worthy to bless my child?" That was an appropriate question. One never feels completely worthy, but we must do our best to be so. There came a strong prompting to bless the child to recover. The worthy mother continued professional treatment and exercised her faith. The Lord responded with the additional blessing needed. And the child recovered.

A relative asked Elder Spencer W. Kimball for a blessing to combat a crippling disease. For some time Elder Kimball prepared himself spiritually; then, fasting, he was prompted to bless her to be healed. Some weeks later she returned, angry and complaining that she was "fed up" with waiting for the Lord to give the promised relief.

He responded: "Now I understand why you have not been blessed. You must be patient, do your part, and express gratitude for the smallest improvement noted."

She repented, followed scrupulously his counsel, and eventually was made well.

It is a sobering responsibility for those who bear the priesthood to act as agents of the Lord to help those in need. That trust requires faith, worthiness, and a sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit to communicate the will of the Lord. Also, it is a sobering responsibility for those who receive a blessing to exercise faith, to express gratitude for every degree of improvement observed, and to do all within their power to resolve the need.

Three years ago I met a young man who had been severely injured in an accident. The medical forecast was grim. If he survived, he could spend the rest of his life completely paralyzed. Recently I met him again. Through the priesthood, he had been blessed to gain the mobility needed to do all the Lord intended he do in life. He moved his electric cart near, shook my hand, sat upright, and broke into a broad grin. The room was charged with his invincible spirit. His faith—and incredibly hard, painful effort, sustained and magnified by the blessing of the Lord—has begun a miracle. With periodic help from loving friends, he is succeeding in a university and striving to progress to qualify to be a missionary. I know his continued effort will yield far greater improvement.

In striking contrast, consider another man. His first comment to me was, "Why doesn't the Lord give me a wife?" as though an eternal companion were a teddy bear to be acquired with no thought of her agency. As we spoke, it was obvious he was not doing the most fundamental things to qualify to find a wife. He admitted that maybe he should do something about his excessive weight, but that was hard. His clothes were slovenly and his body so neglected that it was difficult to stand near him. Clearly, he is not doing his part.

How the Lord's help comes

Help from the Lord generally comes in increments. He can immediately cure serious illnesses or disabilities or even allow the dead to be raised. But the general pattern is that improvement comes in sequential steps. That plan gives us an opportunity to discover what the Lord expects us to learn. It requires our patience to recognize His timetable. It provides growth from our efforts and trust in Him and the opportunity to express gratitude for the help given.

Often we have difficulty mastering lessons the Lord wants us to learn when things are going too well in our lives. When there is suffering or pain, we ask ourselves a lot of questions. Some of them ought to be: "What does the Lord want me to learn from this experience? What do I need to do? What do I need to change? Whom do I need to serve? Or what characteristic must I improve?" Pondering and prayer will help us understand what we are to learn from the challenges we are asked to overcome.

Not all our prayers will be answered as we wish. It is not always easy to know the will of the Lord, yet there are some things we can be certain of. He will never ask us to do anything that is not completely in harmony with His teachings. We cannot count on help if we are immoral or otherwise deliberately disobedient unless we sincerely repent. One who prays to know if another is to be the eternal companion while violating in any degree the law of chastity has little hope of receiving confirmation without repentance.

"For behold, the Lord hath said: I will not succor my people in the day of their transgression; but I will hedge up their ways that they prosper not; and their doings shall be as a stumbling block before them" (Mosiah 7:29).

"But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your

trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, . . . he will . . . deliver you out of bondage" (Mosiah 7:33).

The Lord's will is our best choice

Our earnest prayers are answered when they conform to the will of the Lord. Since we cannot perfectly understand His will, we must walk with faith. He is all-knowing, and His decisions are perfect. The fact that our finite capacity does not let us understand all of His dealings with man does not limit Him from blessing us. His will is our best choice in life, whether or not we fully understand it. When we act using our moral agency wisely, the Lord will act according to His will.

We see such a limited part of the eternal plan He has fashioned for each one of us. Trust Him, even when in eternal perspective it temporarily hurts very much. Have patience when you are asked to wait when you want immediate action. He may ask you to do things which are powerfully against your will. Exercise faith and say, "Let Thy will be done." Such experiences, honorably met, prepare you and condition you for yet greater blessings. As your Father, His purpose is your eternal happiness, your continuing development, your increasing capacity. His desire is to share with you all that He has. The path you are to walk through life may be very different from others. You may not always know why He does what He does, but you can know that He is perfectly just and perfectly merciful. He would have you suffer no consequence, no challenge, endure no burden that is superfluous to your good.

The Lord will help you

To gain unshakable faith in Jesus Christ is to flood your life with brilliant light. You are no longer alone to

struggle with challenges you know you cannot resolve or control yourself, for He said, "*If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me*" (Moroni 7:33; italics added).

If you are despondent, racked by transgression, are ill, alone, or desperately in need of comfort and support, I solemnly testify that the Lord will help you when you carefully obey the spiritual law upon which that help is predicated. He is your Father. You are His child. He loves you. He will never let you down. I know He will bless you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us. Customarily the President of the Church has spoken words of benediction at the close of the conference. President Benson is not with us this afternoon. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will speak in behalf of our beloved prophet.

Before hearing his remarks, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, Missionary Training Center mixed choir, and Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to provide service; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square. Much consecrated service goes into the preparation for and the presentation of the conference.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage given. We are grateful for

the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

Following President Monson's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing

"God Be with You Till We Meet Again," which we hope will represent the sentiments of each of us.

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy, and this conference will stand adjourned for six months. Thank you for your effort in participating with us.

President Thomas S. Monson

The prophet's love and counsel

Traditionally the President of the Church provides closing remarks at the conclusion of conference. How we would enjoy hearing from President Benson! We are grateful that now, in his ninety-third year, he is free from pain, able to move about, meet on occasion with the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, and be the recipient of your faith, your prayers, and your expressions of love for him. All of us were gratified that President Benson was able to attend a portion of the opening session on Saturday and on Sunday morning.

Since he is unable to address the conference prior to its adjournment, I have been asked to respond in his behalf. I seek the inspiration of the Lord as I convey to you the prophet's love and counsel.

This has been a glorious conference. The Brethren have been inspired in their utterances, the prayers offered have been spoken from the heart, and the music truly has been "the song of the righteous" and "a prayer unto [the Lord]" (D&C 25:12). Our sincere appreciation and gratitude go to each who has in any way made the conference most memorable.

We miss the association of Elder Derek A. Cuthbert, who was called to his heavenly home on April 7, 1991. We recall his testimony of truth concerning this work and marvel at all he

was able to accomplish, even with limitations of health. In our prayers we remember his dear wife, Muriel, and each member of his family.

The conference speakers have emphasized the troubles of our times and the necessity to make certain our lives are lived in conformity with the principles of the gospel, that all of us may merit the companionship of the Lord to guide us on our earthly journey and qualify through our obedience for the blessings He desires to bestow upon us.

Importance of the family

President Benson has frequently emphasized the importance of the family. He declared: "Remember, the family is one of God's greatest fortresses against the evils of our day. Help keep your family strong and close and worthy of our Father in Heaven's blessings. As you do, you will receive faith and strength which will bless your lives forever" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 56; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 43).

"[Our] homes . . . need also the blessings which come from daily communion with God. . . . The differences and irritations of the day melt away as families approach the throne of heaven together. Unity increases. The ties of love and affection are re-enforced and the peace of heaven enters" (. . . *So Shall Ye Reap* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1960], p. 107).

Love for children

President Benson has always emphasized the strength of youth and our responsibility to youth. He counseled: "One great thing the Lord requires of each of us is to provide a home where a happy, positive influence for good exists. In future years the costliness of home furnishings or the number of bathrooms will not matter much, but what will matter significantly is whether our children felt love and acceptance in the home. It will greatly matter whether there was happiness and laughter, or bickering and contention" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, p. 46; or *Ensign*, May 1981, p. 34).

How President Benson loves meeting and shaking hands with children and youth! He has traveled throughout the Church and has always taken great pleasure in singing to the children the song "A Mormon Boy."

President Benson receives many letters from children. Sometimes they are humorous, other times tender. When President Benson was hospitalized and the doctors provided a pacemaker to help regulate his heart, one little girl wrote in and said, "Dear President Benson, I know you will be all right because the Bible says, 'Blessed are the pacemakers.'"

He wept when I shared with him a letter I received from a child's father. The letter began: "This past April, my wife and I were watching the Sunday afternoon session of conference. Our three-year-old son, Christopher, was standing on a chair at the kitchen

counter playing with Play-Doh, listening to conference on the radio. As we entered the kitchen at the end of President Benson's comments to the children, Christopher reported excitedly, 'That man on the radio said that even when we make mistakes, our Heavenly Father still loves us.' That simple statement has left a lasting and meaningful impression on our young son. I can still ask him today what President Benson said and receive the same enthusiastic reply. It is a comfort to him to know that he has a kind and loving Father in Heaven."

The Lord bless you

This touching account is representative of the personal influence for good President Benson has ever been. He is gentle. He is kind. He is loving. He is your friend and my friend, and he knows the Lord, our Savior. I am certain I speak for him and for all the Brethren as this conference concludes:

"The Lord bless [you], and keep [you];

"The Lord make his face shine upon [you], and be gracious unto [you];

"The Lord lift up his countenance upon [you], and give [you] peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God Be with You Till We Meet Again."

Elder Kenneth Johnson offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, sang for the Saturday morning session of the conference.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Missionary

Training Center mixed choir, conducted by Douglas Brenchley. Richard Elliott was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir

and the Mormon Youth Chorus. Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude

music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by Robert Cundick, John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, and Richard Elliott, Tabernacle organists.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the conference

INDEX

A

Andersen, Elder H. Verlan	110
Righteous Nephite society; Importance of parental teaching; Teach children light and truth; Essential part of God's plan	
Ashton, Elder Marvin J.	97
Feeble knees means fearful; Strengthen feeble knees; Avoid personal interpretations; Observe the Sabbath; Avoid contention; Be honest; Work hard; Avoid criticizing others; God's work will go forward	
Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of Church	25
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2

B

Backman, Elder Robert L.	7
Christ—more than a king; A pattern for our lives; Miracles; Disciples of the living Christ; His atonement; His commission; Give yourself to Christ; I know that my Redeemer lives	
Ballard, Elder M. Russell	3
Contributions of the Smith family; Joseph Smith, Sr.; Lucy Mack Smith; Hyrum Smith; Lessons from Joseph and Hyrum	
Brewerton, Elder Ted E.	11
Physical light; Spiritual light; Jesus is the Light of the world; How do we receive light?; We cannot live on borrowed light; Conversion of the Stewart family	

C

Cannon, Elder George I.	14
Make each day a good day; Nourish faith and repent; Follow the Savior; Serve in the kingdom; Be happy with ourselves; Don't worry; Work diligently; Each day is a day of eternity; Expressions of gratitude	
Church Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of	25
Clyde, Sister Aileen H.	105
What is charity?; Who is my neighbor?; Understanding charity is not easy; Examples of charity; Relief Society's mission	

Conference Music, Summary of	120
-------------------------------------------	------------

D

Dávila, Elder Julio E.	30
-------------------------------------	-----------

Elder Dávila's conversion; Conversion is a process; Conversion is understanding truth

Didier, Elder Charles	83
------------------------------------	-----------

Political and economic changes; A testimony is our foundation; A testimony is knowledge; Steps to obtain a testimony; Keys of revelation; Testimonies can be lost; Bearing of testimonies; A precious possession

Doxey, Elder Graham W.	32
-------------------------------------	-----------

The voice is still small; Listening is a challenge today; Revitalize your weekly worship; Pray to know God's will; Immerse yourself in the scriptures; The Lord is speaking to you

F

Faust, Elder James E.	43
------------------------------------	-----------

Sundays as a young boy; Scriptural teachings about the Sabbath; Keeping the Sabbath day holy; Miracles related to the Sabbath; Why should we honor the Sabbath?; Choosing Sabbath activities

Fifth Session	96
----------------------------	-----------

First Day, Afternoon Session	24
-------------------------------------------	-----------

First Day, Morning Session	2
-----------------------------------------	----------

First Session	2
----------------------------	----------

Fourth Session	73
-----------------------------	-----------

G

General Authorities Present	1
------------------------------------------	----------

General Priesthood Session	48
-----------------------------------------	-----------

Gibbons, Elder Francis M.	108
----------------------------------------	------------

Foundation of prayer; Secret prayer; Be wise in word and action

H

- Haight, Elder David B.** 49
 Talk directed to the Aaronic Priesthood; Football game in 1923; Years of preparation; Committed young people; Personal foundation stones; Choose to do right; Good people believe in you; Don't let others set your standards; Govern yourselves by correct principles
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (first session)** 3
 President Benson is with us; Christ is the light
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (fourth session)** 74
 Call to help handcart companies; Story of Ellen Pucell Unthank; Rescue party arrives; We became acquainted with God; Our Redeemer's sacrifice; A mission of saving; Put aside our selfishness
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session)** 68
 Two anniversaries; Growth of the Church; Experience with sorrow; Unhappiness of women; Discipline a violent temper; Sacredness of marriage covenants; No enduring happiness without women; Beauty of happy marriage
- Hunter, President Howard W.** 22
 The gospel is for all people; The human race is one family; God gives truth to all men; An inclusive approach toward nonmembers; Ours is a perennial religion

K

- Kofford, Elder Cree-L** 35
 Trial to receive your inheritance; Judgment waits until life's end; Questions you will be asked; Life's facts can still be created

M

- Maxwell, Elder Neal A.** 39
 Importance of repentance; Recognition of wrong; Remorse; Confession; Forsaking of sinning; Restitution; Repentance is difficult; We all need repentance; Things that impede repentance; Blessings that follow repentance
- Monson, President Thomas S. (fifth session)** 119
 The prophet's love and counsel; Importance of the family; Love for children; The Lord bless you

Monson, President Thomas S. (fourth session)	91
Jesus loved children; Our sacred opportunity; Classroom at school; Classroom at church; Classroom of the home; Handicapped children; Powerful emotions; Tiny Tim; Gifts from children; Barry Bonnell and Ricky; Abuse of children; Blessing of the Nephite children; Modern-day miracle	
Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session)	62
Called to serve; Service to young men; Purposes of Church athletics; Value of Scouting; We can succeed in our callings; Promptings to serve; Example of Jiri Snederfler; Great shall be their reward	
Muren, Elder Joseph C.	37
Elder Muren's conversion; Receiving a testimony; Why the Church sends out missionaries; You can know for yourself	

Music, Summary of Conference	120
-------------------------------------------	------------

N

Nelson, Elder Russell M.	79
Tabernacle Choir's European tour; Attributes of disciples; Faith; Virtue; Knowledge; Temperance; Patience; Brotherly kindness; Charity; Humility; Diligence; Godliness; Love so amazing, so divine	
Neuenschwander, Elder Dennis B.	58
Receiving a mission call; You make your mission successful; Simplify your life; Be teachable; Be obedient; Stay with the scriptures; Respect the title you hold; Keep a proper perspective	

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	101
Joy and misery; Experience of Joshua Dennis; Misery comes from losses; Joy comes from wholeness; How do we seek joy?; Fulness of joy; Wickedness never was happiness; Righteousness fosters righteousness	

P

Packer, Elder Boyd K.	26
Spiritual communication comes as a feeling; Both the intellect and the spirit; Reverence and revelation; Reverence in Sunday meetings; Music in worship services; Increase in spiritual power	
Perry, Elder L. Tom	87
Nephi's self-reliance; Importance of self-reliance; A family tradition; Spiritual nourishment; Temporal self-reliance; Proper use of resources; Financial well-being	

Pinegar, Elder Rex D.	54
Does Christ come first in our lives?; Followers of Christ help a family; Everyday acts of Christian service; Following Christ requires sacrifice; What would Jesus have me do?; Moroni was a true Christian	

Priesthood Session, General	48
------------------------------------------	-----------

R

Rojas, Elder Jorge A.	60
Preparing for a bishop's interview; Covenants and ordinances; Living up to the agreement; The priesthood covenant and ordinance; A review	

Russell, Elder Gardner H.	112
Elder Russell's mission call; The call is an eternal miracle; Mission calls are rarely convenient; Army of full-time missionaries; Anything your Father asks; Embrace the miracle of the call	

S

Scott, Elder Richard G.	115
Asking the Lord for help; Scriptural teachings; Help through priest- hood blessings; How the Lord's help comes; The Lord's will is our best choice; The Lord will help you	

Second Day, Afternoon Session	96
--------------------------------------------	-----------

Second Day, Morning Session	73
------------------------------------------	-----------

Second Session	24
-----------------------------	-----------

Summary of Conference Music	120
------------------------------------------	------------

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	25
------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

T

Third Session	48
----------------------------	-----------

W

Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	17
Fruits of the gospel; The Godhead; Resurrection; Parenting; Word of Wisdom; Welfare principles; Missionary work; Chastity; Advice and promise	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-second
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 4 and 5, 1992

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-second
Annual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
April 4 and 5, 1992

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Copyright © 1992
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

All Rights Reserved
Printed in the United States of America

THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 162nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 4, 1992, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 4 and 5, 1992. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 4, 1992, at 6:00 P.M.

President Ezra Taft Benson presided at the Saturday morning and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries. For the first time, the Sunday morning session was carried by satellite transmission to locations in Huddersfield, England; Versailles, France; and Frankfurt, Germany.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

The First Presidency: Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

The Presidency of the Seventy: Dean L. Larsen, Marion D. Hanks, Robert L. Backman, James M. Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, and Carlos E. Asay

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Joe J. Christensen,¹ Jacob de Jager, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goasling, John H. Groberg, W. Eugene Hansen, Harold G. Hillam, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, Alexander B. Morrison, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, L. Aldin Porter, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Carlos H. Amado, Eduardo Ayala, Benjamin B. Banks, Albert Choules, Jr., Spencer J. Condie, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Clinton L. Cutler, Julio E. Dávila, Robert K. Dellenbach, Graham W. Doxey, Lloyd P. George, F. Melvin Hammond, Han In Sang, George R. Hill III, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Kenneth Johnson, Cree-L. Kofford, John R. Lasater, W. Mack Lawrence,

¹Elder Gene R. Cook was excused because of recent knee surgery.

Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, Douglas J. Martin, Helvécio Martins, Gerald E. Melchin, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Jorge A. Rojas, Glen L. Rudd, Robert E. Sackley, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Douglas H. Smith, Lynn A. Sorensen, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, Henry B. Eyring, and Glenn L. Pace

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included many general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 162nd Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 4, 1992, at 10:00 A.M. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "The Morning Breaks" without announcement. President Monson then made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 162nd annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall,

where Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, Dean L. Larsen, and Lynn A. Sorensen are seated on the stand.

We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except Elder Gene R. Cook, who is excused because of recent knee surgery. We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand.

We also extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sisters Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ, is providing the music for this session. The chorus opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee" and will now favor us with "Rock of Ages."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Rock of Ages."
Elder Loren C. Dunn offered the invocation.

President Thomas S. Monson

How our beloved prophet and President, Ezra Taft Benson, would enjoy standing at this pulpit to open a glorious conference of the Church. President Benson, we love you; we pray for you; we are anxious to follow your inspired direction.

This morning I pray for heavenly help as I respond to President Benson's assignment to speak in his behalf. I shall attempt to express his thoughts and counsel, largely in his own words.

Tribute to women

This year we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Relief Society. Women of the Church rejoice as they reflect on past achievements of their organization and, with foresight coupled with faith, meet today's challenges and plan for future accomplishments.

President Benson has singled out two members of the Relief Society for his personal tribute. He said: "I pay grateful tribute to two elect women who have influenced my life—my mother, and my own sweetheart and eternal companion. I thank God that they have used their womanly attributes of compassion and charity to bless my life and the lives of all their posterity."¹

Reminiscing of boyhood days, President Benson recalls:

"Mother was Relief Society president in the ward, a small but solid country ward. I remember how important Father considered her work in that assignment.

"Father gave to me, as the oldest [child], the responsibility of harnessing the horse and getting the buggy ready for Mother's . . . weekly Relief Society meetings. . . .

"At that time I was not tall enough to buckle the collar or put the bridle on the horse without getting on the fence or [standing on] a box.

"In addition, I was to take half a bushel of wheat from our granary and put it in the back of the buggy. In those days the Relief Society sisters were building up a storage of wheat against a time of need. . . .

"When Mother was called to visit the sick in the ward or to help mothers with new babies, it was always by horse and buggy. As the buggy rolled down the dirt road, the circling wheels left a track that stayed even after the buggy disappeared. Mother's influence has also stayed—in my life and in the countless lives she blessed through compassionate service and example."²

I find it interesting that Ezra Benson, the boy who helped his mother and the Relief Society gather and store wheat for a future day of hunger, was Ezra Benson the Apostle, who years later directed a massive distribution of wheat and other essentials to the famished of Europe following World War II.

Of his companion, Flora, President Benson has said: "I honor and acknowledge my precious wife. . . . Her loving devotion, inspiration, faith and loyal support have contributed to whatever success may be ours."³

Suggestions for guiding children

Thinking of the example of his own mother and that of his beloved and faithful wife, Flora, President Benson has offered ten specific suggestions for mothers as they guide their precious children:

1. Take time to always be at the crossroads in the lives of your children, whether they be six or sixteen.

2. Take time to be a real friend to your children.

3. Take time to read to your children. Remember what the poet wrote:

You may have tangible wealth untold;

Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.
Richer than I you can never be—
I had a mother who read to me.⁴

4. Take time to pray with your children.

5. Take time to have a meaningful weekly home evening. Make this one of your great family traditions.

6. Take time to be together at mealtimes as often as possible.

7. Take time daily to read the scriptures together as a family.

8. Take time to do things together as a family.

9. Take time to teach your children.

10. Take time to truly love your children. A mother's unqualified love approaches Christlike love.⁵

Though President Benson has addressed these suggestions primarily to mothers, I am confident he would expect those of us who are men and fathers bearing the holy priesthood to do our part, along with each son and daughter, to implement them and bring to fruition their divine objectives.

Each chair is filled

President Benson leaves us this counsel:

Brothers and sisters, "make it a family objective to all be together in the celestial kingdom. Strive to make your home a little bit of heaven on earth so that after this life is over, you may be able to say:

We are all here!

Father, mother, sister, brother,

All who hold each other dear.

Each chair is filled—

We're all at home. . . .

We're all—all here.⁶

God bless you, President Benson, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Elect Women of God," in *Woman* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979), p. 74.
2. "To the Elect Women," pp. 74–75.
3. "To the Elect Women," p. 75.
4. Strickland Gillilan, "The Reading Mother."
5. Ezra Taft Benson, *To the Mothers in Zion* (pamphlet, 1987), pp. 8–12; see also Ezra Taft Benson, *Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990), pp. 32–36.
6. "The Honored Place of Woman," *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, p. 107; poem quoted from *The Writings of Charles Sprague* (New York: Charles S. Francis, 1841), p. 73.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder James E. Faust

Healing spiritual sickness

I humbly come to this pulpit today to speak about a sure cure for heartache, disappointment, torment, anguish, and despair. The psalmist stated, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3). The healing is a divine miracle; the wounds are a common lot of all mankind. Shakespeare has said, "He

jests at scars that never felt a wound" (*Romeo and Juliet*, act 2, scene 2, line 1). It seems that no one escapes the troubles, challenges, and disappointments of this world.

In today's overloaded society, some of the healing agents that our parents enjoyed seem not to be at work in our lives. Fewer and fewer are able to relieve stress by working with their hands and by tilling the soil. The in-

creasing demands, the diversity of voices, the entreating sales pitches, the piercing noises, the entanglement of many personal relationships can rob our souls of the peace they need to function and survive. Our hurry to meet the relentless demands of the clock tears away at our inner peace. The pressures to compete and survive are great. Our appetite for personal possessions seems enormous. The increasing forces that destroy the individual and family bring great sadness and heartbreak.

One reason for the spiritual sickness of our society is that so many do not know or care about what is morally right and wrong. So many things are justified on the basis of expediency and the acquiring of money and goods. In recent times, those individuals and institutions that have had the courage to stand up and speak out against adultery, dishonesty, violence, gambling, and other forms of evil are often held up to ridicule. Many things are just plain and simply wrong, whether they are illegal or not. Those who persist in following after the evil things of the world cannot know the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

Someway, somehow, we must find the healing influence that brings solace to the soul. Where is this balm? Where is the compensating relief so desperately needed to help us survive in the world's pressures? The onsetting comfort in large measure can come through increased communion with the Spirit of God. This can bring spiritual healing.

Warren Johnson's healing

Spiritual healing is illustrated in the story of Warren M. Johnson, pioneer ferryman at Lee's Ferry, Arizona. As a young man, Warren Johnson came west seeking his fortune in gold

in the summer of 1866. He became very ill, and his companions left him under a tree in the yard of a family in Bountiful. One of the daughters found him and reported that there was a dead man out in the yard. Although he was a complete stranger, this kind family took him in and nursed him back to health. They taught him the gospel, and he was baptized. He eventually ended up as the ferryman at Lee's Ferry.

In 1891 the Warren Johnson family suffered a great tragedy. Within a period of a short time, they lost four children to diphtheria. All four were buried in a row next to each other. In a letter to President Wilford Woodruff, dated July 29, 1891, Warren told the story:

"Dear Brother . . .

"In May 1891 a family residing in Tuba City, came here from Richfield Utah, where they . . . spent the winter visiting friends. At Panguitch they buried a child, . . . without disinfecting the wagon or themselves, [and] not even stopping to wash the dead child's clothes, they came to our house, and remained overnight, mingling with my little children. . . .

"We knew nothing of the nature of the disease, but had faith in God, as we were here on a very hard mission, and had tried as hard as we knew how to obey the word of Wisdom, [to] attend to the other duties of our religion, such as paying [our] tithing, family prayers, etc. etc., that our children would be spared. But alas, in four and a half days [the oldest boy] choked to death in my arms. Two more were taken down with the disease and we fasted and prayed as much as we thought it wisdom as we had many duties to perform here. We fasted [for] twenty-four hours and once I fasted [for] forty hours, but [to] no avail for both my little girls died also. About a week after their death my fifteen year old daughter Melinda was [also] stricken down and we did all we

could for her but she [soon] followed the others. . . . Three of my dear girls and one boy [have] been taken from us, and the end is not yet. My oldest girl nineteen years old is now prostrate [from] the disease, and we are fasting and praying in her behalf today. . . . I would ask for your faith and prayers in our behalf however. What have we done that the Lord has left us, and what can we do to gain his favor again[?]

"Yours in the gospel

"Warren M. Johnson" (in P. T. Riely, "Warren Marshall Johnson, Forgotten Saint," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Winter 1971, p. 19; spelling modernized).

In a subsequent letter dated August 16, 1891, to his friend Warren Foote, Brother Johnson testified that he had found a spiritual peace:

"I can assure you, however, that it is the hardest trial of my life, but I set out for salvation and am determined that . . . through the help of Heavenly Father that I [would] hold fast to the iron rod no matter what troubles [came] upon me. I have not slackened in the performance of my duties, and hope and trust that I shall have the faith and prayers of my brethren, that I can live so as to receive the blessings you having authority . . . placed on my head" ("Autobiography of Warren Foote of Glendale, Kane County, Utah," vol. 2, 16 Aug. 1891; in LDS Church archives).

The gift of healing

The sixth article of faith states that, among other spiritual gifts, we believe in the gift of healing. To me, this gift extends to the healing of both the body and the spirit. The Spirit speaks peace to the soul. This spiritual solace comes by invoking spiritual gifts, which are claimed and manifested in many ways. They are rich, and full, and abundant in the Church today. They flow

from the proper and humble use of a testimony. They also come through the administering to the sick following an anointing with consecrated oil. Christ is the great Physician, who rose from the dead "with healing in his wings" (2 Nephi 25:13), while the Comforter is the agency of healing.

Healing through temple work

The Lord has provided many avenues by which we may receive this healing influence. I am grateful that the Lord has restored temple work to the earth. It is an important part of the work of salvation for both the living and the dead. Our temples provide a sanctuary where we may go to lay aside many of the anxieties of the world. Our temples are places of peace and tranquility. In these hallowed sanctuaries God "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3).

Healing through scripture study

The reading and the study of the scriptures can bring great comfort. Elder Marion G. Romney stated:

"I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase, mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to that counsel. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1960, pp. 112–13).

Healing through the Word of Wisdom

When I was young, the health benefits of the Word of Wisdom, including abstinence from tobacco, alcoholic drinks, tea, and coffee, were not as well established as they are today. However, the spiritual benefits have long been validated. The Word of Wisdom promises that those who remember to keep this counsel and walk in obedience to the commandments “shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones” (D&C 89:18).

Marrow has long been a symbol of vibrant, healthful living. But in a day of life-saving bone marrow transplants, the phrase “marrow to their bones” takes on an additional significance as a spiritual covenant. The promises for those who keep the Word of Wisdom continue. Those who observe this law “shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint. And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them” (D&C 89:19–21).

Healing through sacrament meetings

If we are to be spared, we do indeed need to be fortified against the many destroying agents at work in the world today.

However, for many of us, the spiritual healing takes place not in great arenas of the world but in our own sacrament meetings. It is comforting to worship with, partake of the sacrament with, and be taught in a spirit of humility by neighbors and close friends who love the Lord and try to keep his commandments. Our good bishop assigns the participants to treat a gospel subject or principle. Invariably they speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, open-

ing their hearts so that the audience can behold the jewels therein. The messages are given in humble witness and sweet counsel. We of the audience understand that which is taught by the Spirit of truth and verify the accompanying testimonies.

Our sacrament meetings should be worshipful and healing, restoring those who attend to spiritual soundness. Part of this healing process occurs as we worship through music and song. Singing our beautiful, worshipful hymns is food for our souls. We become of one heart and one mind when we sing praises to the Lord. Among other influences, worshiping in song has the effect of spiritually unifying the participants in an attitude of reverence.

Healing through testimonies

Spiritual healing also comes from bearing and hearing humble testimonies. A witness given in a spirit of contrition, thankfulness for divine providence, and submission to divine guidance is a powerful remedy to relieve the anguish and concerns of our hearts.

Healing through sustaining leaders

I doubt that sincere members of this Church can achieve complete spiritual healing without being in harmony with the foundation of the Church, which, the Apostle Paul stated, is “the apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:20). This may not be the popular thing to do based upon the long history of rejection by the world of the prophets and their messages. Nevertheless, they are the oracles of God on earth and those called to lead and direct the work in this day and time. It is also essential for us to be found sustaining our bishops and our stake presidents and other leaders.

Healing through forgetting of self

Recent information seems to confirm that the ultimate spiritual healing comes in the forgetting of self. A review of the accounts indicates that those who survived best in prison and hostage camps were those who were concerned for their fellow prisoners and were willing to give away their own food and substance to help sustain the others. Dr. Viktor Frankl stated:

"We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of . . . human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, [and] to choose one's own way [of life]" (*Man's Search for Meaning* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963], p. 104).

The Savior of the world said it very simply: "And whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:33).

Healing through prayer

Of all that we might do to find solace, prayer is perhaps the most comforting. We are instructed to pray to the Father in the name of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. The very act of praying to God is satisfying to the soul, even though God, in his wisdom, may not give what we ask for. President Harold B. Lee taught us that all of our prayers are answered, but sometimes the Lord says no. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the "best way to obtain truth and wisdom" is "to go to God in prayer" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 191). Prayer is most helpful in the healing process.

Wounds inflicted by others are healed by the "art of healing." President Joseph F. Smith stated, "But the healing of a wound is an art not acquired by practice alone, but by the loving tenderness that comes from universal good will and a sympathetic interest in the welfare and happiness of others" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 264).

Healing through repentance

There is hope for all to be healed through repentance and obedience. The Prophet Isaiah verified that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). The Prophet Joseph Smith stated: "There is never a time when the spirit is too old to approach God. All are [in] reach of pardoning mercy" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 191).

After our full repentance, the formula is wonderfully simple. Indeed, the Lord has given it to us in these words: "Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?" (3 Nephi 9:13). In so doing, we have his promise that "he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3).

Healing through turning to Christ

We find solace in Christ through the agency of the Comforter, and Christ extends this invitation to us: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The Apostle Peter speaks of "casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). As we do this, healing takes place, just as the Lord promised through the prophet Jeremiah when he said:

"I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make

them rejoice from their sorrow. . . . I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul" (Jeremiah 31:13, 25).

In the celestial glory, we are told, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Revelation 21:4). Then faith and hope will replace heartache, disappointment, torment, anguish, and despair, and the Lord will give us strength, as Alma says, that we "should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ" (Alma 31:38). Of this I have a testimony, and I so declare it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Marion D. Hanks

"Come unto me"

In the fourth chapter of the book of Alma is a line I cherish and would be worthy of: "The Spirit of the Lord did not fail him" (Alma 4:15).

Just a few yards from this beautiful Tabernacle, where since the 1860s the Saints have gathered for conference, is a visitors' center. In that visitors' center is visible through a wide, beautiful two-story window a Thorvaldsen *Christus*, carved after the pattern, a replica, of the original, which is in Copenhagen, Denmark, and is well known throughout the world as a classic representation of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the base of that statue are the words in Danish: *Kommer Til Mig, "Come unto Me."*

That invitation is the central mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We desire to accept and to help others to accept the scriptural invitation to "come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of

The chorus sang "My Heavenly Father Loves Me" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "My Heavenly Father Loves Me."

Elder Marion D. Hanks of the Presidency of the Seventy will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy.

his redemption" (Omni 1:26). We know that he is "the way, the truth, and the life: [and that] no [one] cometh unto the Father, but by [him]" (John 14:6).

My testimony is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Only Begotten in the flesh, the Good Shepherd, our Exemplar; that he is our Advocate with the Father, our Redeemer, and our Savior.

The Savior's example of service

With John of old, we testify that "the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14).

We rejoice in the wonderful welding in his life of principle and performance. The Savior taught precepts of spiritual perfection, and he *practiced* and *applied* them with perfection. He could with authority declare that he was the light and example the people should follow: "I have set an example for you. . . . I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do" (3 Nephi 18:16, 24).

What he *did*, as we read in a splendid verse in the book of Matthew, was to go "about all Galilee, teaching . . . and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of . . . disease" (Matthew 4:23). Matthew also recorded that, as he approached the final events of his earthly ministry, Jesus taught his followers the parable of the sheep and the goats, representing the judgment to come, in which he clearly identified those who will inherit "life eternal" and those who will "go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46). The key difference was that those who should inherit the kingdom with him had developed the habit of helping, had experienced the joy of giving and the satisfaction of serving. They had responded to the needs of the hungry, thirsty, homeless, the naked, the sick, and those in prison. Well known are his words, the words of comfort to them: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40), while to those who were condemned to "everlasting punishment" he made the sad pronouncement, "Inasmuch as ye did it *not* to one of the least of these, ye did it *not* to me" (Matthew 25:45; italics added).

Nothing would seem more clear than the high premium the Savior put upon selfless service to others as an indispensable element of Christian conduct and of salvation. Helping, giving, and sacrificing are, or should be, as natural as growing and breathing.

The Savior's two great missions

Only recently I came upon a significant statement made by President Clark at this pulpit fifty-five years ago concerning these matters:

"When the Savior came upon the earth he had two great missions; one was to work out the Messiahship, the

atonement for the fall, and the fulfillment of the law; the other was the work which he did among his brethren and sisters in the flesh by way of relieving their sufferings. . . . He left as a heritage to those who should come after him in his Church the carrying on of those two great things—work for the relief of the ill and the sufferings of humanity, and the teaching of the spiritual truths which should bring us back into the presence of our Heavenly Father" (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in Conference Report, Apr. 1937, p. 22).

First mission: the messiahship

His divine messiahship is the matter of first magnitude for us. It is the center of our considerations at this conference, of our religion, of our lives. The Book of Mormon declares plainly that "it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation" (Helaman 5:12).

Jesus plainly taught that we have an indispensable personal part in qualifying for the fulfillment of our high eternal possibilities. The Atonement, free gift that it is, requires that the gift be received in the way *he* prescribed, and he gave us the pattern. John writes that "Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan" (Mark 1:9). The sacred ordinance was confirmed by the Spirit, and the Father spoke from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). As he commenced his public ministry, "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). He said to Nicodemus the Pharisee, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5; see 3:1-9).

The scriptures plainly teach that there is more to Christ's gospel plan

than is frequently declared. Peter and the others understood these truths very well. After those at Pentecost had been touched in their hearts by the Spirit and by Peter's powerful testimony, they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

Peter's answer was plain and understandable: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

Second mission: serving others

President Clark in the statement earlier quoted referred to the vital second mission of Christ—that unselfish work "for the relief of the ills and the sufferings of humanity," which the Master plainly declared to be as important as the other elements of his message in our qualifying for eternal life. In the Sermon on the Mount and throughout his teachings he made it clear that he and our Father are concerned with *what kind of people we are!* The sermon concluded, you will remember, with the parable about a house built on a foundation of stone and another built on sand (see Matthew 7:24–27).

Jesus referred repeatedly to the old law by which they had been governed—and then fitted those teachings into the higher and holier context of the law of love he had come to invoke among God's children. He was not content with the old levels of concept and conduct. He wanted those who were the salt of the earth, the light of the world, to rise to nobler heights than the old law had required: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, . . . But I say unto you" (Matthew 5:21–22). He taught them that "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

Then came the direct question: "What do ye more than others?" (Matthew 5:47). His teachings explain the kind of people we are expected to be in our relationships not only with the Almighty but with our families and others and with ourselves.

Christ established the standard of our responsibility as he answered the contentious questioner who asked, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matthew 22:36). Jesus said that love of God with heart, soul, and mind is "the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:38), and love of neighbor the second like unto it. He added, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40).

The Apostle James called the second great commandment the "royal law" (James 2:8), and Paul told the Galatians that "all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:14).

The parable of the good Samaritan supplied the answer to the lawyer's next question, the one that followed "And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). The Samaritan alone of three passersby mentioned gave the help he did because that was the kind of man he was. He had acquired the habit of helpfulness through persistent experience in helping, noticing needs, and reaching out in response to them.

Church members' compassionate service

In the challenging times in which we live, remarkable evidence of man's humanity yet abounds. It is seen in help being offered in compassionate service in every ward and stake in the Church through our Relief Society ladies, Young Women's and children's groups, priesthood quorums, home and visiting teachers, Boy Scouts; in the

fact that every missionary across the earth, as part of his calling, is committed to regular community service—Christian service. It is seen in the great work of our young representatives in the refugee camps. The Church itself has responded to large-scale needs locally and nationally and internationally, and as Christian individuals and families we are striving to understand and carry out our heaven-mandated responsibilities to “walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another . . . according to . . . needs and . . . wants” (Mosiah 18:29).

Shortly before his death, Joseph Smith wrote these words: “[We are] to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever [we find] them” (*Times and Seasons*, 16 Mar. 1842, p. 732).

In recent days we have had the honor of having again in our home as a guest a noble, quiet man from Mali, West Africa, an elder in the Church, who has taught his people how to dig wells for themselves and how to use the water on gardens which miraculously produce fresh vegetables and grain that grow on land which heretofore has grudgingly yielded only meager crops of millet. Literacy and health programs have been introduced.

Chapel dedication in a leper colony

Many other special examples of the strength of Christ’s mission crowd the memory. I share just one or two. Some years ago I was privileged to dedicate a chapel built by the Church in the Kalaupapa leper colony on the island of Molokai in the Hawaiian Islands. The experience was tender and touching and unforgettable.

A musical number by the branch choir, comprising most of the members

of the branch, was a poignant highlight. They came forward haltingly from the congregation, many being helped by others to the front of the small, attractive building. They arranged themselves in choir grouping, some of them literally leaning for support against each other. The sight was one that will linger in memory. Many were blind and many halt and lame. They literally supported each other as they sang hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God.

There were a lot of tears at Kalaupapa that day.

“But teacher, the tomb was empty”

As Easter time approaches, let me share with you the tender story of an eleven-year-old boy named Philip, a Down’s syndrome child who was in a Sunday School class with eight other children.

Easter Sunday the teacher brought an empty plastic egg for each child. They were instructed to go out of the church building onto the grounds and put into the egg something that would remind them of the meaning of Easter.

All returned joyfully. As each egg was opened, there were exclamations of delight at a butterfly, a twig, a flower, a blade of grass. Then the last egg was opened. It was Philip’s, and it was empty!

Some of the children made fun of Philip. “But, teacher,” he said, “teacher, the tomb was empty.”

A newspaper article announcing Philip’s death a few months later noted that at the conclusion of the funeral eight children marched forward and put a large empty egg on the small casket. On it was a banner that said, “The tomb was empty.”

With John of old, we bear especial witness and testify that “the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14) and that a major

purpose of his sacred mission was to teach us how to love and serve one another.

I thank God for the Holy Savior, for the compassionate Christ, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi

Brothers and sisters, my wife and I learned so many faith-promoting missionary stories about Elders George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, and many other missionaries' wonderful spiritual experiences while we were serving in Hawaii (see George Q. Cannon, *My First Mission*, 2nd ed. [Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882]; and Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938]).

Joseph F. Smith's mission to Hawaii

I feel so strongly that I should share with you the missionary experiences of Elder Joseph F. Smith. He was sent by the Brethren as a missionary when he was fifteen years of age. At the age of five he had lost his father, and at fourteen he had lost his mother. The record shows that he labored in Maui and in Kohala on the Big Island. Then he was transferred to the island of Molokai as the presiding elder when he was sixteen years old. Every day he and his companion, Elder Thomas A. Dowell, visited the several small branches, proselyting, healing the sick, and casting out evil spirits. With the Saints they read the scriptures and the beautiful teachings of the Savior, and they retold the story of the Restoration. Many members were indifferent and had an apathetic attitude because of false reports about the Church and the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The two companions traveled from the east to the west on Molokai. Their food was scarce, and they traveled about thirty miles every day under the hot sun without water. One day

Elder Smith's companion almost didn't make it. That day they finally reached the home of Mr. and Mrs. Myers, a German family. This couple treated them kindly and lovingly and gave them food and lodging for several days. Not only that, but Mr. Myers furnished Elder Smith with a good riding horse so he could visit several branches. Elders Smith and Dowell were guided by the Spirit every day. They worked hard and brought converts, as well as bringing so many back into activity.

Sister Ma Manuhii's loving care

One day Elder Smith was taken desperately ill with a raging fever. He was given a priesthood blessing, but he remained ill. He almost passed away. His condition was very critical on many occasions. For the next three months, he was tenderly cared for by a native brother and his wife. This young couple did everything possible to save the young missionary's life and gave him the best they had through tender fatherly and motherly love, even fasting and praying for many days. This young missionary never forgot a kindness and never forsook a friend. He always treated and honored this wonderful Hawaiian lady, Ma Manuhii, as his own Hawaiian mother.

Many years later this boy again visited the Islands in the company of a member of the Presiding Bishopric, Bishop Charles W. Nibley, who later became a member of the First Presidency. As they landed in the harbor at Honolulu, many native Saints greeted them. They brought lots of leis and all kinds of beautiful native flowers. Both

of them were loaded with leis upon leis. The young man, who was now an old man, had more than anyone else. A great Hawaiian band was playing a welcome to them and even played Mormon music.

Then Bishop Nibley explained in his journal one touching little incident:

"It was a beautiful sight to see the deep-seated love, the even tearful affection, that these people had for him. In the midst of it all I noticed a poor, old blind woman tottering under the weight of about ninety years, being led in. She had a few choice bananas in her hand. It was her all—her offering. She was calling, 'Iosepa, Iosepa!' [means 'Joseph, Joseph!'] Instantly, when he saw her, he ran to her and clasped her in his arms, hugged her, and kissed her over and over again, patting her on the head saying, 'Mama, Mama, my dear old Mama!' And with tears streaming down his cheeks he turned to me and said, 'Charley, she nursed me when I was a boy, sick and without anyone to care for me. She took me in and was a mother to me!'"

Bishop Nibley continued:

"O, it was touching—it was pathetic. It was beautiful to see the great, noble soul in loving, tender remembrance of kindness extended to him, more than fifty years before; and the poor old soul who had brought her loving offering—a few bananas—it was all she had—to put into the hand of her loved Iosepa" (*Life of Joseph F. Smith*, pp. 185–86).

Brothers and sisters, this Iosepa was President Joseph F. Smith, sixth President of the Church. What can we learn from this story? Sister Ma Manuhii had no idea that this little sixteen-year-old boy would someday be President of the Church. She didn't expect anything from him. She helped him because she loved the Lord's missionary with the pure love of God (see Moroni 7:47). This Hawaiian couple honored, respected, loved, and took

care of the missionaries as the Lord's messengers because they had the pure love of God. That respect and reverence remained with her until she died.

Elder Smith was seasoned and matured by the Lord in the mission field, and his love, developed and cultivated by this beautiful Hawaiian mother, never left his heart. "With tears streaming down his cheeks . . . , 'Charley, she nursed me when I was a boy, sick and without anyone to care for me. She took me in and was a mother to me!'"

Love brings others into the fold

Brothers and sisters, this type of love, kindness, and thoughtfulness must—MUST—exist in our missionary and reactivation work. This "love of God" (1 Nephi 11:22, 25) is the spirit of missionary work and the spirit of reactivation. This "love of God" is the spirit of conversion. This "love of God" is the spirit of nurturing. "It is the most desirable above all things" (1 Nephi 11:22), and it is "the most joyous to the soul" (1 Nephi 11:23). Brothers and sisters, let's show our noble example like this beautiful Hawaiian mother, not only by feeding the missionaries, but by bringing this love as we take missionaries to part-member families, less-active members, or nonmembers within the framework of the home teaching and visiting teaching programs. These people will be touched by this love.

When Nephi saw the Savior, he exclaimed, "Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men" (1 Nephi 11:22). With this love, when you and I work with full-time missionaries, combining our efforts, we can bring many converts and reactivated members to the temple. Your example will teach the missionaries. When they return to their wards and stakes, they will emulate your example.

Missionaries, you must be so *clean, pure, and diligent*. Obey and observe all the mission rules “with exactness” (Alma 57:21). Like Joseph F. Smith, be *studious* in the scriptures (see 1 Nephi 11:25). Exercise your “*exceeding faith*”; do “*not doubt*” (Alma 57:26). Put your “*trust in God*” (Alma 57:27). Above all, you must cultivate the real missionary quality, “*charity . . . the pure love of Christ*” (Moroni 7:47).

I testify to you that as Moroni promised us, when we “*pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart*,” we “*may be filled with this love*, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:48; italics added). When we work together—missionaries, leaders, and members—the Lord will bless us as he did Nephi and Lehi, the sons of Helaman.

The scripture explains:

“There was exceedingly great prosperity in the church, insomuch that there were thousands who did join . . . and were baptized unto repentance.

“And . . . the work of the Lord did prosper unto the baptizing and uniting [to me, reactivating] to the church of God, many souls, yea, even tens of thousands. . . .

“ . . . The Lord is merciful unto *all who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name*.

“ . . . The gate of heaven [will be] open unto all, even to those who will believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God” (Helaman 3:24, 26–28; italics added).

Brothers and sisters, I humbly testify to you that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. He loves us. As we emulate his love, we can bring wonderful brothers and sisters back into this fold. This is his Church. President Benson is his prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elders Marion D. Hanks and Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “How Firm a Foundation,” following which we shall hear from Elder Alexander B. Morrison of the Seventy.

The chorus and congregation sang “How Firm a Foundation.”

Elder Alexander B. Morrison

Importance of spiritual nourishment

One of the abiding tragedies of Nephite society was its failure to maintain spiritual strength through constant spiritual nourishment. As strength waned, the effects of spiritual malnutrition were quick to be felt. In the book of Mosiah we read that during *one period of relative spiritual strength*, “there began to be much peace again in the land; . . . And the Lord did visit them and prosper them” (Mosiah 27:6–7).

Yet only a few years later the Church was full of wickedness. From Alma chapter 4 we read:

“And thus, in this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be great contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God.

“ . . . And the wickedness of the church was a great stumbling-block to those who did not belong to the church;

and thus the church began to fail in its progress" (Alma 4:9-10).

The lesson is clear: if we do not constantly receive the spiritual nourishment needed daily, we will soon—as individuals and societies—be in dire straits, bereft of God's protection, cut off from the healing influences of the Spirit. Just as one who is weakened by malnutrition soon may fall prey to infectious disease, so too will we, if spiritually weakened, be ready prey for the adversary and his legions of dupes and devils.

Jesus is the living water

What, then, is the source of the spiritual nourishment we need? Where can it be found? Jesus, as always, had the answer. To the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, He proclaimed, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

The woman, puzzled and unsure of the meaning of Jesus' words and not knowing His true identity, exclaimed, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things" (John 4:25).

Then said Jesus, in words of such calm assurance and power that they ring in our hearts two millennia later, "*I that speak unto thee am he*" (John 4:26; italics added).

Jesus, then, is the living water which we require for constant nourishment of our spirits.

Jesus is the bread of life

Jesus' position as the source of essential spiritual sustenance is further illustrated in His glorious sermon to the multitude at Capernaum, as described in the sixth chapter of John. "I am the bread of life," He said; "he that cometh to me shall never hunger;

and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

Jesus, then, is both the bread of life and the living water needed to nourish our spirits and to keep us spiritually strong.

Nourish through the scriptures

To faithful souls who labor in His service, in whatever calling, Jesus gives the blessing of acting as His undershepherds, charged with nourishing the sheep of His pasture and the lambs of His fold. How do wise undershepherds fulfill that sacred responsibility with honor and energy, striving always to be true and faithful to the trust reposed in them? The scriptures provide the guidelines within which faithful servants carry out sacred tasks.

Faithful undershepherds nourish with the good word of God, as occurred in the "Zion society" phase of Nephite history. Moroni wrote, "And after they had been received unto baptism, . . . they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God" (Moroni 6:4).

Faithful servants of the master use the scriptures to learn and teach the grand and glorious principles of salvation and exaltation. Wrote Paul to Timothy:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

"That the man of God may be perfect" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The gift of the scriptures, which testify of Christ, is free to all. "Whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked—and land

their souls . . . at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven" (Helaman 3:29–30).

Christ is at the center of the scriptures. Said He of them, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

Indeed, *all* truth, both spiritual and temporal, testifies of Him. When we learn to read the "signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows" properly (Mosiah 3:15), with the eyes of faith, we will realize that all of history, all of science, all of nature, all divinely revealed knowledge of any sort testifies of Him. He is the very personification of truth and light, of life and love, of beauty and goodness. All that He did was done out of love. In Nephi's words, "He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him" (2 Nephi 26:24).

Nourish through covenants

Faithful undershepherds nourish through commitment to sacred covenants which bind the children of God to their Father and His glorious Son. In a remarkable revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith on April 26, 1832, Jesus pointed out the supernal power of sacred and solemn agreements between man and God: "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10).

Wise undershepherds are never casual in their commitment to Christ and His cause and do all in their power to encourage others to honor sacred agreements solemnly made in the Lord's house.

Nourish one by one

Faithful servants nourish by focusing on the individual. God loves us one

by one. How eloquently the Savior taught that lesson in the masterful parable of the lost sheep found in Luke 15. The parable tells of a shepherd who was prepared to leave the main flock of sheep—the ninety and nine—and go out into the wilderness in search of the one straggler which was lost.

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

"And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:5–6).

Note the attention paid to the individual. It must have been at best a nuisance and most likely dangerous for the shepherd to leave the ninety and nine and go out into the wilderness to find the lost sheep. For one thing, wildernesses tend to be dangerous and lonely places where unwary travelers can get into a great deal of trouble. And what about the worries the shepherd must have had as he thought about the flock left behind without a shepherd's care to safeguard its members from predators, accidents, acts of nature, and so on? After all, anyone who knows anything about sheep understands just how prone they are to get into trouble spontaneously, without anyone having to help them. I learned as a farm boy many years ago that sheep and trouble go together! Come to think of it, so too do people and trouble often go together!

Whenever I think of the shepherd's loving and caring efforts on behalf of the one, I'm reminded of the Savior's deep and abiding love for each of us. Oh, how He rejoices when a lost soul is found by a faithful undershepherd and then is tenderly and lovingly brought home again! "The worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10).

Though even the best of us cannot love others as perfectly as Christ does, the sentiments expressed by Alma

come close. As he left the land of Zarahemla to head a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites, Alma expressed his love for them and his hope for their return to the fold of Christ in this way:

“O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ.

“Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee” (Alma 31:34–35).

Nourish through selfless service

True undershepherds help others partake of the bread of life and the living water through selfless service. They know that service solves the seeming paradox of the scriptures: one has to *lose* his or her life to *find* it. Service, wise undershepherds understand, is the golden key which unlocks the doors to celestial halls. For many, Christ is found through serving Him. With King Benjamin, inspired undershepherds proclaim, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17). Armed with that understanding, they are “willing to mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and . . . stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9).

Nourish through humility

Wise undershepherds, in helping others partake of the bread of life and the living water, seek neither acclaim nor accolade. The honors of men are of no consequence to them. They seek only “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with [their] God” (Micah 6:8). They become as little children, “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [them], even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19).

May we all love, care for, and serve each other that all may receive the bread of life and the living water and be perfected in Christ is my prayer in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang “God So Loved the World” without announcement.

President Monson

Elder Alexander B. Morrison of the Seventy has spoken to us, following which the Mormon Youth Chorus sang “God So Loved the World.”

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder David B. Haight

Temple service

In the first recorded revelation of this, the last dispensation, our Lord instructed Joseph Smith in what we regard as perhaps the greatest work of this dispensation: to seal the living

to their families and progenitors (see D&C 2).

Inscribed on brass plaques in the entry of the Canadian Alberta Temple are these significant words written by Orson F. Whitney, an Apostle of eighty years ago:

Hearts must be pure to come within
these walls,
Where spreads a feast unknown to
festive halls.
Freely partake, for freely God hath
given,
And taste the holy joys that tell of
heaven.
Here learn of Him who triumphed
o'er the grave,
And unto men the keys, the kingdom
gave;
Joined here by powers that past and
present bind
The living and the dead perfection
find.

These tender words remind those who enter the temple of significant truths about their service in the temple: that all who enter may do so feeling the love of our Heavenly Father.

Hearts must be pure

"Hearts must be pure." With this phrase Elder Whitney teaches the importance of effective preparation to attend the temple. We who would attend the temple must be living in a manner which helps us be worthy to enter and fully partake of the feast of which he spoke.

We examine our worthiness to enter the temple in our annual temple recommend interviews with priesthood leaders. Our signature, with theirs, on our temple recommend testifies of our worthiness to enter the temple. How important it is to be completely honest with our bishop. To be less than completely honest with him about our worthiness creates a breach of integrity which compounds the seriousness of concealed sins.

When we present our recommend to the attendant at the temple, we reaffirm our worthiness to enter the temple. If an unresolved problem exists since we received the recommend, it would be well to obey our Lord's teach-

ing expressed in His Sermon on the Mount:

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

"Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

Remember that the gifts we bring to His house are not the sacrifices our ancestors of old brought to their temples, but the pure hearts of which Brother Whitney speaks. We apply the Lord's direction by ensuring that our hearts are pure by examining our lives before we approach His house. Where there is an unresolved sin, we should take the necessary penitent action to clear it.

We should also examine our relationships with our brother, or sister, or wife, or husband, or child, or parent, or anyone else who might have "ought against us." We should repair and strengthen any damaged relationship, then come to the temple.

The truly humble and obedient take this preparation a step further. They clear their hearts of any feelings which may be out of harmony with the sacred environment and sacred experiences they will encounter in the temple. They will be mindful that feelings of anger, hostility, fear, frustration, haste, or any preoccupation with matters outside the temple will interfere with their ability to fully partake of the feast available within the temple—which is a feast of the Spirit. Those kinds of feelings are left outside the temple when we enter.

The endowment: power from on high

A temple is a place in which those whom He has chosen are endowed with power from on high—a power which enables us to use our gifts and capabilities with greater intelligence and increased effectiveness in order to bring

to pass our Heavenly Father's purposes in our own lives and the lives of those we love.

As he dedicated the cornerstone of the Salt Lake Temple on April 6, 1853, President Brigham Young made this observation about the endowment:

"Your *endowment* is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, . . . and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:31).

We receive the blessings of which President Young spoke when we are endowed. Our understanding of the significance of the endowment expands as we regularly participate in the holy ordinances in behalf of those deceased.

The Lord's way of learning

Some participate in the feast of which Orson F. Whitney spoke more fully than others. Those who receive most understand the teaching methods the Lord uses in the temple. They bring to the temple hearts and minds prepared to participate in the Lord's way of learning.

Others receive less and may be somewhat disappointed in their temple experience; perhaps they do not understand how the Lord teaches us in His house. Elder John A. Widtsoe said:

"We live in a world of symbols. No man or woman can come out of the temple endowed as he should be, unless he has seen, beyond the symbol, the mighty realities for which the symbols stand" ("Temple Worship," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, p. 62).

Understanding the endowment

If you may have been somewhat confused, unclear, or concerned about

your temple experience, I hope you will return again and again. When you return, come with an open, seeking, contrite heart, and allow the Spirit to teach you by revelation what the symbols can mean to you and the eternal realities which they represent. Elder Widtsoe thoughtfully provided some counsel about how you might do this. He spoke of the Prophet's first vision as a model of how revelation, in the temple and elsewhere, is received.

"How do men receive revelations?" he asked. "How did the Prophet Joseph Smith obtain his first revelation, his first vision? He desired something. In [a grove of trees], away from human confusion, he summoned all the strength of his nature; there he fought the demon of evil, and, at length, because of the strength of his desire and the great effort that he made, the Father and the Son descended out of the heavens and spoke eternal truth to him" ("Temple Worship," p. 63).

Elder Widtsoe observed that it was the strength of Joseph's desire and the great effort which enabled him to receive his vision of the Father and the Son. Desire and effort are likewise required if we would receive revelation to understand the ordinances of the endowment. He wrote:

"Revelation . . . is not imposed upon a person; it must be drawn to us by faith, seeking and working. . . . To the man or woman who goes through the temple, with open eyes, heeding the symbols and the covenants, and making a steady, continuous effort to understand the full meaning, God speaks his word, and revelations come. . . . The endowment which was given by revelation can best be understood by revelation; and to those who seek most vigorously, with pure hearts, will the revelation be greatest" ("Temple Worship," p. 63).

Revelation comes in response to our desire and seeking; then we feast on the "holy joys that tell of heaven."

President Benson has given us a promise about this. He said:

"Now, by virtue of the sacred priesthood in me vested, . . . I promise you that, with increased attendance in the temples of our God, you shall receive increased personal revelation to bless your life as you bless those who have died" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 108; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 85).

Blessings of temple service

Come to the temples worthily and regularly. Not only do you bless those who are deceased, but you may freely partake of the promised personal revelation that may bless your life with power, knowledge, light, beauty, and truth from on high, which will guide you and your posterity to eternal life. What person would not want these blessings, as expressed by the Prophet Joseph Smith at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. He said, "We ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them" (D&C 109:22).

When you return from the temple, share with your children and loved ones at home your feelings about what you experienced. Speak not of the sacred ordinances but of the love and power manifest by them.

Let your children see you behave—toward them and your eternal companion—in kindlier, more loving ways. Your consistently positive expressions about what you experience in the temple will create in your children a desire to receive those same blessings and provide them with strong motivation to resist the temptations which could disqualify them from temple blessings.

Through the exercise of the sealing power of the holy priesthood, generations are bound together in patriarchal chains from the newborn baby "as far back as the Lord shall reveal" (Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:372).

An eternal family

When sweethearts kneel at the temple altar and are joined by the power of the holy priesthood for time and all eternity, an eternal family is organized and is created. It is to exist throughout all eternity. It may become eternal in its attributes by the constant fidelity of a husband and wife to one another and by their faithfulness to their covenants with their Heavenly Father.

May I invite those of you who are sealed to a spouse, whether living or departed, to recall for a moment your memories of that day of days when you knelt together at the altar and were sealed as husband and wife for time and all eternity. Do you remember any of the words of the ceremony? Do you recall sacred feelings, a glimpse of eternal promises? Can you feel again the power that created a relationship which will transcend death? Can you recall the feeling of love of our Heavenly Father for you and your companion, which was manifest on that occasion?

If time and the realities of everyday life have eroded your recollections of what you felt and received when you were sealed, you should return to the temple and participate again as proxies for the departed in that same sealing ordinance. Take advantage of that opportunity. Do it together as husband and wife. In this manner you may deepen your understanding of the covenants you made and renew the promises you received on that day when you were sealed as eternal companions.

Faithfulness ensures full blessings

For some of you these words may reopen wounds you wish closed and buried. There may be a bitter tinge to the memories that those words invoke because that which once seemed so glorious and promising to you little resembles the reality you now experience. Your eternal marriage may have been destroyed by infidelity or apostasy, or perhaps it is being eroded by indifference, neglect, or inattention to covenants. You may have been a faithful spouse but are now involuntarily a lonely, struggling, single parent.

May your hearts be lifted by my testimony that your faithfulness to your endowment and sealing covenants assures you a fulness of the blessings promised. The infidelity, sin, or indifference of a spouse need not adversely affect *your* faithfulness to *your* covenants. I testify to you that the promised blessings are yours through your faithfulness to your covenants. I testify that no matter how long and difficult the road, you can, with the support of loving leaders and the constant love of our Savior, arrive at your eternal destination.

Become worthy of a temple recommend

Now a word to those who may not now qualify for a temple recommend. Work with your priesthood leaders and change your life in order to worthily enter the temple. Then attend regularly.

You will come to know our Lord there. As your relationship with Him grows and deepens, you will grow increasingly confident in His love, in His compassion for your difficulties, in His power to bear you up and bring you back into His presence. As you avail yourself of that divine assistance, you will come to know that there can

be no challenge, no difficulty, no obstacle in your life which you and He together cannot overcome. To that I testify!

Ordinances bear witness of Christ

Each of the ordinances of the Lord's house bears witness "of Him who triumphed o'er the grave"—of the reality of His atonement and His resurrection. We are taught of immortality and eternal life, which are realities for us through His atonement. We are blessed by covenants and ordinances to prepare us to eventually reenter His divine presence.

I close, as I began, with Elder Whitney's inspired verse:

Hearts must be pure to come within
these walls,
Where spreads a feast unknown to
festive halls.
Freely partake, for freely God hath
given,
And taste the holy joys that tell of
heaven.
Here learn of Him who triumphed
o'er the grave,
And unto men the keys, the kingdom
gave;
Joined here by powers that past and
present bind
The living and the dead perfection
find.

I pray that we will take full advantage of every opportunity to regularly come to our Lord's temple and there freely partake of the feast and blessings He provides, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve has just addressed us, followed by the Mormon

Youth Chorus singing “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.”

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

Bashing

When King David was pleading for mercy in the fifty-seventh Psalm, he cried, “My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword” (Psalm 57:4).

In the world today we are victims of many who use their tongues as sharp swords. The misuse of our tongues seems to add intrigue and destruction as the media and private persons indulge in this pastime. In the vernacular of the day, this destructive activity is called *bashing*. The dictionary reports that to bash is to strike with a heavy, crushing blow.

Such a popular behavior is indulged in by far too many who bash a neighbor, a family member, a public servant, a community, a country, a church. It is alarming also how often we find children bashing parents and parents bashing children.

“Nay, speak no ill”

We as members of the Church need to be reminded that the words “Nay, speak no ill” are more than a phrase in a musical context but a recommended way of life (see *Hymns*, no. 233). We need to be reminded more than ever before that “if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13). If we follow that admonition, there is no time for the dastardly hobby of bashing instead of building.

Some think the only way to get even, to get attention or advantage, or to win is to bash people. This kind of behavior is never appropriate. Often-times character and reputation and almost always self-esteem are destroyed under the hammer of this vicious practice.

How far adrift we have allowed ourselves to go from the simple teaching “If you can’t say something good about someone or something, don’t say anything” to where we now too often find ourselves involved in the bash business.

Even though reports and rumors pertaining to misconduct and misbehavior are readily available and can make good ammunition for those who would injure, bash, or damage, the Savior reminds us that he who is without sin may cast the first stone (see John 8:7). Ugly reports and conversations are always available to those who would promote the sordid and sensational. None of us is yet perfect. We each have failings that aren’t terribly difficult to detect—especially if that is the aim. Through microscopic examination one can find in almost every life incidents or traits that can be destructive when they are magnified.

Recognizing the good

We need to get back to basic principles of recognizing the good and the praiseworthy within the family. Home evening needs to be reemphasized and used as a tool or foundation for wholesome communication and teaching, but

never as an opportunity to bash other family members, neighbors, teachers, or Church leaders. Family loyalty will emerge when we reinforce the good and the positive and bridle our negative thoughts as we seek after those things that are of good report.

There will always be those in the days ahead who will be inclined to bash us and others, but we cannot allow a heavy, crushing blow to destroy us or to deter our personal or church progress.

Bernard Baruch, an adviser to six United States presidents, was once asked whether he was ever disturbed by attacks from enemies. He said, "No man can humiliate or disturb me. I won't let him."

We are reminded that Jesus Christ, the only perfect person to ever walk the earth, taught us through quiet example to say nothing or to be silent in stressful times in our lives rather than to spend time and energy bashing for whatever purpose.

Charity: the antidote for bashing

So what is the antidote for this bashing that hurts feelings, demeans others, destroys relationships, and harms self-esteem? Bashing should be replaced with charity. Moroni described it this way:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all. . . .

" . . . Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever" (Moroni 7:46-47).

Charity is, perhaps, in many ways a misunderstood word. We often equate charity with visiting the sick, taking in casseroles to those in need, or sharing our excess with those who are less fortunate. But really, true charity is much, much more.

Real charity is not something you give away; it is something that you ac-

quire and make a part of yourself. And when the virtue of charity becomes implanted in your heart, you are never the same again. It makes the thought of being a basher repulsive.

Perhaps the greatest charity comes when we are kind to each other, when we don't judge or categorize someone else, when we simply give each other the benefit of the doubt or remain quiet. Charity is accepting someone's differences, weaknesses, and shortcomings; having patience with someone who has let us down; or resisting the impulse to become offended when someone doesn't handle something the way we might have hoped. Charity is refusing to take advantage of another's weakness and being willing to forgive someone who has hurt us. Charity is expecting the best of each other.

None of us needs one more person bashing or pointing out where we have failed or fallen short. Most of us are already well aware of the areas in which we are weak. What each of us does need is family, friends, employers, and brothers and sisters who support us, who have the patience to teach us, who believe in us, and who believe we're trying to do the best we can in spite of our weaknesses. Whatever happened to giving each other the benefit of the doubt? Whatever happened to hoping that another person would succeed or achieve? Whatever happened to rooting for each other?

Bashing is of Satan

It should come as no surprise that one of the adversary's tactics in the latter days is stirring up hatred among the children of men. He loves to see us criticize each other, make fun or take advantage of our neighbor's known flaws, and generally pick on each other. The Book of Mormon is clear about where all anger, malice, greed, and hate come from.

Nephi prophesied that in the last days the devil would “rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good” (2 Nephi 28:20). By the looks of what we constantly see depicted in the news media, it appears that Satan is doing a pretty good job. In the name of reporting the news, we are besieged with sometimes graphic depictions—too often in living color—of greed, extortion, violent sexual crimes, and insults between business, athletic, or political opponents.

The Sermon on the Mount

Throughout the scriptures a common thread seems to emerge. Let’s consider first the Sermon on the Mount, which to our knowledge was the first sermon Jesus Christ taught His newly called disciples. The overriding theme of the Savior’s sermon, which in many ways is the ultimate handbook on coming unto Him, seems to center on the virtues of love, compassion, forgiveness, and long-suffering—in other words, those qualities that enable us to deal with our fellowmen more compassionately. Let’s look specifically at the Savior’s message to the Twelve. They (and we) were admonished to “be reconciled to [our] brother” (Matthew 5:24), to “agree with [our] adversary quickly” (5:25), to “love [our] enemies, [to] bless them that curse [us], [to] do good to them that hate [us], and [to] pray for them which despitefully use [us], and persecute [us]” (5:44). We are told, “Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (5:39).

It seems interesting that the first principles the Lord Jesus Christ chose to teach His newly called Apostles were those that center on the way we treat each other. And then what did He emphasize during the brief period He spent with the Nephites on this conti-

nent? Basically the same message. Could this be because the way we treat each other is the foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Come unto Christ by loving others

During an informal fireside address held with a group of adult Latter-day Saints, the leader directing the discussion invited participation by asking the question, “How can you tell if someone is converted to Jesus Christ?” For forty-five minutes those in attendance made numerous suggestions in response to this question, and the leader carefully wrote down each answer on a large chalkboard. All of the comments were thoughtful and appropriate. But after a time, this great teacher erased everything he had written. Then, acknowledging that all of the comments had been worthwhile and appreciated, he taught a vital principle: “The best and most clear indicator that we are progressing spiritually and coming unto Christ is the way we treat other people.”

Would you consider this idea for a moment—that the way we treat the members of our families, our friends, those with whom we work each day is as important as are some of the more noticeable gospel principles we sometimes emphasize.

“Charity never faileth”

Last month the Relief Society celebrated its 150th anniversary. Its motto, “Charity Never Faileth,” has been a way of life for its members and others around the globe.

Imagine what could happen in today’s world—or in our own wards, or families, or priesthood quorums and auxiliaries—if each of us would vow to cherish, watch over, and comfort one another. Imagine the possibilities!

One young woman, serving in a stake Relief Society presidency and at the time also laboring under the pressure of an especially challenging project, lost her temper one morning during a presidency meeting. The cause of her unhappiness had little to do with the question at hand and was related more to the fact that at the time she was laboring under intense home pressure on a major task and was feeling frustrated and frazzled. Afterward, she was embarrassed at her behavior and immediately called to apologize for her outburst. Her friends in the presidency were generous and told her not to think another thing about it. Still she wondered if they might think less of her, now that they'd seen her at less than her best. But that evening the doorbell rang around dinnertime, and there stood the other members of the presidency with dinner in hand. "We knew when you lost your cool this morning that you must just be worn out. We thought a little supper might help. We want you to know we love you." The young woman was amazed. In spite of her outburst that morning, her friends were there to offer support rather than criticism. Rather than seize the opportunity to bash her, they were filled with the spirit of charity.

Be one who nurtures and who builds. Be one who has an understanding and a forgiving heart, who looks for the best in people. Leave people better than you found them. Be fair with your competitors, whether in business, athletics, or elsewhere. Don't get drawn into some of the parlance of our day and try to "win" by intimidation or by undermining someone's character. Lend a hand to those who are frightened, lonely, or burdened.

If we could look into each other's hearts and understand the unique challenges each of us faces, I think we would treat each other much more

gently, with more love, patience, tolerance, and care.

Governing our tongues

If the adversary can influence us to pick on each other, to find fault, bash, and undermine, to judge or humiliate or taunt, half his battle is won. Why? Because though this sort of conduct may not equate with succumbing to grievous sin, it nevertheless neutralizes us spiritually. The Spirit of the Lord cannot dwell where there is bickering, judging, contention, or any kind of bashing.

Even in biblical times James warned us of the necessity to govern our tongues:

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (James 3:5-6).

True conversion begets love

Once again may I emphasize the principle that when we truly become converted to Jesus Christ, committed to Him, an interesting thing happens: our attention turns to the welfare of our fellowmen, and the way we treat others becomes increasingly filled with patience, kindness, a gentle acceptance, and a desire to play a positive role in their lives. This is the beginning of true conversion.

Let us open our arms to each other, accept each other for who we are, assume everyone is doing the best he or she can, and look for ways to help leave quiet messages of love and encouragement instead of being destructive with bashing.

Again James reminds us, "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:18).

May God help us individually and collectively to know and teach that bashing should be replaced with charity today and always, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has concluded this session of the conference.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable and satellite

systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." The benediction will be given by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today."

Elder Earl C. Tingey offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 162nd Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 4, 1992, at 2:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a Relief Society choir from the Brigham City Utah Region. Evelyn M. Harris conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Hinckley made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to the second general session of the 162nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson was with us this morning. We excuse him this afternoon; he will be watching the proceedings of the conference on television.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance and to all who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We express our gratitude to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems for their cooperation in making these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

We note that Elders M. Russell Ballard, Robert E. Sackley, and W. Mack Lawrence are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

The music for this session will be provided by a Relief Society choir from the Brigham City Utah Region, under the direction of Sister Evelyn M. Harris, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir will begin this session by singing "I Believe in Christ." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I Believe in Christ."

Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

This beautiful choir will now sing "More Holiness Give Me." President

Thomas S. Monson will then present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Brother Heber B. Kapp, husband of Sister Ardeth G. Kapp, has been called to preside over the Canada Vancouver Mission. It will therefore be necessary to release her as General President of the Young Women. We also release her counselors, Jayne B. Malan and Janette C. Hales, and all members of the Young Women General Board.

All who wish to join in an expression of profound appreciation to these sisters for their excellent service may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain Sister Janette C. Hales as General President of the Young Women, with Virginia H. Pearce as first counselor and Patricia P. Pinegar as second counselor. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general officers of the Church as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued vote of love and confidence.

We invite the newly called Young Women General Presidency to take their places on the stand at this time.

President Hinckley

Brother Ted E. Davis will now read the auditors' report. Following

this, Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1991.

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1991

Ted E. Davis

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

The Audit Committee is independent of all Church officers, employees, and operations and has access to all records relevant to the committee's responsibility. We have reviewed the adequacy of controls over receipts and expenditures of funds and other procedures that safeguard the assets of the Church and its controlled organizations, including budgeting, accounting and auditing systems, and the related financial statements of the Church for the year ending 31 December 1991.

Expenditures of Church funds for the year were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes, composed of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed by revelation. The Appropriations Committee and Budget Committee administer major expenditures within approved budgets.

The Auditing Department staff consists of certified public accountants and similarly qualified auditors and is independent of all other departments. It performs financial audits, opera-

tional audits, and audits of computer systems for all Church operations worldwide. Incorporated businesses owned or controlled by the Church, for which accounts are not maintained in the Finance and Records Department, are audited by the Church's internal auditors, independent professional auditing firms, or government regulatory agencies. Audits of local units are performed locally. Local audit procedures are established and audit reports are reviewed by the Auditing Department.

Based on our review of financial and operating controls and the audit reports and responses, we are of the opinion that the budgeting, accounting, auditing, and other control procedures have maintained adequate accountability for Church assets and obligations. In all material respects, all Church funds received and expended during the year ended 31 December 1991 have been controlled and accounted for in accordance with established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee
David M. Kennedy
Merrill J. Bateman
Ted E. Davis

The Church Statistical Report for 1991

F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presi-

dency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 1991. (Statistics are based on

1991 reports available prior to this conference.)

Church units

Stakes	1,837
Districts	527
Missions	267
Wards and branches	18,810
Nations and territories with organized wards or branches ...	138

(These statistics reflect an increase of 53 stakes and 720 wards and branches during 1991.)

Church membership

Total membership.....	8,120,000
Children of record baptized during 1991.....	75,000
Converts baptized during 1991.....	297,770

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	43,395
------------------------------	--------

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Derek A. Cuthbert of the First Quorum of the Seventy; Elder Joseph Anderson, emeritus General Authority; Frances LaRue Carr Longden, former counselor in the Young Women General Presidency and widow of John Longden, Assistant to the Twelve; Leone Watson Doxey, former counselor in the Primary General Presidency; and Wilford G. Edling, chairman of the Church Audit Committee.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve will be our first speaker at this session. He will be followed by Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Alma's decision to teach God's word

In the fourth chapter of the book of Alma, we find one of the many accounts contained in this book where the chief spiritual leader was troubled with the performance of his people. We read:

"And it came to pass in the eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things

were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel.

"Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma, yea, and to many of the people whom Alma had consecrated to be teachers, and priests, and elders over the church; yea, many of them were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people" (Alma 4:6-7).

It was a time of decision for Alma. In his role as chief high priest, he had been attempting to protect his people from falling into sin by teaching them the gospel. In his role as chief judge, he had been administering the laws of the

land. As he found the wickedness of the people increasing, he could not continue to divide his time between these dual roles. Again we read from the book of Alma regarding his decision:

"And he selected a wise man who was among the elders of the church, and gave him power according to the voice of the people, that he might have power to enact laws according to the laws which had been given, and to put them in force according to the wickedness and the crimes of the people.

"Now this man's name was Nephihah, and he was appointed chief judge; and he sat in the judgment-seat to judge and to govern the people.

"Now Alma did not grant unto him the office of being high priest over the church, but he retained the office of high priest unto himself; but he delivered the judgment-seat unto Nephihah.

"And this he did that he himself might go forth among his people, or among the people of Nephi, that he might preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, . . . that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them" (Alma 4:16-19).

Alma understood a basic fact of life. There is no way of caring for the problems of mankind unless the great majority of them have been taught and have subscribed their lives to a code of conduct which will keep them from falling into sin. The Lord, in the very beginning, established for our first earthly parents commandments and covenants which, if observed and obeyed, will keep us from the heartache and waste of unrighteous living. As we consider conditions in the world today, we should be asking the question, How can we more effectively

prevent the loss resulting from an overwhelming increase in spiritual, emotional, and physical problems now afflicting mankind? It seems as if we are spending too much of our time and energy in repairing the damage of sin and not enough time in teaching the Lord's law as a foundation on which we can govern our lives.

The need for more laborers

From the Old Testament we find Ezekiel telling us that the Lord reproved those who did not help feed His sheep. We read:

"My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. . . .

" . . . Neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; . . .

"[And] thus saith the Lord God; Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out" (Ezekiel 34:6, 8, 11).

Wasn't this also one of the Savior's laments as He performed His earthly ministry? We read from the Gospel of Matthew:

"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every [manner of] sickness and every disease among the people.

"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

"[And] saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:35-38).

The shortage of laborers in the Lord's vineyard continues now, as it did in previous times.

The prophet's call to serve

History has recently recorded the words of a prophet calling for every worthy and able young man to serve a full-time mission. The response to the prophet's voice has been heartwarming. Many thousands of young men have listened to his clarion call and have come forward to fulfill honorable, successful missions, declaring the gospel of our Lord and Savior to ever-increasing numbers. Their harvest has been truly remarkable.

As the numbers increase, the call of the prophet was again heard to open the doors of nations to the preaching of the gospel. We have all witnessed a miracle of the power of the united prayers of the Saints. Doors have been opened to the preaching of the gospel in nations never dreamed of or hoped for just a few years ago. Now the demand for increased numbers of full-time missionaries is greater than ever before. And again we issue the call for every worthy young man to heed the voice of the prophet to serve as a full-time missionary. We call on you bishops and branch presidents to see that every worthy and able young man has an opportunity to go forth into the mission field. Many of our young women have also served in the mission field. They have been some of the most productive missionaries we have.

President Kimball made the following statement regarding young women serving: "Many young women have a desire to serve a full-time mission, and they are also welcome in the Lord's service. This responsibility is not on them as it is on the elders, but they will receive rich blessings for their unselfish sacrifice. The Lord is pleased [with] their willingness to bring souls to

him" (*President Kimball Speaks Out* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981], p. 30).

These valiant young men and young women go into the mission field bearing a strong witness of the mission of our Lord and Savior, giving true Christian service, and teaching with faith and conviction.

An urgent need for more couples

In addition to the need for more young men and women to serve, there is an urgent need for couples. Each time we visit a mission, the universal request is for more couples. The need is great for mature couples who are financially able, possessing strong testimonies and in reasonably good health. Their entry into the mission field adds strength and maturity to our missionary effort.

With the opportunities to labor so plentiful, we need experienced couples to work with those newly converted to the gospel, making sure that the seeds which have fallen on good ground will be nourished and cultivated in order that the tares of a previous life-style will not spring up and choke out the good plants. You mature couples have years of experience in studying, teaching, and administering in the wards and branches of the Church. That experience is so desperately needed throughout the world to prevent the tender new plants from being overcome by worldliness.

You are the ones who can build a firm root structure, which will support the new converts in the truths of the gospel in this life and help them become worthy to receive blessings in the eternities to come.

Experiences of missionary couples

Listen to the experiences of those couples who have gone forth to serve.

Quoting a few lines from a letter recently received in the Missionary Department from the president of the Oklahoma Tulsa Mission, we read:

"The Wilsons, who recently returned home, did an outstanding job in reactivating the membership. They were able to see two couples go to the temple, have eighteen baptisms, increase ward activity from an average of 136 to over 180 during just the year that they labored in the Nevada Ward. When they came into the mission field, they had just purchased a new truck. During their mission, they put 29,000 miles on the vehicle. This couple was truly dedicated to strengthening the Lord's work in this area. Now they are retired, living in St. George, and would like to go on another mission in the near future."

The letter continues:

"Brother Williams is the branch president in the Lebanon Branch. President and Sister Williams have done an outstanding job in reactivating members and also getting a genealogical library going in the town."

Sister Williams writes:

"I am so proud of my husband. He really helps the young elders a lot. He gives them the support they need. President Williams is in the height of his glory when he can take them out on a discussion.

"Since we opened our new library, I have been just overwhelmed with the work, with both nonmembers and members. The local Genealogical Association (all nonmembers) meets once a month in our chapel, holding their genealogical meetings. They have all become interested in our new library and the wonderful research tools we have. I have trained each staff member as completely as I can so they will have full knowledge of all we have in the library since, alas, I will have to go home someday. Darn it!"

In another letter, from the Prices, who served in Australia, they write:

"I admit it is hard to leave growing and changing grandchildren, but we share the joys of our missions with our families. Knowing that our children and our little grandchildren are praying for us every night is a sustaining and inspiring feeling each day. And besides, it is all for our Father in Heaven, who has promised us that our family bonds will never be broken if we serve Him."

Entries in your life's history

Is this not the special time of decision for all of you young adults of full-time missionary age and all of you special mature older couples? Have you ever sat down and contemplated what kind of entries you will prepare for your life's history? Will yours be one composed of slides and videos of worldly acquisitions of boats and motor homes, of travel and entertainment for personal gratification and amusement?

Or will your history express the joy you have experienced in preaching and teaching the message of our Lord and Savior to all who would hear your voice? May you decide, as Alma did, to go forth among the people, preaching the word of God unto them to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, to pull down the pride, craftiness, and contentions among them, that they may be reclaimed and saved by you in bearing pure testimony to them.

Bishops and branch presidents, only one additional missionary couple called from your ward or branch would mean an increase of over eight thousand couples in our missionary force. Oh, how they're needed!

The field is white

To you who will accept the call to go forth and serve, I can promise you that your good name will never be for-

gotten in this world or in the eternities to come. So again we issue the clarion call and pray that the Lord of the harvest will send forth laborers in increased numbers, for the field is white, all ready for a bounteous harvest (see D&C 4:4).

That this is His work in which we are engaged is my solemn witness to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Angel Abrea

Prepare for afflictions

At a time when persecution intensified toward the newly organized Church, the Lord said to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, "Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days" (D&C 24:8).

Tribulation, afflictions, and trials will constantly be with us in our sojourn here in this segment of eternity, just as the Savior said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). Therefore, the great challenge in this earthly life is not to determine how to escape the afflictions and problems, but rather to carefully prepare ourselves to meet them.

I say prepare ourselves because it demands persistent effort to develop patience as a personal attribute. In practicing patience, one comes to understand it and to acquire it.

Have patience in affliction

From Liberty Jail, in a time of anguish and deep suffering for the gospel's sake, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote the following message to the Saints:

"Dear brethren, do not think that our hearts faint, as though some

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy, who will be followed by Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy.

strange thing had happened unto us, for we have seen and been assured of all these things beforehand, and have an assurance of a better hope than that of our persecutors. Therefore God hath made broad our shoulders for the burden. We glory in our tribulation, because we know that God is with us, that He is our friend, and that He will save our souls" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 123).

We must have patience in order to withstand pain and grief without complaint or discouragement, which detract from the Spirit. It's necessary to have patience in the face of tribulation and persecution for the cause of truth, which sets an example because the manner in which we bear our cross will be an influence to others to help lighten their load.

Our patience must be in the same manner and in the same spirit as was that of the sons of Mosiah when they were entrusted with the task to "go forth among the Lamanites, thy brethren, and establish my word; yet ye shall be patient in long-suffering and afflictions, that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls" (Alma 17:11).

Patience must be our constant companion during the journey which carries us toward that great goal: "Continue in patience until ye are perfected"—the counsel the Lord gave to the elders of the Church (D&C 67:13).

It should be made clear that we are not talking here about a passive patience which waits only for the passing of time to heal or resolve things which *happen to us*, but rather a patience that is active, which *makes things happen*. Such was the patience Paul described in his epistle to the Romans when he used the words "by patient continuance in well doing" (Romans 2:7).

Perhaps one of the best examples of patience which gives us an eternal perspective of its application in our lives is found in the words of Peter: "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:20).

Have faith in God's wisdom

Patience in affliction and adversity means to persist firmly and never forsake that which we know to be true, standing firm with the hope that in the Lord's due time we will gain an understanding of that which we do not understand now and which causes us suffering.

Then the promise in Malachi will become a reality: "Then shall ye return, and discern . . . between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Malachi 3:18).

Into the life of the faithful sister whose son was killed while on a mission came many questions which raced through her mind and those asked by disbelievers, creating doubts such as, "Why was my son killed if he was a good missionary and an excellent son?

My son was serving the Lord and was a great example to his brothers who are preparing to go into the mission field. Why?"

Patience in affliction and suffering means answering as she did to all those questions: "I don't know, nor do I have all the answers, but one thing I do know is that someday, in the Lord's divine timetable, I shall see my son again and be reunited with him."

Wasn't the reply of this sister prompted by the same spirit which gave place to the words of Nephi: "I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things"? (1 Nephi 11:17). What a beautiful example of faith which brings a feeling of assurance while facing the unknown!

Endure with faith in Christ

In the face of persecution and threats to which the early Christians were subjected, patience filled with testimony was manifest in their faith and hope in Christ as recorded in the words of Paul:

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. . . .

"Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. . . .

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:8-10, 14, 16-17).

"Not as I will, but as thou wilt"

Patience in affliction and suffering describes the life of Christ, the great exemplar. In the moments of great suffering and pain which transpired in Gethsemane, He was able to express in fervent prayer, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39), giving us the example and a frame of reference for a life of obedience and perseverance despite circumstances or external conditions in which we could find ourselves.

How many times do we conclude our prayers with, "Let this cup pass from me"?

Under circumstances when the symbolic cup might represent sickness, pain, anxiety, unemployment, or the suffering of a loved one, are we able to continue our prayer with, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"? This very word, this key word *nevertheless*, conveys the firm conviction that we are placing everything in the hands of the Lord.

When at times on life's journey it becomes our lot to travel with the criticism of skeptics, the hate of some, the rejection of others, the impatience of many, or the betrayal of a friend, we must be able to pray in such a manner that an abiding faith and a strong testimony that the Lord will be with us to the end will compel us to say, "Nevertheless, Father, Thy will be done, and with Thy help, in patience I will follow firmly on the path that takes me back to Thee."

The Lord's assurance

In the year 1833, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord consoled the Saints, who had been "afflicted, and persecuted, and cast out from the land of their inheritance" (D&C 101:1), with words of comfort and hope, saying, "Let your hearts be

comforted . . . ; all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God" (D&C 101:16).

To Enoch, who was slow of speech and in a time of great tribulation, the Lord said, "Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance, for all flesh is in my hands, and I will do as seemeth me good" (Moses 6:32).

To Joseph Smith in moments of trial, and referring to his enemies, the Lord said, "Hold on thy way, . . . for their bounds are set, they cannot pass" (D&C 122:9).

These key words of counsel were given when those receiving them were passing through adverse circumstances: "all flesh is in my hands"; "know that I am God"; "I will do as seemeth me good"; "their bounds are set, they cannot pass." In moments of trial these words appeal to patience and perseverance, founded in principles which are a testimony in and of themselves.

Knowing God helps us endure

In the words of the Savior, life eternal is to know God (see John 17:3), and that implies a knowledge of His attributes and a testimony of them. To know God consists of knowing even ourselves, for as the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 343). To know God is much more than to talk about God. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that it is "to think what he thinks, to feel what he feels" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973], 1:762).

How can we do otherwise than patiently endure the trials of life if we know God and understand that He is omnipotent? With Nephi we can say that "he is mightier than all the earth"

(1 Nephi 4:1). We know and can testify of His omniscience, and with Lehi we can say, "All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things" (2 Nephi 2:24).

Based on that knowledge, cemented in a strong testimony of the attributes of our Heavenly Father, the faithful Latter-day Saint—instead of despairing because a goal on his or her agenda was not realized, because his or her timetable does not bring a solution to the problems, or because comfort does not come to calm the troubles of today—waits patiently for fulfillment of promises, according to the Lord's timetable, the Lord who "knoweth all the times which are appointed unto man" (Alma 40:10). The faithful Latter-day Saint waits patiently because, certainly, faith, "the assurance of things hoped for" (JST, Hebrews 11:1), is exercised with the conviction that the promises will be fulfilled "in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will" (D&C 88:68).

"Stand fast, ye Saints of God"

God does live and He does fulfill His promises, and to the many testimonies given, I wish to add mine. I know that even in times of affliction and tribulation, if we patiently endure in faith, blessings of comfort and hope will come into our lives, and we will be able to partake of that "incomprehensible joy" of which Ammon and his brothers received (see Alma 27:17–18; 28:8).

Therefore, in the words of Joseph Smith, "Stand fast, ye Saints of God, hold on a little while longer, and the storm of life will be past, and you will be rewarded by that God whose servants you are, and who will duly appreciate all your toils and afflictions for Christ's sake and the Gospel's" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 185).

These things I say in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

William R. Bradford

"I want my life back!"

On our present assignment, my wife and I live a long way away from our children. This means the letters go back and forth. I would like to read a paragraph from a letter one of our daughters recently sent:

"I've become a nurse. Four of the six kids have the flu. I'm changing my ambitions from psychiatrist to nurse. Anyway, nobody in this family is sick in the head; we are just all sick. I hate it when the kids are sick." Then in capital letters, "I WANT MY LIFE BACK!"

When we read the letter, we gave each other a knowing smile. All of our children are caught up in a very busy life. It is what they call "the fast lane."

But those last words, "I WANT MY LIFE BACK," have stuck in my

mind, and the more I have thought about them the more concerned I've become. This concern has persuaded me to say something about uncluttering our lives and getting back to basics.

Problems of a cluttered life

The story is told of a boy who arrived home from school and found his father standing at the open door looking into a very cluttered house. "Is Mother home?" asked the boy. His father answered, "I can't see her, but I know she's in there somewhere. I can hear sobbing."

This would be funny if it were not true in so many cases. I believe that a cluttered life can create a great deal of sorrow and sadness and be the cause of

much sobbing. I also believe that there are a great many people in the so-called "fast lane" that want their lives back.

A cluttered life is a life that you do not have control of. It is a life in which the things you have surrounded yourself with and allow to use up your time are controlling you and negatively influencing your happiness and eternal progress.

Material clutter

Our lives can become cluttered by many things. Some are obvious, such as material things, the stuff we collect. I really wish I were able to give a lesson on how to prioritize the material things—how to sort them, dispose of some, and put the rest in order—but I'm not qualified.

The last time I worked on that kind of a project, I spent nine hours moving things around, changing them from one box to another, stacking some here and some there. When I was finished I was so proud of myself. Then I realized that all I had really done was move them from one place to another.

My wife says that I have a subconscious rule that I must move things from one place to another at least a hundred times before I can bring myself to give them away. Suffice it to say, if you need help in this, there are better experts than I to teach you.

But how well I know that we can surround ourselves with the material things to the extent that we have no time for the spiritual. Look around and you will see all the gadgets and toys and the nice and the fun things that cause us to squander and pay and to wander and play.

Subtle clutter

Other things that clutter our lives and use up our time are not as obvious

as the material. They are more subtle and just seem to evolve, taking control of us.

Whenever I think of something subtle—you know, kind of hidden, something we know is there if we stop to think about it but do not suspect it of cluttering up or negatively influencing our lives—whenever I think of something subtle like this, I know that Satan is busy at his work.

Nothing suits the devil better than to become a silent partner with us. He knows that we have agency and are at liberty to make choices for ourselves. He also knows that while in mortality we are subject to time. If by his subtle means he can become our silent partner, he can then influence us to make wrong choices that use up our time unwisely and prevent us from doing that which we should.

We give our lives to that which we give our time. As I have said, while here in mortality we are subject to time. We also have agency and may do what we will with our time. Let me repeat: We give our lives to that which we give our time.

How to unclutter our lives

I have learned that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to unclutter one's life by starting at the top of the pile with the idea that the solution is to just get things sorted and better organized. It is nice to get better organized, but that is not enough. Much has to be discarded. We must actually get rid of it.

To do this we need to develop a list of basics, a list of those things that are indispensable to our mortal welfare and happiness and our eternal salvation. This list must follow the gospel pattern and contain the elements needed for our sanctification and perfection. It must be the product of inspiration and prayerful judgment between

the things we really need and the things we just want. It should separate need from greed. It must be our best understanding of those things that are important as opposed to those things that are just interesting. It should have nothing to do with trying to stay in the fast lane.

We need to examine all the ways we use our time: our work, our ambitions, our affiliations, and the habits that drive our actions. As we make such a study, we will be able to better understand what we should really be spending our time doing.

The family comes first

At the top of our list of basics, we will surely have the family. Next only to our devotion to God, the family comes first. Their temporal and spiritual well-being is of vital importance, and so there must be work to provide for it. This means hard work. Although there has to be a balance and time for the fun things, they cannot outweigh the need for a cooperative effort by all the members of the family to provide for their spiritual and temporal needs. To work is a commandment from God. It is the pattern for the happiness of individuals and the family and is the strength of both the Church and society.

A mother should never allow herself to become so involved with extras that she finds herself neglecting her divine role. A father must not let any activity, no matter how interesting or important it may seem, keep him from giving of himself in the one-on-one service and close, constant care of each member of the family.

The titles of Mother and Father will persist after this life. All that we may acquire and any titles we may earn which are worldly will pass away. In the meantime they may be cluttering up our lives and affecting our eternal outcome.

Young people must learn that none of the exciting and entertaining and fun things are worth it if they take you off from the path that will lead you back home to your Heavenly Father.

Living the basics of the gospel

We must remember that a person who is not living the basics of the gospel of Jesus Christ is not living them, no matter who or what has caused it. We must also remember that a family divided is a family divided, no matter who or what divides it.

There are, then, some serious and soul-searching questions that we must ask ourselves. One of these questions would surely be, Do I have time for prayer? I don't mean just an occasional, quick, repetitious prayer that is like giving a wave of the hand to your Father in Heaven as you pass Him on your way to something important. I mean sincere, honest, "from the depths of a contrite spirit and a broken heart" prayer; kneeling in humility, demonstrating to the Holy Father that you really love him; private prayer which involves you in the process of repentance and pleading for forgiveness and allows time for pondering and waiting for the answers to come.

As you examine your list of basics, the next question would be, Do I study the scriptures? If you do, you know that Lehi saw a rod of iron, which, interpreted, means the word of God (see 1 Nephi 11:1-23). Those who held to the rod, using it as a guide at all times, came safely through the mist of darkness and arrived at the tree of life and partook of its glorious fruit (see 1 Nephi 8:19, 30).

Now the question again: Do you study the scriptures? I solemnly testify that the holy scriptures are the word of God. Constant study of them is the act of holding to the iron rod. They will guide you to the tree of life. If you are

one who has said, "I want my life back," I exhort you to go to the tree of life, where you will find the pure love of God.

God's path is simple and straight

With an uncluttered life, you will not be so busy doing terrestrial things that you do not have time to do those things which are celestial. God's plan is a plan of simplicity. It involves being obedient to simple laws—laws that have within them an automatic blessing and happiness for obedience and an automatic punishment and unhappiness for their disobedience.

I urge you to clear away the clutter. Take your life back. Use your willpower. Learn to say no to those things that will rob you of your precious time and infringe upon your agency to choose to live in exactness to God's plan of happiness and exaltation.

Don't let the subtle influences of Satan take away any part of your life. Keep it under your own control and operated by your own agency. This life is a probationary period. It is a marvelous gift of time during which we can learn to be like our Heavenly Father

by following the teachings of His Son, Jesus Christ. The path He leads us on is not a cluttered path. It is simple and straight and lighted by the Spirit.

It is my humble prayer that by our choices we may preserve our individual agency from the subtleness of Satan and live our lives bright and clear and on the path that leads us back to the presence of our Holy Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have listened to Elder Angel Abrea, who is a native of Argentina, and to William R. Bradford, who presently presides over the work in the northern part of South America with headquarters in Quito, Ecuador. We thank these brethren.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Now Let Us Rejoice in the Day of Salvation." Following the singing, Elder Adney Y. Komatsu of the Seventy will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."

Elder Adney Y. Komatsu

An invitation to come back

My brothers and sisters, I would like to recall to your minds the statement of invitation made by the First Presidency in December of 1985, and I quote:

"At this Christmas season we rejoice in the blessings that come of membership and *activity* in this Church whose head is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. In deep sincerity we express our love and gratitude for our brethren and sisters everywhere.

"We are aware of some who are inactive, of others who have become

critical and are prone to find fault, and of those who have been disfellowshipped or excommunicated because of serious transgressions.

"To all such we reach out in love. We are anxious to forgive in the spirit of Him who said: 'I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men' (D&C 64:10).

"We encourage Church members to forgive those who may have wronged them. To those who have ceased *activity* and to those who have become critical, we say, 'Come back. Come

back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints' " (*"An Invitation to Come Back," Church News*, 22 Dec. 1985, p. 3; italics added).

Using activities to fellowship

While most of us in the Church may think of activities as primarily fun and games, there is a part that *activities* play in the Church that reaches far beyond this shallow perception.

For those who have experienced Church discipline, feelings of isolation and loneliness are very real. This is the case whether the discipline is informal or formal. In the case of formal excommunication, the isolation and loneliness are more than a feeling. This action results in a person's name being removed from the Church membership records and the withdrawal of the gift of the Holy Ghost given at the time of baptism and confirmation.

Most of us have experienced times of isolation and loneliness in our lives. Have you ever been in a city, airport, train station, or the like and, while surrounded by hundreds or even thousands of people, yet felt alone? Have you on occasion, when uniquely challenged in your family as a child, a teen, or even an adult, felt alone while living with your family under the same roof? Have you on other occasions felt alone and lonely even while sitting among others in a Church meeting or a school class?

The fact that people are physically nearby, regardless of the setting, does not always equate to feelings of acceptance, understanding, inclusion, and fellowship. In too many cases the reverse may be true. Feelings of acceptance and inclusion come when someone invites us into their circle of friendship and activity. Far beyond fun and games, activities represent at least one non-threatening way to accept, include,

understand, and fellowship others. Perceived in this manner, activities become another vehicle to show charity, love, kindness, forgiveness, service, and to include and not exclude. Amulek said, "If ye do not remember to be charitable, ye are as dross, which the refiners do cast out, (it being of no worth)" (Alma 34:29).

Those whose formal Church participation may be limited for a season can experience the warmth of loving arms and open hearts as they are invited to participate in activities in the Church. Their season of limitation is softened as they are warmly included in family home evenings, dinners, socials, firesides, roadshows, dramas, interest groups, homemaking activities, family outings, ward camps, reunions, and the like.

Through activities, individuals can sense a feeling of being included, wanted, and needed. Participating in Church activities provides opportunities to associate with members of the quorum, Relief Society, or ward on neutral grounds. Again, their season of limitation can be softened as they are fellowshipped and included socially in activities. Their participation in activities is often the forerunner to their participation in meetings of worship on the Sabbath, even though for a time they must participate in worship and teaching settings as spectators.

Planning activities with a purpose

Some critical issues are:

Are activities an integral part of your family, your quorum, Relief Society, or Church unit?

Are activities planned and conducted on a regular basis that include those working their way back into full fellowship and those who are less active in the fold?

Do your activities represent safe harbors of acceptance, brotherhood, and sisterhood?

Are you helping those who are struggling to recapture their faith and testimony look forward to the day when their privilege and blessings to participate fully in Church might be reinstated?

Through a variety of family, priesthood, Relief Society, or ward and stake activities, we can create a setting that—

1. Helps all of us participate in wholesome activities that are free from the sensuality and coarseness of many activities offered and promoted by the world.

2. Places a premium on including rather than excluding individuals and groups regardless of age, station in life, Church callings, and so on.

3. Offers opportunities for participation to the active, those who are less active, and those who are winning their way back to full fellowship.

4. Displays forgiveness and forgetting as individuals feel the warmth and concern of loving arms and open hearts. When we do not forgive and forget, the Lord warns:

“My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; . . . for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

“Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin” (D&C 64:8-9).

When a person returns to full fellowship in the Church as a result of love, kindness, and forgiveness from those who care, the feeling of joy is almost inexpressible. This depth of joy is described in the Book of Mormon when Alma met Ammon in a joyful meeting:

“Now the joy of Ammon was so great even that he was full; yea, he was swallowed up in the joy of his God,

even to the exhausting of his strength; and he fell again to the earth.

“Now was not this exceeding joy? Behold, this is joy which none receiveth save it be the truly penitent and humble seeker of happiness” (Alma 27:17-18).

Activities can be so much more than fun and games and so much more than momentary pleasure. Activities planned with purpose and carried out with real efforts aimed at helping participants on their path to perfection bring joy everlasting and occupy an important place in the Church.

We need to be reminded that activities sponsored by the Church are not new. In each administration of the thirteen modern-day prophets who have presided over the Church, activities have been an important part of the Latter-day Saint way of life. Church activities continue to be one means to include rather than exclude, to be a participant rather than a spectator, to find moments of joy among challenges of adversity, to promote socialization and unity rather than isolation and disharmony, and to offer neutral and nonjudgmental circumstances for those who are winning their way back to full fellowship in the Church with the Saints and household of God.

Come unto Christ

In closing I would like to continue quoting from the First Presidency's Christmas message:

“We are confident that many have longed to return, but have felt awkward about doing so. We assure you that you will find open arms to receive you and willing hands to assist you.

“This is the Christmas season when we honor the birth of the Lord who gave His life for the sins of all. We know there are many who carry heavy burdens of guilt and bitterness. To such we say, ‘Set them aside and give

heed to the words of the Savior: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30) ("An Invitation to Come Back," p. 3).

The First Presidency continues by saying:

"We plead with you. We pray for you. We invite and welcome you with love and appreciation.

"Sincerely your brethren, The First Presidency" (p. 3).

May I invite all to come unto Christ. Come back and partake of His joy. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Adney Y. Komatsu of the Seventy has just addressed us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve, and he will be followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks, also of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Richard G. Scott

The tragic scars of abuse

I speak from the depths of my heart to each one of you who have been scarred by the ugly sin of abuse, whether you are a member or non-member of the Church. I would prefer a private setting to discuss this sensitive subject and ask that the Holy Spirit help us both that you may receive the relief of the Lord from the cruelty that has scarred your life.

Unless healed by the Lord, mental, physical, or sexual abuse can cause you serious, enduring consequences. As a victim you have experienced some of them. They include fear, depression, guilt, self-hatred, destruction of self-esteem, and alienation from normal human relationships. When aggravated by continued abuse, powerful emotions of rebellion, anger, and hatred are generated. These feelings often are focused against oneself, others, life itself, and even Heavenly Father. Frustrated efforts to fight back can degenerate into drug abuse, immorality, abandonment of home, and, tragically in extreme cases, suicide. Unless corrected, these feelings lead to despondent lives, discordant marriages, and even the transition from victim to abuser. One awful result is a deepening lack of trust in others, which becomes a barrier to healing.

Scars need not be permanent

To be helped, you must understand some things about eternal law. Your abuse results from another's unrighteous attack on your freedom. Since all of Father in Heaven's children enjoy agency, there can be some who choose willfully to violate the commandments and harm you. Such acts temporarily restrict your freedom. In justice, and to compensate, the Lord has provided a way for you to overcome the destructive results of others' acts against your will. That relief comes by applying eternal truths with priesthood assistance.

Know that the wicked choice of others cannot completely destroy your agency unless you permit it. Their acts may cause pain, anguish, even physical harm, but they cannot destroy your eternal possibilities in this brief but crucial life on earth. You must understand that *you are free to determine to overcome the harmful results of abuse*. Your attitude can control the change for good in your life. It allows you to have the help the Lord intends you to receive. No one can take away your ultimate opportunities when you understand and live eternal law. The laws of your Heavenly Father and the

atonement of the Lord have made it possible that you will not be robbed of the opportunities which come to the children of God.

You may feel threatened by one who is in a position of power or control over you. You may feel trapped and see no escape. Please believe that *your Heavenly Father does not want you to be held captive by unrighteous influence, by threats of reprisal, or by fear of repercussion to the family member who abuses you.* Trust that the Lord will lead you to a solution. Ask in faith, nothing doubting (see James 1:6; Enos 1:15; Moroni 7:26; D&C 8:10; 18:18).

I solemnly testify that when another's acts of violence, perversion, or incest hurt you terribly, against your will, you are not responsible and you must not feel guilty. You may be left scarred by abuse, but those scars need not be permanent. In the eternal plan, in the Lord's timetable, those injuries can be made right as you do your part. Here is what you can do *now*.

Seek help

If you are now or have in the past been abused, seek help now. Perhaps you distrust others and feel that there is no reliable help anywhere. Begin with your Eternal Father and his beloved Son, your Savior. Strive to comprehend their commandments and follow them. They will lead you to others who will strengthen and encourage you. There is available to you a priesthood leader, normally a bishop, at times a member of the stake presidency. He can build a bridge to greater understanding and healing. Joseph Smith taught, "A man can do nothing for himself unless God direct him in the right way; and the Priesthood is for that purpose" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 364).

Talk to your bishop in confidence. His calling allows him to act as an instrument of the Lord in your behalf. He can provide a doctrinal foundation to guide you to recovery. An understanding and application of eternal law will provide the healing you require. He has the right to be inspired of the Lord in your behalf. He can use the priesthood to bless you.

Your bishop can help you identify trustworthy friends to support you. He will help you regain self-confidence and self-esteem to begin the process of renewal. When abuse is extreme, he can help you identify appropriate protection and professional treatment consistent with the teachings of the Savior.

Principles of healing

These are some of the principles of healing you will come to understand more fully:

Recognize that you are a beloved child of your Heavenly Father. He loves you perfectly and can help you as no earthly parent, spouse, or devoted friend can. His Son gave his life so that by faith in him and obedience to his teachings you can be made whole. He is the consummate healer.

Gain trust in the love and compassion of your elder brother, Jesus Christ, by pondering the scriptures. As with the Nephites, he tells you: "I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy. . . . I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you" (3 Nephi 17:7-8).

Healing best begins with your sincere prayer asking your Father in Heaven for help. That use of your agency allows divine intervention. When you permit it, the love of the Savior will soften your heart and break the cycle of abuse that can transform a victim into an aggressor. Adversity, even when caused willfully by others,

unrestrained appetite, can be a source of growth when viewed from the perspective of eternal principle (see D&C 122:7).

The victim must do all in his or her power to stop the abuse. Most often the victim is innocent because of being disabled by fear or the power or authority of the offender. At some point in time, however, the Lord may prompt a victim to recognize a degree of responsibility for abuse. Your priesthood leader will help assess your responsibility so that, if needed, it can be addressed. Otherwise the seeds of guilt will remain and sprout into bitter fruit. Yet no matter what degree of responsibility, from absolutely none to increasing consent, the healing power of the atonement of Jesus Christ can provide a complete cure (see D&C 138:1–4). Forgiveness can be obtained for all involved in abuse (see Articles of Faith 1:3). Then comes a restoration of self-respect, self-worth, and a renewal of life.

As a victim, do not waste effort in revenge or retribution against your aggressor. Focus on your responsibility to do what is in your power to correct. Leave the handling of the offender to civil and Church authorities. Whatever they do, eventually the guilty will face the Perfect Judge. Ultimately the unrepentant abuser will be punished by a just God. The purveyors of filth and harmful substances who knowingly incite others to acts of violence and depravation and those who promote a climate of permissiveness and corruption will be sentenced. Predators who victimize the innocent and justify their own corrupted life by enticing others to adopt their depraved ways will be held accountable. Of such the Master warned,

“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that

he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

Understand that healing can take considerable time. Recovery generally comes in steps. It is accelerated when gratitude is expressed to the Lord for every degree of improvement noted.

Forgiveness helps heal

During prolonged recovery from massive surgery, a patient anticipates complete healing in patience, trusting in others’ care. He does not always understand the importance of the treatment prescribed, but his obedience speeds recovery. So it is with you struggling to heal the scars of abuse. Forgiveness, for example, can be hard to understand, even more difficult to give. *Begin by withholding judgment.* You don’t know what abusers may have suffered as victims when innocent. The way to repentance must be kept open for them. Leave the handling of aggressors to others. As you experience an easing of your own pain, full forgiveness will come more easily.

You cannot erase what has been done, but you can forgive (see D&C 64:10). Forgiveness heals terrible, tragic wounds, for it allows the love of God to purge your heart and mind of the poison of hate. It cleanses your consciousness of the desire for revenge. It makes place for the purifying, healing, restoring love of the Lord.

The Master counseled, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them *who despitefully use you and persecute you*” (3 Nephi 12:44; italics added).

Bitterness and hatred are harmful. They produce much that is destructive. They postpone the relief and healing you yearn for. Through rationalization and self-pity, they can transform a victim into an abuser. Let God be the judge—you cannot do it as well as he can.

To be counseled to just forget abuse is not helpful. You need to understand the principles which will bring healing. I repeat, most often that comes through an understanding priesthood leader who has inspiration and the power of the priesthood to bless you.

Cautions in repairing damage

I caution you not to participate in two improper therapeutic practices that may cause you more harm than good. They are (1) excessive probing into every minute detail of your past experiences, particularly when this involves penetrating dialogue in group discussion; and (2) blaming the abuser for every difficulty in your life.

While some discovery is vital to the healing process, the almost morbid probing into details of past acts, long buried and mercifully forgotten, can be shattering. There is no need to pick at healing wounds to open them and cause them to fester. The Lord and his teachings can help you without destroying self-respect.

There is another danger. Detailed leading questions that probe your past may unwittingly trigger thoughts that are more imagination or fantasy than reality. They could lead to condemnation of another for acts that were not committed. I know of cases, likely few in number, where such therapy has caused great injustice to the innocent from unwittingly stimulated accusations that were later proven false. Memory, particularly adult memory of childhood experiences, is fallible. Remember, false accusation is also a sin.

Stated more simply, if someone intentionally poured a bucket of filth on your carpet, would you invite the neighbors to determine each ingredient that contributed to the ugly stain? Of course not. With the help of an expert, you would privately restore its cleanliness.

Likewise the repair of damage inflicted by abuse should be done privately, confidentially, with a trusted priesthood leader and, where needed, the qualified professional he recommends. There must be sufficient discussion of the general nature of abuse to allow you to be given appropriate counsel and to prevent the aggressor from committing more violence. Then, with the help of the Lord, you can bury the past.

I humbly testify that what I have told you is true. It is based upon eternal principles I have seen the Lord use to give a fulness of life to those scarred by wicked abuse.

The Savior's healing power

If you feel there is only a thin thread of hope, believe me, it is not a thread. It can be the unbreakable connecting link to the Lord which puts a life preserver around you. He will heal you as you cease to fear and place your trust in him by striving to live his teachings.

Please, don't suffer more. Ask now for the Lord to help you (see Mormon 9:27; Moroni 7:26, 33). Decide now to talk to your bishop. Don't view all that you experience in life through lenses darkened by the scars of abuse. There is so much in life that is beautiful. Open the windows of your heart and let the love of the Savior in. And should ugly thoughts of past abuse come back, remember his love and his healing power. Your depression will be converted to peace and assurance. You will close an ugly chapter and open volumes of happiness.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Richard Scott of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Relief Society sesquicentennial

This year we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Relief Society, organized in Nauvoo, Illinois, on March 17, 1842. Last month's anniversary program was carried by satellite to most continents of the world. Books are being published to review the history and celebrate the worldwide sisterhood of Relief Society. Ward and stake Relief Societies are celebrating through service in their local communities. Far-reaching efforts to promote literacy will be formally announced later this year.

We are grateful for the effective leadership of President Elaine L. Jack and her counselors and board, who are directing this celebration, and for the earlier leaders and workers whose accomplishments we celebrate.

The Relief Society has great significance for every member of the Church. All of us have been blessed through the example and service of its members.

I am the beneficiary of at least four different generations of Relief Society service: my grandmother, my mother, my wife, and our daughters.

The most vivid memories of my childhood include my grandmother all dressed up to leave the farm and drive into town, resolute and cheerful in her Relief Society service. My mother's leadership in the Relief Society of one of the BYU stakes was influential in the lives of hundreds of young women being prepared for a lifetime of service in family, church, and community. I have met these women in many of my visits throughout the Church.

In Chicago, our children and I were schooled in Christian love and service by a mother and wife working in her calling as ward Relief Society president. Later, at BYU, we rejoiced as our daughters were called to leader-

ship and service in the Relief Societies of their BYU branches. The entire family enjoys benefits and blessings through Relief Society service.

Charitable work

From its beginning, the Relief Society has led out in charitable work. At the first meeting, President Emma Smith said, "Each member should be ambitious to do good" (minutes of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, 17 Mar. 1842, p. 13; see also "Ambitious to Do Good," *Ensign*, Mar. 1992, p. 4; quotations are taken from original documents, hereafter referred to as minutes). The minutes of those initial meetings are filled with accounts of how the sisters obtained work opportunities for the needy, took in the homeless, and made donations to help those in need of food, shelter, and schooling.

A decade after the departure from Nauvoo, sisters trained in the principles of the Relief Society were still leading in efforts to provide for those in need. In a session of conference, President Brigham Young announced that the Saints in two handcart companies were stranded by early snows and suffering in the mountains of Wyoming. He called for immediate help to rescue them, and before they left the Tabernacle many sisters had begun to gather clothing to send to the Saints in the mountains (see Kenneth W. Godfrey et al., *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982], p. 269).

The commission to save souls

In the initial meetings of Relief Society, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the society "is not only to relieve the poor, but to save souls" (minutes, 9 June 1842, p. 63; *History of*

the Church, 5:25). A later First Presidency explained: "One of the purposes of the organization of the Relief Society was that a system might be inaugurated by which study of religious subjects, or Church doctrine and government, might be pursued by women. The administration of charity under the direction of the Bishopric . . . was to be part of their active work. But this was not intended to absorb their activities to the exclusion of the development of faith, and the advancement of women in literary, social and domestic activities of life" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75], 5:217).

"To save souls opens the whole field of human activity and development," Elder John A. Widtsoe later declared. "Relief of poverty, relief of illness; relief of doubt, relief of ignorance—relief of all that hinders the joy and progress of woman. What a magnificent commission!" (John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987], p. 308).

Teaching the gospel

That commission included teaching. In a revelation given in 1830, the Lord told Emma Smith that the Prophet would authorize her "to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church, according as it shall be given thee by my Spirit" (D&C 25:7). When she was later selected to lead the Relief Society, her prophet husband referred to this revelation that she would "expound the scriptures to all" and "teach the female part of the community." He declared "that not she alone, but others, may attain to the same blessings" (minutes, 17 Mar. 1842, p. 8).

Succeeding Presidents of the Church have reemphasized this impor-

tant duty to teach, and the leaders and teachers of the Relief Society have fulfilled this responsibility with great distinction.

Organization of the Relief Society

The Relief Society was organized upon the initiative of the women of Nauvoo. Desiring to organize a society to promote sisterhood and to accomplish benevolent works, a group of women asked Eliza R. Snow to draft a constitution and bylaws. When Joseph Smith learned of this, he asked that the sisters be called together so that he could provide "something better for them than a written Constitution." One sister recalled his saying, "I will organize the women under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood" (Sarah M. Kimball, "Auto-Biography," *Woman's Exponent*, 1 Sept. 1883, p. 51).

We are fortunate to have careful minutes of the first two years' meetings of the Relief Society. From these minutes we know the substance of the Prophet Joseph Smith's instructions to the new organization and its members. This anniversary is an appropriate time to recall and reemphasize these prophetic directions.

In his first formal instruction to the newly founded organization, the Prophet said he was "deeply interested that [the Relief Society] might be built up to the Most High in an acceptable manner." He taught that "when instructed, we must obey that voice . . . that the blessings of heaven may rest down upon us. All must act in concert, or nothing can be done [that the Society] should move according to the ancient Priesthood" (minutes, 30 Mar. 1842, p. 22; *History of the Church*, 4:570).

The Prophet's counsel apparently sought to give this new organization the benefit of an early revelation in which the Lord instructed the newly

organized First Presidency “how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation. I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:9–10). The Relief Society’s promised blessings were dependent upon its leaders and members functioning within the limits the Lord had set.

Directed by the priesthood

The next time he met with the Relief Society, Joseph Smith “exhorted the sisters always to concentrate their faith and prayers for, and place confidence in those whom God has appointed to honor, whom God has placed at the head to lead” (minutes, 28 Apr. 1842, p. 37; *History of the Church*, 4:604–5). This counsel, of course, furthered the direction in the earlier revelation on priesthood, which declared that all “authorities or offices in the church are appendages” to the Melchizedek Priesthood and that this priesthood “holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world” (D&C 107:5, 8). Consequently, the Relief Society and the auxiliaries organized later have always functioned and have thrived under the direction of the presiding authorities of the priesthood.

At this same meeting, the Prophet spoke the words that President Gordon B. Hinckley recently characterized as “a charter . . . of the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (“Ambitious to Do Good,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1992, p. 4):

“This Society is to get instruction thro’ the order which God has established—thro’ the medium of those appointed to lead” (minutes, 28 Apr. 1842).

Here the Prophet declared that the Relief Society was to receive instruction and direction from the priest-

hood leaders who presided over their activities. Like the quorums of priesthood holders in the Church, the Relief Society was to be self-governing, but it was not to be an independent organization. It was an integral part of the Church, not a separate church for women.

The Prophet continued, “I now turn the key to you in the name of God and this Society shall rejoice and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time—this is the beginning of better days to this Society” (minutes, 28 Apr. 1842, p. 40).

When he “turn[ed] the key,” the Prophet Joseph Smith made the Relief Society an official part of the Church and kingdom of God. This opened to women new opportunities for receiving knowledge and intelligence from on high, such as through the temple ordinances that were soon to be instituted. Similarly, as the Prophet promised them in connection with their charitable service, “If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates” (minutes, 28 Apr. 1842, p. 38; *History of the Church*, 4:605).

Authority and priesthood keys

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that the Prophet’s action opened to women the possibility of exercising “some measure of divine authority, particularly in the direction of government and instruction in behalf of the women of the Church” (“Relief Society—An Aid to the Priesthood,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1965, p. 5). President Smith explained: “While the sisters have not been given the Priesthood, . . . that does not mean that the Lord has not given unto them authority. Authority and Priesthood are two different things. A person may have authority given to him, or a sister to her, to do certain things in the Church that are binding and absolutely neces-

sary for our salvation, such as the work that our sisters do in the House of the Lord" ("The Relief Society Organized by Revelation," *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1959, p. 4).

President Smith's teaching on authority explains what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said that he organized the Relief Society "under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood." The authority to be exercised by the officers and teachers of the Relief Society, as with the other auxiliary organizations, was the authority that would flow to them through their organizational connection with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and through their individual setting apart under the hands of the priesthood leaders by whom they were called.

No priesthood keys were delivered to the Relief Society. Keys are conferred on individuals, not organizations. The same is true of priesthood authority and of the related authority exercised under priesthood direction. Organizations may channel the exercise of such authority, but they do not embody it. Thus, the priesthood keys were delivered to the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, not to any organizations (see Topical Guide, "Priesthood, Keys of").

Under the priesthood authority of the bishop, the president of a ward Relief Society presides over and directs the activities of the Relief Society in the ward. A stake Relief Society president presides and exercises authority over the function to which she has been called. The same is true for the other auxiliaries. Similarly, women called as missionaries are set apart to go forth with authority to teach the everlasting gospel, and women called to work in a temple are given authority for the sacred functions to which they have been called. All function under the direction of the priesthood leader who has been

given the priesthood keys to direct those who labor in his area of responsibility.

The Prophet Joseph Smith told the early sisters that he had something better for them than a written constitution. Being organized under priesthood authority, they were to reject worldly concepts of power and seek the power that flows down from heaven for those functions and to those individuals who are using their time and talents in the Lord's way.

In considering the Prophet's instructions to the first Relief Society, we should remember that in those earliest days in Church history more revelation was to come. Thus, when he spoke to the sisters about the appropriateness of their laying on hands to bless one another, the Prophet cautioned "that the time had not been before that these things could be in their proper order—that the Church is not now organized in its proper order, and cannot be until the Temple is completed" (minutes, 28 Apr. 1842, p. 36). During the century that followed, as temples became accessible to most members, "proper order" required that these and other sacred practices be confined within those temples.

Importance of motherhood

I will conclude by offering some counsel on the responsibilities of fathers and mothers and priesthood leaders, with special emphasis on matters of interest to the Relief Society.

President Harold B. Lee repeatedly told men that "the greatest of the Lord's work you . . . will ever do . . . will be within the walls of your own home" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 130; or *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 98). That direction also applies to women, and it should engage the best teaching efforts of the Relief Society. We cannot overstate the supreme importance of the task our Father in

Heaven has assigned to the mothers, who are the teachers and workers and standard-setters in the homes of the Latter-day Saints. The mothers in those homes give the impressionable sons and daughters of God their earliest and most formative orientation for their mortal journey toward eternal life.

Using the priesthood to bless others

Brethren, we know that the priesthood is the power of God delegated to men to act for the blessing and salvation of all mankind. While we sometimes refer to priesthood holders as "the priesthood," we must never forget that the priesthood is not owned by or embodied in those who hold it. It is held in a sacred trust to be used for the benefit of men, women, and children alike. Elder John A. Widtsoe said, "Men have no greater claim than women upon the blessings that issue from the Priesthood and accompany its possession" (*Priesthood and Church Government* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 83). For example, our young women should have just as many opportunities for blessings from priesthood leaders as our young men.

Unity of priesthood and auxiliaries

Some leaders at various levels of the Church have neglected to apply these basic principles. Some have failed to have the regular consultation with auxiliary leaders that is specified in our Church handbooks of instruction. President Spencer W. Kimball taught the governing principle to the priesthood leaders of the Church when he said: "Our sisters do not wish to be indulged or to be treated condescendingly; they desire to be respected and revered as our sisters and our equals. I mention all these things, my brethren, not because the doctrines or the teachings of the Church regarding women are in any doubt, but because in some

situations our behavior is of doubtful quality" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 49).

Priesthood leaders are directed to work in close harmony and partnership with the leaders of our auxiliaries: "As auxiliary leaders work with priesthood leaders to accomplish the mission of the Church, the Lord's earthly kingdom will prosper and individual lives will be blessed" (*Melchizedek Priesthood Leadership Handbook* [1990], p. 2).

Only by unity can we follow the way of the Lord, who said, "Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27).

Marriage: a common objective

One of the great functions of Relief Society is to provide sisterhood for women, just as priesthood quorums provide brotherhood for men. But all should remember that neither sisterhood nor brotherhood is an end in itself. Each is a means of individual spiritual growth and cooperative service. The ultimate and highest expression of womanhood and manhood is in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. Only this relationship culminates in exaltation. As the Apostle Paul taught, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11). Thus, the common objective of brotherhood in our priesthood quorums and sisterhood in our Relief Societies is to bring men and women together in the sacred marriage and family relationships that lead toward eternal life, "the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7).

We give thanks for the Savior, who made this great goal attainable, for His priesthood authority that administers the essential ordinances, and for the great men and women whose lives are an inspiring legacy of godly service. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve, who has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time. We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because at 2:00 the time will change to daylight saving time. We'd like to see you here tomorrow at the right hour.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M., daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning

session which immediately follows should be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the Relief Society choir from the Brigham City Utah Region. I want those in the Tabernacle to take a look at them. What a magnificent picture they are.

The choir will now sing in closing, "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Helvécio Martins of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide."

Elder Helvécio Martins offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 162nd Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 4, 1992. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Orem Utah Region. Stanley Zenk directed the choir, and John Longhurst was at the organ.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to the general priesthood session of the conference.

President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching these proceedings in his apartment, sends his love and best wishes to all who are participating in

this session and has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct. We are pleased that President Benson could attend the beginning session this morning. All of us felt his love.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

We note that Elders David B. Haight, John K. Carmack, and Carlos Amado are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders F. Enzo Busche and L. Lionel Kendrick are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those brethren in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon, Sisters Ardeth G. Kapp, Jayne B. Malan, and Janette C. Hales were released as the General Presidency of the Young

Women; and sisters Janette C. Hales, Virginia H. Pearce, and Patricia P. Pinegar were sustained as the new Young Women General Presidency.

The singing during this session will be furnished by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Orem Utah Region, under the direction of Brother Stanley Zenk, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days." Following the singing, Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days."

Elder F. Burton Howard offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Howard. Brother Howard presides as the Area President of the Mexico Area of the Church.

The choir will now favor us with "God of Our Fathers, We Come unto Thee." Following the choir number, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "God of Our Fathers, We Come unto Thee."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

"My servant Joseph"

My focus, in a few headlines, will be on the remarkable man whom the Lord repeatedly and affectionately called "my servant Joseph" (D&C 5:7). What followed Joseph Smith's prayer in the spring of 1820 irrevocably illuminated our view of God, ourselves, others, life, even the universe! A young boy in a small grove of trees began receiving answers to mankind's oldest and largest questions! But young Joseph certainly did not go into the Sacred Grove seeking the restoration of the holy priesthood and the holy endowment, the sealing power, and all the keys thereof. He did not even know of their existence! He merely wanted to know which of several churches to join. His prayer was for personal and tactical guidance. The response, however, was of global and eternal significance!

Joseph Smith's courage

Would Joseph have gone into the grove, brethren, if he had known beforehand the unceasing persecution which would soon engulf him and finally cause his martyrdom?

Courage is one of Joseph Smith's special qualities. Without it, he would have shrunk from carrying out his remarkable role. At about age seven, he had a gravely infected leg. Amputation seemed inevitable. He refused alcoholic anesthetics when his leg bones were surgically and painfully treated in a new technique. By the way, that thoughtful little boy asked his mother to leave the room so she wouldn't have to witness his suffering.

For Joseph's ailment, the best medical help available in America was surprisingly just a few miles away: Dr. Nathan Smith, founder of Dartmouth's medical school and the experienced pioneer of this advanced technique

(see Le Roy S. Wirthlin, "Joseph Smith's Boyhood Operation: An 1813 Surgical Success," *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1981, pp. 131-54; see also "Joseph Smith's Surgeon," *Ensign*, Mar. 1978, pp. 59-60). He led the team who saved Joseph's leg, including for the grueling march of Zion's Camp.

Joseph often displayed courage, as one beneficiary later reported: "Sickness and fright had robbed me of strength. Joseph had to decide w[h]ether to leave me to be captured by the mob or endanger himself by rendering aid. Choosing the latter course, he lifted me upon his own broad shoulders and bore me with occasional rests through the swamp and darkness. Several hours later we emerged upon the lonely road and soon reached safety. Joseph's . . . strength permitted him to [save] my life" (in Carl Arrington, "Brother Joseph," *New Era*, Dec. 1973, p. 19).

The glorious and the laborious

Joseph's courage was matched by his willingness to be tutored. The Restoration, which occurred "in process of time" (Moses 7:21), so required. After a glorious visitation, there would be laborious implementation. For instance, the bestowal of the golden plates, history's most stunning "find" in the field of religion, was followed by painstaking translation. The keys of the holy apostleship were dramatically restored, but well before the sifting march of Zion's Camp and the subsequent calling of the Twelve. Elijah's very significant visit came well before either the people or temples were prepared to enjoy the restored sealing power.

Yes, Joseph received remarkable manifestations, along with constant vexations. True, for instance, there were periodic arrivals of heavenly messengers, but these were punctuated by the periodic arrivals of earthly mobs.

While Joseph was befriended by heavenly notables, he was also be-

trayed by some of his earthly friends. Receiving keys and gifts was real, but so was the painful loss of six of the eleven children born to him and Emma. Granted, Joseph had revealed to him glimpses of far horizons—the first and third estates. But these periodic glories occurred amid Joseph's arduous daily life in the second estate.

Consecrated Joseph gave so much, yet often so little was returned. President Brigham Young lamented: "There was confidence due from his brethren to Joseph which he did not receive. In his death they learned a profitable lesson, and afterwards felt that if he could only be restored to them how obedient they would be to his counsels" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:222).

I recall reading years ago that, during severe apostasy in Kirtland, Joseph shook someone's hand for what seemed to be a long time. Discerningly, the Prophet then said he was glad to know that individual was his friend because he had so few of them in those days.

Seer, translator, and revelator

Joseph was a seer. He had the gift to translate ancient records (see *History of the Church*, 1:238), and a "seer is greater than a prophet" (Mosiah 8:15; see 8:13-17).

The process of translation was truly "a marvellous work and a wonder," or, as rendered in Hebrew, "a miraculous miracle" (Isaiah 29:14). Depending upon his sequence of translation, scholars estimate that Joseph in 1829 was translating at a rapid daily equivalent of from eight to thirteen of today's printed pages (see John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, "The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information" [Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986], pp. 38-39). An able, professional translator recently told me he considers one page a day productive.

From Joseph the translator—untrained in theology—more printed pages of scripture have come down to us than from any other mortal, as Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has calculated!

Joseph, the revelator. He also became an articulator. President Young said the Prophet Joseph had the “happy faculty” of communicating things “often in a single sentence throwing . . . light into the gloom of [the] ages . . . in one blending flood of heavenly intelligence” (Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:310).

Joseph Smith lit up life’s landscape, brethren, so that we can see “things as they really are, and . . . really will be” (Jacob 4:13). The revelations about the dispensations in salvational history tell us that Adam had the fullness of Christ’s gospel and all its ordinances (see Moses 5:58–59). Hence, Christianity did not begin with Jesus’ mortal messiahship in the meridian of time in Jerusalem! The diffusion which followed Adam naturally resulted in some similarities in various religions. Therefore, as Elder Joseph F. Smith declared, we find “relics of Christianity” which “date back . . . beyond the flood, independent of . . . the Bible” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:325). Latter-day Saints are therefore unsurprised but instead are enriched whenever discoveries are made which show how the Lord grants “unto all nations” to teach a portion of “his word” (Alma 29:8).

In 1834 all the priesthood in the Kirtland area met, not in a tabernacle but in a small log cabin. There, Joseph prophesied that the Church would eventually grow to fill North and South America and even the world (see Wilford Woodruff, *Millennial Star*, 19 Sept. 1892, p. 605; see also Conference Report, Apr. 1898, p. 57). Think of it, brethren—tonight we have live audiences in over three thousand separate congregations involving 162,000 men and young men! Later, videos will reach tens of thousands more in forty-

seven countries and seventeen languages!

Even so, young men listening tonight, including several of my grandsons, will aid in the further fulfillment of Joseph’s bold prophecy, for “the ends of the earth shall inquire after [Joseph’s] name” (D&C 122:1). And young men listening tonight will answer those inquiries in the years ahead and in places with strange-sounding names.

Another remarkable prophecy, given nearly thirty years before the tragedy of the American Civil War, foretold not only where it would begin, but, more importantly, that it would end “in the death and misery of many souls” (D&C 87:1). By far, that war still ranks as America’s bloodiest.

Other prophecies await. Some are grim, such as “a desolating sickness shall cover the land” (D&C 45:31). How its awful fulfillment will occur, we do not know.

When they first met, Joseph also prophesied that Brigham Young would one day preside over the Church (see *Millennial Star*, 11 July 1863, p. 439).

Brigham Young was not easily impressed by anybody, yet he said he felt like shouting “Hallelujah!” all the time that he ever knew Joseph Smith! (in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:51). And dying Brigham’s last words were, “Joseph! Joseph! Joseph!” He was about to be with his beloved Joseph once again! (in Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985], p. 399).

Joseph’s spiritual submissiveness

Joseph could not have accomplished what he did if he had not become consecrated and spiritually submissive. Elder Erastus Snow warned the rest of us that when we are “inclined to be stiff and refractory, . . . the Spirit of the Lord is held at a distance from us” because we are too busy grati-

fying our own wills, and thus we “interpose a barrier” between us and God (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:352).

Near the end, in multiple meetings, Joseph transferred the keys, authority, and ordinances to the Twelve. On one such occasion, President Wilford Woodruff said the revelator’s “face was as clear as amber and he was covered with a power [I have] never seen in [an instant] in the flesh before” (in *Journal History*, 12 Mar. 1897). President Young said that those who knew Joseph could tell when “the Spirit of revelation was upon him, . . . for at such times there was a peculiar clearness and transparency in his face” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:89).

Even with all he revealed, however, the Prophet Joseph knew much more than he could tell. President John Taylor observed that Joseph “felt fettered and bound” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:148). Heber C. Kimball confirmed that Joseph sometimes felt “as though he were enclosed . . . ; there was no room for him to expand, . . . no room in the hearts of the people to receive” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:233).

The Prophet Joseph was a very good man. We need not suppose him “guilty of any great or malignant sins,” for such, he said, “was never in my nature” (Joseph Smith—History 1:28). Near the end of his life, he meekly said, “I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 368).

Unsurprisingly, the Prophet was closely linked with previous prophets! Just as on the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, James, and John were given priesthood keys by Elias, the Prophet Joseph likewise received priesthood keys from Elias and also from Peter, James, and John and so many others! In a December 1834 blessing, Father Smith confirmed to his son that ancient

Joseph in Egypt “looked after his posterity in the last days . . . [and] sought diligently to know . . . who should bring forth the word of the Lord [to them] and his eyes beheld thee, my son [Joseph Smith, Jr.]: [and] his heart rejoiced and his soul was satisfied” (*Patriarchal Blessings*, 1:3).

Joseph’s suffering

Concerning his personal suffering, Joseph was promised, “Thy heart shall be enlarged.” An enlarged Joseph wrote from Liberty Jail, “It seems to me that my heart will always be more tender after this than ever it was before. . . . I think I never could have felt as I now do if I had not suffered” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984], pp. 386–87). Was Joseph not told, “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good”? (D&C 122:7).

Revelations about the Atonement

Most significantly, through the Prophet Joseph came translations and revelations which confirmed and described, as never before, the reality of the glorious Atonement, in which, alas, so few really believe today. It is the central act of all human history! Very few words have come directly from Jesus about His specific and personal suffering during that agonizing but emancipating atonement. Almost all of these precious few words come to us through the Prophet Joseph! Jesus truly did bleed at every pore. He trembled because of pain. He suffered both body and spirit. He pled that He might not shrink, or pull back, from performing the Atonement. He finally finished His preparations unto the children of men. Meek Jesus let His will be “swallowed up in the will of the Father”! (Mosiah 15:7). Even in the midst of His astonishing, personal triumph,

Jesus, true to His premortal promise, still gave all the glory to the Father (see D&C 19:18–19; Moses 4:2).

Be men of Christ

The Prophet's life was thus one of high achievement amid deep disappointment. Brethren, how will we endure our own peaks and valleys? Will we so submit individually, or will we be "stiff and refractory"?

Joseph became fully consecrated and grew in a "spiritual crescendo." Will we do the same, brethren, by witnessing to our families, friends, and flocks—not only through our verbal testimonies but also by our developmental examples? We can do this by becoming ever more visibly the men of Christ!

Or will we be like those who were decent but who lacked the courage to declare openly for Jesus and who were afraid of losing their places in the synagogue? (see John 12:42–43). There are so many equivalent situations today, and some Church members are reluctant to risk losing their places! Each day we decide the degree of our discipleship. Each day we answer the question, "Who's on the Lord's side? Who?"

Now, my brethren, "these are [your] days" (Helaman 7:9) in the history of the Church. Mark well what kind of days they will be, days when, with special visibility, the Lord will "make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations" (D&C 133:3). God will also "hasten" His work (D&C 88:73). He will also "shorten" the last days "for the elect's sake" (Matthew 24:22); hence, there will be a compression of events (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:20). Furthermore, "all things shall be in commotion" (D&C 88:91). Only those in the process of becoming the men and women of Christ will be able to keep their spiritual balance. Brethren, may we "walk by faith" and, if necessary, even on our knees! In the name of the Lord of the universe, even Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have heard from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy.

Elder Carlos E. Asay

A young man of deacon age reported:

"I feel a lot of pressure from my friends to smoke and steal and things like that. . . . My best friends are really pushing me to do it. They call me a *pansy* and a *Momma's boy* if I don't. I really don't like the idea of smoking but my good friend Steve told me in front of some of my friends, 'Kevin, you're an idiot and a chicken wrapped up in one little body'" (in John W. Santrock, *Child Development* [New York: William C. Brown, 1987], p. 408; italics added).

An eighteen-year-old priest recounted:

"On one occasion, I was persuaded to join a group on a weekend excursion. I was told that the [plans] for the day included . . . sightseeing, a lunch, and a movie. I was promised that there would be no [inappropriate activities]. All . . . knew that I was a Latter-day Saint and . . . deeply committed to the moral standards of the Church.

"Upon reaching the city, we visited a place or two of historical significance and ate lunch. Then the inevitable hap-

pened—the group turned toward a bar and a house of [prostitution]. I refused to enter these dens of iniquity, and I openly expressed my anger over the broken promises of my associates.

“As I walked away . . . , my companions taunted me by shouting, ‘When are you going to grow up?’ ‘When will you stop being a sissy and a religious fanatic?’ ‘When are you going to be a man?’” (Carlos E. Asay, *In the Lord’s Service* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990], p. 46).

Who is a man?

It seems that everyone at some time or another is invited by peers to smoke, drink, steal, or engage in other immoral acts, all under the pretense of manhood. And when someone refuses to participate, he is often ridiculed and called names like pansy, mamma’s boy, idiot, chicken, sissy, and religious fanatic. Such names are used by peers who equate manliness with the ability to drink liquor, blow tobacco smoke out of all the facial cavities, sow one’s wild oats like some animal on the street, and break moral laws without a twinge of conscience.

We see colorful advertisements on billboards, in magazines, and on the television screen promoting cigarettes, beer, and other vices. Those who use cunning tactics to peddle their wares disregard the souls of young people and love only their money. They would have us believe that a person with a cigarette or alcoholic beverage in hand is a man, when in reality he is nothing more than a slave to a destructive substance. They would have us believe that a person who engages in illicit sex is a man, when in reality he is nothing more than an abuser of those who are “tender and chaste and delicate” (Jacob 2:7). They would have us believe that brute force, or crude behavior, uncontrolled temper, foul language, and dirty appearance make a man, when in reality these characteristics are animalistic

at best and the opposite of manhood at worst.

We who bear the priesthood must be on guard; we must not be influenced by barbarian voices in our quest to become men (see 1 Corinthians 14:8–11). We must remember that “God created man in his own image” and that man is expected to keep that image engraven upon his countenance (Genesis 1:27; see also Alma 5:14, 19).

“What is man?” asked the psalmist (Psalm 8:4). The answer: “[God] made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour” (8:5). It is, therefore, our responsibility to climb ever upward and to wear God-given crowns honorably. Young men, especially those of a “chosen generation” and “royal priesthood,” must understand that they are the spiritual offspring of God and that no one becomes in truth a man until he reverences the Father of spirits and allows inner powers to control his thoughts, words, and actions (see 1 Peter 2:9; Acts 17:28; Hebrews 12:9).

What makes a man a man?

What makes a man a man? This is a question used in a popular beer ad. The suggestion of that advertisement is that by drinking the beer the consumer becomes a man. How devious and how very stupid! Those who try to get you to drink alcoholic beverages and use drugs have total disregard for you, you who are the “temples of God.” Hence, they would have you defile your body and offend the Spirit of God that dwells within you (see 1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

What makes a man a man? Let’s turn to the Book of Mormon and Father Lehi for an answer. A short time before his death, Lehi gave this charge to his sons:

“Arise from the dust, . . . and be men” (2 Nephi 1:21; italics added).

“Awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake

off the awful chains by which ye are bound" (1:13).

"Be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things" (1:21).

"Put on the armor of righteousness. . . . Come forth out of obscurity. . . . Rebel no more" (1:23-24).

• The challenge to "*arise from the dust*" means to overcome evil behaviors that destroy character and ruin lives. Physical appetites must be controlled.

• "*Awake from a deep sleep*, . . . even from the sleep of hell," suggests a process of learning and becoming aware of God's holy purposes. No sleep is deeper or more deadly than the sleep of ignorance.

• "*Shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound*" indicates the need to overcome bad habits, even the seemingly little habits that grow into strong "chains of hell" (see 2 Nephi 26:22; Alma 5:7).

• "*Be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things*" requires full commitment to righteousness and a singleness of purpose so that one's will is made compatible with the will of God.

• "*Put on the armor of righteousness*" reminds us of the need to wear the helmet of salvation, pick up the sword of truth, use the shield of faith, and accept the full protective coverings of the Lord (see Ephesians 6:11-18).

• "*Come forth out of obscurity*" instructs one to model goodness and serve as a light to others. True men are living light fountains which are pleasant to be near (Thomas Carlyle; see also D&C 103:9-10).

• "*Rebel no more*" makes it perfectly clear that ignoring or willfully breaking commandments is a wasteful effort.

A vicious lie

There is a lie—a vicious lie—circulating among the Latter-day Saints

and taking its toll among the young. And it is that a "balanced man" is one who deliberately guards against becoming too righteous. This lie would have you believe that it is possible to live successfully and happily as a "double-minded man" with one foot in Babylon and one foot in Zion (see James 1:8).

I love this story of two young men who had been schooled in a monastery. One morning as they sought adventure, they passed a cathedral. The more righteous of the two remembered that they had not prayed that morning and said, "How can [we] hope for [God's] blessing upon the day?"

The less righteous one responded, "My friend, I have prayed so much during the last two months . . . that I feel that I have [somewhat] over-prayed myself."

"How can a man have too much religion?" asked the first. "It is the one thing that availeth. A man is but a beast as he lives from day to day, eating and drinking, breathing and sleeping. *It is only when he raises himself, and concerns himself with the immortal spirit within him, that he becomes in [very] truth a man.* Bethink ye how sad a thing it would be that the blood of the Redeemer should be spilled to no purpose" (*Works of A. Conan Doyle* [New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1988], pp. 58-59; italics added).

Can a man be too righteous? Too Christlike? Impossible! Can the so-called "balanced man" walk successfully the beam between good and evil? No. Each step is shaky, and eventually he will teeter and fall and break himself against the commandments of God.

Fleshliness never was manliness, and it never will be. A real man is one who yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and seeks to acquire Christlike virtues. A real man is one who allows the Spirit to direct the course and to call the cadence in his life. "Remember, to be carnally-minded is death,

and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal" (2 Nephi 9:39).

Ezra Taft Benson's example of manliness

A man of Christ stood on October 1, 1959, before a crowd of 1,500 people in a church within the shadow of the Kremlin and boldly referred to Jesus as the great Redeemer. He said in an emotion-filled voice:

"I believe very firmly in prayer. . . . It is possible to reach out and tap that Unseen Power which gives us such strength and such an anchor in time of need. . . . Be unafraid, keep His commandments, love one another, pray for peace and all will be well. . . . Truth will endure. Time is on the side of truth" (Ezra Taft Benson, *Cross Fire: The Eight Years with Eisenhower* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1962], pp. 486-87).

People wept openly on that occasion, including newsmen who had reluctantly attended the worship service. One newsman, a former marine, ranked the experience as one of the two most spiritual and memorable of his life.

There was a man in that cathedral in Russia on that special day. His name, Ezra Taft Benson—he who now presides as the President, prophet of the Church.

Joseph Smith's example of manliness

Parley P. Pratt provides us with a description of a real man in his account of his imprisonment in Richmond, Missouri, with Joseph Smith and others. On one of those awful nights in jail, Brother Pratt and his associates were exposed to the filthy language of their guards as they bragged of their deeds of rape, murder, robbery, and other crimes committed against the Mormons. When the Prophet Joseph Smith could bear it no more, he rose to his feet and spoke with a voice of thunder:

"SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT!" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], p. 211).

Said Elder Pratt: "I have seen the ministers of justice, clothed in magisterial robes . . . in the Courts of England; I have witnessed a Congress in solemn session . . . ; I have tried to conceive of kings . . . and of emperors assembled to decide the fate of kingdoms; but dignity and majesty have I seen but *once*, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri" (*Autobiography*, p. 211).

There was a man! Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Restoration.

The Savior's example of manliness

The Savior, the perfect model of manliness, stood before his tormentors having been scourged, beaten, spat upon, and platted with a crown of thorns. Pilate admitted, "I find no fault in him." Then he pronounced those irrefutable and piercing words: "Behold the man!" (John 19:4-5).

Jesus, our Savior, was *the* man among men, for he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52); he subjected the flesh to the Spirit and yielded not to temptation (see Mosiah 15:1-8); he learned obedience by the things which he suffered (see Hebrews 5:8); he grew from grace to grace (see D&C 93:12-14); and, in the words of Shakespeare:

His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might
stand up
And say to all the world "This was a
man!"

[*Julius Caesar*, cited in David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals* (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953), p. 353]

Thus he, the only sinless and perfect man who ever walked this earth, is qualified to state: "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

King David instructed his son Solomon,

"Be thou strong . . . and shew thyself a man;

"And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, . . . that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest" (1 Kings 2:2-3; italics added).

I echo this charge: Be men! Be men of Christ! Be men of God! For this I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone

The need for mature couples

Brethren, I would talk tonight to the generation who are moving into their mature years, many of whom have served God, country, and fellowman—a strong, principled, and committed generation, which did great things but had the wisdom not to talk about them much. There is another need for us now.

The cause to which I speak is of missionary work as couples. It was of such great consequence that the Savior, in his final instructions to his disciples, charges them with it: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. . . . I have chosen you . . . that ye should go . . . and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:13, 16).

There has never been a greater need than now for an army of mature couples to go out into every far corner of this earth and retain the fruit of the harvest. The harvest is truly great, and the laborers are few. Remember the words of Ammon:

"Our brethren, the Lamanites, were in darkness, yea, even in the darkest abyss, but behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God! And this is the blessing which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work" (Alma 26:3).

Imagine what thousands of couples could do this year, followed by hosts more in succeeding years. We could move into the fields of harvest, and we could nurture, care for, and gather them "into the garners, that they are not wasted. Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day" (Alma 26:5-6).

Sacrifices to serve a mission

I think we will not be tested in the way the pioneers were tested. They were called to leave all worldly possessions, homes, even family and loved ones to cross the prairies to dry and desolate, forbidding lands. They buried their babies, children, and companions on the Great Plains in shallow, unmarked graves. Physically, they suffered beyond belief, nor can tongue tell the sad, pitiful story. Out of the ashes of sacrifice of so noble a people this kingdom has emerged to become the most powerful force for good on the face of the earth today.

There is a need—not to leave homes forever, but for a time—then return and reap the rich harvest of the faithful labor. Your children and grandchildren will be blessed. The power of good will go out from Zion. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace" (Mosiah 12:21).

Can you imagine any more Christ-like service than to secure the harvest?

Missionary couples are sent into the branches to minister and nurture. They strengthen the Church, lift up the hands that hang down, and fall in love with the Filipinos, the Africans, the Norwegians, Haitians, and Polyne-sians.

Imagine what it means to be truly needed by the Lord in a far ministry.

Prisoners of the Lord's love

There was a popular song that our generation may remember. Review the slightly adjusted lyrics with me:

Away from home tonight you'll find
me,
Too weak to break the chains that
bind me;
I need no shackles to remind me
I'm just a prisoner of love.
For one command I stand and wait
now
From one who's master of my fate
now.
I can't escape for it's too late now;
I'm just a prisoner of love.
What's the good of my caring,
Unless I am sharing his love for me?
Although there may be others,
I must be a brother, for I'm not free.
He's in my dreams, awake or
sleeping.
Upon my knees to him I'm creeping,
My very life is in his keeping.
I'm just a prisoner of love.
I am a prisoner of love.

René de Chardin said, "Someday, after we have mastered the winds, the waves, the tides, and gravity, we will harness for God the energies of love; and then, for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire."

Wonderful couples who simply love the Lord and will enlist in this

great work and accept a call will also be prisoners of love—His love.

Now is the time to serve

Yogi Berra, an oft-quoted baseball philosopher, said, "When you come to a crossroads, . . . take it." Thousands of you may have reached a crossroads.

Now is the time to accept a call or volunteer for one.

A little old lady at a rest home turned to the old man next to her and said, "I can guess your age."

"You can't," he replied.

"Yes, I can," she said. "You go take a bath, shave, brush your hair, put on a nice clean shirt and a tie, and shine your shoes, and I'll tell you."

The old man was gone for about an hour. When he returned he was neat, clean, hair brushed, shoes polished, and in his suit. She said, "Now you go stand up against the wall." He did.

He said, "Now, how old am I?"

She said, "You're eighty-nine."

He responded, "That's right, but how did you know?"

She said, "You told me yesterday."

After examining a woman's husband, a doctor said, "I don't like the looks of your husband."

"Neither do I," said the woman, "but he is good to the children."

Some of us may look a little old, but if we get all dressed up we don't look half bad.

Memories to last the eternities

You can imagine what a wonderful blessing it would be to serve in a branch in Alaska, Barbados, Haiti, Nigeria, or Manila. We need couples filled with love and a desire to serve, whose chief responsibility is to bless the harvest so that the fruit will remain. Experience alone from a mature life qualifies us to become nurturers.

Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's will never be the same again once you have celebrated them while serving a mission. Imagine a small Christmas tree with a few decorations, Christmas carols, a humble apartment, never more in love with your wife—a Christmas spirit that makes that little apartment seem as a sacred temple. You pack your white baptismal clothing and walk, hand in hand, to the chapel, where a little family waits patiently to enter God's kingdom through the waters of baptism. You see the star of wonder, not hanging over Bethlehem, but in the eyes of the humble, sweet converts. You look at your wife; she looks at you; nothing need or can be said, both of you overcome with joy.

The twelve or eighteen months will seem as a small moment, but the memories will last through the eternities.

A divine charge to share

Those of us who have partaken of the goodness of God have a divine charge to share. The Apostle Paul asked the Ephesians "to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). We should be filled with all the fulness of God.

We ask along with James: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" (James 2:14).

And in the last verse of the book of James, the Apostle gives us a key to our service. "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). Should the reward be less for the nurturer, the garnerer, the carer?

"Your family shall live"

President Harold B. Lee taught the principle that only as we make ourselves totally available are we worthy disciples of Christ and obtain another promise that reaches beyond us. We worry and ache and pain over family members who have erred. The thirty-first section of the Doctrine and Covenants provides a great key in verse five:

"Therefore, thrust in your sickle with all your soul, and your sins are forgiven you, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your back, for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Wherefore, your family shall live."

Ours has been a giving generation. Why not one more time, that our families should live?

We do not know the blessings or condescensions of God. The promise is sure: "Wherefore, your family shall live." Blessings will come to our wayward or wandering children, even those who are married and have children of their own.

It is still our duty to stand

Our generation came through a depression, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. We live in the season of the world when good has become evil and evil, good. We have heard outcries against the things which we hold precious and dear—prayer and God. We see attempts at legalization of drugs, abortion, homosexuality, and other compromising, drifting philosophies. Some of the brightest in our generation have been swept by giant waves onto treacherous shoals. We may not have been all that we should have been as parents, but we have loved our children, this Church, and our homelands, and we have cared for people in all nations. Some of the best blood of our generation has been spilled to preserve freedom. We have sacrificed many things to provide those who would

follow better things than we had. This may well be another opportunity to reach our own by serving others.

President Joseph F. Smith said:

"After we have done all we could do for the cause of truth, and withstood the evil that men have brought upon us, . . . it is still our duty to stand. We cannot give up; we must not lie down. Great causes are not won in a single generation. To stand firm in the face of overwhelming opposition, when you have done all you can, is the courage of faith. The courage of faith is the courage of progress. Men who possess that divine quality go on; they are not permitted to stand still if they would. They are not simply the creatures of their own power and wisdom; they are instrumentalities of a higher law and a divine purpose" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 119).

There is a holy hand behind the divine purposes of God. We can be His "instrumentalities."

Raise a title of love

Most of us do not have many years left to live. As we come to the latter years of life, we come to a mature spiritual understanding. We have these next years to do something great, important, and significant for God, our religion, our wives, and children. We ought to raise a new title, not a title of liberty, but of love—a banner that will remain long after we are gone.

What better way have we to prepare to meet our God than to serve a mission when the autumn and winter of life is upon us?

We are prisoners of love. Come, my beloved brethren. Let our generation do something great and noble; come join our ranks. Let us march by the thousands out into the vineyards to

nurture, teach, and bless the tender branches. Let us protect and bless the fruit of the harvest. Let us gather the sheaves into the garner, away from the storm, safe from the whirlwind, a holy place where the storm cannot penetrate.

A good man said: "I believe the test of a great man is humility. I do not mean by humility the doubt in one's own personal power; but really, truly great men have the curious feeling that greatness is not in them but through them and they see the divine in every other human soul and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful."

That sounds like our generation. Who knows but what God will grant for us and ours what we do for others? Come, lift your banner high and march with us into the mission field in the spirit of love and caring.

Ponder and pray together. Begin to prepare. Our generation can do something great for those who follow. Have we been "steeled" for the very purpose about which I have been speaking? Let the ranks of missionaries swell with couples from every broad reach of this earth that the fruit will remain, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Carlos E. Asay and Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy.

It's only fitting, after hearing their remarks, that the choir and congregation will now join in singing "Called to Serve," following which we shall hear from Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Called to Serve."

Elder L. Aldin Porter

Qualities of effective missionaries

Elder L. Tom Perry made reference this afternoon to additional millions and millions of people who now may hear the glorious message of the restored gospel. The Lord has, in the recent past, opened the doors of nations long denied the blessings of gospel covenants. Elder Perry reissued the Lord's clarion call for every worthy young man to serve a mission. With a deep desire to in no way detract from his clear and urgent message, I would like to ask the question, What kind of missionaries must they be?

A willing heart and mind

The Church was less than eighteen months old when the Lord encouraged the early Saints by saying: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great. Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind" (D&C 64:33-34).

Missionaries who have willing minds are needed in the field.

Let me share with you the recorded feelings of one who had a willing mind. Elder Heber C. Kimball recorded: "The Prophet Joseph came to me . . . and . . . said, 'Brother Heber, the Spirit of the Lord has whispered to me: "Let my servant Heber go to England and proclaim my Gospel, and open the door of salvation to that nation."'

"The thought was overpowering. . . . 'O, Lord,' " wrote Elder Kimball, " 'I am a man of stammering tongue, and altogether unfit for such a work; how can I go to preach in that land, which is so famed throughout Christendom for learning, knowledge and piety;

the nursery of religion; and to a people whose intelligence is proverbial!'"

Note this: "However, all these considerations did not deter me from the path of duty; the moment I understood the will of my Heavenly Father, I felt a determination to go at all hazards, believing that He would support me by His almighty power, and endow me with every qualification that I needed" (in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967], pp. 103-4).

Many months passed; this man of strong determination to duty had completed his mission and was about to return to his home:

"On the morning when I left Chatburn many were in tears, thinking they should see my face no more. When I left them, my feelings were such as I cannot describe. As I walked down the street I was followed by numbers; the doors were crowded by the inmates of the houses to bid me farewell, who could only give vent to their grief in sobs. . . . While contemplating this scene I was constrained to take off my hat, for I felt as if the place was holy ground. The Spirit of the Lord rested down upon me and I was constrained to bless that whole region of country. . . . My heart was like unto theirs, and I thought my head was a fountain of tears, for I wept for several miles after I bid them adieu" (in *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, p. 187).

The Lord needs missionaries with a willing heart and mind.

Commitment

Truly effective missionaries have many talents, varied and beautiful, but one quality they all seem to have is the ability to stick with their commitments—that is, the power to *do* what

they agree to do. They tell themselves to get up in the morning, on time, and do it. They don't depend on companions, district leaders, or anyone else. They commit to the mission president that they will follow the gospel study program every morning and not run out of steam in a few days. They understand that the Lord has called them to teach and testify, baptize and build the kingdom in His name, and they are happily at their work.

From whence comes this power to make a decision and stay with it? I would suggest to you it comes, in most cases, long before they arrive in the mission field.

Clean of serious transgressions

Eighteen months ago, President Thomas S. Monson spoke at the general priesthood meeting concerning a very important message. It has been published for all of us in a pamphlet called *For the Strength of Youth*. Permit me to read a short paragraph:

"Some people knowingly break God's commandments. They plan to repent before they go on a mission or receive the sacred covenants and ordinances of the temple. Repentance for such behavior is difficult and painful and may take a long time. It is better to not commit the sin. Certain sins are of such gravity that they can put your membership in the Church and your eternal life at risk. Sexual sins are among those of such seriousness" (*For the Strength of Youth* [pamphlet, 1990], p. 17).

It is my judgment that some of our youth *do not believe* that repentance for serious transgression "is difficult and painful and may take a long time." Where has this grave misunderstanding come from?

To you young people, if any of us who are older have given you the impression that it isn't too serious to

disobey the commandments of God, forgive us. Listen carefully to the words of the Lord through a prophet, even King Benjamin:

"And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved—

"I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an enemy to all righteousness; therefore, the Lord has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in unholy temples" (Mosiah 2:36–37).

Far better that we diligently strive to keep ourselves clean of these serious transgressions. Some have not done so, and gratefully there is a way of escape. But it "is difficult and painful and may take a long time."

Note the words of the Lord Himself as He remembers the cost of our transgressions and points us to that deliverance:

"Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

"But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:15–18).

Worthy to be guided by the Spirit

Young men, you must live righteously for many reasons. One of them is that you must be accompanied by the Spirit of the Lord as you labor in the mission field. The association of the Spirit of the Lord is dependent upon personal righteousness. If you do not strive diligently for the assistance of the Spirit, you will find your missionary work extremely difficult and your results very disappointing.

President Benson's counsel is very clear: "Our preaching and our teaching must be by the power of the Holy Ghost. . . . We must ever remember that in this glorious work, the most essential element is the Spirit" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 313).

Listen also to the words of the Lord as He speaks of His emissaries:

"Wherefore, I call upon the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised, to thrash the nations by the power of my Spirit;

"And their arm shall be my arm, and I will be their shield and their buckler; and I will gird up their loins, and they shall fight manfully for me" (D&C 35:13-14).

Let your desire be to join this magnificent army marching arm in arm with companions to "fight manfully" for Him, accompanied by the Spirit.

Priesthood leaders, let us be careful that we do not permit young missionaries to go into the mission field with unresolved transgression. It is literally like going into battle without helmet, sword, or shield. Let us remember that it takes time to develop the power to resist the fires of temptation. It takes time to receive the sweet comfort that always comes to the heart of the truly penitent. Allow them sufficient time.

A disciple of Jesus Christ

In addition, there is a broader issue. Time will permit just a reference to it. But our success in this endeavor will have eternal consequences for more than the missionary and the convert.

Elder Boyd K. Packer has reminded us that "the safety of the Church in generations ahead rests on our success in calling missionaries. If we have concern for the future of this work, we will not rest until every able-bodied young man is made worthy and desires to receive a call to a mission" ("Principles," *Ensign*, Mar. 1985, p. 10).

The Lord is calling for worthy, willing workers to labor in His harvest fields.

My beloved young men, will you consider what it would mean to you if you could join the prophet Mormon in saying: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13).

I am a witness that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. It is my deep conviction that He has called us to teach and testify in His name before the world. And to you young brethren, my sincere prayer is that you will respond to His call with a willing mind and worthy heart, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Seventy has just spoken to us. All from whom we've heard this evening are real missionaries, and I hope and pray that every young man who is here tonight preparing for a mission will have an opportunity to serve under just such a president as any one of these.

President Thomas S. Monson

Truly a royal priesthood has assembled tonight. The Tabernacle on Temple Square is filled to overflowing, and the Assembly Hall is occupied, as are chapels throughout many countries in the world. In all likelihood this is the largest assemblage of priesthood holders ever to come together. Your devotion to your sacred callings is inspiring. Your desire to learn your duty is evident. The purity of your souls brings heaven closer to you and your families.

Living in difficult economic times

These are difficult economic times. Cutbacks in industry, layoffs on a substantial scale, and the resultant dislocation of families become a serious challenge. We must make certain that those for whom we share responsibilities do not go hungry or unclothed or unsheltered. When the priesthood of this Church work together as one in meeting these vexing conditions, near miracles take place.

We urge all Latter-day Saints to be prudent in their planning, to be conservative in their living, and to avoid excessive or unnecessary debt. The financial affairs of the Church are being managed in this manner, for we are aware that your tithing and other contributions have not come without sacrifice and are sacred funds.

Let us make of our homes sanctuaries of righteousness, places of prayer, and abodes of love, that we might merit the blessings that can come only from our Heavenly Father. We need His guidance in our daily lives.

Being profitable servants

In this vast throng is priesthood power and the capacity to reach out and share the glorious gospel with others. We have the hands to lift others from complacency and inactivity. We

have the hearts to serve faithfully in our priesthood callings and thereby inspire others to walk on higher ground and to avoid the swamps of sin which threaten to engulf so many. The worth of souls is indeed great in the sight of God. Ours is the precious privilege, armed with this knowledge, to make a difference in the lives of others. The words found in Ezekiel could well pertain to all of us who follow the Savior in this sacred work:

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. . . .

"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

"And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezekiel 36:26-28).

How might we merit this promise? What will qualify us to receive this blessing? Is there a guide to follow? May I suggest three imperatives for our consideration? They apply to the deacon as well as the high priest. They are within our reach. A kind Heavenly Father will help us in our quest.

First: *Learn what we should learn!*

Second: *Do what we should do!*

Third: *Be what we should be!*

Let us in some detail discuss these objectives, that we might be profitable servants in the sight of our Lord.

Learn what we should learn

1. *Learn what we should learn.* The Apostle Paul placed an urgency on our efforts to learn. He said to the Philippians, "One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

And to the Hebrews he urged, "Lay aside . . . sin . . . , and let us run with patience the race . . . set before us, looking [for an example] unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Elder Stephen L. Richards spoke often to holders of the priesthood and emphasized his philosophy pertaining to it. He declared:

"The Priesthood is usually simply defined as 'the power of God delegated to man.' This definition, I think, is accurate. But for practical purposes I like to define the Priesthood in terms of service and I frequently call it 'the perfect plan of service.' I do so because it seems to me that it is only through the utilization of the divine power conferred on men that they may ever hope to realize the full import and vitality of this endowment. It is an instrument of service . . . and the man who fails to use it is apt to lose it, for we are plainly told by revelation that he who neglects it 'shall not be counted worthy to stand.'

"The Priesthood is not static and a man's ordination . . . is not a static investiture. There may be some men, however, who so regard it, for they seem to be so smug and content with their ordinations.

"I can well imagine such a man going into the presence of the great Eternal Judge and saying in substance, 'While I was on earth I was a High Priest. I come now to claim the reward of a High Priest.' I think it is not difficult to suppose what may be his answer. He will likely be met with such questions as these, 'What did you do when you were a High Priest? How did you use this great power which you held? Whom did you bless with it?' Upon his reply to such interrogatories as these will his reward be predicated."¹

The First Presidency, comprised of Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose, in February 1914 declared:

"Priesthood is not given for the honor or aggrandizement of man, but for the ministry of service among those for whom the bearers of that sacred commission are called to labor. . . .

"The God-given titles of honor, and of more than human distinction, associated with the several offices in and orders of the Holy Priesthood, are not to be used nor considered as are the titles originated by man; they are not for adornment nor are they expressive of mastership, but rather of appointment to humble service in the work of the one Master whom we profess to serve."²

President Harold B. Lee, one of the great teachers of the Church, put his counsel in easy-to-understand terms: "When one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord's errand."³

Now some of you may be shy by nature or consider yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord's work, and when we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help. Remember that the Lord will shape the back to bear the burden placed upon it.

Priesthood outings to Clarkston

While the formal classroom may be intimidating at times, some of the most effective teaching takes place other than in the chapel or the classroom. Well do I remember that about this season, some years ago, members holding the Aaronic Priesthood would eagerly look forward to an annual outing commemorating the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. By the busload the young men of our stake journeyed ninety miles north to the Clarkston Cemetery, where we viewed the grave

of Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. While we surrounded the beautiful granite shaft which marks his grave, Elder Glen L. Rudd, then a high counselor, presented the background of the life of Martin Harris, read from the Book of Mormon his testimony, and then bore his own witness to the truth. The young men listened with rapt attention, touched the granite marker, and pondered the words they had heard and the feelings they had felt.

At a park in Logan, lunch was enjoyed. The group of young men then lay down on the lawn at the Logan Temple and gazed upward at its lofty spires. Beautiful white clouds hurried by the spires, moved along by a gentle breeze. The purpose of temples was taught. Covenants and promises became much more than words. The desire to be worthy to enter those temple doors entered those youthful hearts. Heaven was very close that day. Learning what we should learn was assured.

Do what we should do

2. *Do what we should do.* In a revelation on priesthood, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, recorded as the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, "learning" moves to "doing" as we read, "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence" (D&C 107:99).

Each priesthood holder attending this session tonight has a calling to serve, to put forth his best efforts in the work assigned to him. No assignment is menial in the work of the Lord, for each has eternal consequences. President John Taylor warned us: "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty."⁴ And who of us can afford to be responsible for the delay of eternal life of a human soul? If great joy is

the reward of saving one soul, then how terrible must be the remorse of those whose timid efforts have allowed a child of God to go unwarned or unaided so that he has to wait till a dependable servant of God comes along.

The old adage is ever true: "Do your duty, that is best; leave unto the Lord the rest."

Most service given by priesthood holders is accomplished quietly and without fanfare. A friendly smile, a warm handclasp, a sincere testimony of truth can literally lift lives, change human nature, and save precious souls.

The Fussesks' mission to Poland

An example of such service was the missionary experience of Juliusz and Dorothy Fussek, who were called to fill a two-year mission in Poland. Brother Fussek was born in Poland. He spoke the language. He loved the people. Sister Fussek was English and knew little of Poland and its people.

Trusting in the Lord, they embarked on their assignment. The living conditions were primitive, the work lonely, their task immense. A mission had not at that time been established in Poland. The assignment given the Fussesks was to prepare the way that a mission could be established, that other missionaries be called to serve, people taught, converts baptized, branches established, and chapels erected.

Did Elder and Sister Fussek despair because of the enormity of their assignment? Not for a moment. They knew their calling was from God, they prayed for His divine help, and they devoted themselves wholeheartedly to their work. They remained in Poland not two years, but five years. All of the foregoing objectives were realized.

Elders Russell M. Nelson, Hans B. Ringger, and I, accompanied by Elder

Fussek, met with Minister Adam Wopatka of the Polish government and heard him say, "Your church is welcome here. You may build your buildings, you may send your missionaries. You are welcome in Poland. This man," pointing to Juliusz Fussek, "has served your church well. You can be grateful for his example and his work."

Like the Fussesks, let us do what we should do in the work of the Lord. Then we can, with Juliusz and Dorothy Fussek, echo the psalm: "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. . . . He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:2-4).

Be what we should be

3. *Be what we should be.* Paul counseled his beloved friend and associate Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

President Ezra Taft Benson has urged us to pray over our assignments and to seek divine help that we might be successful. Further, he has followed this counsel himself in all of his undertakings. Prayer is a hallmark of the leadership of Ezra Taft Benson. "The recognition of a power higher than man himself does not in any sense debase him. He must seek, believe in, pray and hope that he will find. No such sincere, prayerful effort will go unanswered: that is the very constitution of the philosophy of faith. Divine favor will attend those who humbly seek it."

From the Book of Mormon comes counsel that says it all. The Lord speaks: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

And what manner of man was He? What example did He set in His service? From John, chapter 10, we learn:

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

"But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

"The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

"As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:11-15).

Learn what we should learn. Do what we should do. Be what we should be. By so doing, the blessings of heaven will attend. We will know that we do not serve alone. He who notes the sparrow's fall will, in His own way, acknowledge our service.

Slides of the Berndt family

Let me share with you, brethren, a touching experience that illustrates this assurance.

Brother Edwin Q. Cannon, Jr., was a missionary to Germany in 1938, where he loved the people and served faithfully. At the conclusion of his mission, he returned home to Salt Lake City. He married and commenced his own business.

Forty years passed by. One day Brother Cannon came to my office and said he had been pruning his missionary slides. Among those slides he had kept since his mission were several which he could not specifically identify. Every time he had planned to discard those few slides, he had been impressed to keep them, although he was at a loss as to why. They were photographs taken by Brother Cannon during his mission when he served in Stettin, Germany, and were of a family—a mother, a father, a small girl, a

small boy. Brother Cannon knew their surname was Berndt but could remember nothing more about them. He indicated that he understood there was a Berndt who was a Regional Representative in Germany, and he thought, although the possibility was remote, that this Berndt might have some connection with the Berndts who had lived in Stettin and who were depicted in the photographs. Before disposing of the slides, he thought he would check with me.

I told Brother Cannon I was leaving shortly for Berlin, where I anticipated that I would see Dieter Berndt, the Regional Representative, and that I would show the slides to him to see if there were any relationship and if he wanted them. There was a possibility I would also see Brother Berndt's sister, who was married to Dietmar Matern, a stake president in Hamburg.

The Lord didn't even let me get to Berlin before His purposes were accomplished. I was in Zurich, Switzerland, boarding the flight to Berlin, when who should also board the plane but Dieter Berndt. He sat next to me, and I told him I had some old slides of people named Berndt from Stettin. I handed them to him and asked if he could identify those shown in the photographs. As he looked at them carefully he began to weep. He said, "Our family lived in Stettin during the war. My father was killed when an Allied bomb struck the plant where he worked. Not long afterward, the Russians invaded Poland and the area of Stettin. My mother took my sister and me and fled from the advancing enemy. Everything had to be left behind, including any photographs we had. Brother Monson, I am the little boy pictured in these slides, and my sister is the little girl. The man and the woman are our dear parents. Until today, I have had no photographs of our childhood in Stettin or of my father."

Wiping away my own tears, I told Brother Berndt the slides were his. He placed them carefully and lovingly in his briefcase.

At the next general conference, when Dieter Berndt, Regional Representative, visited Salt Lake City, he paid a visit to Brother and Sister Edwin Cannon, Jr., that he might express in person his own gratitude for the inspiration that came to Brother Cannon to retain these precious slides and that he followed that inspiration in keeping them for forty years.

William Cowper penned the lines:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm. . . .
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.
[*Hymns* (1948), no. 48]

I leave with you my testimony that this work in which we are engaged is true. The Lord is at the helm. May we ever follow Him in my sincere prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, pp. 46-47.
2. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols., (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 4:304.
3. *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974), p. 255.
4. In *Journal of Discourses*, 20:23.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his remarks, we remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desir-

ing to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which follows must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

Now brethren, because daylight saving time begins at 2:00 A.M. tomorrow, we encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening. We want everyone on time tomorrow.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic

rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Orem Utah Region for the inspiring music this evening. What a cadre of missionaries they comprise.

Following President Hinckley's address, the choir will conclude by singing "Thy Holy Word." The benediction will be offered by Elder J Ballard Washburn of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Believe in the prophets

My beloved brethren, this has been an inspirational meeting. We have heard much which, if applied, will bless our lives. I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit as I add my testimony. I desire to speak in the spirit of testimony. In so doing, I intend to speak rather informally of some of my own experiences and observations concerning the leaders of this Church. I have chosen a text from the second book of Chronicles, the twentieth chapter.

I take you back to the time when Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, was king of Judah and Jerusalem.

It was a season of terrible anxiety. The Ammonites and the Moabites had declared war on the people of Judah. Those of Judah were vastly outnumbered, and their cause appeared hopeless.

Jehoshaphat gathered his people together to plead with the Lord for help. He cried out in prayer:

"O our God, . . . we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (2 Chronicles 20:12).

Then Jahaziel, the Levite prophet, said to Jehoshaphat:

"Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of

this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . .

"Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you . . . : fear not, nor be dismayed" (20:15, 17).

Then the king, relying upon the words of the prophet, said to the people, "Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; *Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper*" (20:20; italics added).

These are the words of my text. I repeat them: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."

The Prophet Joseph Smith

We sing a hymn in this Church that is peculiar to us: "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days" (*Hymns*, no. 19).

I have not spoken face to face with all of the prophets of this dispensation. I was not acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith, nor did I ever hear him speak. My grandfather, who as a young man lived in Nauvoo, did hear him and testified of his divine calling as the great prophet of this dispensation. But I feel I have come to know the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I have read and believed his testimony of his great first vision in which he conversed with the Father and the Son. I have pondered the wonder of that as I have stood in the grove where he prayed, and in that environment, by the power of the Spirit, I have received a witness that it happened as he said it happened.

I have read the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God. By the power of the Holy Ghost I have received a testimony and a witness of the divine origin of this sacred record. Joseph Smith did not write it of his own capacity.

I have seen with my own eyes the power of the priesthood which came to him under the hands of those who held it anciently. I have studied his life and measured his words. I have pondered the circumstances of his death, and I have come to know him—at least in some degree, at least enough that I can stand before you and testify that he was a prophet called and ordained to stand as God's instrument in this great work of restoration.

Other prophets of this dispensation

I never saw Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, or Lorenzo Snow. But I know they were men of God because I have studied their lives and read their words and received in my heart a witness of their calling as prophets of God.

I remember as a small boy seeing President Joseph F. Smith. I do not recall the details, but I have in my mind a picture of him as a man with a flowing beard whose voice was not strong. I have since read much of what he taught. And I know that he spoke as a prophet of the living God.

I have known in a personal way Presidents Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, and Ezra Taft

Benson. I have done work for each. I have served under each. I have known them, I have heard them pray, and I can testify that each has been an unusual and remarkable man, that each has been called of God after a long period of experience and tempering, of training and discipline to stand as an instrument of the Almighty in speaking to the people for their blessing and direction.

President Heber J. Grant

I heard President Grant on several occasions before I met him. As teenage boys, my brother and I came to this Tabernacle at conference when there was room for anybody who wished to come. As boys are wont to do, we sat in the balcony at the very far end of the building. To me it was always impressive when this tall man stood to speak. Some kind of electricity passed through my boyish frame. His voice rang out in testimony of the Book of Mormon. When he said it was true, I knew it was true. He spoke with great power on the Word of Wisdom and, without hesitation, promised blessings to the people if they would observe it. I have often thought of the human misery, the pain that has resulted from the smoking of cigarettes, the poverty that has resulted from the drinking of liquor which might have been avoided had his prophetic counsel been followed.

He spoke on the law of tithing. I can still hear his great testimony of this principle. He spoke of the fast offering and said, as I remember him from my boyhood days, that if all the world would observe this simple principle, which came as a revelation from God, the needs of the poor over the earth would be met without taxing the people for welfare purposes.

He warned against the enslavement of personal debt. The world at that time was on a reckless pursuit of

riches. Then came Black Thursday of November 1929. I was nineteen years of age, a student at the university. I saw the economy crumble. I saw men whom I knew lose everything as their creditors moved against them. I saw much of the trauma and the stress of the times. I thought then, and I have thought since, how so many people might have been saved pain and misery, suffering, embarrassment, and trouble had they listened to the counsel of a prophet concerning personal debt.

President George Albert Smith

George Albert Smith succeeded Heber J. Grant as President and prophet. The terrible Second World War came to a close during his presidency. Our people, as well as others in Europe, were starving in the aftermath of that war. President Smith went to see the president of the United States, Harry Truman. He asked for transportation to get foodstuffs and clothing to those in need. President Truman asked President Smith where he would get these resources. President Smith replied that the Church operated production projects under a welfare program and that women of the Relief Society had saved wheat. The shelves of our storehouses were well stocked, and our granaries were filled. This had come of the prophetic foresight of Church leaders.

The government promised transportation, and Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve was sent to Europe to look after the distribution of the commodities which were shipped to Germany.

I was among those who worked nights at Welfare Square here in Salt Lake City loading commodities onto rail cars which moved the food to the port from which it was shipped across the sea. During the time of the Swiss Temple dedication, when many of the Saints of Germany came to the temple,

I heard some of them, with tears running down their cheeks, speak with appreciation for that food which had saved their lives.

President Smith used to talk of a line which we must not cross. One side was the Lord's, the other the adversary's. President Smith would say to us, "Stay on the Lord's side of the line." He frequently reminded us: "We are all our Father's children. We must love people into doing what's right." He was the epitome of love.

President David O. McKay

David O. McKay succeeded George Albert Smith. He was a robust and handsome man, commanding in his appearance, yet withal possessed of a smile that was beautiful and reassuring. He looked like a prophet, and he spoke as a prophet.

I recall the time when a world-renowned journalist came to interview him. This was a man who had met the great of the earth. He was tough and unsparing in his questioning and probing. When he came out of the President's office, he said to President McKay's secretary, "Today I have seen and talked with a prophet."

Great were his teachings; persuasive were his pleas for personal righteousness and the strengthening of our families. His great statement on the home has become as a motto with us: No success in life can compensate for failure in the home. Those who followed his counsel have been blessed. Those who scorned it have paid a tragic price.

President Joseph Fielding Smith

Joseph Fielding Smith next became President of the Church and the prophet of the Lord. Some thought he spoke harshly in the tone of a prophet of the Old Testament. He did speak

straightforwardly and without equivocation. Such is the mission of a prophet. But it was my experience that he was a man of great kindness who grieved over the unwillingness of so many to follow the commandments of the Lord.

He used three great words that I can never forget: "true and faithful." In his public addresses, in his private conversations, in his prayers to the Lord he pleaded that we might be true and faithful. Those who followed his counsel have tasted the sweet fruit of obedience. Those who have scoffed have known something of the bitterness that comes of a denial of truth.

President Harold B. Lee

Harold B. Lee came next. This was a man I loved. During the short tenure of his presidency, I traveled in Europe with him on two different occasions. Those were wonderful days when we talked together. I was his junior companion on those journeys, and he spoke out of his great heart about many things. He warned against the neglect of families. He told us that the greatest work any of us would ever do would be within the walls of our own homes. He told us to survey large fields and cultivate small ones. In so saying, he wanted us to get the great, broad picture of this work and then with faithfulness take care of our own individual responsibility in it.

He had come out of humble circumstances and carried in his heart a great sensitivity for the poor. He was the first managing director of the welfare program as it was established in 1936, and he taught its principles across the Church. He extended to me a call to serve as a stake president and set me apart in that office. I still remember some of the things he said in that blessing. Said he: "Be sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit. Be slow to censure and quick to encourage."

I commend that counsel to each of you. It came from a living prophet of God.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Great was my love also for his successor, President Spencer W. Kimball. This kindly man, short of stature, was so diligent, so energetic, so determined to overcome any handicap that even the quality of his injured voice actually became an asset. When he stood to speak, we all listened. Who can ever forget his great, moving statement:

"So much depends upon our willingness to make up our minds, collectively and individually, that present levels of performance are not acceptable [unto us] or to the Lord. In saying that, I am not calling for flashy, temporary differences in our performance levels, but a quiet resolve . . . to do a better job, to lengthen our stride" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 174).

That call to lengthen our stride went across the entire Church. Many took it to heart and worked with greater enthusiasm and dedication. As they did so, they were blessed in their lives. How great is my debt, and is yours also, to this kindly man of gentle ways and prophetic leadership.

President Ezra Taft Benson

President Ezra Taft Benson was ordained and set apart to his high and holy calling immediately following the death of President Kimball. Could anyone doubt his qualifications for this responsibility? Over the years in public and Church affairs, he had moved with ease among the great of the earth. Since the days of his childhood, he has carried in his heart a deep and unmovable conviction concerning the divinity of this work. He has exercised the authority of the apostleship in his minis-

try among the nations. He has spoken prophetically and wonderfully on many things, but his most oft-repeated message to the people of the Church has been, "Read the Book of Mormon."

Why? Because he knows that the reading of this sacred testament will bring us closer to God and that there is no greater need among us than this.

Could there be a call from a prophet more timely than this call? One need only look at the filth and rot that are sweeping over the world in the form of pornographic literature, pornographic movies, pornographic videocassettes, pornographic television to see the need for a great and powerful and moving counterforce for righteousness.

Importance of following the prophets

I go back to the words of Jehoshaphat: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20).

There are many little things that test our willingness to accept the word of the prophets. Jesus said, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

So it has been through the history of mankind, and so it is today. In our own communities, even here in Utah, we have experienced some of this. President Grant carried to his grave a deep sense of sorrow that, contrary to his counsel, the people of Utah cast the final vote, in 1934, that repealed the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

I am grateful to say that we had a different experience some years ago when we joined with other citizens in a campaign to control the distribution of liquor. There is no question in my mind that great benefits have come as a result of the overwhelming response

to direction from our prophet. There was a similar result when it was proposed that an MX Missile site be located here. Under the leadership of President Kimball, we took a position on this matter. I believe that not only were we of this part of the country blessed because of that position, but also the entire nation, and perhaps the world.

Now again, as always, we are faced with public moral issues, this time concerning lotteries, pari-mutuel betting, and other forms of gambling. The Presidents of the Church have spoken clearly and unequivocally on these matters.

These are little things, but they are important things. They bring to mind the great contest between the prophet Elijah and the priests of Baal. Said Elijah on that occasion: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Be true and faithful

Now in conclusion, may I repeat that I have worked with seven Presidents of this Church. I have recognized that all have been human. But I have never been concerned over this. They may have had some weaknesses. But this has never troubled me. I know that the God of heaven has used mortal men throughout history to accomplish His divine purposes. They were the very best available to Him, and they were wonderful.

These men whom I have known and with whom I have worked have been totally unselfish in their zeal to build the kingdom of God and bring happiness into the lives of the people. They have been unsparing in giving of themselves to the great work for which each had responsibility in his particular season.

I speak to the priesthood of this Church, wherever you may be gathered

across the world, in gratitude for a prophet to guide us in these latter days. I plead for loyalty to him whom the Lord has called and anointed. I plead for steadfastness in upholding him and giving attention to his teachings. I have said on another occasion at this pulpit that if we have a prophet, we have everything. If we do not have a prophet, we have nothing. We do have a prophet. We have had prophets since the founding of this Church. We shall never be without a prophet if we live worthy of a prophet.

The Lord is watching over this work. This is His kingdom. We are not as sheep without a shepherd. We are not as an army without a leader.

I go back to those three words so frequently spoken by President Joseph

Fielding Smith: "true and faithful." God help us to be true and faithful, to hear with listening ears that counsel which has come from Him who is our Father and our God, and from Him who is our Savior and our Redeemer as they have spoken to us through those whom we sustain as prophets. I bear witness and testimony of these things and, my brethren, leave my blessing and love with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Thy Holy Word." Elder J Ballard Washburn offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 162nd Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 5, 1992. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "For the Strength of the Hills" without announcement.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful spring Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 162nd annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We are honored this morning with the presence of President Ezra Taft

Benson, who presides at this conference.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Benjamin B. Banks, and Rulon G. Craven are seated on the stand.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We note that the conference is being relayed for the first time to satellite downlink locations in Huddersfield, England; Versailles, France; and Frankfurt, Germany.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled from far and near to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, with Brother

Richard Elliott at the organ, will provide the music for this session. The choir opened these services by singing "For the Strength of the Hills." They will now sing "On This Day of Joy and Gladness," following which Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "On This Day of Joy and Gladness."

President Thomas S. Monson

On this Sabbath day our thoughts turn to Him who atoned for our sins, who showed us the way to live and how to pray, and who demonstrated by His own actions the blessings of service. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, this Son of God, even Jesus Christ the Lord, yet beckons to each of us to follow Him.

A leper gives thanks

In the book of Luke, chapter 17, we read:

"And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

"And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

"And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

"And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

Elder Marlin K. Jensen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

"And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:11-19).

Through divine intervention, those who were lepers were spared from a cruel, lingering death and given a new lease on life. The expressed gratitude by one merited the Master's blessing, the ingratitude shown by the nine, His disappointment.

"Accentuate the positive"

Like the leprosy of yesteryear are the plagues of today. They linger; they debilitate; they destroy. They are to be found everywhere. Their pervasiveness knows no boundaries. We know them as selfishness, greed, indulgence, cruelty, and crime, to identify but a few. Surfeited with their poison, we tend to criticize, to complain, to blame, and, slowly but surely, to abandon the positives and adopt the negatives of life.

A popular refrain from the 1940s captured the thought:

Accentuate the positive;
Eliminate the negative.
Latch on to the affirmative;
Don't mess with Mr. In-between.¹

Good advice then. Good advice now.

This is a wonderful time to be living here on earth. Our opportunities are limitless. While there are some things wrong in the world today, there are many things right, such as teachers who teach, ministers who minister, marriages that make it, parents who sacrifice, and friends who help.

We can lift ourselves, and others as well, when we refuse to remain in the realm of negative thought and cultivate within our hearts an attitude of gratitude. If ingratitude be numbered among the serious sins, then gratitude takes its place among the noblest of virtues.

A favorite hymn always lifts our spirits, kindles our faith, and inspires our thoughts:

When upon life's billows you are
tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking
all is lost,
Count your many blessings; name
them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the
Lord has done. . . .
So amid the conflict, whether great
or small,
Do not be discouraged; God is over
all.
Count your many blessings; angels
will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your
journey's end.
[Hymns, no. 241]

Well could we reflect upon our lives as individuals. We will soon discover much to prompt our personal gratitude.

Gratitude for our mothers

First, there is gratitude for our mothers.

Mother, who willingly made that personal journey into the valley of the shadow of death to take us by the hand and introduce us to birth—even to mortal life—deserves our undying

gratitude. One writer summed up our love for mother when he declared, "God could not be everywhere, and so He gave us mothers."

While on the cruel cross of Calvary, suffering intense pain and anguish, Jesus "saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26-27). What a divine example of gratitude and love!

My own mother may not have read to me from the scriptures; rather, she taught me by her life and actions what the "Good Book" contains. Care for the poor, the sick, the needy were everyday dramas never to be forgotten.

Gratitude for our fathers

Second, let us reflect gratitude for our fathers.

Father, like Mother, is ever willing to sacrifice his own comfort for that of his children. Daily he toils to provide the necessities of life, never complaining, ever concerned for the well-being of his family. This love for children, this desire to see them well and happy, is a constant in a time of change.

On occasion I have observed parents shopping to clothe a son about to enter missionary service. The new suits are fitted, the new shoes are laced, and shirts, socks, and ties are bought in quantity. I met one father who said to me, "Brother Monson, I want you to meet my son." Pride popped his buttons; the cost of the clothing emptied his wallet; love filled his heart. Tears filled my eyes when I noticed that *his* suit was old, *his* shoes well worn; but he felt no deprivation. The glow on his face was a memory to cherish.

As I reflect on my own father, I remember he yielded his minuscule discretionary time to caring for a crippled uncle, aged aunts, and his family. He served in the ward Sunday

School presidency, always preferring to work with the children. He, like the Master, loved children. I never heard from his lips one word of criticism of another. He personified in his life the work ethic. I join you in an expression of gratitude for our fathers.

Gratitude for our teachers

Third, all of us remember with gratitude our *teachers*.

The teacher not only shapes the expectations and ambitions of pupils; the teacher also influences their attitudes toward their future and themselves. If the teacher loves the students and has high expectations of them, their self-confidence will grow, their capabilities will develop, and their future will be assured. A citation to such a teacher could well read: "She created in her room an atmosphere where warmth and acceptance weave their magic spell; where growth and learning, the soaring of the imagination, and the spirit of the young are assured."

May I express public gratitude for three of my own teachers. I thank G. Homer Durham, my history professor. He taught the truth, "The past is behind; learn from it." He loved his subject; he loved his students. The love in his classroom opened the windows of my mind, that learning might enter.

O. Preston Robinson, my professor of marketing, instilled in his students that the future is ahead and we are to prepare for it. When he entered the classroom, his presence was like a welcome breath of fresh air. He instilled a spirit of "You can do it." His life reflected his teaching—that of friendly persuasion. He taught truth. He inspired effort. He prompted love.

Then there was a Sunday School teacher—never to be forgotten, ever to be remembered. We met for the first time on a Sunday morning. She accompanied the Sunday School president into the classroom and was presented to us as a teacher who actually re-

quested the opportunity to teach us. We learned that she had been a missionary and loved young people. Her name was Lucy Gertsch. She was beautiful, soft-spoken, and interested in us. She asked each class member to introduce himself or herself, and then she asked questions that gave her an understanding and an insight into the background of each boy, each girl. She told us of her childhood in Midway, Utah; and as she described that beautiful valley, she made its beauty live, and we desired to visit the green fields she loved so much. She never raised her voice. Somehow rudeness and boisterousness were incompatible with the beauty of her lessons. She taught us that the present is here and that we must live in it. She made the scriptures actually come to life. We became personally acquainted with Samuel, David, Jacob, Nephi, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Our gospel scholarship grew. Our deportment improved. Our love for Lucy Gertsch knew no bounds.

We undertook a project to save nickels and dimes for what was to be a gigantic party. Sister Gertsch kept a careful record of our progress. As boys and girls with typical appetites, we converted in our minds the monetary totals to cakes, cookies, pies, and ice cream. This was to be a glorious occasion—the biggest party ever. Never before had any of our teachers even suggested a social event like this one was going to be.

The summer months faded into autumn; autumn turned to winter. Our party goal had been achieved. The class had grown. A good spirit prevailed.

None of us will forget that gray morning in January when our beloved teacher announced to us that the mother of one of our classmates had passed away. We thought of our own mothers and how much they meant to us. We felt sorrow for Billy Devenport in his great loss.

The lesson that Sunday was from the book of Acts, chapter twenty, verse thirty-five: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." At the conclusion of the presentation of a well-prepared lesson, Lucy Gertsch commented on the economic situation of Billy's family. These were depression times; money was scarce. With a twinkle in her eyes, she asked, "How would you like to follow this teaching of the Lord? How would you feel about taking your party fund and, as a class, giving it to the Devenports as an expression of our love?" The decision was unanimous. We counted very carefully each penny and placed the total sum in a large envelope.

Ever shall I remember the tiny band walking those three city blocks, entering Billy's home, greeting him, his brother, sisters, and father. Noticeably absent was his mother. Always I shall treasure the tears which glistened in the eyes of each one present as the white envelope containing our precious party fund passed from the delicate hand of our teacher to the needy hand of a grief-stricken father. We fairly skipped our way back to the chapel. Our hearts were lighter than they had ever been, our joy more full, our understanding more profound. This simple act of kindness welded us together as one. We learned through our own experience that indeed it is more blessed to give than to receive.

The years have flown. The old chapel is gone, a victim of industrialization. The boys and girls who learned, who laughed, who grew under the direction of that inspired teacher of truth have never forgotten her love or her lessons.

Even today when we sing that old favorite—

Thanks for the Sabbath School. Hail
to the day
When evil and error are fleeing away.

Thanks for our teachers who labor
with care
That we in the light of the gospel
may share.

[Hymns, no. 278]

—we think of Lucy Gertsch, our Sunday School teacher, for we loved Lucy, and Lucy loved us.

Let us ever have an attitude of gratitude for our teachers.

Gratitude for our friends

Fourth, let us have gratitude for our *friends*. Our most cherished friend is our partner in marriage. This old world would be so much better off today if kindness and deference were daily a reflection of our gratitude for wife, for husband.

The Lord spoke the word *friend* almost with a reverence. He said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

True friends put up with our idiosyncrasies. They have a profound influence in our lives.

Oscar Benson, a Scouter of renown, had a hobby of interviewing men on death row in various prisons throughout the country. He once reported that 125 of these men had said they had never known a decent man.

In the depths of World War II, I experienced an expression of true friendship. Jack Hepworth and I were teenagers. We had grown up in the same neighborhood. One afternoon I saw Jack running down the sidewalk toward me. When we met, I saw that there were tears in his eyes. In a voice choked with emotion, he blurted out the words, "Tom, my brother Joe, who is in the Navy Air Corps, has been killed in a fiery plane crash!" We embraced. We wept. We sorrowed. I felt highly complimented that instinctively Jack, my friend, felt the urgency to share with me his grief. We can all be grateful for such friends.

Gratitude for our country

Fifth, may we acknowledge gratitude for our *country*—the land of our birth.

When we ponder that vast throng who have died honorably defending home and hearth, we contemplate those immortal words, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). The feelings of heartfelt gratitude for the supreme sacrifice made by so many cannot be confined to a Memorial Day, a military parade, or a decorated grave.

At the famed Theatre Royal, situated on Drury Lane in London, England, is a beautifully framed plaque containing words which touch my very soul and prompt feelings of deep gratitude:

1914–1918

Actors, musicians, writers and workers for the stage who have given their lives for their country. Honour to the immortal dead, that great . . . company of shining souls who gave their youth that the world might grow old in peace. Their name liveth forever more. These nobly played their parts, these heard the call for God and King and home. They gave their all.

Since ye who pass in quest of happy hours

Behold the price at which those hours were bought,

Strew here the fragrance of memorial flowers,

The silent tribute of a grateful thought.²

Gratitude for our Savior

Sixth and finally—even supremely—let us reflect gratitude for our *Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*. His glorious gospel provides answers to life’s greatest questions: Where did we

come from? Why are we here? Where does my spirit go when I die? His called missionaries bring to those who live in darkness the light of divine truth:

Go, ye messengers of glory;
Run, ye legates of the skies.
Go and tell the pleasing story
That a glorious angel flies,
Great and mighty, great and mighty,
With a message from the skies.
[*Hymns*, no. 262]

He taught us how to pray. He taught us how to live. He taught us how to die. His life is a legacy of love. The sick He healed; the downtrodden He lifted; the sinner He saved.

Only He stood alone. Some Apostles doubted; one betrayed Him. The Roman soldiers pierced His side. The angry mob took His life. There yet rings from Golgotha’s hill His compassionate words, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Earlier, perhaps perceiving the culmination of His earthly mission, He spoke the lament, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). “No room in the inn” was not a singular expression of rejection—just the first. Yet He invites you and me to host Him. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

Who was this Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief? Who is this King of glory, this Lord of hosts? He is our Master. He is our Savior. He is the Son of God. He is the author of our salvation. He beckons, “Follow me” (Matthew 4:19). He instructs, “Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37). He pleads, “Keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Let us follow Him. Let us emulate His example. Let us obey His word. By so doing, we give to Him the divine gift of gratitude.

My sincere prayer is that we may, in our individual lives, reflect that marvelous virtue: an attitude of gratitude. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Ac-cen-tu-ate the Positive," lyrics by Johnny Mercer (ASCAP, 1945).
2. Louise N. Parter.

The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise" without announcement.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the choir singing that stirring anthem "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker.

President Howard W. Hunter

Love others as God loves us

In an important message to the Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo just one year before his tragic and untimely martyrdom, the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

"If we would secure and cultivate the love of others, we must love others, even our enemies as well as friends. . . . Christians should cease wrangling and contending with each other, and cultivate the principles of union and friendship in their midst" (*History of the Church*, 5:498-99).

That is magnificent counsel today, even as it was 150 years ago. The world in which we live, whether close to home or far away, needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. It provides the only way the world will ever know peace. We need to be kinder with one another, more gentle and forgiving. We need to be slower to anger and more prompt to help. We need to extend the hand of friendship and resist the hand of retribution. In short, we need to love one another with the pure love of Christ, with genuine charity and compassion and, if necessary, shared suffering, for that is the way God loves us.

"Lord, I would follow thee"

In our worship services, we often sing a lovely hymn with text written by Susan Evans McCloud. May I recall a few lines of that hymn for you?

Savior, may I learn to love thee,
Walk the path that thou hast shown,
Pause to help and lift another,
Finding strength beyond my
own. . . .

Who am I to judge another
When I walk imperfectly?
In the quiet heart is hidden
Sorrow that the eye can't see. . . .

I would be my brother's keeper;
I would learn the healer's art.
To the wounded and the weary
I would show a gentle heart.
I would be my brother's keeper—
Lord, I would follow thee.
[Hymns, no. 220]

We need to walk more resolutely and more charitably the path that Jesus has shown. We need to "pause to help and lift another," and surely we will find "strength beyond [our] own." If we would do more to learn "the healer's

art," there would be untold chances to use it, to touch the "wounded and the weary" and show to all "a gentle[r] heart." Yes, Lord, we should follow thee.

Charity, the pure love of Christ

"A new commandment I give unto you," he said, "That ye love one another; . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). This love that we should have for our brothers and sisters in the human family, and that Christ has for every one of us, is called charity or "the pure love of Christ" (Moroni 7:47). It is the love that prompted the suffering and sacrifice of Christ's atonement. It is the highest pinnacle the human soul can reach and the deepest expression of the human heart.

We have a feeling of appreciation that our women's Relief Society organization, celebrating this year its sesquicentennial anniversary, has always had as its theme "Charity Never Fails." Charity encompasses all other godly virtues. It distinguishes both the beginning and the end of the plan of salvation. When all else fails, charity—Christ's love—will *not* fail. It is the greatest of all divine attributes.

Out of the abundance of his heart, Jesus spoke to the poor, the downtrodden, the widows, the little children; to farmers and fishermen and those who tended goats and sheep; to strangers and foreigners, the rich, the politically powerful, as well as the unfriendly Pharisees and scribes. He ministered to the poor, the hungry, the deprived, the sick. He blessed the lame, the blind, the deaf, and other people with physical disabilities. He drove out the demons and evil spirits that had caused mental or emotional illness. He purified those who were burdened with sin. He taught lessons of love and repeatedly demonstrated unselfish service to others. All were recipients of his love.

All were "privileged the one like unto the other, and none [were] forbidden" (2 Nephi 26:28). These are all expressions and examples of his unbounded charity.

The world in which we live would benefit greatly if men and women everywhere would exercise the pure love of Christ, which is kind, meek, and lowly. It is without envy or pride. It is selfless because it seeks nothing in return. It does not countenance evil or ill will, nor rejoice in iniquity; it has no place for bigotry, hatred, or violence. It refuses to condone ridicule, vulgarity, abuse, or ostracism. It encourages diverse people to live together in Christian love regardless of religious belief, race, nationality, financial standing, education, or culture.

The Savior has commanded us to love one another as he has loved us; to clothe ourselves "with the bond of charity" (D&C 88:125), as he so clothed himself. We are called upon to purify our inner feelings, to change our hearts, to make our outward actions and appearance conform to what we say we believe and feel inside. We are to be true disciples of Christ.

Vern Crowley learns a lesson in love

As a young man, Brother Vern Crowley said he learned something of the crucial lesson the Prophet Joseph had taught the early Saints in Nauvoo when he told them to "love others, even our enemies as well as friends." This is a good lesson for each of us.

After his father became ill, Vern Crowley took responsibility for running the family wrecking yard although he was only fifteen years of age. Some customers occasionally took unfair advantage of the young man, and parts were disappearing from the lot overnight. Vern was angry and vowed to catch someone and make an example of him. Vengeance would be his.

Just after his father had started to recover from his illness, Vern was mak-

ing his rounds of the yard one night at closing time. It was nearly dark. In a distant corner of the property, he caught sight of someone carrying a large piece of machinery toward the back fence. He ran like a champion athlete and caught the young thief. His first thought was to take out his frustrations with his fists and then drag the boy to the front office and call the police. His heart was full of anger and vengeance. He had caught his thief, and he intended to get his just dues.

Out of nowhere, Vern's father came along, put his weak and infirm hand on his son's shoulder, and said, "I see you're a bit upset, Vern. Can I handle this?" He then walked over to the young would-be thief and put his arm around his shoulder, looked him in the eye for a moment, and said, "Son, tell me, why are you doing this? Why were you trying to steal that transmission?" Then Mr. Crowley started walking toward the office with his arm around the boy, asking questions about the young man's car problems as they walked. By the time they had arrived at the office, the father said, "Well, I think your clutch is gone and that's causing your problem."

In the meantime, Vern was fuming. "Who cares about his clutch?" he thought. "Let's call the police and get this over with." But his father just kept talking. "Vern, get him a clutch. Get him a throwout bearing too. And get him a pressure plate. That should take care of it." The father handed all of the parts to the young man who had attempted robbery and said, "Take these. And here's the transmission, too. You don't have to steal, young man. Just ask for it. There's a way out of every problem. People are willing to help."

Brother Vern Crowley said he learned an everlasting lesson in love that day. The young man came back to the lot often. Voluntarily, month by month, he paid for all of the parts Vic Crowley had given him, including the

transmission. During those visits he asked Vern why his dad was the way he was and why he did what he did. Vern told him something of their Latter-day Saint beliefs and how much his father loved the Lord and loved people. Eventually the would-be thief was baptized. Vern later said, "It's hard now to describe the feelings I had and what I went through in that experience. I, too, was young. I had caught my crook. I was going to extract the utmost penalty. But my father taught me a different way."

A more excellent way

A different way? A better way? A higher way? A more excellent way? Oh, how the world could benefit from such a magnificent lesson. As Moroni declares:

"Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world. . . .

"In the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way" (Ether 12:4, 11).

President David O. McKay once said:

"The peace of Christ does not come by seeking the superficial things of life, neither does it come except as it springs from the individual's heart. Jesus said to his disciples: 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you' " (*Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953], pp. 39-40).

In all the realms of daily living and in a world of so much need, we should so live that one day we will hear the King of Kings say to us:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matthew 25:35-36).

And if we should have occasion to say: "Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?"—then I am certain we will hear this reply: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:37–40).

Love others to secure peace

We need a more peaceful world, growing out of more peaceful families and neighborhoods and communities. To secure and cultivate such peace, "we must love others, even our enemies as well as our friends." The world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who are filled with the love of Christ do not seek to force others to do better; they inspire others to do better, indeed inspire them to the pursuit of God. We need to extend the hand of friendship. We need to be kinder, more gentle,

more forgiving, and slower to anger. We need to love one another with the pure love of Christ. May this be our course and our desire.

I add my witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, and that this is his Church, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "The Earth Is the Lord's" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Hunter, for your moving remarks. The choir has sung "The Earth Is the Lord's."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Let Us All Press On," following which we shall hear from Bishop Robert D. Hales, the Presiding Bishop of the Church.

The choir and congregation sang "Let Us All Press On."

Bishop Robert D. Hales

Gratitude for the goodness of God

A few months ago I had an experience that took me to the very edge of this mortal existence. As many of you know, I suffered a heart attack last August. I had the opportunity of knowing firsthand of the healing strength that comes through united prayer. For that I will always be grateful. Thank you for your prayers and for your concern. Your kindness to me lifted my spirits and aided in the healing process. I have been greatly blessed with improving health and strength.

Throughout that experience there is one particular feeling that began in-

side of me almost immediately and intensified as time went on and became overpowering during my illness and during my recovery and remains with me still. I became overwhelmed with a feeling of deep gratitude for the goodness of God.

Gratitude for the Atonement

My deepest gratitude is for the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Atonement is the foundation upon which all gospel truths reside.

The Savior tells us:

"I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

"And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross" (3 Nephi 27:13-14).

The Prophet Joseph Smith recorded "that he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; That through him all might be saved" (D&C 76:41-42).

I bear my testimony in all gratitude for the knowledge that our Savior lives, that he was resurrected, that there is a redemption and a salvation through the Atonement for all mankind—that all will be resurrected. I am thankful for that knowledge.

Show gratitude through obedience

The Lord said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Our obedience to the laws, ordinances, and commandments is the greatest expression of love and gratitude that we can bestow upon him.

Gratitude for repentance

Gratitude is also the foundation upon which repentance is built.

The Atonement brought mercy through repentance to balance justice. How thankful I am for the doctrine of repentance. Repentance is essential to salvation. We are mortal—we are not perfect—we will make mistakes. When we make mistakes and do not repent, we suffer.

The prophet Mormon taught us that he saw people sorrowing, thinking it was repentance; but then he taught us, "Behold this my joy was vain, for their sorrowing was not unto repentance, *because of the goodness of God*; but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not

always suffer them to take happiness in sin" (Mormon 2:13; italics added).

Mormon teaches us that there will always be suffering and sorrow in sin, but to repent only because we feel bad or because we have suffered or because we are sorrowful does not show that we understand the goodness of God.

The point I would like to make is that when we express thankfulness to God and to his Son, Jesus Christ, we base our faith and repentance upon their forgiveness and their goodness.

Jesus' expressions of gratitude

How grateful I am for the scriptures, which give examples of Jesus' expressing thanks to his Heavenly Father.

At the Last Supper, "the Lord Jesus the same night . . . he was betrayed took bread: And *when he had given thanks*, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24; italics added). "And he took the cup, *and when he had given thanks*, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it" (Mark 14:23; italics added).

Like the Savior, it is important for each of us to prepare ourselves to give thanks for the atoning sacrifice each week as we partake of the sacrament.

The story of Lazarus is of great significance to me as I have studied the goodness of Jesus.

Mary greeted Jesus. Her brother, Lazarus, had died. Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her were also weeping. Jesus, in great compassion, "groaned in the spirit, and was troubled" (John 11:33). Jesus asked, "Where have ye laid him?" (11:34). "Jesus wept" (11:35).

"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, *I thank thee that thou hast heard me*" (11:41; italics added).

And then Jesus asked Lazarus to come forth from the dead (see 11:43).

Might it be well for us to remember to give thanks to our Heavenly Father prior to asking for his help in solving our problems?

John 6:5–14 beautifully tells the account of Jesus and the five loaves and two fishes:

“And Jesus took the loaves; *and when he had given thanks*, he distributed to the disciples” (John 6:11; *italics added*).

On another occasion the disciples of Jesus prayed earnestly for the Holy Ghost. And when they were filled with the Holy Ghost, Jesus “*bowled himself to the earth*, and he said:

“Father, *I thank thee* that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world.

“Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words” (3 Nephi 19:19–21; *italics added*).

Express gratitude through prayer

Prayer is an essential part of conveying appreciation to our Heavenly Father. He awaits our expressions of gratefulness each morning and night in sincere, simple prayer from our hearts for our many blessings, gifts, and talents.

Through expression of prayerful gratitude and thanksgiving, we show our dependence upon a higher source of wisdom and knowledge—God the Father and his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are taught to “live in thanksgiving daily” (Alma 34:38).

“O how you ought to thank your heavenly King!” King Benjamin taught (Mosiah 2:19).

Gratitude for parents and family

As the years pass I become more grateful for my parents. They lived the gospel, studied the scriptures, and bore

testimony of God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. They also bore testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Even as a child it was through their teachings and example that I received an absolute knowledge of the existence of eternal life with our goal to return with honor, as a family, into the presence of our Heavenly Father.

Among the lessons taught me by my father was gratitude for what it meant to be a General Authority. Some years ago Father, then over eighty years of age, was expecting a visit from a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on a snowy winter day. Father, an artist, had painted a picture of the home of the Apostle. Rather than have the painting delivered to him, this sweet Apostle wanted to go personally to pick the painting up and thank my father for it. Knowing that Father would be concerned that everything was in readiness for the forthcoming visit, I dropped by his home. Because of the depth of the snow, snowplows had caused a snowbank in front of the walkway to the front door. Father had shoveled the walks and then labored to remove the snowbank. He returned to the house exhausted and in pain. When I arrived, he was experiencing heart pain from overexertion and stressful anxiety. My first concern was to warn him of his unwise physical efforts. Didn't he know what the result of his labor would be?

“Robert,” he said through interrupted short breaths, “do you realize an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ is coming to my home? The walks must be clean. He should not have to come through a snowdrift.” He raised his hand, saying, “Oh, Robert, don't ever forget or take for granted the privilege it is to know and to serve with Apostles of the Lord.”

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve with the Lord's anointed and for the opportunity to give testimony of

those who have been called to lead us as prophets, seers, and revelators in this dispensation.

I am also grateful for my counselors who serve with me and for the Seventy and for all the priesthood and auxiliary leaders throughout the Church for their faithfulness. I am grateful for my father's example of love and caring for my mother. In his eighties he taught us that he would be leaving us and joining Mother, who had passed on before him, and that he wanted us to live worthily to reunite in heaven and become an eternal family. For these teachings we, his children, are grateful.

I am thankful for a mother who was devoted to her husband and children—a mother who taught by example. I am thankful for her dedicated service in the Relief Society for over thirty years. At the age of sixteen, upon receiving my driver's license, I was privileged to learn from her as she took me along when she assisted the bishop in caring for the poor and the needy.

I am thankful for a brother and sister who love the Lord and have remained true and faithful. I express my love for their caring ways these past six decades.

I love my dear companion, Mary, my two sons, Steven and David, and their families. May I express appreciation for all the joy they have brought into my life. A colleague some years ago told me that my greatest asset was my dear wife, Mary. Of that fact I give public appreciation for what she has meant in my life.

Those who are blessed to have their companions, their mothers and their fathers, their brothers and their sisters, sons and daughters with them in this earthly existence, please express your love for them and gratitude to them while you can on this side of the veil.

Give thanks for blessings

We must remember to give thanks to our Heavenly Father for the blessings and gifts that have been given to us.

"And ye must give thanks unto God in the Spirit for whatsoever blessing ye are blessed with" (D&C 46:32).

"And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God" (D&C 46:26).

As the Presiding Bishop, I am grateful for the members of this Church who so willingly give of their time, their means, and their talents through tithes and offerings and through acts of compassionate service. What a wonderful example they set for their children and for their neighbors. It would be well to also give thanks for the youth of this Church, for their faithfulness. They are indeed a royal generation, preparing as they and their children and grandchildren prepare for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Gratitude is a state of appreciation, an act of thanksgiving, which causes us to be humble because we recognize an act of kindness, service, or caring from someone else which lifts us and strengthens us.

Ingratitude is the attitude of being unaware or not recognizing when someone has assisted us or helped us or, even worse, when we know we have been helped and have not given thanks privately or publicly.

Gratitude brings peace and healing

In some quiet way the expression and feelings of gratitude have a wonderful cleansing or healing nature. Gratitude brings warmth to the giver and the receiver alike.

Gratitude expressed to our Heavenly Father in prayer for what we have brings a calming peace—a peace which allows us to not canker our souls for what we don't have. Gratitude brings a

peace that helps us overcome the pain of adversity and failure. Gratitude on a daily basis means we express appreciation for what we have now without qualification for what we had in the past or desire in the future. A recognition of and appreciation for our gifts and talents which have been given also allows us to acknowledge the need for help and assistance from the gifts and talents possessed by others.

Thank the Lord in all things

Gratitude is a divine principle:

"Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things" (D&C 59:7).

This scripture means that we express thankfulness for what happens, not only for the good things in life but also for the opposition and challenges of life that add to our experience and faith. We put our lives in his hands,

realizing that all that transpires will be for our experience.

When in prayer we say, "Thy will be done," we are really expressing faith and gratitude and acknowledging that we will accept whatever happens in our lives.

That we may feel true gratitude for the goodness of God for all the blessings that have been given to us and express those feelings of thankfulness in prayer to our Heavenly Father, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church, has just spoken to us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

I have been a General Authority for over thirty years and a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for twenty-two. During those years I have interviewed I don't know how many, surely thousands, of members of the Church and have talked with them in intimate terms of their worthiness, their sorrow, and their happiness. I mention that only in the hope that the credential of experience may persuade you to consider matters which have us deeply worried.

Moral environment

Today I speak to members of the Church as an environmentalist. My message is not on the *physical* but on the *moral and spiritual* environment in which we must raise our families. As we test the *moral* environment, we find the *pollution* index is spiraling upward.

The Book of Mormon depicts humanity struggling through a "mist of darkness" and defines the darkness as the "temptations of the devil" (1 Nephi 8:23; 12:17). So dense was that *moral pollution* that many followed "strange roads" and "fell away into forbidden paths and were lost" (1 Nephi 8:28; see 8:23–32).

The deliberate pollution of the fountain of life now clouds our moral environment. The gift of mortal life and the capacity to kindle other lives is a supernal blessing. Its worth is *incalculable*!

The spiritual environment

The rapid, sweeping deterioration of values is characterized by a preoccupation—even an obsession—with the procreative act. Abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it are openly scoffed at, marriage and parent-

hood ridiculed as burdensome, unnecessary. Modesty, a virtue of a refined individual or society, is all but gone.

The tempter

The adversary is jealous toward all who have the power to beget life. He cannot beget life; he is impotent. He and those who followed him were cast out and forfeited the right to a mortal body. His angels even begged to inhabit the bodies of swine (see Matthew 8:31). And the revelations tell us that "he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27).

With ever fewer exceptions, what we see and read and hear have the mating act as a central theme. Censorship is forced offstage as a violation of individual freedom.

That which should be absolutely private is disrobed and acted out center stage. In the shadows backstage are addiction, pornography, perversion, infidelity, abortion, incest, and molestation. In company with them now is a plague of biblical proportion. And all of them are on the increase.

Society excuses itself from responsibility except for teaching the physical process of reproduction to children in school to prevent pregnancy and disease and providing teenagers with devices which are supposed to protect them from both.

When any effort is made to include values in these courses—basic universal values, not just values of the Church, but of civilization, of society itself—the protest arises, "You are imposing religion upon us, infringing upon our freedom."

Freedom to choose

While we pass laws to reduce pollution of the earth, any proposal to

protect the moral and spiritual environment is shouted down and marched against as infringing upon liberty, agency, freedom, the right to choose.

Interesting how one virtue, when given exaggerated or fanatical emphasis, can be used to batter down another, with freedom, a virtue, invoked to protect *vice*. Those determined to transgress see any regulation of their life-style as interfering with their agency and seek to have their actions condoned by making them legal.

People who are otherwise sensible say, "I do not intend to indulge, but I vote for freedom of choice for those who do."

Flawed argument

Regardless of how lofty and moral the "pro-choice" argument sounds, it is badly flawed. With that same logic one could argue that all traffic signs and barriers which keep the careless from danger should be pulled down on the theory that each individual must be free to choose how close to the edge he will go.

No free agency

The phrase "*free agency*" does not appear in scripture. The only agency spoken of there is *moral agency*, "which," the Lord said, "I have given unto him, that every man may be *accountable* for his own sins in the day of judgment" (D&C 101:78; italics added).

Heeding the warning

And the Lord warned members of his Church, "Let not that which I have appointed be polluted by mine enemies, *by the consent of those who call themselves after my name*: For this is a very sore and grievous sin against me, and against my people" (D&C 101:97–98; italics added).

Because the laws of man, by and large, do not raise moral issues, we are taught to honor, sustain, and obey the law (see Articles of Faith 1:12) and that "he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land" (D&C 58:21).

The right to speak out

When a moral issue does arise, it is the responsibility of the leaders of the Church to speak out. Gambling, for instance, certainly is a moral issue. Life is a moral issue. When morality is involved, we have both the *right* and the *obligation* to raise a warning voice. We do not as a church speak on political issues unless morality is involved. In thirty years and thousands of interviews, I have never once asked members of the Church what political party they belonged to.

Physical and moral laws

There are both moral and physical laws "irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world" (D&C 130:20) which man cannot overrule.

For instance, do you think a vote to repeal the law of gravity would do any good?

Unenforceable

Suppose a law decreed that all children would be taken from their parents and raised by the state. Such a law would be wicked but probably could be enforced. Such things have been done before.

But suppose an article of that law stated, "Within fifteen days the mother will cease all emotional ties to her child."

That provision is absolutely unenforceable. No matter how severe the penalty or the number of enforcers, it is absolutely unenforceable because it

contravenes both natural and moral law.

No matter if fifteen weeks or months or fifteen years were allowed, it cannot be enforced! It may work with animals, but "all flesh," the scriptures teach, "is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts" (1 Corinthians 15:39). It cannot be made to work with human mothers. Never!

A man-made law against nature would be as impossible to defend as a law annulling love between mother and child would be impossible to enforce!

Children of God

No greater ideal has been revealed than the supernal truth that we are the children of God, and we differ, by virtue of our creation, from all other living things (see Moses 6:8–10, 22, 59).

The evil idea

No idea has been more *destructive* of happiness; no philosophy has produced more sorrow, more heartbreak and mischief; no idea has done more to destroy the family than the idea that we are not the offspring of God, only advanced animals, compelled to yield to every carnal urge.

Animals are not subject to moral law. Nevertheless, while by and large they are promiscuous in responding to their mating instincts, their mating rituals have set patterns and have rigid limitations. For instance, animals do not pair up with their own gender to satisfy their mating instincts. Nor are these instincts expressed in the molestation of their offspring.

The source of life is now relegated to the level of unwed pleasure, bought and sold and even defiled in satanic rituals. Children of God can willfully surrender to their carnal nature and, without remorse, defy the

laws of morality and degrade themselves even below the beasts.

Most abominable

If we pollute our fountains of life, there will be penalties "exquisite" and "hard to bear" (see D&C 19:15), more than all of the physical pleasure ever could be worth. Alma told his son Corianton, "Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?" (Alma 39:5).

The code for moral law is found in the scriptures, stated as simply as, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). The scriptures speak in general terms, leaving us free to apply the principles of the gospel to meet the infinite variety of life. But when they say "thou shalt not," we had better pay attention.

The only legitimate employment of the power of procreation is between husband and wife, man and woman, who have been legally and lawfully married. Anything else violates the commandments of God. From Alma, "If ye speak against it, it matters not, for the word of God must be fulfilled" (Alma 5:58).

The measure of a successful parent

It is a great challenge to raise a family in the darkening mists of our moral environment.

We emphasize that the greatest work you will do will be within the walls of your home (see Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 130; or *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 98), and that "no other success can compensate for failure in the home" (see David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, p. 116; quoting J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* [Wash-

ington, D.C.: The Southern Co-operative League, 1924], p. 42).

The measure of our success as parents, however, will not rest solely on how our children turn out. That judgment would be just only if we could raise our families in a perfectly moral environment, and that now is not possible.

It is not uncommon for responsible parents to lose one of their children, for a time, to influences over which they have no control. They agonize over rebellious sons or daughters. They are puzzled over why they are so helpless when they have tried so hard to do what they should.

It is my conviction that those wicked influences one day will be overruled.

"The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught a more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God" (Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, p. 110).

We cannot overemphasize the value of temple marriage, the binding ties of the sealing ordinance, and the standards of worthiness required of

them. When parents keep the covenants they have made at the altar of the temple, their children will be forever bound to them. President Brigham Young said:

"Let the father and mother, who are members of this Church and Kingdom, take a righteous course, and strive with all their might never to do a wrong, but to do good all their lives; if they have one child or one hundred children, if they conduct themselves towards them as they should, binding them to the Lord by their faith and prayers, I care not where those children go, they are bound up to their parents by an everlasting tie, and no power of earth or hell can separate them from their parents in eternity; they will return again to the fountain from whence they sprang" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 208).

Repentance

In the battle of life, the adversary takes enormous numbers of prisoners, and many who know of no way to escape and are pressed into his service. Every soul confined to a concentration camp of sin and guilt has a key to the gate. The adversary cannot hold them if they know how to use it. The key is labeled *Repentance*. The twin principles of repentance and forgiveness exceed in strength the awesome power of the adversary.

I know of no sins connected with the moral standard for which we cannot be forgiven. I do not exempt abortion. The formula is stated in forty words:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

"By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them" (D&C 58:42–43).

I will remember your sins no more

However long and painful the process of repentance, the Lord has said:

"This is the covenant . . . I will make with them. . . I will put my *laws* into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

"And *their sins and iniquities* will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:16–17; italics added).

Civilizations, like Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed themselves by disobedience to the laws of morality. "For the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man. And when the Spirit ceaseth to strive with man then cometh speedy destruction" (2 Nephi 26:11; see also Genesis 6:3; Ether 2:15; D&C 1:33; Moses 8:17).

God grant that we will come to our senses and protect our moral environment from this mist of darkness which deepens day by day. The fate of all humanity hangs precariously in the balance.

And may we have the protection of Him who is our Father and our God, and may we merit the love and blessings of His Son, our Redeemer, in whose name, even the name of Jesus Christ, I bear witness, amen.

The choir sang "Home's Bright Love" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Counsel of the Twelve has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "Home's Bright Love."

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude this session by singing "Thy Servants Are Prepared." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Durrel A. Woolsey of the Seventy, and we shall adjourn until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Young men and women of faith

My brethren and sisters, I have enjoyed several heartwarming experiences in recent months. I use them as a basis for something I wish to say particularly to the youth and young adults of the Church, many thousands of whom are joined with us in this great world conference.

A few weeks ago I looked into the faces of a huge fireside congregation who had gathered on a Sunday evening on the campus of Brigham Young University. I was told there were about eighteen thousand in attendance. They were bright-eyed and attentive. They were eager and alert. They gave their undivided attention, and when the meeting was over they were generous in their expressions of appreciation.

A few months before that I met with students of the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of Southern California, who gathered in our institute building in Los Angeles. Most of these are involved in graduate studies. They are in a challenging and wonderful season of their lives, concerned with great and serious undertakings. I have no doubt they will become leaders in their chosen disciplines. But they are also young men and women with faith who gathered that Sunday to listen and learn of the things of God.

Within the past month I have met with other comparable groups in Spain and Italy, in Switzerland and Denmark. In each place they were clean, neatly dressed, with an eagerness that was wonderful and infectious. It mattered not that they spoke a different language from mine and that they live in a different part of the world. They are partakers of the same gospel of Jesus Christ with a tremendous understanding of that gospel and a deep and abiding sense of gratitude for it.

Then two weeks ago I was in southern Utah on the campus of Southern Utah University. Sprinkled all through that congregation were young men and women, many of whom are enrolled in that school and who again reflect in their appearance and manner something that is wholesome and uplifting.

These are some of our young people of whom I am proud and concerning whom I have a great sense of gratitude and a compelling sense of optimism. In saying this, I do not wish to imply that all is well with all of them. There are many who have troubles and many who live far beneath the high expectations we have concerning them. There are also those who waver in their faith and who are troubled and frustrated within themselves. There are some, I regret to say, who step over the line of acceptable moral behavior and suffer great tragedies in their lives. But even considering these, I have great confidence in our young people as a whole. I regard you as the finest generation in the history of the Church. I compliment you, and I have in my heart a great feeling of love and respect and appreciation for you.

Each time I have stood before such a group, there has come into my mind the great and prophetic statement made by Peter of old. Said he, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

I know of no other statement which more aptly describes you nor which sets before you a higher ideal by which to shape and guide your lives.

A crisis of behavior and belief

Some time ago I read a letter to a newspaper editor which was highly

critical of the Church. I have forgotten the exact language, but it included a question something like this: When are the Mormons going to stop being different and become a part of the mainstream of America?

About this same time there came to my desk a copy of an address given by Senator Dan Coats of Indiana. He spoke of a study made by "a commission of educational, political, medical and business leaders" dealing with the problems of American youth. The committee issued a report called *Code Blue*. That report, according to the Senator, concluded, "Never before has one generation of American teenagers been less healthy, less cared for, or less prepared for life than their parents were at the same age."

He went on to say: "I have seen the parade of pathologies—they are unending and increasing:

"Suicide is now the second leading cause of death among adolescents, increasing 300 percent since 1950.

"Teen pregnancy has risen 621 percent since 1940. More than a million teenage girls get pregnant each year. Eighty-five percent of teenage boys who impregnate teenage girls eventually abandon them.

"The teen homicide rate has increased 232 percent since 1950. Homicide is now the leading cause of death among fifteen- to nineteen-year-old minority youth. . . .

"Every year substance abuse claims younger victims with harder drugs. A third of high school seniors get drunk once a week. The average age for first-time drug use is now thirteen years old."

The report reached a shocking conclusion. It said: "The challenges to the health and well-being of America's youth are not primarily rooted in illness or economics. Unlike the past, the problem is not childhood disease or unsanitary slums. The most basic cause of suffering . . . is profoundly self-

destructive behavior. Drinking. Drugs. Violence. Promiscuity. A crisis of behavior and belief. A crisis of character" (*Imprimis*, Sept. 1991, p. 1).

When I read those statements, I said to myself, If that is the mainstream of American youth, then I want to do all in my power to persuade and encourage our young people to stay away from it.

The loss of moral values

Now I know, as do you, that there are millions of young people in this nation and in every nation who live wholesome, good lives and who are ambitious to make something of themselves. But no one can blink at the fact that in this land, and in other lands across the world, there is an epidemic affecting the lives of millions of youth. It is a sickness that comes of a loss of values, of an abandonment of moral absolutes. The virus which has infected them comes of leaderless families, leaderless schools, leaderless communities. It comes of an attitude that says, "We will not teach moral values. We will leave the determination of such to the individual." Parents, in all too many cases, have abdicated their responsibility to "train up a child in the way he should go" so that "when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Educators in all too many cases have adopted an attitude of moral neutrality.

Many public officers have abandoned any reverent use of the name of God in public meetings, thereby closing the door to Deity when it is plainly evident there is a need for wisdom beyond their own.

If we deny the one sure source of moral truth, then from whence will it come?

Lately we have been following in our papers the trial of a group of young men in New York City who attacked a family from Provo, Utah, to rob them

to get money to go to a discotheque. A son in that family, in trying to defend his mother, was killed.

I do not pretend to know all of the facts. But if what I have read is true, that tragedy finds its roots in the absence of a proper set of values implanted in the lives of those young men. They are now faced with tragic consequences, the spending of years in prison.

In a recent year more than four hundred youth were killed in Los Angeles by other young people, in many instances the result of gang warfare.

A chosen generation

And so I might continue with a picture familiar to all of you, but I return to Peter's great statement as I make a plea and offer a challenge: "Ye are a chosen generation." How very true that is. Notwithstanding all of the problems that we have, this, I believe, is the greatest age in the history of the world. And you young people of this generation are a part of it. You are the beneficiaries of it. Its fruits are here to bless your lives if you will grasp them and live worthy of them.

We today enjoy more of comfort, more of opportunity, more of the blessings of science and research than any generation in the history of the earth. We live longer to enjoy these things. When I was born, the life expectancy in the United States was fifty years. Today it is seventy-five-plus years. It is difficult for me to believe that during the seemingly short time I have lived, the average life expectancy in this nation has increased by a quarter of a century. There has been more of scientific discovery in my lifetime than in all the previous years of the history of mankind. I do not know why I have been so blessed as to have been born in this favored season. But I am grateful, profoundly grateful. I hope that you are also.

And on top of this flowering of knowledge has come an even greater blessing in the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You and I are experiencing the profound and wonderful blessings of the dispensation of the fullness of times. In this day and time there have been restored to the earth all of the principles, powers, blessings, and keys of all previous dispensations. By certain and clear and unequivocal revelation there has come knowledge of the living reality of God our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

John the Baptist has come to earth and conferred the priesthood of Aaron with "the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins" (D&C 13:1).

Peter, James, and John, who in mortality were ordained of the Lord, have restored to earth the divine power given by Jesus Himself when He said to them in the flesh, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

As a part of this great unfolding of knowledge and light and truth, there has come the Book of Mormon, this added testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, a companion volume to the Holy Bible, a declaration of the living reality of the Son of God which speaks in testimony of Him as that knowledge was revealed to prophets who long ago came to know Him in this western hemisphere.

Truly, my dear young friends, you are a chosen generation. I hope you will never forget it. I hope you will never take it for granted. I hope there will grow in your hearts an overpowering sense of gratitude to God, who has made it possible for you to come upon the earth in this marvelous season of the world's history.

A royal priesthood

You young men, you *are* a royal priesthood. Do you ever pause to think of the wonder of it? You have had hands placed upon your heads to receive that same priesthood exercised by John who baptized Jesus of Nazareth. With worthiness in your lives, you may enjoy the comforting, protecting, guiding influence of ministering angels. No individual of earthly royalty has a blessing as great. Live for it. Be worthy of it, is my plea to each of you.

A holy nation

Peter speaks of "an holy nation." He does not refer to a political entity. He refers to a vast congregation of the Saints of God, men and women who walk in holiness before Him and who look to Jesus Christ as their Savior and their King. Young men and women, what a treasured privilege to have citizenship in this holy nation. Never belittle the rights, privileges, and responsibilities that flow therefrom.

A peculiar people

Peter's final description—"a peculiar people."

Of course you are peculiar. If the world continues its present trend, and if you walk in obedience to the doctrines and principles of this Church, you may become even more peculiar in the eyes of others.

Value system comes from God

To each of you I say this: As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you have been taught many values of divine origin. These values are based on the commandments which the finger of the Lord wrote upon the tablets of stone when Moses spoke with Jehovah upon

the mountain. You know them. You are familiar with them.

The values you have been taught likewise are based upon the beatitudes which Jesus spoke to the multitude. These, with others of His divine teachings, constitute a code of ethics, a code of values, a code of divine doctrine familiar to you and binding upon you.

To these have been added the precepts and commandments of modern revelation.

Combined together these basic, divinely given principles, laws, and commandments must constitute your value system. You cannot escape the consequences of their observance. If you will shape your lives according to their pattern, I do not hesitate to promise that you will know much of peace and happiness, of growth and achievement. To the degree that you fail to observe them, I regretfully say that the fruits will be disappointment, sadness, misery, and even tragedy.

You cannot afford . . .

You of this generation, this chosen generation, this royal priesthood, this holy nation, you of this peculiar people—you cannot with impunity follow practices out of harmony with values you have been taught. I challenge you to rise above the sordid elements of the world about you.

You cannot afford to drink beer and other liquors which can rob you of self-control. You cannot afford to smoke cigarettes or use other forms of tobacco and abandon the values which the Lord has set for your guidance. The partaking or distribution of illegal drugs is to be shunned as you would shun a terrible disease.

You cannot afford in any degree to become involved with pornography, whatever its form. You simply cannot afford to become involved in immoral practices—or to let down the bars of sexual restraint. The emotions that stir within you which make boys attractive

to girls and girls attractive to boys are part of a divine plan. But they must be restrained, subdued, and kept under control, or they will destroy you and make you unworthy of many of the great blessings which the Lord has in store for you.

Some young women have thought it clever to bear a child outside of marriage. That illusion soon fades. Teenage pregnancy brings only a harvest of regret, misery, self-depreciation, and unhappiness. It will not happen if there is a true understanding of values and the application of self-discipline on the part of both young men and young women.

You cannot afford to cheat in school or to shoplift or steal or do anything of the kind.

You cannot afford to do any of those things which do not square with the precepts, the teachings, the principles which the God of heaven has set down because of His love for you and His desire that your lives be rich and full and purposeful.

Nor can you afford to idle away your time in long hours watching the frivolous and damaging programming of which much of television is composed. There are better things for you to do. The world into which you will move will be terribly competitive. You

need to increase your education, to refine your skills, to hone your abilities so that you may fill responsibilities of consequence in the society of which you will become a part.

Ponder your purpose and potential

And so I invite you, every one of you within the sound of my voice, to think for a moment upon why you are here under the divine plan of your Father in Heaven and of your tremendous potential to do good during the life that He has given you.

Please know that we love you. We appreciate you. We have confidence in you, knowing that it will only be a short time until you must take over the leadership of this Church and of other great responsibilities which may be yours in the world in which you will live.

God bless you, I humbly pray, as I bear witness and testimony of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Thy Servants Are Prepared."

Elder Durrel A. Woolsey offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 162nd Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 5, 1992. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 162nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Ezra Taft Benson, who has attended other sessions of the conference, is watching this session in his apartment and has asked that I conduct.

To those in the Assembly Hall, we note that Elders Neal A. Maxwell, Douglas J. Martin, and Albert Choules, Jr., are seated on the stand.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger and accompanied by John Longhurst, will provide the music for this session.

The choir will begin this service by singing "Great Is the Lord." The invocation will then be offered by Elder J. Richard Clarke of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Great Is the Lord."

Elder J. Richard Clarke offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Clarke. The choir will now sing "Let the Mountains Shout for Joy." Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then speak to us.

The choir sang "Let the Mountains Shout for Joy."

Elder Russell M. Nelson

This morning Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke of the "fountains of life." This afternoon I should like to speak of the "doors of death." Both are crucial components of life.

Recently at the funeral of a friend, I visited with two distinguished brothers—former surgical colleagues of mine—whose lovely companions had both passed away. They said they were going through the most difficult period of their lives, adjusting to the almost unbearable loss of their partners. These wonderful men then told of their cooking breakfast for each other once a week, sharing that rotation with their sister, trying to lessen their loneliness imposed by the doors of death.

Death separates "the spirit and the body [which] are the soul of man" (D&C 88:15). That separation evokes pangs of sorrow and shock among those left behind. The hurt is real. Only its intensity varies. Some doors are heavier than others. The sense of tragedy may be related to age. Generally the younger the victim, the greater the grief. Yet even when the elderly or

infirm have been afforded merciful relief, their loved ones are rarely ready to let go. The only length of life that seems to satisfy the longings of the human heart is life everlasting.

Mourning

Irrespective of age, we mourn for those loved and lost. Mourning is one of the deepest expressions of pure love. It is a natural response in complete accord with divine commandment: "Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die" (D&C 42:45).

Moreover, we can't fully appreciate joyful reunions later without tearful separations now. The only way to take sorrow out of death is to take love out of life.

Eternal perspective

Eternal perspective provides peace "which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). In speaking at a funeral of a loved one, the Prophet

Joseph Smith offered this admonition: "When we lose a near and dear friend, upon whom we have set our hearts, it should be a caution unto us. . . . Our affections should be placed upon God and His work, more intensely than upon our fellow beings" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 216).

Life does not begin with birth, nor does it end with death. Prior to our birth, we dwelled as spirit children with our Father in Heaven. There we eagerly anticipated the possibility of coming to earth and obtaining a physical body. Knowingly we wanted the risks of mortality, which would allow the exercise of agency and accountability. "This life [was to become] a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God" (Alma 12:24). But we regarded the returning home as the best part of that long-awaited trip, just as we do now. Before embarking on any journey, we like to have some assurance of a round-trip ticket. Returning from earth to life in our heavenly home requires passage through—and not around—the doors of death. We were born to die, and we die to live (see 2 Corinthians 6:9). As seedlings of God, we barely blossom on earth; we fully flower in heaven.

Physical death

The writer of Ecclesiastes said, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die" (Ecclesiastes 3:1–2; see also Alma 12:27).

Think of the alternative. If all 69 billion people who have ever lived on earth were still here, imagine the traffic jam! And we could own virtually nothing and scarcely make any responsible decisions.

Plan of happiness

Scriptures teach that death is *essential* to happiness: "Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would *destroy* the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8; italics added; see also 2 Nephi 9:6).

Our limited perspective would be enlarged if we could witness the reunion on the other side of the veil, when doors of death open to those returning home. Such was the vision of the psalmist who wrote, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Spiritual death

But there is another type of separation known in scripture as spiritual death (see 2 Nephi 9:12; Alma 12:16; 42:9; Helaman 14:16, 18). It "is defined as a *state of spiritual alienation from God*" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 2:217). Thus, one can be very much alive physically but dead spiritually.

Spiritual death is more likely when goals are unbalanced toward things physical. Paul explained this concept to the Romans: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13).

If physical death should strike before moral wrongs have been made right, opportunity for repentance will have been forfeited. Thus, "the [real] sting of death is sin" (1 Corinthians 15:56).

Even the Savior cannot save us in our sins. He will redeem us from our sins, but only upon condition of our repentance. We are responsible for our own spiritual survival or death (see Romans 8:13–14; Helaman 14:18; D&C 29:41–45).

Coping with trials

Physical and spiritual trials provide continuing challenges in life. Each of you could provide illustrations from personal experience. Many of you, for instance, are at the twilight of life and endure long and difficult days. You know well the meaning of that divine injunction to endure to the end (see Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13; 1 Nephi 13:37; 22:31; 2 Nephi 31:16; 33:4; Omni 1:26; 3 Nephi 15:9; D&C 14:7; 18:22; 24:8).

The Savior of the world repeatedly asked that we pattern our lives after His (see John 13:15; 14:6; 1 Peter 2:21; 2 Nephi 31:9, 16; 3 Nephi 18:16; 27:27). So we must endure trials—as did He. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8).

When hardship heaps its heavy load upon us, good may yet be gleaned. Shakespeare so wrote:

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.
[*As You Like It*, act 2, scene 1, lines 12–14]

The Lord’s expression is even more explicit: “After much tribulation come the blessings” (D&C 58:4).

Postmortal life

Mortality, temporary as it is, is terminated by the doors of death. Questions then come to searching minds of those left behind: “Where is my loved one now?” “What happens after death?” While many questions cannot be fully answered with available knowledge, much is known.

Paradise

The first station in postmortal life is named paradise. Alma wrote:

“Concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection—Behold, it has been made known unto me . . . that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, . . . are taken home to that God who gave them life.

“ . . . The spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace” (Alma 40:11–12).

Resurrection and immortality

Some facetiously state that nothing is as permanent as death. Not so! The grip of physical death is temporary. It began with the fall of Adam; it ended with the atonement of Jesus the Christ. The waiting period in paradise is temporary too. It ends with the Resurrection. From the Book of Mormon we learn that the “paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls” (2 Nephi 9:13).

A few years ago our stake president and his wife had a wonderful son taken in his youthful prime because of an automobile accident. We are consoled by the knowledge that the very laws that could not allow his broken body to survive here are the same eternal laws which the Lord will employ at the time of the Resurrection, when that body “shall be restored to [its] proper and perfect frame” (Alma 40:23; see also 11:42–45).

The Lord who created us in the first place surely has power to do it again. The same necessary elements

now in our bodies will still be available—at His command. The same unique genetic code now embedded in each of our living cells will still be available to format new ones then. The miracle of the Resurrection, wondrous as it will be, is marvelously matched by the miracle of our creation in the first place.

Judgment

Our resurrection will not be an end but a new beginning. It will prepare us for judgment by the Lord, who said, "As I have been lifted up [upon the cross] by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works" (3 Nephi 27:14).

Even before we approach that threshold of the eternal court of justice, we know who will personally preside:

"The keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name.

"And whoso knocketh, to him will he open" (2 Nephi 9:41–42).

Family ties

Loving relationships continue beyond the doors of death and judgment. Family ties endure because of sealings in the temple. Their importance cannot be overstated.

I remember vividly an experience I had as a passenger in a small two-propeller airplane. One of its engines suddenly burst open and caught on fire. The propeller of the flaming engine was starkly stilled. As we plummeted in a steep spiral dive toward the earth, I expected to die. Some of the passengers screamed in hysterical panic. Miraculously, the precipitous dive extinguished the flames. Then, by starting up the other engine, the pilot was

able to stabilize the plane and bring us down safely.

Throughout that ordeal, though I "knew" death was coming, my paramount feeling was that I was not afraid to die. I remember a sense of returning home to meet ancestors for whom I had done temple work. I remember my deep sense of gratitude that my sweetheart and I had been sealed eternally to each other and to our children, born and reared in the covenant. I realized that our marriage in the temple was my most important accomplishment. Honors bestowed upon me by men could not approach the inner peace provided by sealings performed in the house of the Lord.

That harrowing experience consumed but a few minutes, yet my entire life flashed before my mind. Having had such rapid recall when facing death, I do not doubt the scriptural promise of "perfect remembrance" when facing judgment (Alma 5:18; see also Alma 11:43).

Eternal life

After judgment comes the possibility of eternal life—the kind of life that our Heavenly Father lives. His celestial realm has been compared with the glory of the sun (see 1 Corinthians 15:41; D&C 76:96). It is available to all who prepare for it, the requirements of which have been clearly revealed: "Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20; see also John 17:3).

Time to prepare

Meanwhile, we who tarry here have a few precious moments remaining "to prepare to meet God" (Alma

34:32). Unfinished business is our worst business. Perpetual procrastination must yield to perceptive preparation. Today we have a little more time to bless others—time to be kinder, more compassionate, quicker to thank and slower to scold, more generous in sharing, more gracious in caring.

Then when our turn comes to pass through the doors of death, we can say as did Paul: "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:6-7).

We need not look upon death as an enemy. With our full understanding and preparation, faith supplants fear. Hope displaces despair. The Lord said, "Fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full" (D&C 101:36). He bestowed this gift: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

As a special witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that He lives! I also testify that the veil of death is very thin. I know by experiences too sacred to

relate that those who have gone before are not strangers to leaders of this Church. To us and to you, our loved ones may be just as close as the next room—separated only by the doors of death.

With that assurance, brothers and sisters, love life! Cherish each moment as a blessing from God (see Mosiah 2:21). Live it well—even to your loftiest potential. Then the anticipation of death shall not hold you hostage. With the help of the Lord, your deeds and desires will qualify you to receive everlasting joy, glory, immortality, and eternal lives. For this I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard, also a member of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Sister Ardeth G. Kapp, released yesterday as General President of the Young Women.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Sacrifices of pioneers

Last October we listened to many inspired conference messages. In his Sunday morning address, President Gordon B. Hinckley called to our attention some of the poignant experiences of our pioneer forefathers whose sacrifices helped them lay the foundation of the restored Church. Our hearts were softened and our spirits grew tender with emotion as we listened to him recount experiences of some of those hardy handcart pioneers.

The images engendered in my mind and heart have not left me. Again and again, I find my thoughts returning

to the high, snow-covered, windswept plains of Wyoming. In my mind's eye, I see the suffering of those faithful Saints and know that in their extremity, under circumstances hard for us today to conceive, many of them came to know God in a way that few people will ever understand.

Margaret McNeil Ballard

Many of us are descendants of hardy pioneers, and we feel grateful and inspired by their faith-promoting examples of sacrifice. My great-grandmother Margaret McNeil Ballard recorded in her journal a pioneer expe-

rience of sacrifice that occurred when she was between nine and eleven years of age. She wrote:

"After landing we planned to go west to Utah with the Martin and Willey handcart companies; but Elder Franklin D. Richards counseled my father not to go with them. Afterwards, we were very thankful because of the great suffering, privation and cold weather to which these people were subjected. There were many of the company who were frozen that year on their journey. . . .

"The company we were assigned to had gone on ahead and as my mother was anxious for me to go with them she strapped my little brother James on my back with a shawl. He was only four years old and . . . quite sick with the measles; but I took him since my mother had all she could do to care for the other children. I hurried and caught up with the company, traveling with them all day. That night a kind lady helped me take my brother off my back. I sat up and held him on my lap with the shawl wrapped around him, alone, all night. He was a little better in the morning. The people in the camp were very good to us and gave us a little fried bacon and some bread for breakfast.

"We traveled this way for about a week, before my brother and I were united with our family again."

This brief episode in Great-grandmother's life teaches me that our pioneer ancestors gave everything, even their lives, for their faith, for the building of the kingdom of God when the Church was in its infancy. It teaches also that they helped, nourished, and strengthened each other in their extremity and shared unstintingly. Their material means, such as food, clothing, and shelter, were meager, but their love for one another and their devotion to their Lord and to the gospel were boundless.

Our sacrifices

Our commitment to the kingdom should match that of our faithful ancestors even though our sacrifices are different. They were driven from comfortable homes and compelled to journey one thousand miles by ox-drawn wagon and handcart to reestablish their families, homes, and Church in safety. Our sacrifices may be more subtle but no less demanding. Instead of physical deprivation and hardship, we face the challenge of remaining true and faithful to gospel principles amidst such evil and destructive forces as dishonesty, corruption, drug and alcohol misuse, and disease often caused by sexual promiscuity. Also, we find ourselves in combat daily with immorality in all of its many forms. Pornography and violence, often portrayed in insidious television shows, movies, and videos, are running rampant. Hate and envy, greed and selfishness are all about us, and families are disintegrating at an ever-increasing pace. In the midst of all of this, my brothers and sisters, we must never forget the source of our abundant blessings.

Sacrifices for a ward building

I recall in my own ministry joining with members of the Holladay Seventh Ward in the spring of 1956 as we gathered on the hillside near Mount Olympus. Under the direction of our stake president, G. Carlos Smith, we broke ground for the construction of a new ward building. At the time the ward was created, we had a total of 373 members. As I recall, more than half of them were under the age of twelve. I served as second counselor to Bishop William Partridge. Under his leadership this little band of people proceeded immediately to build a three-phase ward building.

The ward was divided in 1958, and I was named bishop of the Holladay

Twelfth Ward. In those days, local members paid 50 percent of the cost of constructing a building. One of the most important leadership experiences in my life came several weeks before the announced dedication of the building. Our ward of young families, who were struggling to make ends meet, needed to raise the final \$30,000 required to pay our share of the cost. I fasted and prayed, asking for help from Heavenly Father to know what I should say to our ward members regarding this obligation. We already had pressed them very hard, and they had willingly contributed money and personal labor beyond anything I believed possible. But still we needed to raise the last \$30,000.

As the brethren gathered for priesthood meeting, I was impressed to read to them the testimony my Grandfather Ballard bore to the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve on January 7, 1919, the day he was ordained an Apostle. I quote just a small portion of his testimony.

"I know, as I know that I live, that this is God's work and that you are His servants. . . . I remember one testimony, among the many testimonies which I have received. . . . Two years ago, about this time, I had been on the Fort Peck Reservation for several days with the brethren, solving the problems connected with our work among the Lamanites. Many questions arose that we had to settle. There was no precedent for us to follow, and we just had to go to the Lord and tell Him our troubles, and get inspiration and help from Him. On this occasion I had sought the Lord, under such circumstances, and that night I received a wonderful manifestation and impression which has never left me. I was carried to this place—into this room. I saw myself here with you. I was told there was another privilege that was to be mine; and I was led into a room

where I was informed I was to meet someone. As I entered the room I saw, seated on a raised platform, the most glorious being I have ever conceived of, and was taken forward to be introduced to Him. As I approached He smiled, called my name, and stretched out His hands toward me. If I live to be a million years old I shall never forget that smile. He put His arms around me and kissed me, as He took me into His bosom, and He blessed me until my whole being was thrilled. As He finished I fell at His feet, and there saw the marks of the nails; and as I kissed them, with deep joy swelling through my whole being, I felt that I was in heaven indeed. The feeling that came to my heart then was: Oh! if I could live worthy, though it would require four-score years, so that in the end when I have finished I could go into His presence and receive the feeling that I *then* had in His presence, I would give everything that I am or ever hope to be!" (Melvin J. Ballard—*Crusader for Righteousness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], pp. 65–66).

The Spirit of the Lord touched our hearts. Very little else was said because this small group of faithful people also knew in their own way that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He is our Savior and our Redeemer. We all knew that with greater faith in Him, we could reach our goal. During that same day, family after family came to my office with money, making personal sacrifices that were far beyond what I, the bishop, would ever have asked of them. By eight o'clock Sunday evening, the ward clerk had written receipts for a little more than \$30,000.

Sacrifice truly brought forth the blessings of heaven to the members of our ward. Never have I lived among people who were more united, more caring, more concerned for one another than these ward members were when making their greatest sacrifice. In

the midst of this effort, the sick of our ward were healed through priesthood blessings. The youth committed to live righteously. The young men set their goals to be fully worthy to serve missions, and most of them did; and the young women resolved to settle for nothing but a worthy temple marriage. Sisters of the Relief Society found great joy in rendering compassionate service to others, and home teaching and visiting teaching were completed every month in the spirit of joy and service. In the midst of our greatest sacrifice, our ward members became bonded together in the true spirit of the gospel of love and service.

The Lord's example of sacrifice

Sacrifice is a demonstration of pure love. The degree of our love for the Lord, for the gospel, and for our fellowmen can be measured by what we are willing to sacrifice for them. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ manifested the supreme example of this love. His life and ministry established a pattern for us to follow. His divine mission was culminated in a supreme act of love as He allowed His life to be sacrificed for us. Having power over life and death, He chose to submit himself to pain, ridicule, and suffering, and offered His life as a ransom for our sins. Because of His love, He suffered both body and spirit to a degree beyond our comprehension and took upon Himself our sins if we repent. Through His personal sacrifice, He provided a way for us to have our sins forgiven and, through Him, to find our way back into the presence of our Heavenly Father.

The sacrifice he requires of us is "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20), which can lead us to repentance. When we consider His example, the demands made upon our time or means are slight in comparison.

We should, therefore, give gladly and count it as a blessing and an opportunity.

Do not lose the spirit of sacrifice

I realize that today many faithful members of the Church are sacrificing a great deal to support sons and daughters serving on missions and render other great service in many ways. As I have pondered these simple acts of faith, I have asked myself, however, how many of us really measure up to our potential in living the spirit of the law of sacrifice?

Church members today have been blessed greatly to have some of our financial burdens lifted. Faithful payment of tithes that are administered carefully now provides funds for constructing our buildings, paying for utilities, and meeting many other obligations that formerly necessitated additional contributions. We must realize that decreasing these needs for financial contributions gives birth to enlarged opportunities for us to live a higher law. By this I mean that on our own initiative we can find ways to extend ourselves in helping others and contributing to the building of the Lord's kingdom. The Lord has instructed us that we "should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; For the power is in [us], wherein [we] are agents unto [ourselves]" (D&C 58:27-28).

My brothers and sisters, we must not lose the spirit of sacrifice demonstrated by the handcart pioneers. Some of the Lord's choicest blessings await those who practice this eternal principle through extending themselves in service to God and to their fellowmen. The sacrificing spirit and the happiness that come through service to others can bring peace and joy even amid trials.

Teach sacrifice in every home

The principle of sacrifice should be taught in every Latter-day Saint home and should be practiced in many simple yet important ways. We can do this by setting an example of reverence that will bring the true spirit of worship into our meetings and by guarding against murmuring and complaining about the challenges of the Sunday worship schedule. We can contribute a generous fast offering, find joy in supporting missionaries, and pay an honest tithing. We can accept Church callings and serve with a happy and grateful heart, do temple work regularly, offer family and personal daily prayers, and teach one another each week in well-planned family home evenings. Both younger members and those who are older can prepare early and make themselves worthy to accept calls to serve as missionaries. We all can be good neighbors and can take care of widows, the poor, and the less fortunate. We can reach out to others in our service as home and visiting teachers. Brethren, we must be clean and worthy to bless others with the priesthood we hold.

Today we are not called to pull handcarts through the snow-swept

plains of Wyoming. However, we are called to live, foster, and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our privilege to invest our means and our time to bless others. Each one of us must do all we can to preserve our Latter-day Saint way of life. A vital part of this preservation is a willingness to set aside personal desires and replace them with unselfish sacrifice for others.

God bless you, brothers and sisters, to know as I know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that being a member of His Church, the only true and living Church, is never a burden but always a great blessing. That we may be grateful for this blessing I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve.

Sister Ardeeth G. Kapp, who was released yesterday as Young Women General President, will now address us. She will be followed by Sister Janette C. Hales, sustained yesterday as General President of the Young Women.

Ardeth G. Kapp

My dear brothers and sisters, today my heart is filled with joy because of the deep love and respect I feel for the newly called Young Women Presidency. I also feel heartfelt gratitude for my counselors and the Young Women board members I have served with. We rejoice in the opportunities that have come through our callings. I'm grateful to my eternal companion, who has been my constant support.

A mighty force for righteousness

As we have inquired of the Lord in earnest prayer and sought Him diligently, we have felt His Spirit and witnessed His guiding hand. I bear testimony of the wisdom, inspiration, and guidance of our priesthood leaders directing this great work.

At the time of my calling, President Hinckley spoke of this as a time when the young women of the Church would become a mighty force for

righteousness. We are witnessing this around the world.

A young fifteen-year-old from Zaire, Africa, wrote, "I know my Heavenly Father loves me because I have asked."

Another young woman wrote: "I am almost fourteen. I want to know if you think it is all right to go to the school dances. If you don't answer my letter in time for the Halloween dance, I won't go. I don't want to disobey."

Behind these righteous young women are loving parents and faithful leaders who sense the sacred trust to teach, to love, to hold a hand, and, when appropriate, to hold the line.

Knowing who we are

In *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye speaks to his daughters and says: In Anatevka "everyone here knows who [she] is and what God expects [of her]" (Jerry Bauch, "Tradition," *Fiddler on the Roof* [New York: Sunbeam Music, 1971]).

It is important for all of us to know who we are and what God expects of us.

After Jesus had fasted forty days, the tempter came to Him and attempted to plant seeds of doubt about who He really was. "If thou be the Son of God," he began his evil ploy (Matthew 4:3). Jesus knew who He was. He has declared that message clearly to each of us: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God!" (D&C 6:21). He is our Savior, our advocate with the Father.

The young women of the Church have a personal statement which declares their identity: "I am a daughter of a Heavenly Father who loves me, and I will have faith in His eternal plan, which centers in Jesus Christ, my Savior" (*Young Women Handbook* [1989], p. 3).

Each of us, young and older, through the ordinance of baptism has covenanted to take upon us the name

of Jesus Christ, to love, to care, and to serve our brothers and sisters wherever they may be.

A few weeks ago I was speaking at a missionary fireside where members had brought their nonmember friends. I noticed a young girl sitting by her mother on the front row. I learned later that she was only twelve years old. I asked her if she would come up. She could hardly see over the pulpit. Unrehearsed, this young girl, with great feeling and conviction in her tender yet clear voice, repeated from memory:

"We are daughters of our Heavenly Father who loves us, and we love him. We will 'stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places'" (*Young Women Handbook*, p. 3).

She continued to the end of the Young Women Theme, including the Young Women Values, while the audience listened in awe.

Knowing and remembering who we are and whose we are, we become guided by a force affecting our attitude and our conduct. We draw close to our Father in Heaven through sacred ordinances and covenants available only through His restored Church.

Making and keeping covenants

I had the privilege of visiting with a faithful family of Latter-day Saints in a small nipa hut in the Philippines. In this humble setting a beautiful young woman, fourteen years old, listened intently while her father explained that by saving all the money they could and selling everything they owned, the family would one day have enough to go to the temple, where they could be sealed as a family forever.

It is our faith in the importance of making covenants with God and coming to understand our immense possibilities that the temple, the house of the Lord, becomes the focus for all that really matters. In the temple we

participate in ordinances and covenants that span the distance between heaven and earth. They prepare us to one day return to God's presence and enjoy the blessings of eternal families and eternal life.

I have heard young women around the world repeat in many languages their commitment: "We will be prepared to make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation" (*Young Women Handbook*, p. 3). Those blessings can be available to all of us—to all our Father's children. When our faith is centered in Jesus Christ, our Savior, we begin to understand our identity and our tender rela-

tionship to Him as expressed in the song:

The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His,
And He is mine forever.
[Henry W. Baker, "The King of Love," in *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (New York: Harper, 1948), no. 783]

It is through the ordinances and covenants available in the temple that our Father in Heaven has provided the way for us to return to Him rejoicing. To these eternal truths I bear my testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Janette C. Hales

You are not alone

How I love Ardeth Kapp and Jayne Malan and the recently released board members. And what a wonderful feeling came over me when President Monson called to tell me that my counselors had been called. He said, "You shouldn't be alone." And then he quickly added, "You are not alone."

I have a testimony of those words and what comfort they give. Four years ago, when I found myself quite suddenly a widow with the youngest of my five children leaving for a mission, I felt alone. I did a lot of walking at that time, and one day I told a neighbor I found myself thinking about youth. She said, "Really? I wonder why?" I concluded that perhaps I was trying to remember who I was before I was married. I said, "If I ever have a chance to work with young people again, I will be so much more patient, so much more gentle, and so much more loving." And I have since added, "I will do all in my power to encourage young people to prepare for the future."

Study, pray, and listen

There are times when we are growing up when we feel alone or left out. Times of change are growing-up times: things like moving, changing schools, going on a mission, having a baby, having your baby go on a mission, a serious illness, losing someone you love. I believe that there are some things that help in these growing-up times so we don't feel so alone. Spend more time talking to Heavenly Father and reading the scriptures. Listen to the still, small voice. In the words of a young woman of Beehive age: "At first when I would say my prayers and read scriptures, I would never get a good feeling about it. But after about two months of my scriptures and prayer, I began to feel very happy, and I loved my family, and I felt like being nice to everyone."

When the prophet Enos listened to the words of the Lord, he began to feel a desire for the welfare of others (see Enos 1:9). When we start to think of others, we feel less alone.

Build a support system

Another thing that helps is to build a support system. As a president needs counselors, we all need caring and interested family and friends. A father said to his daughter: "Somebody does care about you. It may not always be the people you want to have caring about you, but there is always someone who is there and who cares. In fact, you probably already know who they are because they are the ones you have always been able to count on. That won't change" (Joseph Walker, "Value-Speak," *Chicago Tribune*, 3 June 1991). We need people who care. "Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands" (D&C 121:9).

Work and gain experience

Growing up does not take place without a work effort. Not long ago, my youngest daughter came home and said her bishop had asked her to be a Sunday School teacher. She said, "I just don't feel like a Sunday School teacher." I said, "You aren't yet, Mary, but you will be." Growing up involves developing our potential. Heavenly Father is counting on each one of us. Confidence will grow quietly from within as we work and gain experience.

Enjoy doing small, unseen deeds

Sometimes we make the mistake of feeling we are alone just because we are not getting recognition. Only a small part of what we do takes place in a public setting. The rest takes place in small and often unseen deeds. When you add the small deeds together, however, they are a thousand times greater than those receiving public recognition. Albert Schweitzer said that when you compare the public deeds to the small, private ones, they are "like the foam on the waves of a deep ocean"

(Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, trans. A. B. Lemke [New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1990], p. 90). This is a good thing to remember when growing up.

Many people love you

To every young woman of the Church, in your growing-up years you are not alone. I want you to know how much I love you. Do you have any idea how much you are thought about, talked about, prayed about, and loved by your parents and leaders? Learn to work and develop your abilities. Consider the needs of others and give loving service. Support one another as you stand for truth and righteousness. Our Heavenly Father loves you. He understands your challenges. He knows you were prepared for this time before you were born. I have complete faith in the words of our prophet, who said, "You have been born at this time for a sacred and glorious purpose" (Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Young Women of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 81).

Adults, know and love the youth

Now, to every adult member of the Church, may I suggest that you learn the names of the young people in your ward or branch and call them by name. Encourage them in their work efforts. Recognize them for the good things they do. They need our support, and we need theirs. Probably the hardest thing about growing up is that you have to keep doing it. But we are not alone. I bear testimony and express gratitude for this knowledge in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

The young women of the Church have been well served by Sister Ardeth Kapp and her counselors, Jayne B. Malan and Janette C. Hales. Sister Kapp, of course, will join her husband,

Heber, when he presides over the Canada Vancouver Mission. You can always feel her missionary spirit. And of course we feel wonderfully well about the young women being in the charge of Sister Janette C. Hales, from whom we've just heard, and her counselors, Virginia H. Pearce and Patricia P. Pinegar.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee,

O God, for a Prophet." Elder Han In Sang, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at October conference, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Han In Sang

A disciple of the Lord

I feel deeply humble, and I sincerely pray for the Spirit and for support from the Lord.

From the book of 3 Nephi we read: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13).

I came from Korea, traveling halfway around the world to bear my testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Korea has experienced wars. During my lifetime I have seen many tragic things, sadness, and changes. Yet I have also witnessed many miracles. My country of Korea is where I was born and where I have lived all my life. It is where my beloved ancestors, including my dear father and mother and the parents of my grandparents, are buried.

Four of our five children are in Korea now. Many of our close friends and our brothers and sisters and their families are there also.

I have never lived outside Korea until last August, when I was called to Salt Lake City, called by the Lord to declare His words among His people.

Yet the First Presidency counseled me to become a General Authority, a disciple of the Lord first, above all things.

Gratitude to Heavenly Father

Before I've gone too far, let me say, "*Kam sa ham ni ta!*" *Kam sa ham ni ta* is a unique Korean honorific expression of gratitude.

I am grateful to Heavenly Father for His love and special blessings in my life. During the desperate times of difficulties and throughout the war, I wandered to the very edge of my life and felt most helpless. There was no hope and no future for me. I thought I had been completely thrown out and left out by everything.

Heavenly Father, through my loving parents, worked out miracles for me. I was able to stand up and move forward. The shelters and food were provided here and there. It wasn't much, but enough for me to keep going and ultimately to join with you today in this historic great Tabernacle, surrounded by the chosen leaders of the Lord's Church.

Thus I say, "*Kam sa ham ni ta*" to my Heavenly Father.

Gratitude to Dr. Kim Ho Jik

I am grateful for my good parents and for their special love and wonderful influence on my life. I am also deeply grateful to Dr. Kim Ho Jik, the first Korean Latter-day Saint, the most

humble and unselfish person I have ever known. This great man led the handful of poverty-stricken young Korean Saints during the time of tribulation to lay the foundation of the work of the Lord in the land of morning calm—Korea—by preparing those seemingly helpless individuals to learn the gospel of Jesus Christ and to stand firm for the cause of the Lord.

His love of God and his love for me formulated many miracles in my life.

I set my goal to become a good member of the Church as he was—a good father, a good husband, and even a good translator as he was. I know that today he and my father are looking down and smiling at me from the spirit world.

Gratitude to members and leaders

I am grateful for you, my brothers and sisters. *Kam sa ham ni ta!*

One of you taught me the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and baptized me into the kingdom. The love you had moved me to accept the gospel to begin with. Then many great leaders of the Church came over to teach and train us all these years.

President Lee, President Kimball, President Benson, President Hinckley, President Monson, and many other great leaders came to help us and change us, with great love of the Lord.

In Korea, President Hinckley wept many times, and we all felt the love he had for the Lord and for the poor people in the Orient. *Kam sa ham ni ta!*

The costs of discipleship

When we left our home in Korea last fall, many of our brothers and sisters came to KimPo Airport to say good-bye to us. Four of our children were also among the people, half lost and half crying. They were so proud of their parents. On that particular day, my wife and I stood on the side of the

departure lounge away from the area where we normally stood, where we had seen our guests off.

KimPo Airport—I know that place very well. I have gone there numerous times, primarily to bring visitors in and to accompany guests out. Each time I visited KimPo Airport, I would say to myself or to my wife, “Not me! Never! I will do their errands for them. I will drive for them and translate for them and all the rest. But no, sir! I will stay home and be a good Gospel Doctrine class teacher in Sunday School!” Thus, the Lord heard my selfish whispering.

Elder Maxwell, you taught us about the reality of the costs of discipleship. Further, you said, “They can be paid neither at wholesale rates nor in one lump sum” (*Men and Women of Christ* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991], p. 24).

I had to learn the lesson very quickly, and I am grateful for the counsel and encouragement of the message.

We are now living in Tokyo, Japan. Only the Lord knows why. In Tokyo we have to learn everything all over again, including the new meaning of life. We have to learn the language, the culture, the system of the society, how to commute from one place to another, and, importantly, we are learning about the people and how to love these people.

In the book of Mark we read, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

Bearing this cross is not easy, but it will not be too difficult because God lives and He loves us.

The love of God

I meet many tired leaders here and there in our area. I hug them and tell them I love them because I have a strong testimony of the living God and His great love.

To me, the love of God means going out to the people and doing something good for them and helping them until they change their old ways of living and come to Heavenly Father, happily.

Only the love of God will cure many diseases and problems of the world, including the disease of inactivity in the Church.

May that love of God bring peace in your homes. I love you, and *Kam sa ham ni ta!* I know that God our Heavenly Father lives and that Jesus Christ is our Savior. Joseph Smith was a true

prophet of the Lord in this dispensation, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Wasn't that a beautiful expression, brothers and sisters? Elder Han In Sang of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders Stephen D. Nadauld and Sam K. Shimabukuro, who were also sustained as members of the Seventy at the October conference.

Elder Stephen D. Nadauld

It is a humbling experience to occupy this podium where truths of the Restoration have been taught by prophets and Apostles both past and present. I am grateful for this call to serve and have come to admire and love the Brethren with whom I associate.

I am indebted to a wonderful and able mother and a truly extraordinary wife, companion, and mother to our seven sons. I echo a sentiment previously expressed by Elder Scott—Margaret excels me in every worthwhile quality. I love her very much.

Running into ourselves

Children can provide wonderful and often humorous insights into life. We have in our family identical ten-year-old twin sons. In some circumstances they are practically impossible to tell apart.

Recently we moved and found ourselves in new surroundings. Several days later I was talking to Aaron, one of the twins, and inquired about the big bump he had on his forehead. He described it this way. "Well, Dad, Lincoln [who is his older brother] was chasing me down the hall. I ran around the cor-

ner, and I saw my twin brother, Adam. Now, I knew I could outrun Adam, so I just kept running." It turns out he ran into a full-length mirror!

Life provides for each of us a full-length, wide-screen panorama of opportunities to run into ourselves. The eminent philosopher Pogo expressed it this way: "We have met the enemy, and he is us!" (Walt Kelly).

In more eloquent terms, Moroni was told by the Lord: "And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness . . . ; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

Overcoming weaknesses through faith

As we look into the mirror at the accumulation of bumps and bruises that evidence our weaknesses, may we be reminded that there are two great stabilizing forces that can anchor our souls.

The first is illustrated by an experience of several months ago. A stake president and I took the opportunity to visit a young woman in her home near

Atlanta, Georgia. She was twenty-nine years old; her husband had been killed in a car accident; she was living in a modest apartment with her two young children. I suppose we expected to find her upset and discouraged at having received a "bump" not of her own making. On the contrary, she was cheerful; she was calm; she was very gracious. She thanked us for coming and then said, as nearly as I can recall:

"Brethren, I want you to know I believe in the plan of redemption. I am grateful to my Savior for the promise of a glorious resurrection with my husband. I am grateful for His redeeming sacrifice." Then, putting her arms around her two children, she said, "Our faith in Jesus Christ will see us through."

We came expecting to comfort and strengthen, and we left humbled, buoyed, and blessed by her wonderful expression of faith.

Indeed we walk by faith—faith in the plan of redemption, faith in the role of Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer, faith that as the Son of God he has the power to save, to forgive, to lift us up. Because of our faith, we repent, we keep his commandments, we seek his restored Church and authorized priesthood. We listen to and follow the words of his prophets and Apostles spoken from this and other pulpits.

When we exercise our faith in him, then Christ will help us overcome our weaknesses and the resulting bumps and bruises.

Carol's example of good works

To illustrate the second great stabilizing force, I would relate another experience. Some years ago I was serving as a young bishop. We were holding a ward social around a swimming pool near the apartment where most of the ward members lived. I was introduced to a new member of the ward, a young woman in her twenties by the name of

Carol. Carol had been afflicted with cerebral palsy since infancy. She walked with great difficulty; her hands were crippled. Her kind and dear face was also affected, as was her speech. But, as I would come to understand, to know Carol was to love her.

I had only to wait a few minutes to begin learning the great lesson she would teach. While we were talking, we watched a tall, handsome, dark-haired, very athletic young man dive off the diving board and seem to injure himself slightly. He got out of the pool holding his neck and went and sat under a tree. I watched as Carol struggled to prepare a plate of food and with great difficulty delivered it to him—a guileless act of service, of good works. Carol's good works became a legend. She cared for the sick; she took food to the hungry; she drove people places (an experience that delivered you pale and shaken but always in one piece); she comforted; she lifted; she blessed.

I walked with her one day on the sidewalk that passed through the apartment complex where she lived. From the windows, from the balconies, from the porches came cries of "Hi, Carol!" "How are you doing, Carol?" "Come up and see us, Carol." And occasionally someone would say, "Oh, hi, Bishop." It was clear that Carol was loved and greatly accepted through her wonderful good works.

My most vivid recollection of Carol occurred in the spring of that year. The ward had agreed to participate in the stake five-kilometer fun run—an oxymoronic term, to be sure. Carol wanted to be with the rest of the ward members, but we didn't see how it would be possible. For her, just walking was a great difficulty. Nevertheless, she was determined. She struggled and trained each day to increase her endurance.

The race finished in the stadium. Two or three hundred of us were in the

stands by the finish line, drinking juice and catching our breath. And then we remembered Carol—she was left somewhere back on the course. As we ran out of the entrance to the stadium, she came into view, struggling to breathe, barely able to walk, but determined to finish. As she started around the track toward the finish line, a wonderful thing happened. Suddenly the track was lined on both sides with hundreds of cheering friends. Others were running alongside to support and hold her up. Carol “of great good works” had finished the race.

One day each of us will cross the finish line. Will it likewise be to the

cheers and encouragement of those we have loved and served? Hopefully it will be to the approbation of our Savior, who because of our faith and our good works will say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

I add my witness to the many that have been borne from this pulpit. I know God lives. Jesus Christ is his Son, our Savior and our Redeemer. He has the power to lift us up if we will come unto him in faith, with good works, and with all of our hearts. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Sam K. Shimabukuro

Greetings from Japan and Korea

My dear brothers and sisters, I am pleased to convey to all of you love and warm greetings from the wonderful Saints and missionaries of Japan and Korea. They join the hundreds of thousands of Saints and missionaries throughout the world in doing their utmost to be true and dedicated disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ so as to enjoy the blessings of peace and fulfillment in their lives and share the blessings of love and goodwill with others.

I am honored and humbled by this assignment from the First Presidency to speak in this session of general conference. If a wife's worries and concerns are the determining factor for assuring the success of a talk in general conference, then I'm happy to say I've got it made, for the amount of worries and concerns generated by my wife is more than enough to assure the success of not only my talk, but also all of the talks that have been given and will be given from this pulpit at this conference. What a blessing to have a wife who worries for you and over you.

“What think ye of Christ?”

In Matthew chapter 22, verse 42, is recorded a question of great import to you and me who profess to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The question, as raised by Jesus Himself, is “What think ye of Christ?” I'm sure we have thought of or have been asked this question before. No doubt we have come up with many responses, and all have been reflective of the deep love and esteem we have for Him. It is not surprising we have given or have heard others give, time and time again, such descriptions as the Only Begotten Son, Lord and Savior, Redeemer of the World, Sinless Sacrifice, Lamb of God, Light of the World, and countless more. And each time we bear testimony of what we think of Him, I'm sure we do it with utmost reverence and endearment. It is also reassuring to know that what we testify is made sure by the Spirit, for “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

"What doest ye for Christ?"

And now may I humbly pose another important question that may be considered a follow-up to "What think ye of Christ?" It is not a question found in the scriptures, but hopefully it may be worthy of your thoughtful consideration, and perhaps also prove appropriate in assessing and measuring our discipleship—yours and mine. As a follow-up to "What think ye of Christ?" may I pose the question "What doest ye for Christ?"

The main character relative to the question "What think ye of Christ?" is, of course, the Lord Jesus Himself. We place Him on center stage as we give vivid descriptions of His divine nature, mission, and accomplishments, followed by our thoughts and testimonies concerning His teachings and works during His ministry of three short years and the profound impact for good these have had in our lives.

The question "What doest ye for Christ?" is, of course, of great importance because it poses a challenge that has eternal implications and consequences affecting our mortal life and our life beyond the veil. This time we become the main characters, and we occupy center stage rather than Jesus Christ. The issue now is not what we think of Him, but rather what we have done, are doing, and will do for Him. Clearly our discipleship could and would be measured by our responses to this question, and obviously such responses must be in terms of works more than words.

Jesus taught us, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). He brings home the powerful message that to do His Father's will is the key to entering the kingdom of heaven. To think and to testify of Christ are very important, but in addition these must

be followed by good works patterned after those of Christ.

The answer to the question "What doest ye for Christ?" can be found only in the things we do for Him. The burden of proving our discipleship—in other words, what we are willing to do for Him—rests squarely on our shoulders. Truly by his works, Jesus has already proven the man He is and what He has accomplished for us. By what He did He has left us an indelible description of Himself and has made it easy for us to form an opinion about Him. Now the attention has shifted from Christ to us. It is our turn to leave a description of ourselves by what we do for Him, and this in turn provides the answers to the question "What doest ye for Christ?" and the question of what we want people to think of us.

A Christlike character

That description we eventually would like to leave of ourselves as we labor diligently to answer the question by the works we do may well be called character—hopefully even a Christlike character. The meaning and heart of a Christlike character are beautifully described in Jesus' simple but profound statement, "What manner of men ought ye to be? . . . Even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27). And typical of the great man He is, He not only tells us what a Christlike character is, He also extends a helping hand to you and me as to what we can and must do to have a Christlike character. In loving terms He said:

"Verily, verily I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church, for the works which ye have seen me do [even] that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do;

"Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:21–22).

Furthermore He said, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). And still further, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). And finally, simply but majestically, "Follow thou me" (2 Nephi 31:10).

It becomes clear that the wisest and most sensible thing for us to do as His disciples is to labor diligently during this mortal estate to become like Him and acquire a Christlike character by following and doing what He taught and showed us. When we do this, our works become sure answers to the question "What doest ye for Christ?" and in turn they go hand in hand with our answers to "What think ye of Christ?" Indeed, our cries of "Lord, Lord" and the works we do being in harmony with each other for sure will entitle us to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The greatest of all achievements that we can attain in our long and chal-

lenging journey through immortality is when our claim to discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ reaches the stage where we can say, with all honesty, His ways are our ways and His thoughts our thoughts.

That we may all achieve this through dedicated effort and steadfast faith in Him who is our Exemplar of truth and righteousness is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Stephen D. Naudal and Sam K. Shimabukuro of the Seventy. Brother Shimabukuro, we want Sister Shimabukuro to keep worrying about all of us. Her worries and her prayers surely were answered.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My beloved brethren and sisters, it's a privilege for me to be here on this occasion and to have the opportunity of bearing my testimony as to the truthfulness of the gospel and my deep love of its leaders. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord while I address you.

Since being a very small boy, probably age five, I came to conference, and I remember I sat with my father on the third row, center section, and enjoyed so much all of the conferences that he took me to. But I don't believe I've ever attended a finer and more inspirational conference than this one. I might add, it's been probably the longest I've ever attended, since I'm one of the last speakers.

The inspired Wentworth letter

A key document of the restoration of the gospel is a letter the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote in reply to a request of John Wentworth, editor of a Chicago newspaper. In the Wentworth letter, the Prophet wrote a "sketch of the rise, progress, persecution, and faith of the Latter-day Saints" (*History of the Church*, 4:535). It apparently was the first published account of principal events that occurred in the thirty-six-year period after the Prophet's birth. The last part of the letter, the Articles of Faith, is a concise statement of fundamental beliefs of the Church. The fact that one heaven-inspired person rather than a council of scholars

produced this remarkable document is another evidence of Joseph Smith's divine calling (see *History of the Church*, 4:535 note).

Seeking the good

The last part of the thirteenth article of faith states, "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."

The word *seek* means to go in search of, try to discover, try to acquire. It requires an active, assertive approach to life. For example, Abraham "sought for the blessings of the fathers . . . and to be a greater follower of righteousness" (Abraham 1:2). It is the opposite of passively waiting for something good to come to us with no effort on our part.

We can fill our lives with good, leaving no room for anything else. We have so much good from which to choose that we need never partake of evil. Elder Richard L. Evans declared: "There is evil in the world. There is also good. It is for us to learn and choose between the two; to increase in self-discipline, in competence, in kindness; to keep going—putting one foot in front of the other—one day, one hour, one moment, one task at a time" (*Thoughts for One Hundred Days*, 5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1966–72], 4:199).

If we seek things that are virtuous and lovely, we surely will find them. Conversely, if we seek for evil, we will find that also. Lucifer understands how to tempt and drag many of our Heavenly Father's children down to where he and his followers are. He rebelled and was cast out; he wants to make us as miserable as he is (see 2 Nephi 2:18).

My message may be the opposite of the worldly message of Satan's fallacy. Nephi described it when he wrote:

"Many . . . shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us.

" . . . Nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one . . . ; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God" (2 Nephi 28:7–8).

Though we live in the world, we must not be of the world. For members of the Church, seeking the good is more than a lofty ideal. It is an obligation we accepted when we entered the waters of baptism; we renew it each time we partake of the sacrament. We must remember, "The Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven" (D&C 1:31–32).

Strengthening our families

We can seek to strengthen our families and can foster peace and happiness in our homes, making them a safe haven from the cares and woes about us. By example parents can teach children to be kind, considerate, respectful, and supportive of one another and to avoid strife and contention. Occasionally, family members treat each other with less courtesy and kindness than they do acquaintances or even strangers. Family members do have differences that can cause friction, but they should reserve their most tender affection for those who are closest to them: their spouse, parents, brothers, and sisters. The true greatness of a person, in my view, is evident in the way he or she treats those with whom courtesy and kindness are not required.

Being good neighbors

We can seek to be good neighbors. In most cases, those who are good neighbors will have good neighbors. Being a good neighbor means doing more than offering a thoughtful gesture from time to time on a holiday or in a crisis. It means striving continuously to build and maintain genuine friendship. We react quickly in an emergency. For example, last Christmas our neighbor's car caught on fire. Everyone who saw the flames immediately rushed out to help. Do we respond as well when the need is less urgent but perhaps very important? Do we visit our neighbors even when no one is ill and no crisis exists?

Providing selfless service

We can seek to provide selfless service because of the love we have for our fellowmen. The Savior placed such love second only to love for God when he said:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

Regarding these two commandments, we read in the book of 1 John:

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

"And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).

Serving others should become a natural part of the life of every follower of our Savior. When we subordinate

personal interests out of love and give of ourselves with no thought of receiving in return, we are moving toward becoming true disciples.

"The Lord has . . . commanded his people to care for the poor and needy. He said, 'And remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple' (D&C 52:40)" (*Providing in the Lord's Way: A Leader's Guide to Welfare* [1990], p. 3). In a stake I visited recently, the unemployment rate was high. However, the faithful Saints and leaders there have joined together in a liberal fast-offering contribution to make sure that no one goes without necessities.

Becoming self-reliant

We should seek to become self-reliant, so far as possible, rather than depend on someone else to provide for us. Some people seem to have the notion that we have a right to everything in life without making any effort to produce it ourselves. Many believe the government and others should take care of us. They think others should provide food, health care, and housing. Of course, society must care for some of its people, but the general population should get away from the idea of depending on the government for things they can provide for themselves and their families.

Being happy

We should seek to be happy and cheerful and not allow Satan to overcome us with discouragement, despair, or depression. As President Benson said, "Of all people, we as Latter-day Saints should be the most optimistic and the least pessimistic" ("Do Not Despair," *Ensign*, Oct. 1986, p. 2). Where sin is the cause of unhappiness, we need to repent and return to a righteous

life because "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). "You cannot do wrong and feel right. It is impossible" (Ezra Taft Benson, "To 'The Rising Generation,'" *New Era*, June 1986, p. 5).

I believe happiness comes from a clear conscience and from being without guile or deception. It means avoiding jealousy and envy. It means cultivating peace in our homes and enjoying the peace in our hearts that righteousness brings. It comes from a knowledge and assurance, given by the Spirit, that the life we are pursuing accords with God's will and is acceptable to him (see Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 3:5). After all, the Prophet Joseph's oft-quoted statement remains in force; he said, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (*History of the Church*, 5:134-35). We need not feel depressed or discouraged about conditions in the world, for the Lord will help us find the good that will lead us to happiness.

Seeking uplifting entertainment

In a day when broadcasters and publishers have rather free access into our homes, we must seek clean, uplifting entertainment, whether on television, videos, movies, magazines, books, or other printed material. We should be very selective and choose only those things that meet the test of being virtuous, lovely, of good report, or praiseworthy. If it is questionable, we should avoid it.

Supporting good government

Especially in an election year, as we have in the United States this year, we should seek to support those we believe will act with integrity and carry

out our ideas of good government. The Lord has said:

"When the wicked rule the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold" (D&C 98:9-10).

The Church maintains a policy of strict political neutrality, favoring no party or candidate, but every member should take an active part in the political process. We should study the issues and the candidates to be sure our votes are based on knowledge rather than hearsay. We need to pray for our public officials and ask the Lord to help them in making momentous decisions that affect us. Our beliefs regarding earthly governments and laws are summarized in section 134 of the Doctrine and Covenants and the twelfth article of faith. We should support public policy that coincides with these moral beliefs.

Sharing the gospel

Church members should seek to carry the gospel message forth to all who will hear it. We should seek without delay to preach by precept and by example to be sure everyone is willing to accept gospel truths and has the opportunity to do so. The best way to teach the gospel is to live it. Parents are to prepare their children by teaching them gospel principles; teaching them to live clean, pure lives so they can be worthy missionaries and ambassadors of the Lord; encouraging them to acquire a strong testimony of the gospel; and helping them to prepare financially for this sacred service. Also, older couples should arrange their affairs so they can serve as missionaries.

Doing temple work

We can seek to enter holy temples frequently to perform essential ordinances regularly for others who have

preceded us. Temple work enables us to do for others what they cannot do for themselves. It is a labor of love that permits our forefathers to continue their progress toward eternal life. As valuable and beneficial as temple work is to them, it is equally valuable to us. The house of the Lord is a place where we can escape from the mundane and see our lives in an eternal perspective. We can ponder instructions and covenants that help us understand more clearly the plan of salvation and the infinite love of our Heavenly Father for his children. We can ponder our relationship to God, the Eternal Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ.

We learn from the Doctrine and Covenants that a temple is a place of thanksgiving, "a place of instruction for all those who are called to the work of the ministry in all their several callings and offices; that they may be perfected in the understanding of their ministry, in theory, in principle, and in doctrine, in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on the earth" (D&C 97:13-14).

Regular temple work can provide spiritual strength. It can be an anchor in daily life, a source of guidance, protection, security, peace, and revelation. No work is more spiritual than temple work.

In the words of Hugh Nibley: The "temple is a scale model of the universe. . . . The mystique of the temple lies in its extension to other worlds; it is the reflection on earth of the heavenly order, and the power that fills it comes from above" (*Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992], p. xv).

As spirit children of our Heavenly Father, we should seek always to recognize the divine potential within us and never restrict our perspective to the limited scope of mortal life.

Seeking the Holy Ghost

We should seek the Holy Ghost, who can be the constant companion of all members of the Church who are obedient and righteous. He can reveal all truth to us in our minds and in our hearts, comfort us in times of distress, prompt us in making correct choices and decisions, and help us purify ourselves from sin. I know of no greater blessing that can come to us in mortality than the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Surely we live in troubled times, but we can seek and obtain the good despite Satan's temptations and snares. He cannot tempt us beyond our power to resist (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). When we seek "anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy," we are seeking to emulate the Savior and follow his teachings. Then we are on the path that can lead us to eternal life.

I bear humble witness that our Heavenly Father knows and loves each of his children and that his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. Joseph Smith is the prophet of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His successors, from Brigham Young to our present prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, are also modern-day prophets of God. They teach us to seek that which is good. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Before hearing the closing remarks of President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, the Relief Society choir from the Brigham City Utah Region, the Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Orem Utah Region, and the

Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during all of the sessions of conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctor, the Church Health Unit nurses, and the ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and the interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square. Temple Square is literally a garden paradise.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference.

We are grateful for the owners and the operators of the many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Consider the Lilies of the Field."

The benediction will be offered by Bishop Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

The conference will then stand adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brothers and sisters, these have been two wonderful days. I hope that we will review and ponder what we have heard. We have feasted on the word of God.

The music has been wonderful. The prayers have been inspired. The talks have been uplifting and enlightening, and our lives will be the richer for our experience if we strive to do better in harmony with the teachings to which we have listened.

President Benson's testimony

We regret that President Benson has been unable to speak to us. He is now in his ninety-third year. His presence yesterday and again today has helped us. We have enjoyed his smile and the wave of his hand. As we bring this meeting to a close, I leave with you a statement from him—his personal witness of the Son of God, whose servant he is. These are his words:

"Nearly two thousand years ago a perfect Man walked the earth—Jesus the Christ. He was the Son of a Heavenly Father and an earthly mother. He

is the God of this world, under the Father. In his life, all the virtues were lived and kept in perfect balance; he taught men truth—that they might be free; his example and precepts provide the great standard—the only sure way—for all mankind. Among us he became the first and only one who had the power to reunite his body with his spirit after death. By his power all men who have died shall be resurrected. Before him one day we all must stand to be judged by his laws. He lives today, and in the not too distant future shall return, in triumph, to subdue his enemies, to reward men according to their deeds, and to assume his [rightful] role to rule and reign in righteousness over the entire earth" (*An Enemy Hath Done This*, comp. Jerreld L. Newquist [Salt Lake City: Parliament Publishers, 1969], pp. 52–53).

Such is the testimony of our prophet and our leader. When all is said and done, I remind you that this is our great mission—to bear witness to the world, both with example and precept, of the living reality of the Son of God, the resurrected Lord, who is our Redeemer and our Savior.

"I invoke the blessings of heaven"

Now in conclusion, may I thank each of you, all within the sound of my voice, wherever you may be across this broad land and across the world, for the faith which you carry in your hearts of the divinity of this work, for the devotion with which you serve, for your prayerful desires to bring up your children in light and truth and to nurture them with the good word of God.

When you leave the Tabernacle in a few minutes, I invite you to look at the spires of the temple just to the east of us. The capstone on the highest tower of that beautiful structure was put in place one hundred years ago tomorrow. The Brethren at the conference of a century ago urged the people to consecrate the needed skills and resources to ensure dedication of the temple on April 6, 1893. They met the challenge, and at this time next year we will commemorate the centennial of

the dedication of this magnificent house of the Lord. Its presence is testimony that no challenge is too great for the people of this Church when they move forward in faith.

In behalf of President Benson and all of my Brethren, I invoke upon you, wherever you may be, the blessings of heaven. May the Lord smile with favor upon you that there may be peace in your lives and peace in your homes. May you return safely to those you love, and may the remembrances of this great occasion be sweet and fruitful, I humbly pray. God be with you till we meet again, my beloved brethren and sisters, my friends and associates in this great work, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Consider the Lilies of the Field."

Bishop Henry B. Eyring offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, sang at the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Relief Society choir from the Brigham City Utah Region, conducted by Evelyn M. Harris. Clay Christiansen was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, music was provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Orem Utah Region. Stanley Zenk conducted the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, and Richard Elliott, Tabernacle organists; and by Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, Temple Square organists.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the conference

INDEX

A

Abrea, Elder Angel	34
Prepare for afflictions; Have patience in affliction; Have faith in God's wisdom; Endure with faith in Christ; "Not as I will, but as thou wilt"; The Lord's assurance; Knowing God helps us endure; "Stand fast, ye Saints of God"	
Asay, Elder Carlos E.	57
What is a man? What makes a man a man? A vicious lie; Ezra Taft Benson's example of manliness; Joseph Smith's example of manliness; The Savior's example of manliness	
Ashton, Elder Marvin J.	23
Bashing; "Nay, speak no ill"; Recognizing the good; Charity: the antidote for bashing; Bashing is of Satan; The Sermon on the Mount; Come unto Christ by loving others; "Charity never faileth"; Governing our tongues; True conversion begets love	
Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of General	28
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell	105
Sacrifices of pioneers; Margaret McNeil Ballard; Our sacrifices; Sacrifices for a ward building; The Lord's example of sacrifice; Do not lose the spirit of sacrifice; Teach sacrifice in every home	
Bradford, William R.	37
"I want my life back!" Problems of a cluttered life; Material clutter; Subtle clutter; How to unclutter our lives; The family comes first; Living the basics of the gospel; God's path is simple and straight	

C

Church Audit Committee Report for 1991	29
Church Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of	28
Church Statistical Report for 1991	29
Conference Music, Summary of	125

F

Faust, Elder James E.	4
Healing spiritual sickness; Warren Johnson's healing; The gift of healing; Healing through temple work; Healing through scripture study; Healing through the Word of Wisdom; Healing through sacrament meetings; Healing through testimonies; Healing through sustaining leaders; Healing through forgetting of self; Healing through prayer; Healing through repentance; Healing through turning to Christ	

Featherstone, Elder Vaughn J.	61
The need for mature couples; Sacrifices to serve a mission; Prisoners of the Lord's love; Now is the time to serve; Memories to last the eternities; A divine charge to share; "Your family shall live"; It is still our duty to stand; Raise a title of love	

G

General Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of	28
General Authorities Present	1
General Priesthood Session	52

H

Haight, Elder David B.	18
Temple service; Hearts must be pure; The endowment: power from on high; The Lord's way of learning; Understanding the endowment; Blessings of temple service; An eternal family; Faithfulness ensures full blessings; Become worthy of a temple recommend; Ordinances bear witness of Christ	

Hales, President Janette C.	111
You are not alone; Study, pray, and listen; Build a support system; Work and gain experience; Enjoy doing small, unseen deeds; Many people love you; Adults, know and love the youth	

Hales, Bishop Robert D.	87
Gratitude for the goodness of God; Gratitude for the Atonement; Show gratitude through obedience; Gratitude for repentance; Jesus' expressions of gratitude; Express gratitude through prayer; Gratitude for parents and family; Give thanks for blessings; Gratitude brings peace and healing; Thank the Lord in all things	

Han In Sang, Elder	113
A disciple of the Lord; Gratitude to Heavenly Father; Gratitude to Dr. Kim Ho Jik; Gratitude to members and leaders; The costs of discipleship; The love of God	

Hanks, Elder Marion D.	9
“Come unto me”; The Savior’s example of service; The Savior’s two great missions; First mission; the messiahship; Second mission: serving others; Church members’ compassionate service; Chapel dedication in a leper colony; “But teacher, the tomb was empty”	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Priesthood session)	73
Believe in the prophets; The Prophet Joseph Smith; Other prophets of this dispensation; President Heber J. Grant; President George Albert Smith; President David O. McKay; President Joseph Fielding Smith; President Harold B. Lee; President Spencer W. Kimball; President Ezra Taft Benson; Importance of following the prophets; Be true and faithful	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session)	124
President Benson’s testimony; “I invoke the blessings of heaven”	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session)	96
Young men and women of faith; A crisis of behavior and belief; The loss of moral values; A chosen generation; A royal priesthood; A holy nation; A peculiar people; Value system comes from God; You cannot afford . . . ; Ponder your purpose and potential	
Hunter, President Howard W.	84
Love others as God loves us; “Lord, I would follow thee”; Charity, the pure love of Christ; Vern Crowley learns a lesson in love; A more excellent way; Love others to secure peace	
K	
Kapp, Sister Ardeth G.	109
A mighty force for righteousness; Knowing who we are; Making and keeping covenants	
Kikuchi, Elder Yoshihiko	13
Joseph F. Smith’s mission to Hawaii; Sister Ma Manuhii’s loving care; Love brings others into the fold	
Komatsu, Elder Adney Y.	40
An invitation to come back; Using activities to fellowship; Planning activities with a purpose; Come unto Christ	
M	
Maxwell, Elder Neal A.	53
“My servant Joseph”; Joseph Smith’s courage; The glorious and the laborious; Seer, translator, and revelator; Joseph’s spiritual submissiveness; Joseph’s suffering; Revelations about the Atonement; Be men of Christ	

Monson, President Thomas S. (Priesthood session)	68
Living in difficult economic times; Being profitable servants; Learn what we should learn; Priesthood outings to Clarkston; Do what we should do; The Fussesks' mission to Poland; Be what we should be; Slides of the Berndt family	
Monson, President Thomas S. (Saturday morning session)	3
Tribute to women; Suggestions for guiding children; Each chair is filled	
Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session)	79
A leper gives thanks; "Accentuate the positive"; Gratitude for our mothers; Gratitude for our fathers; Gratitude for our teachers; Gratitude for our friends; Gratitude for our country; Gratitude for our Savior	
Morrison, Elder Alexander B.	15
Importance of spiritual nourishment; Jesus is the living water; Jesus is the bread of life; Nourish through the scriptures; Nourish through covenants; Nourish one by one; Nourish through selfless service; Nourish through humility	
Music, Summary of Conference	125
N	
Nadauld, Elder Stephen D.	115
Running into ourselves; Overcoming weaknesses through faith; Carol's example of good works	
Nelson, Elder Russell M.	101
Mourning; Eternal perspective; Physical death; Plan of happiness; Spiritual death; Coping with trials; Postmortal life; Paradise; Resurrection and immortality; Judgment; Family ties; Eternal life; Time to prepare	
O	
Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	47
Relief Society sesquicentennial; Charitable work; The commission to save souls; Teaching the gospel; Organization of the Relief Society; Directed by the priesthood; Authority and priesthood keys; Importance of motherhood; Using the priesthood to bless others; Unity of priesthood and auxiliaries; Marriage: a common objective	
Obituaries	30

P

Packer, Elder Boyd K.	91
Moral environment; The spiritual environment; The tempter; Freedom to choose; Flawed argument; No free agency; Heeding the warning; The right to speak out; Physical and moral laws; Unenforceable; Children of God; The evil idea; Most abominable; The measure of a successful parent; Repentance; I will remember your sins no more	
Perry, Elder L. Tom	30
Alma's decision to teach God's word; The need for more laborers; The prophet's call to serve; An urgent need for more couples; Experiences of missionary couples; Entries in your life's history; The field is white	
Porter, Elder L. Aldin	65
Qualities of effective missionaries; A willing heart and mind; Commitment; Clean of serious transgressions; Worthy to be guided by the Spirit; A disciple of Jesus Christ	
Priesthood Session, General	52

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	27
Saturday Morning Session	2
Scott, Elder Richard G.	43
The tragic scars of abuse; Scars need not be permanent; Seek help; Principles of healing; Forgiveness helps heal; Cautions in repairing damage; The Savior's healing power	
Shimabukuro, Elder Sam K.	117
Greetings from Japan and Korea; "What think ye of Christ?" "What doest ye for Christ?" A Christlike character	
Summary of Conference Music	125
Sunday Afternoon Session	100
Sunday Morning Session	78
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	28

W

Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	119
The inspired Wentworth letter; Seeking the good; Strengthening our families; Being good neighbors; Providing selfless service; Becoming self-reliant; Being happy; Seeking uplifting entertainment; Supporting good government; Sharing the gospel; Doing temple work; Seeking the Holy Ghost	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-second
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 3 and 4, 1992

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-second
Semiannual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
October 3 and 4, 1992

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Copyright © 1992
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

All Rights Reserved
Printed in the United States of America

THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SECOND SEMIANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 162nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1992, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 3 and 4, 1992. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 3, 1992, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried by satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries. For the first time, the Sunday morning session was carried by satellite transmission to locations in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, and Jamaica.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

The First Presidency: ¹Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell,

Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

The Presidency of the Seventy: Dean L. Larsen, James M. Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, and L. Aldin Porter

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Robert L. Backman, Benjamin B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Joe J. Christensen, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Jacob de Jager, Robert K. Dellenbach, Loren C. Dunn, Henry B. Eyring, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goaslin, John H. Groberg, Marion D. Hanks, W. Eugene Hansen, Harold G. Hillam, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, Alexander B. Morrison, Glenn L. Pace, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, Merrill J. Bateman, C. Max Caldwell, Albert Choules, Jr., Gary J. Coleman, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Clinton L. Cutler, Julio E. Dávila, John B. Dickson, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, Lloyd P. George, F. Melvin Hammond, Han In Sang, George R. Hill III, Jay E. Jensen, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Kenneth Johnson, Cree-L Kofford,¹ W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, John M. Madsen,¹ Helvécio Martins, Gerald E. Melchin, V. Dallas Merrell,

¹President Ezra Taft Benson and Elders John R. Lasater and Douglas J. Martin were excused.

Lynn A. Mickelsen, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Dennis B. Neuen-schwander, Jorge A. Rojas, Glen L. Rudd, Robert E. Sackley, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Douglas H. Smith, David E. Sorensen, Lynn A. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1992, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "O My Father." President Hinckley then made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 162nd semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference in his apartment, has requested that we go ahead.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow

gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders James E. Faust, Robert E. Wells, and H. Burke Peterson are seated on the stand.

We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except President Benson and Elder Douglas J. Martin, who is serving as president of the New Zealand Temple. We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We may make some mention of these flowers. They are a token of gratitude from the Saints of Kauai in thanks for the love and concern shown by members of the Church everywhere in their time of trial. They write, "Our flowers are all gone, and these were graciously provided by Brother Fred Rivera in behalf of the Saints of Maui." They conclude their little note with, "Aloha and mahalo." And we return the same to them: "Aloha and mahalo."

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sisters Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ, is providing the music for this session. They opened this session by singing "O My Father" and will now favor us with "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

Elder Harold G. Hillam offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Sustaining President Benson

My brethren and sisters, President Benson ordinarily would speak to us in the opening session of the conference and extend his warm welcome. We regret that he is not with us. He would wish to be here, and we wish that he were here. It is becoming increasingly hard for him to get out. His age makes public appearances difficult. He is now in his ninety-fourth year. It is not easy for him to do what he once did with such vigor and enthusiasm. His strong and vibrant voice has stirred all of us in times past. His eloquence in expounding the gospel and his tremendous testimony of this work, persuasive in its tone and cogency, have lifted all who have heard him. We miss him and pray that the Lord will comfort him and bless him that he may enjoy much of happiness for the remainder of his life.

His burdens became much heavier when his beloved companion, Sister Flora Amussen Benson, passed away on August 14. They had been married for nearly sixty-six years. They have been an example to the entire Church. He now feels the terrible loneliness that comes to a man with the death of a gifted and beautiful wife, the mother of his children, his great support and comfort.

Our hearts reach out to him in sympathy and love. We pray that the Lord will comfort him and sustain him

and bring gladness into his heart while he yet remains with us as the prophet of God.

He has asked that we go forward with the conference. We do so with his encouragement and with a prayer in our hearts that we will be blessed of the Lord—all who speak—that there may be a great spiritual outpouring among the Saints who will meet in many places and under a great variety of circumstances.

As a reminder of the greatness of his power of expression, and as a reaffirmation to each of us, may I, as we open this conference, give you a statement or two of what he has told us in the past. It is worthy of repetition.

The last and great dispensation

I quote: "This is the last and great dispensation in which the great consummation of God's purposes will be made, the only dispensation in which the Lord has promised that sin will not prevail. The Church will not be taken from the earth again. It is here to stay. The Lord has promised it and you are a part of that Church and kingdom—the nucleus around which will be builded the great kingdom of God on the earth. The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God on the earth will be combined together at Christ's coming—and that time is not far distant. How I wish we could get the vision of this

work, the genius of it, and realize the nearness of that great event. I am sure it would have a sobering effect upon us if we realized what is before us" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 19).

Follow the course

"God bless all of us that we may follow the course laid out for us by our Heavenly Father and our greatest example—the Lord Jesus Christ. May we do so regardless of what the world may say or do, that we may hold fast to the iron rod, that we may be true to the faith, that we may maintain the standards set for us and follow this course to safety and exaltation. (See 1 Ne. 8:19.) The door is open. The plan is here on earth. It is the Lord's plan. The

authority and power are here. It is now up to you" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 26).

Such have been the declarations of this man who stands today as the Lord's prophet and our President. We bring you his love, his greeting, and his blessing. And to him we return our love and our loyalty, with a prayer in our hearts that the God of heaven will bless him, comfort him, sustain him, and bring him joy and gladness. I so pray as I give you my testimony that he is the prophet whom the Lord has trained and sustained through all of these years to speak as a prophet unto the nations and as our leader, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Where is wisdom?

Today I would like to pose a question asked long ago by Job: "Where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12).

Leaders of this Church have repeatedly emphasized the importance of education. It is a vital component of wisdom. Not long after the pioneers began construction of their temple in Illinois, they established the University of the City of Nauvoo. The First Presidency proclaimed that this university "will enable us to teach our children wisdom, to instruct them in all the knowledge and learning, in the arts, sciences, and learned professions."¹

A similar scene followed after the persecuted pioneers entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Less than three years later, on 28 February 1850, they instituted the University of the State of Deseret.² Later several academies of learning were established.

Now as Church membership worldwide exceeds eight million, it is evident that a direct role of the Church in secular education is no longer feasible. Yet our commitment to education remains constant.

Scriptures teach that "the glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36). They also teach that individual "intelligences . . . were organized before the world was" (Abraham 3:22). "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:29).

Our personal intelligence is everlasting and divine. I believe Thomas Jefferson felt that dignity of the human spirit when he wrote, "I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."³

Seek education

Because of our sacred regard for each human intellect, we consider the obtaining of an education to be a religious responsibility. Yet opportunities and abilities differ. I believe that in the pursuit of education, individual desire is more influential than institution, and personal faith more forceful than faculty.

Our Creator expects His children everywhere to educate themselves. He issued a commandment: "Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). And He assures us that knowledge acquired here will be ours forever (see D&C 130:18-19).

Measured by this celestial standard, it is apparent that those who impulsively "drop out" and cut short their education not only disregard divine decree but frustrate the realization of their own potential.

I remember my moment of resolution many years ago when, as an untrained teenager, I secured temporary employment at Christmastime. The work was monotonous. Each hour and each day passed slowly. I resolved then and there that I must obtain an education that would qualify me better for life. I determined to stay in school and work for an education as though my very life depended upon it.

Later as stake president I was questioned by many young people about their own educational pursuits. Some asked me how long it took to become a doctor of medicine. "The general pattern would be four years at a university, followed by four years in medical school," I replied. "And if you choose to become a specialist, that could take another five years or more, depending upon your desire."

That occasionally evoked a reaction, "That adds up to thirteen years—

and maybe *more*? That's too long for me!"

"It all depends," I would respond. "Preparation for your career is not too long if you know what you want to do with your life. How old will you be thirteen years from now if you *don't* pursue your education? Just as old, whether or not you become what you want to be!"

So my counsel then—and now—is to continue your education wherever you are, whatever your interest and opportunity, however you determine you can best serve your family and society.

Beware of unbalance

Choose what you will learn and whose purposes you will serve. But don't place all your intellectual eggs in one basket of secular learning. Remember this warning from the Book of Mormon:

"O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.

"But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:28-29).

That scripture reminds me of a friend who proudly boasted that his climb toward wealth had come from tireless work and lessons learned in the "school of hard knocks." But his fortune had come at the expense of his spiritual development. When it was too late, he regretfully discovered that his ladder of success had been leaning against the wrong wall. He had never read this instruction from his Maker:

"Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich" (D&C 6:7; see also 11:7).

Mankind's unfamiliarity with the scriptures has sometimes brought sorrow to great numbers of people over long periods of time. The suffering that has resulted from such ignorance is truly tragic. May I illustrate with excerpts from history that pertain to the spread of infection.

In the nineteenth century, health officials and others were concerned about pollution of the air, not by visible smoggy hydrocarbons of today, but by an invisible miasma that was blamed for almost any infection. In 1867, for example, Lord Lister indicted bad air as the chief cause of infection.⁴ Because of that, in 1869 Simpson from Edinburgh urged that hospitals be taken down and rebuilt every few years.⁵ Such an extravagant practice was also advocated by other experts.⁶

Even Florence Nightingale, a living legend following her heroic efforts in the Crimean War, failed to recognize the transmission of infection from one patient to another—this despite her careful notations that wound infection accounted for 40 percent of post-operative mortality.⁷

But others missed the connection too. For centuries, lives of innumerable mothers and children were claimed by "childbirth fever"—infections unknowingly transmitted among the innocent by unwashed hands of attendants.⁸

It was only a short century ago that the great work of Koch, Pasteur, and others proved that infection could be caused by bacteria in contaminated body fluids—or infected issues—passed from one individual to another.

With these highlights of history in mind, may I quote the word of the Lord recorded long ago in Leviticus, chapter 15:

"The Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying,

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When any man hath a running issue out of his flesh, because of his issue he is unclean.

"And this shall be his uncleanness in his issue . . .

"Every bed, whereon he lieth that hath the issue, is unclean: and every thing, whereon he sitteth, shall be unclean.

"And whosoever toucheth his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water. . . .

"And he that toucheth the flesh of him that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water" (Leviticus 15:1–5, 7; italics added).

Several verses follow which re-emphasize and illustrate those important principles. Then we read this conclusion:

"And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue; then he shall . . . wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean" (15:13).

Thus our loving Heavenly Father had clearly revealed principles of clean technique in the handling of infected patients more than three thousand years ago! These scriptures are in complete harmony with modern medical guidelines.⁹ But during those many millennia, how many mothers needlessly perished? How many children suffered because man's quest for knowledge had failed to incorporate the word of the Lord?

Contemporary challenges

In our day many challenges face us. Some are new; some are old—simply clothed in modern attire. The epistles of Paul include prophecies pertaining to our day. Do these descriptions sound familiar?

"In the last days perilous times shall come.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, [and the list of insidious qualities goes on] . . .

"Without natural affection, . . .

" . . . Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: . . .

"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 7).

Paul's warnings describe apostasy and other dangers of our day. Some of these perils are contrary to God's purposes and are championed by persuasive people possessing more ability than morality, more knowledge than wisdom. Their rationalization breeds justification. The Bible affirms that "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (Proverbs 12:15). Indeed, individuals with malignity of purpose often wear the mask of honesty. So we must constantly be on guard.

To build a house straight and strong, you do not choose crooked boards. So to build your eternal destiny, you cannot—you must not—limit lessons only to those warped to exclude revelation from God. The Book of Mormon offers this note of caution and hope:

"Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works" (Jacob 4:10).

Remember the terrible price paid for ignorance of divine instruction. Until the turn of this century, infection was spread as if no one had ever read or taken seriously the fifteenth chapter of Leviticus. Where is wisdom?

Today we are seriously concerned with the increasing incidence of human infection with HIV (human immunosuppressive virus) and variant viruses and the associated outbreak of AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). An epidemic has been forecast—a plague fueled by a vocal few who exhibit greater concern for civil rights than for public health, a plague abetted by the immoral. Some live in lust as though God's commandment to be chaste was written with an asterisk, exempting them from obeying. And re-

grettably, as in previous plagues, many innocent victims are doomed to suffer. Where is wisdom?

Avoidable deaths and mounting financial burdens are also incurred worldwide because of indifference to or ignorance of God's declaration that tobacco "is not good for man" (D&C 89:8). Many other societal problems could be listed, such as alcohol and drug abuse, gambling, civil strife, and erosion of family stability.¹⁰ We may know so much, yet learn so little. "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"¹¹ Again I ask, Where is wisdom?

Wisdom found

Wisdom is to be found in pure intelligence, in that divine light which can guide people in all countries, all climes, and all continents. The Lord promised that "a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel" (D&C 45:28). Then He lamented:

"But they receive it not; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men. . . .

"And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.

"But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

"And there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me" (D&C 45:29, 31-33; see also 87:6).

In bright contrast to such bitter chaos, the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ beams as the hope of the world. Missionaries and members courageously proclaim its brilliance. Wise

students throughout the world heed its light and enrich their education by adding the curriculum of Church seminaries and institutes. The Lord hides His wisdom from no one: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5).

Again I pose the question once asked by Job: "Where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12). Answer: It emanates from the Lord. He Himself said:

"I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more" (2 Nephi 28:30).

Divine light and wisdom continue to increase when love for Deity grows:

"That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24; see also 88:67).

"He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things" (D&C 93:28).

Where is wisdom? It pulses and surges with the Lord's light of truth! With that light He lifts us toward eternal life, I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 4:269.
2. *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 28 Feb. 1850, pp. 1-2.
3. In Elbert D. Thomas, *Thomas Jefferson, World Citizen* (New York: Modern Age Books, 1942), p. 251.
4. J. Lister, "On a New Method of Treating Compound Fracture, Abscess, etc., with Observations on the Conditions of Suppuration," *Lancet*, 1 (1867): 326.
5. J. Y. Simpson, "Our Existing System of Hospitalism and Its Effects," *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, 14 (1869): 817.
6. L. A. Stimson, "Bacteria and Their Influence upon the Origin and Development of Septic Complications of Wounds," *New York Medical Journal*, 22 (1875): 144.
7. See Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1913), 1:352-438.
8. See Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis, *Die Aetiologie, der Begriff und die Prophylaxis des Kindbettfiebers*, reprinted from 1861 ed. (New York: Johnson Reprint Co., 1966), pp. 102-13.
9. See *Isolation Techniques for Use in Hospitals* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1970), p. 9.
10. See Bryce J. Christensen, "Critically Ill: The Family and Health Care," in *The Family in America* (Mount Morris, Ill.: The Rockford Institute Center on the Family in America, May 1992), pp. 1-8.
11. T. S. Eliot, "Choruses from 'The Rock,'" *The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1971), p. 96.

The chorus sang "Come, Follow Me."

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Come, Follow Me."

Elder James M. Paramore of the Presidency of the Seventy will now speak, and he will be followed by Bishop Glenn L. Pace of the Presiding Bishopric.

Elder James M. Paramore

Personal prisons

My beloved brothers and sisters, for several years and with the deepest feelings I have thought about what I would like to talk to you about this morning. The prophet Mormon tells us that “by the power of [the Lord’s] word did they cause prisons to tumble” (Mormon 8:24). In recent weeks I have reread the stories of Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo’s brilliant novel *Les Misérables* and of Bob Merrick in the novel *Magnificent Obsession* by Lloyd C. Douglas. These two stories, though widely different in time, circumstances, and affluence, have touched my heart in many ways.

I have agonized as I have thought about the ordeal of Jean Valjean—the nineteen years in prison and the things done to him for the small transgression of stealing a loaf of bread to feed a starving family. He suffered so many indignities even after he was finally released from the physical prison.

Some of the same feelings flood my mind as I reflect upon the self-inflicted sufferings of Bob Merrick. The life of a prominent surgeon was lost and the sight of another because of Bob Merrick’s wayward activities, selfishness, ego, and disdain for others. He suffered in a prison of his own making.

Yes, I realize these masterfully crafted episodes are fictional, but they cause me to think about the various types of prisons Satan leads us into building for ourselves and others, or that others build for us.

The Savior will deliver us

Haven’t we all been delivered from various forms of captivity? How did you feel when the doors were opened to your personal prison? How was it to feel free? How wonderful it is to be liberated from any kind of a prison.

I remember how I felt forty-one years ago when I was taken from a train in Europe at 2:00 A.M. by two soldiers of a hostile nation and held against my will. I was verbally and physically abused. I felt I would never see my family or my country again. I assure you that while I was held captive, the blood coursed through my veins like adrenaline. Though the captivity lasted less than a day, it seemed like an eternity. And when I was put on another train and sent back to safety, my gratitude to the Lord knew no bounds. I was *free*! As I talked to the train conductor, I learned that hundreds had not been so lucky.

I then was led to think of Him who really delivers us from various types of prisons into forgiveness, a newness of life, of spirit, of change, and of opportunity, and how the souls of men find such relief, fulfillment, and safety when this occurs. I thought of the Son of God and His greatest freewill offering to each of us, given at the expense of His own life and under excruciating pain. I thought of how our Father in Heaven loves each one of us. And though we sometimes walk into prisons of our own making, He is there with keys to unlock the doors that bind us. I thought of those who help along the way, who share in turning those keys which deliver others, and who care so deeply sometimes that they rebuild the trust of others—like the two men of God in the novels helped to free Jean Valjean and Bob Merrick from their prisons into magnificent new freedoms promised by the Lord.

Prisons that come from sin

As difficult as a physical captivity or prison is, there are other captivities or prisons even more devastating. They are very subtle and take various forms in life, such as (1) taking advantage of another; (2) bearing false witness to

get gain; (3) knowing things to be true and not defending them; (4) stealing the morality of another; (5) destroying the innocence of a little child; (6) being captive to alcohol or drugs; or (7) financially digging a pit for another, causing hardship and destroying his ability to take care of his needs and so on. There are many prisons which come from our sins or the sins of others "according to the captivity and power of the devil" (2 Nephi 2:27), who leads us away.

Deceit in business

Let me take an example to illustrate the point of these prisons. The prophet Job counseled us not to "dig a pit for your friend" (Job 6:27). I understand that could mean a business associate, a neighbor, a member of the Church. How could this happen?

Several years ago a great young man had a thriving business. He had worked long, hard hours for many years to develop the skills, reputation, and expertise necessary to build his business and provide for the needs of his young family. He loved his work, and every morning he anxiously began each new project with creativity and opportunity. His was a great life, filled with much hope and many projects. Then one major project was completed and finalized. Rather large payments were anticipated, but a shrewd businessman found that oral approvals, given to my friend to make many necessary alterations in the project, could easily be broken and not honored. After all, there was no written record of the changes requested. It was just "good business" to get it as cheap as possible even after commitments were made. And so verbal commitments were not honored. The money due, which was considerable, was not paid.

At this point we have several prisons that are in place: the prison of deceit of the "shrewd" businessman, and the prison of the deceived, who could not now honor his own commitments.

To this day the one deceived, through further industry and much hardship, is still trying to get out of the prison created by another. And he has lost confidence in others, and he and his family have lost opportunities and his business because of another.

Did not the Savior teach through the prophet Moses, "If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution"? (Exodus 22:5).

These types of prisons often cause the offended to lose faith, hope, and even the ability to care for their own, as was the case with my young friend. But these prisons should not happen. They often cause years of anguish. They cause those involved to wonder about justice and mercy. Sometimes these people find it impossible to resolve their own personal affairs honorably.

Do unto others

The lessons taught by the Savior differ widely from these actions. For He taught, in effect, Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you (see Matthew 7:12; 3 Nephi 14:12). He taught, "Behold it is my will that you shall pay all your debts" (D&C 104:78). Yes, even if it takes years, pay your debts.

No Christian should ever be a challenge to another Christian. Many widows, single mothers, and older couples are victimized by those who take advantage of them, who do not honor their commitments and then put them into a type of prison. Those affected find themselves pleading for someone to open their prison doors, often while babies cry for bare necessities.

When we seek to follow Christ, we take the oath of a Christian as a member of this Church; we covenant to

never put another in any sort of prison, but rather to try to liberate those who are there. We become like one man who said that when he joined this Church it changed the way he thought, the way he talked, the way he believed, the way he dressed, the way he worked and honored his employer, the things he read, the movies he saw, the way he conducted his financial affairs in absolute honesty with everyone, and the way he served others. He truly believed in the liberating power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and became free because of it. As is stated in the book of John, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Freed from the prison of alcohol

Years ago an acquaintance of mine was captive for over twenty years to a serious alcohol problem, which bound him every day. He would leave work, buy his alcohol, drive into the countryside, and drink until he could barely find his way home. He truly was under the captive spirit of the devil and lived in hell. A faithful home teacher loved this brother, saw him often, taught him to pray for help, and prayed for him often.

One day while he was driving his pickup truck into the countryside to begin his daily alcohol ritual, he felt a powerful influence to stop his truck, walk out into a field, fall to his knees, and plead for help from his Father in Heaven. Later he tearfully testified that as he arose from his knees, the desire to drink alcohol had completely left him. He had been delivered from a twenty-year prison. God heard his prayer, felt the desire of his heart, and opened the prison doors that bound him.

Jesus unlocks the doors

Beloved friends, it is Jesus who has unlocked and will unlock the doors

of our personal prisons. It is a glorious promise to all who are captive, for whatever reasons, upon the condition of repentance.

Certainly a Latter-day Saint will demonstrate the freedom he has received by walking in all morality and all honesty, as taught by the Lord. For his word is his bond—sacred and honored. His life becomes the testament that it is all true—every principle and every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Savior and His prophets. By living these cardinal principles, we are truly free and we become the witnesses of His word.

One of the beautiful, profound statements of the man of God to Jean Valjean was: "My brother, you belong no more to evil, but to good. It is your soul I am buying for you, . . . and I give it to God" (Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, volume 1, book 2, chapter 12). No more prisons for others, if you will, because of my actions.

Repent to be free

Jesus came that man might have life and have it more abundantly. He walked the path, taught the way, opened the doors to truly liberate mankind, and said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The writer, Mr. Douglas, expressed it beautifully when he said to Bob Merrick, "When you find THE WAY, you will be bound—it will become an obsession—a magnificent obsession."

We know it works, for listen to the words which record what happened to the Saints who truly followed the Savior for two hundred years following His appearance in America:

"And as many as did come unto them, and did *truly repent* of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost.

"... And there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man *did deal justly* one with another.

"And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they *were all made free*. . . .

"... And surely there could not be a *happier people* among all the people

who had been created by the hand of God" (4 Nephi 1:1-3, 16; italics added).

Yes, "by the power of his word did they cause prisons to tumble" (Mormon 8:24). May we live our lives so we will all be free with no prisons for ourselves or others, only a magnificent obsession filled with freedoms and blessings ahead, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Bishop Glenn L. Pace

Strengthening personal testimonies

When I was young I was overly dependent on my older sister. For example, I was a fussy eater, and when we went to visit our grandparents I was constantly faced with being offered food I didn't like. To minimize my embarrassment, when the plate was passed to me, I would turn to my sister and ask, "Collene, do I like this?"

If it was familiar and she knew I didn't like it, she would say, "No, he doesn't like that."

I could then say to Grandma, "She's right; I don't like it."

If it was something we hadn't eaten before, she would say, "Just a minute," and taste it, and then tell me if I liked it or not. If she said I didn't like it, no amount of coaxing could get me to eat it.

I know it is past time for me to rely on my own taste buds and stop denying myself healthy food just because my sister told me I didn't like it.

On a much more serious note, I believe the time has come for all of us to feast on the fruit of our own testimonies as opposed to the testimony of another person. The testimony of which I speak is much deeper than knowing the Church is true. We need to progress to the point of knowing we are true to the Church. We also need to increase our capacity to receive personal revelation. It is one thing to receive a witness that

Joseph Smith saw God and Christ. It is quite another to have spiritual self-confidence in your ability to receive the revelation to which you are entitled.

The train of the Church

Many of us take the blessings of the gospel for granted. It is as if we are passengers on the train of the Church, which has been moving forward gradually and methodically. Sometimes we have looked out the window and thought, "That looks kind of fun out there. This train is so restrictive." So we have jumped off and gone and played in the woods for a while. Sooner or later we find it isn't as much fun as Lucifer makes it appear, or we get critically injured, so we work our way back to the tracks and see the train ahead. With a determined sprint we catch up to it, breathlessly wipe the perspiration from our foreheads, and thank the Lord for repentance.

While on the train we can see the world and some of our own members outside laughing and having a great time. They taunt us and coax us to get off. Some throw logs and rocks on the tracks to try and derail it. Other members run alongside the tracks, and while they may never go play in the woods, they just can't seem to get on the train. Others try to run ahead and too often take the wrong turn.

I would propose that the luxury of getting on and off the train as we please is fading. The speed of the train is increasing. The woods are getting much too dangerous, and the fog and darkness are moving in.

Time for spiritual revival

Although our detractors might as well “stretch forth [their] puny arm[s] to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream” (D&C 121:33) as try to derail this train, they are occasionally successful in coaxing individuals off. With all the prophecies we have seen fulfilled, what great event are we awaiting prior to saying, “Count me in”? What more do we need to see or experience before we get on the train and stay on it until we reach our destination? It is time for a spiritual revival. It is time to dig down deep within ourselves and rekindle our own light.

President Joseph F. Smith said, “One fault to be avoided by the Saints, young and old, is the tendency to live on borrowed light [and] to permit . . . the light within them to be reflected, rather than original” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 87).

Storms of disaster and disobedience

The whole world seems to be in commotion. Today’s news is filled with accounts of large-scale famine, civil unrest, and natural disasters. Even more devastating in the long run is the spiritually destructive hurricane of disobedience to God’s commandments that is engulfing the world. This horrible storm is blowing the moral fiber out of the nations of the earth and leaving the land in moral desolation. Many people seem to be oblivious to this hurricane and have become so desensitized they don’t even feel a breeze.

We are following a cycle which was repeated over and over again in the Book of Mormon. As the Lord tells us, “In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me” (D&C 101:8).

We shouldn’t be too surprised, therefore, that the Lord is allowing some wake-up calls to jar us loose from apathy just as he has done in previous dispensations. In the book of Helaman, Nephi said, “And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, . . . they will not remember him” (Helaman 12:3).

In our dispensation the Lord has said, “And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer” (D&C 105:6).

Prepare by learning obedience

To some, the events unfolding in the world today are frightening. This is not a time to panic, but it is definitely a time to prepare. What can we do to better prepare ourselves for that which is at our doorstep? It is simple. We need to get back to basics and “learn obedience.” When we are obedient, we follow the first principles of the gospel and place our faith in our Lord and Savior; we repent of our sins; we are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost to guide us. We read and ponder the scriptures, pray for direction in our lives, and look for ways to help others who are going through difficult times. We share the gospel with people living on earth and make it possible for saving ordinances to be performed for those who have passed beyond the veil.

During this conference and on many other occasions we will be taught by the Lord’s anointed servants. These prophets, seers, and revelators receive revelation relative to the kingdom to which their mantle entitles them. We follow the Brethren. Finally, we pre-

pare ourselves to receive an endowment in the temple. If we remain faithful, this endowment literally gives us additional power to overcome the sins of the world and "stand in holy places" (D&C 45:32).

I make a special appeal to the youth. You will remain much safer and infinitely happier if you will place your energy into current obedience rather than saving it for future repentance. When we are obedient, we establish a base from which the challenges of the future can be addressed.

Golden moments of adversity

In spite of our obedience, trials and tribulations will come our way. Disasters and tribulation are not always for the punishment of the wicked, but often for the sanctification of the righteous. We admire the early members of the Church for their faithfulness through their numerous trials. It is interesting to contemplate whether they succeeded in facing their obstacles because of their spirituality or whether they were spiritual because of the obstacles they faced.

Into each of our lives come golden moments of adversity. This painful friend breaks our hearts, drops us to our knees, and makes us realize we are nothing without our Lord and Savior. This friend makes us plead all the night long for reassurance and into the next day and sometimes for weeks and months. But ultimately, just as surely as the day follows the night, as we remain true and faithful, this strange friend, adversity, leads us straight into the outstretched arms of the Savior.

I have tried to understand why we must experience tribulation before we can experience the ultimate communication. It seems there is an intense concentration which must be obtained before our pleadings reach our Father in Heaven and, perhaps even more

importantly, before He can get through to us. Sometimes we must be straining very hard to hear the still small voice. Before we can be taught things hidden from the world, we must be on a spiritual frequency which is out of this world. Adversity can help fine-tune this frequency. Even the Savior communicated more intensely with our Father in Heaven when he was in agony. When the Lord was in Gethsemane, Luke recorded, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22:44).

Being valiant in our testimonies

The challenge for each of us, in order to prevent having to receive constant wake-up calls, is to remain obedient once we have turned upward. As the storm clears, it is possible to stay in tune by being valiant in our testimonies. We can then enjoy reprieves—sometimes long ones—and have a taste of heaven on earth. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be in the plan to have a whole lifetime of bliss if our goal is increased spirituality and perfection.

It is my hope that each of us will experience a spiritual revival as we become more obedient. This increased depth of spirituality will help give us the perspective we need to face today's adversities and the strength we need for tomorrow. While the world is in commotion, the kingdom is intact. We are living in the greatest and most exciting part of our dispensation since the Restoration itself. We plead with everyone to become active participants in building the kingdom. This is the hour of our opportunity, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder James M. Paramore and Bishop Glenn L. Pace have just spoken to us.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling," following which we shall hear from Elder Robert L. Backman, recently released as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The chorus and congregation sang "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling."

Elder Robert L. Backman

An emeritus General Authority

Fourteen years ago I stood at this pulpit to accept my call to the Seventy. The years following have been the most challenging, rewarding, satisfying years of my life. I have enjoyed every choice experience I have had.

At this conference I am being made an emeritus General Authority. I pray that my productive life is not over. I look ahead and wonder what to do with the rest of my days. I don't feel old; my mind is still reasonably alert; my body still functions well. My father died at ninety-four. My mother still lives at ninety-five. I have a lot of mileage left in me. Barring an accident, I probably have at least another twenty-five years ahead of me.

I don't want to be like the retiree of whom it was said, "He died at seventy but waited to be buried until he was eighty-five."

What to do?

An example for retired people

There is a single passage in all the New Testament which describes the Savior's life between the age of twelve and when he began his ministry. I have quoted that passage many times in speaking to the youth. I wonder if it doesn't have just as much application for the rest of us, particularly those who are retired. Luke wrote, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

In today's vernacular, these words translate into our Savior's growing physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. What a model to follow!

Growing physically

Of course our bodies are wearing down. That is part of life. But I believe we have a duty to maintain our health the best we can through proper exercise, a healthy diet, daily care of our bodies. I hope to emulate Elder Joseph Anderson, who was still swimming at one hundred and walking daily until his death, or my uncle, Milt Backman, who is still playing racquetball at ninety-four.

Growing mentally

We need to keep expanding our minds, for they require exercise as surely as do the muscles of our bodies. I want to follow the example of my good neighbor, Perris Jensen, who graduated from Brigham Young University at eighty-one, and Amelia McConkie, widow of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, who, after her husband's death, took up painting.

I have already started piano lessons, and I mean to master the computer if I live long enough.

Growing socially

We have so many opportunities to serve our fellowmen. Wherever we live, our fellow citizens are hungry for the wisdom and experience of those who

have lived long and well. Without the voluntarism which can be given by the retired, our cities are in danger of dying. As I look ahead, I think of the tremendous civic good deeds Lowell Bennion has extended throughout his life but more particularly since he retired. He has exemplified real Christian living, reaching out to "the least of these [our] brethren" (Matthew 25:40).

Growing spiritually

One of the dangers I see in retiring is that we withdraw from the world. We turn inward as society seems to say, "We have no more use for you." With the aging of our society, more and more of us are going to retire. I hope the Church will continue to use us. We have been tried and tested throughout our lives. Society is not likely to experience any challenge we have not faced. We have learned what is important and what brings lasting happiness. Use our experience, our testimonies, our wisdom, and our understanding. We can still assist in building the kingdom of God. I believe he needs all the help he can get.

Enduring to the end

There is no retirement from the service of the Lord. We believe in eternal progression. We should continually grow spiritually throughout our lives. The gospel challenges us to endure to the end.

The word *endure* has an interesting connotation. We seem to equate it with suffering. I was interested to discover that *endure* comes from the Latin word *indurare*, which means "to harden, to steel, make lasting." I like one of the definitions of the word *endure* found in the *Random House Dictionary*. It defines *endure* as "to have or gain continued or lasting acknowledgment or recognition, as of worth, merit, or greatness."

When I think of the supernal joy I have experienced during my ministry, I hope those rich spiritual adventures are not ended. I know they will not be if I accept the opportunities to serve that lie ahead.

Retired couples as missionaries

Having been deeply involved in missionary work for the past several years, I see such glorious opportunities for older couples to continue to be useful in serving their fellowmen. How badly the Church needs us!

There are so many of you who have found fulfillment in serving missions, forgetting yourselves in that important work, staying youthful in the discipline and single-mindedness that come with being immersed in the gospel and sharing your testimonies with all those you meet. I hope I can do the same!

I think of Royce Flandro and his wife, who after retirement served a mission in Spain, performing valuable service. Upon returning home they missed that beautiful experience, so they came to the Missionary Department to ask where they could help the most. It was suggested to them that they might learn Hungarian, which they did. A few months later they were called to Hungary, once again serving with distinction. Now they are headed for Mongolia.

So many of us are afraid to leave our "comfort zones" and thus cheat ourselves of some of the greatest adventures of our lives.

Brother and Sister Harold Salway have served in Fiji, Ireland, South Africa, Israel, England, California, and are now preparing to go to Florida. They intend to continue to serve as long as their health permits. Who can measure the good they have done or the blessings they have received?

The staff in the Missionary Department recently received a letter from President Thomas R. Murray of

the Missouri Independence Mission concerning the missionary service of Elder and Sister Ronald Smith. He wrote:

"The Smiths left a legacy in Nebraska City, Nebraska. They baptized eighteen people, reactivated a large number in two wards, traveled many miles per month, contributed to the local newspaper, gave meaningful community service, motivated the Scouting program, strengthened the ward leadership, fellowshiped and friendshipped, and provided great public relations for the Church in the community."

Where could the Smiths have spent a more productive, profitable time or experienced more fulfilling service?

Couples can learn languages

Some have an idea that as we get older we can't learn languages. That is not true. Again and again we see couples come to the Missionary Training Center without prior knowledge of a language and leave two months later able to communicate. Of course their skills increase as they love and serve in the mission field. Even when a new language is difficult, older couples perform a unique service in the missions simply by being there. Their experience, example, and faith serve as tremendous resources in building inexperienced members of the Church. They are absolutely indispensable to the growth of the kingdom across the world.

I remember meeting a wonderful couple who were missionaries among the southeast Asians of the California Oakland Mission. As I saw the bonding between the missionaries and these delightful new Latter-day Saints, I asked the sister missionary whether she could speak their language. She responded that she could not. I then asked her how they communicated with

the members. With tears in her eyes, she replied, "We just love them."

Looking forward to new opportunities

I have rejoiced in the rich experiences of the past fourteen years, but I look forward to the challenges of the golden years ahead. I look forward to new experiences, new adventures, new horizons, new worlds to conquer. I look forward to new opportunities to grow physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. I pray that my life from this day forth will testify that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

I pray that you and I might wear ourselves out in the service of the Lord so that at the end of our useful, productive lives we can exult with Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Instruments in the Lord's hands

I conclude my public ministry by paraphrasing the words I spoke in 1978, words that have even deeper meaning for me after that choice experience.

President Benson declared that the highest honor we could have is to be members of God's Church, which I am; to know that Christ is our Savior, which, I testify to you, I know; to hold his holy priesthood, which I do; and to be part of an eternal family unit, which I am. I'm honored above all men. I'm blessed above all men. And I am so grateful for the holy calling which I have enjoyed. I rejoice in the opportunity that has been mine of consecrating my entire life to His service.

Every blessing I have in my life, everything I hold dear and precious in my heart, I can trace to my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to my love of the Lord, to my testimony of his divine gospel, and to the responses I have made to the opportunities for service.

My beloved Brethren, my dear wife and I are still prepared to go wherever you want to send us and to do whatever you ask of us. We pray only that we might be instruments in the hands of the Lord to assist you in your awesome assignment to build the kingdom of God, to sanctify his people, and to prepare the way for Christ to come in his glory, when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is the Savior of the world, which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. (See Conference Report, Apr. 1978, p. 109; or *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 72.)

The chorus sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

President Hinckley

Elder Robert L. Backman of the Seventy has just addressed us, and the chorus has sung "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Thank you, Elder Backman, for those stirring remarks. How I've enjoyed these last seven years, being closely associated with you.

Brigham Young once counseled us to use the scriptures as follows:

"Do you read the Scriptures, my brethren and sisters, as though you were writing them a thousand, two thousand, or five thousand years ago? Do you read them as though you stood in the place of the men who wrote them? If you do not feel thus, it is your privilege to do so, that you may be as familiar with the spirit and meaning of the written word of God as you are with your daily walk and conversation" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 128).

Moroni's voice of warning

The Book of Mormon has many special accounts with lessons which can be applied to all ages. It is a book of great passion and feeling. Let us take Brigham Young's advice and imagine we are standing in the place where Moroni, the last of the great Nephite prophets, stood. The assignment his

father gave to him to complete the record, which was entrusted to his care, was very difficult. He must have been in a state of shock as he described the total destruction of his people.

He must have felt compelled to describe how his people had been hunted by the Lamanites until they were all destroyed. In his feeling of loneliness, he reports that his father was among those who were killed. We sense that the only thing Moroni is living for is to complete the record, as he writes, "Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not" (Mormon 8:4).

All he has is the faith that the Lord will preserve him long enough to complete the record and that someday it will be found by one chosen of the Lord. He realizes that the record will be a voice of warning to future generations of what occurs when nations like his own turn away from the teachings of the Lord. It is from the depths of his heart that Moroni cries out to those who will eventually receive the record. He wants to spare those who read his account the heartache and misery which come from disobedience.

Warning to Church members

He writes first to the members of the Church and then to those who have not embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ. Moroni's last words to the members of the Church are written as a voice of warning. He writes as one who sees the history of his people repeating itself in the future. From the Book of Mormon we read:

"Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.

"Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.

"And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.

"For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

"O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world?" (Mormon 8:34–38).

I guess one of the greatest mysteries of mortality is why mankind fails to learn from history. Why do those who profess to be true followers of Christ so often become victims of the enticements of the world? The evidence is so

strong regarding the blessings which accrue to those who trust in and follow the ways the Lord has prescribed for us.

Successes in Utah

Several recent articles in the news and business press have reported on the success of Utah, the place where we still have the greatest concentration of members of the Church. They emphasize that we are seen as "a repository of old-fashioned values, an American success story" (Peter Steinfelds, "Despite Growth, Mormons Find New Hurdles," *New York Times*, 15 Sept. 1991, sec. 1, p. 1).

One article reported: "If religion, as Karl Marx once wrote, is 'the opium of the people,' in Utah it is the amphetamine. Thanks largely to the influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . Utah has become the envy of its neighbors" (Sally B. Donnelly, "Mixing Business and Faith," *Time*, 29 July 1991, p. 22).

From another magazine, *Business Week*, we read: "Utah at its best. Of the 50 states, Utah has the highest literacy rate, the youngest population, the highest percent of high school graduates, the highest percent of persons with college education, the ninth highest percent of college graduates, a state population with the highest average number of years of school completed, the highest birth rate, the lowest death rate, the fourth longest life expectancy, one of the three lowest cancer rates, one of the lowest heart disease rates, the lowest consumption of alcohol, the lowest consumption of tobacco, the shortest average hospital stays, the healthiest population, . . . [and] the best-run state government" (*Business Week*, 16 Dec. 1991, p. 118J).

Notice both what is being said and not being said in these articles. They are honoring collective accomplishments, not individual achievements. It is noteworthy of what the citizens of

Utah have been able to do together. As communities they have become a beacon to the world. As a people they have demonstrated an ability to overcome much of the divisiveness of special interests, uncontrolled individualism, and selfishness.

Many members seek worldly pursuits

How I wish I could feel comfortable with all this special attention we are receiving. In the midst of this favorable publicity, we see so many members seeking worldly pursuits contrary to the words of the Lord's prophets through the ages.

Many of us are more concerned about our fine apparel, the size of our homes, and our cars and their gadgets than we are about the needs of the poor and the needy. We also have seen the threats of legalized abortion, gambling, and pornography, and challenges to public prayer undermining the values that bind us together as a community of Saints.

Stand firm in your convictions

Clearly the members of the Church face tremendous challenges in the latter days. We must not only resist, but mount a counteroffensive against the temptations of the world and its teachings if we are to preserve our uniqueness.

Despite the challenges we face, I plead with each one of you to stand firm in your convictions. There is no way to escape the whirlwinds of the judgments of God that He will unleash on the heads of His children who choose to pursue a course that is against His will. We need to heed Moroni's warning to avoid the fate which destroyed his people.

Warning to unbelievers

Part of what Moroni was feeling should also be translated into a re-

newed desire to do missionary service. Moroni also witnessed the wickedness and destruction which come from unbelief, when men's and women's souls are not anchored to the teachings of the gospel. After warning the believers, he pleads with the unbelievers. Again we read:

"And now, I speak also concerning those who do not believe in Christ.

"Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God?

"Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? . . .

"O then ye unbelieving, turn ye unto the Lord; cry mightily unto the Father in the name of Jesus, that perhaps ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, at that great and last day" (Mormon 9:1–3, 6).

Who would not want to heed the voice of warning of one who has witnessed such heartache and misery? Is it any wonder that his words are to declare that there is a better, happier, and more fulfilling way to live?

Moroni's voice of hope

Moroni's words are not just a voice of warning but also a voice of hope as he lets us know that every one of God's children is precious to Him. He desires that every soul enjoy immortality and eternal life. Again we read:

"Because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they

are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and all shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death.

"And then cometh the judgment of the Holy One upon them; and then cometh the time that he that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; he that is happy shall be happy still; and he that is unhappy shall be unhappy still" (Mormon 9:13-14).

We are here to declare that the restored gospel of our Lord and Savior is here to bless all of our Father in Heaven's children. We are anxious to share it with you. One of our recent prophets has declared:

"Our objective is to bring the gospel to all the world.

Brethren, this is an ambitious project we have, but as you know, we are but planning to do what the Lord has already seen and which He has charged us with" (Spencer W. Kimball, Regional Representatives' seminar, 5 Apr. 1976, p. 1).

We invite you to come and join with us to find the real fulfillment life has to offer.

Obeys and serve to overcome gloom

Today we find ourselves surrounded with so much depression, despair, lack of confidence, and loss of hope. I ask myself, For what purpose is all this gloom? Consider with me for a moment the great blessings which have been promised us in a covenant with the Lord. He has entered into a solemn and binding contract with each of us from the very beginning to give us all that He hath according to our faithfulness. He

has declared, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say" (D&C 82:10).

By solemn covenant He will perform His part of the agreement. The opportunity to receive these great blessings is ours to control based on our individual performance. What is required of us?

First, we need to be obedient to the laws of the Lord. This is one of the first lessons taught to Adam and Eve: obedience brings faith. It brings forth the blessings of heaven. Disobedience brings forth heartache and despair.

Following the law of obedience comes the requirement to give of ourselves in service to our Father in Heaven's children. Sacrificing what we have to benefit our brothers and sisters is the crowning test of the gospel. One of the purposes of the mortal experience is to see if we will follow the Savior's counsel to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Finding the joys of eternity

We live in the most glorious era in the history of mankind. The opportunity to reap the blessings of the Lord has never been greater, as is the opportunity to serve Him and experience the eternal satisfaction which comes from that service.

Let the words of Moroni and the voices of all the prophets fill our hearts and our souls that we may escape the errors of the past caused by disobedience to the eternal laws of God. Let us remember that it is in our power to enjoy the fruits of the gospel, for He has promised us that if we will be obedient to His law and be willing to render unto Him what He requires of us in service and sacrifice, we will find the joys of eternity.

It is my witness to you that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Eternal God, and I so declare it in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council

of the Twelve has spoken to us, and the chorus has sung "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

President Howard W. Hunter

The beacon in the harbor of peace

My dear brothers and sisters, we are mindful that, in spite of hopeful progress seen in recent years, many parts of the world are still filled with strife and sorrow and despair.

Our hearts are torn and our emotions touched when each day's coverage of local or global news brings yet another story of conflict and suffering and, all too often, open warfare. Surely our prayer is to see the world made a better place in which to live, to see more care and concern for one another, and to see the cause of peace and reassurance increased in every direction and extended to all people.

In the pursuit of such peace and reassurance, may I quote a great voice from the past. He said: "[In order to make the world] a better place . . . to live, . . . the first and most important step is to choose as a leader one whose leadership is infallible, whose teachings when practiced have never failed. In . . . [any] tempestuous sea of uncertainty, the pilot must be one who through the storm can see the beacon in the harbor of peace" (David O. McKay, *Man May Know for Himself* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1967], p. 407).

Jesus is the only unfailing beacon

The message of this general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that there is but

one guiding hand in the universe, only one truly infallible light, one unfailing beacon to the world. That light is Jesus Christ, the light and life of the world, the light which one Book of Mormon prophet described as "a light that is endless, that can never be darkened" (Mosiah 16:9).

As we search for the shore of safety and peace, whether we be individual women and men, families, communities, or nations, Christ is the only beacon on which we can ultimately rely. He is the one who said of his mission, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

In this age, as in every age before us and in every age that will follow, the greatest need in all the world is an active and sincere faith in the basic teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the living Son of the living God. Because many reject those teachings, that is all the more reason why sincere believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ should proclaim its truth and show by example the power and peace of a righteous, gentle life.

Love your enemies

Consider, for example, this instruction from Christ to his disciples. He said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

Think what this admonition alone would do in your neighborhood and mine, in the communities in which you and your children live, in the nations which make up our great global family. I realize this doctrine poses a significant challenge, but surely it is a more agreeable challenge than the terrible tasks posed for us by the war and poverty and pain the world continues to face.

How are we supposed to act when we are offended, misunderstood, unfairly or unkindly treated, or sinned against? What are we supposed to do if we are hurt by those we love, or are passed over for promotion, or are falsely accused, or have our motives unfairly assailed?

Do we fight back? Do we send in an ever-larger battalion? Do we revert to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, or, as Tevye says in *Fiddler on the Roof*, do we come to the realization that this finally leaves us blind and toothless?

Be more forgiving

We all have significant opportunity to practice Christianity, and we should try it at every opportunity. For example, we can all be a little more forgiving. In latter-day revelation the Lord said:

"My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

"Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:8-10).

Christ taught with authority and love

In the majesty of his life and the example of his teachings, Christ gave us much counsel with secure promises always attached. He taught with a grandeur and authority that filled with hope the educated and the ignorant, the wealthy and the poor, the well and the diseased.

His message, as one writer said, "flowed forth as sweetly and as lavishly to single listeners as to enraptured crowds; and some of its very richest revelations were vouchsafed, neither to rulers nor to multitudes, but to the persecuted outcast of the Jewish synagogue, to the timid inquirer in the lonely midnight, and the frail woman by the noonday well." His teachings dealt not so much with ceremony and minutia as "with the human soul, and human destiny, and human life—with Hope and Charity, and Faith. . . . Springing from the depths of holy emotions, it thrilled the being of every listener as with an electric flame. In a word, [his] authority was the authority of [God]." Christ's voice was pure and pervaded with sympathy. Even the severity of his sternest injunctions was expressed with an unutterable love. (Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* [Portland, Oreg.: Fountain Publications, 1964], p. 215.)

"It is I; be not afraid"

Let me recall one of the great stories of Christ's triumph over that which seems to test us and try us and bring fear to our hearts. As Christ's disciples set out on one of their frequent journeys across the Sea of Galilee, the night was dark and the elements were strong and contrary. The waves were boisterous and the wind was bold, and these mortal, frail men were frightened. Unfortunately "there was no one with them . . . to calm and save [them], for Jesus was alone upon the [shore]."

As always, he was watching over them. He loved them and cared for them. In their moment of greatest extremity they looked and saw in the darkness an image in "a fluttering robe" walking toward them on "the ridges of the sea. . . . They cried out in terror at the sight, thinking that it was a phantom that walked upon the waves. And through the storm and darkness to them—as so often to us, when, amid the darknesses of life, the ocean seems so great, and our little boats so small," there came the ultimate and reassuring voice of peace with this simple declaration: "It is I; be not afraid." Peter exclaimed, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." And Christ's answer to him was the same as to all of us: "Come."

Peter "sprang over the vessel's side into the troubled waves, . . . and while his eye was fixed on his Lord, the wind might toss his hair, and the spray might drench his robes, but all was well." Only when with wavering faith he removed his glance from the Master to look at the furious waves and the black gulf beneath him, only then did he begin to sink. Again, like most of us, he cried, "Lord, save me." Nor did Jesus fail him. "He stretched out His hand, and grasped the hand of His drowning disciple, with the gentle rebuke, 'O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?'"

Then safely aboard their little craft, they saw the wind fall and the crash of the waves become a ripple. Soon they were at their haven, their safe port, where all would one day hope to be. "All—the crew as well as His disciples—were filled with [deep] amazement." Some of them addressed him by a title which I declare today: "Truly thou art the Son of God." (See Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, pp. 310–13; see also Matthew 14:22–33.)

Fix our eyes on Jesus

It is my firm belief that if as individual people, as families, communities, and nations, we could, like Peter, fix our eyes on Jesus, we too might walk triumphantly over the swelling waves of disbelief and remain unterrified amid the rising winds of doubt. But if we turn away our eyes from him in whom we must believe, as it is so easy to do and the world is so much tempted to do, if we look to the power and fury of those terrible and destructive elements around us rather than to him who can help and save us, then we shall inevitably sink in a sea of conflict and sorrow and despair.

At such times when we feel the floods are threatening to drown us and the deep is going to swallow up the tossed vessel of our faith, I pray we may always hear amid the storm and the darkness that sweet utterance of the Savior of the world: "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:27).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Howard W. Hunter, for your inspiring remarks.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

This wonderful chorus of young voices will now sing "The Spirit of God." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the Presidency of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1992, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a family choir from the Jordan Utah South and Riverton Utah regions. Roger L. Sorenson conducted the choir, and John Longhurst was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Monson made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to the second general session of the 162nd semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference on television.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We express our gratitude to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and cable systems for their cooperation in making

these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

We note that Elders Russell M. Nelson, Hugh W. Pinnock, and Ronald E. Poelman are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

The music for this session will be provided by a family choir from the Jordan Utah South and Riverton Utah regions, under the direction of Brother Roger L. Sorenson, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir will begin this session by singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." The invocation will be offered by Elder LeGrand R. Curtis of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Teach Me to Walk in the Light." President Gordon B. Hinckley will then present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "Teach Me to Walk in the Light."

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brothers and sisters, in harmony with the principle of common consent as set forth in the revelation, I shall now present to you the General

Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints;

Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Any who feel otherwise may so manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any who may feel otherwise.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor. Any who feel to the contrary may indicate by the same sign.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of release and appreciation to Elders Marion D. Hanks and Robert L. Backman for their service as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and that they be designated as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

With gratitude for their service as General Authorities, it is proposed that we release the following who have served as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: George R. Hill III, John R. Lasater, Douglas J. Martin, Glen L. Rudd, Douglas H. Smith, and Lynn A. Sorensen.

It is proposed that Bishop Henry B. Eyring and Bishop Glenn L. Pace be released as First and Second Counselors, respectively, in the Presiding Bishopric.

Those who wish to vote in a note of appreciation for the great service of these Brethren may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain as Presidents of the Quorums of the Seventy Elders Dean L. Larsen, James M.

Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, and L. Aldin Porter. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

Since April conference, Elders Carlos H. Amado, Benjamin B. Banks, Spencer J. Condie, and Robert K. Dellenbach have been called as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. It is proposed that we sustain Henry B. Eyring and Glenn L. Pace as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All who can join in sustaining these Brethren may so indicate. If there be any to the contrary, please indicate by the same sign.

Elders Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Merrill J. Bateman, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, John B. Dickson, John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, V. Dallas Merrell, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, and Lowell D. Wood have been called as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy since the April conference. Those who wish to sustain this action and these Brethren may so indicate it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain H. David Burton as First Counselor and Richard C. Edgley as Second Counselor to Bishop Robert D. Hales in the Presiding Bishopric. Those in favor, please indicate. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we give a vote of appreciation to Elders Hugh W. Pinnock, Hartman Rector, Jr., and Clinton L. Cutler for their service as the Sunday School General Presidency and to Elders Robert K. Dellenbach and Stephen D. Nadauld for their service as first and second counselors, respectively, in the Young Men General Presidency. All who wish to join in this may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Merlin R. Lybbert, Clinton L. Cutler, and Ronald E. Poelman as the Sunday School General Presidency and that we sustain Elders Stephen D. Nadauld and L. Lionel Kendrick as

first and second counselors, respectively, in the Young Men General Presidency. Those in favor, please indicate. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general officers of the Church as presently constituted. All in favor. Any who may be opposed.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative.

We invite the new Counselors in the Presiding Bishopric to take their places on the stand at this time.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your vote of love and support.

Now, for the information of the members of the Church, we are pleased to announce that work is proceeding on schedule for the San Diego California Temple, which will likely be dedicated next spring. Work is also on schedule for the Orlando Florida and Bountiful Utah temples. Architectural work is proceeding, looking in the near

future to the construction of the temples in St. Louis, Missouri; Bogotá, Colombia; and Guayaquil, Ecuador.

We are also pleased to announce that property has been designated for the construction of a new temple in Hong Kong to serve the needs of our people in that great area of Asia; and another in Hartford, Connecticut, to accommodate Church members from the New York, Boston, and New England areas; and also another temple in Utah County to relieve the pressure on the Provo Temple, which is operating far beyond its designed capacity. We anticipate that there will be others, the locations of which will be announced later.

Thank you.

President Monson

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

Yearning for home

At some time in your life, you've probably experienced the pangs of homesickness. It might have been those first times you stayed overnight with a friend or went on a sleepover, as our grandchildren call them. As much as you wanted to be with your friends, you might have been lonely for your parents and for the secure feeling of being home, where it was safe and comfortable.

Sustained homesickness might not have come until later—when you left for college or to serve a mission, or even when you were uprooted by marriage and a move far from home. Or it might have occurred when your parents divorced and you found yourself struggling to adapt to new surroundings and maybe even a stepparent and

new relatives. During these periods of adjustment and absence, you perhaps felt unsettled, lonely, and had a deep yearning for home.

Recently a mission president asked me to speak to a troubled missionary who was having extreme homesickness problems. His intense yearnings were causing poor performance, a waste of time, a lack of concentration, and a dislike for his present assignment. I took the occasion to tell him that some of the right kind of homesickness could be desirable, but it must be kept under control. Let me say at the outset, *yearning* is defined as "to have a strong or deep desire; be filled with longing" (*American Heritage Dictionary*, second college edition, 1982). This missionary seemed very sincere in wanting to do better. Proper yearnings for home can be beneficial.

An anchor, a port, a refuge

Not just children but all of us will want to think of home under joyous or trying circumstances. We let ourselves become homesick for love, acceptance, security, understanding, and guidance that generally are taught and shared there. Home should be the place in which a person can unburden his soul and find renewed strength to face the world; where there is comfort, joy, and understanding; where best friends live; and where we can learn to be our best selves.

There is a certain kind of yearning for home we should never want to lose. Home should be an anchor, a port in a storm, a refuge, a happy place in which to dwell, a place where we are loved and where we can love. Home should be where life's greatest lessons are taught and learned. Home and family can be the center of one's earthly faith, where love and mutual responsibility are appropriately blended. Thinking of home with its pleasant and happy memories can make us stronger during our present and future days here upon the earth.

President Benson's childhood home

President Benson has always loved his childhood home. He loves Whitney, Idaho, his birthplace. He loves the homestead where all eleven children were born and reared by noble parents.

Over a lifetime of worldwide travel, he yearned to return often to his home, and he did so. His heart has always been in Cache Valley. He loved going back and visiting with family members still there and seeing the friends of his birth, his neighbors, his teachers, his bishops, his kin who had such an impact for good on his life. He calls them "the finest people in all the world," and Whitney "the ideal farm community."

It revitalizes President Benson to go back to his roots, to go back to the

land that nourished him and built character in him and provided him the sacred beginnings of a life devoted to God, family, and country. Truly, President Benson loves his childhood home.

Yearning for our heavenly home

I am concerned for people today who do not have a longing for or thoughts of home. It is unfortunate that among us we have people who have never experienced home life that has been and is desirable so that there can be an anxiousness under control for thoughts toward home. Our responsibilities are to share the warmth of our homes by being good neighbors and friends.

To know who we are is important, but to know where we are in relationship to our earthly home and heavenly home is essential if we are to receive all the blessings our Father in Heaven has for those who love him and keep his commandments. Our eternal home is our ultimate destination. A proper yearning for home can prevent our getting lost in detours or paths that lead us away.

Young Women anxious to go home

It is reported that one summer at a Young Women's conference in Alberta, Canada, three hundred girls were camped in tents scattered among tall pines. It rained every day and was very cold and wet. Even so, there was no murmuring in the camp. On the last day of the conference, the leader addressed the young women under cloudy skies. Despite the unseasonable cold, there was a feeling of warmth among them for this their temporary home. Maybe because of the cold they were all drawn together and felt warm from the inside out.

The speaker began her remarks by asking, "Where are you going following this outdoor conference?" The united

chorus of three hundred young women resounded through the tall pines. "Home!" they cried out. "Where?" they were asked again, and they responded with even greater conviction: "Home!" They knew where they wanted to go most of all and were anxious to get there.

The most attractive home that we will ever share will be that abode with our families with appropriate relationship to our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

The prodigal son turns homeward

Even the prodigal son could not resist the pull of home. He spurned his father, his home life, and his heritage, lavishly wasting his inheritance on riotous living. When he had nothing and was reduced to living off the spoils that only swine would eat, his thoughts turned homeward. Could there have been moments, as he gleaned the fields for husks to eat, when he longed for the security, safety, and acceptance he'd had before? Might he have been deeply homesick? Repentant, and hoping his father would accept him as a servant, he finally returned home. His father rejoiced, welcoming him back with open arms and complete acceptance. He no doubt knew that welcoming his wayward son was crucial if he hoped to ever return to his heavenly home. (See Luke 15:11-32.)

Being homesick isn't all bad

Over the years I've counseled with many whose homesickness threatened to interfere with their missions, marriages, and families.

But I've come to see that being homesick isn't all bad. It's natural to miss the people you are closest to. It's normal to long to be where you feel secure, where those you love have your best interests at heart. It's understandable to want to return to the place

where you learned how to walk and talk, where you felt loved even when friends turned away, and where you were accepted regardless of the situation. There's no place on earth that can take the place of a home where love has been given and received.

Heartbreak of having no home

Recently we've witnessed the tragic devastation that Hurricane Andrew left in its wake in southern Florida and Louisiana. Tens of thousands of people have lost their homes. Armed forces personnel have raised tent cities to try to at least provide these victims with shelter. But the sobering fact is that, at least for a time, many of these people literally cannot go home. I cannot imagine how they must yearn for what they so recently had.

I have known other men and women who, for one reason or another, could not go home or who had no home to go to. I have felt their pain and seen their tears. It is at best a heartbreaking situation.

Satan wants us to forget about home

In another application, I have also known men and women who have jeopardized the privilege of returning to their heavenly home. Some were dealing with problems that made them ineligible to enter the temple and make the eternal covenants that bind us to our eternal home. I have felt their heartache and their longing for opportunities that, at least for a time, were beyond their reach.

The ramifications are poignant and endless. Perhaps we've all had these overwhelming thoughts come to mind: What if I am unworthy? What if I could never go home?

If he could have his way, Satan would distract us from our heritage. He would have us become involved in a million and one things in this life—

probably none of which is very important in the long run—to keep us from concentrating on the things that are really important, particularly the reality that we are God's children. He would like us to forget about home and family values. He'd like to keep us so busy with comparatively insignificant things that we don't have time to make the effort to understand where we came from, whose children we are, and how glorious our ultimate homecoming can be!

Our spiritual heritage

We are literally the children of our Heavenly Father. We kept our first estate. During our experience in premortality, we lived with and were cared for and taught by a loving Father. Among other things, we were schooled in what had to be a perfect spiritual and educational environment. And we rejoiced when told of the plan whereby we could prove ourselves. Hence the day arrived when it was our turn to experience a period of probation and testing, a period during which a veil would be drawn over our memories so that we would be free either to walk by faith and by the Spirit or to forsake our spiritual heritage and birthright.

Now we're here. And I'm sure we would all agree that this second estate has lived up to its billing. It is a time of testing, of probation. The challenges and duties and responsibilities at times seem to overshadow almost everything else. Sadly, it's easy to become so encumbered by the press of daily life that we lose our focus.

Focus on what really matters

One definition of the word *focus* is "directed attention" or "emphasis" (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*). Perhaps as much as anything in this day and age of mass media, instantaneous worldwide communications,

and modern conveniences that seem to help us pack more into each day than would have been considered possible just a few decades ago, we need to focus on and direct our attention to the things that really matter. And simply, what really matters is a personal testimony of Jesus Christ, an understanding of who we are and what we're doing here, and an absolute determination to return home.

What young musician, finally scheduled to debut in a capacity concert hall after years of agonizing rehearsal, would, while en route to the performance, stop to join a long line forming at the latest hit movie, forgetting the thousands of people waiting to hear her?

What world-class runner, after training for well over a decade, would find himself in the Olympic finals, only to stop running halfway through his race to watch the high-jump finals taking place on the other side of the field?

These examples may seem preposterous, but how much more tragic it is for someone who, equipped with a testimony of the truth and a knowledge of the purpose of life, becomes more absorbed in life today than in life forever; who's just a little more concerned about his or her status and standing in mortality than in eternity; whose focus is not directed to God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, with whom it is possible to have a glorious connection and bond.

Pursue things higher than the earth

I fear that at times we run the risk of acting like seasoned, conditioned athletes who are more interested in what kind of jogging suits we'll wear than in buckling down to train for the race. C. S. Lewis had an intriguing way of evaluating this dilemma: "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an igno-

rant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. . . . We are far too easily pleased" (*A Mind Awake: An Anthology of C. S. Lewis*, ed. Clyde S. Kilby [New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968], p. 168).

The prophet Mormon put it another way: "Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world?" (Mormon 8:38).

When we have a yearning and don't know what it is for, perhaps it's our soul longing for its heartland, longing to be no longer alienated from the Lord and the pursuit of something much higher, better, and more fulfilling than anything this earth has to offer.

"See that ye fall not out"

After Joseph, son of Jacob, had been reunited with his brothers, he

asked them to return home to Canaan to bring his father, Jacob, to him in Egypt. As the brothers were preparing to depart, Joseph said to them simply, "See that ye fall not out by the way" (Genesis 45:24).

Might our Heavenly Father have given us much the same counsel as we departed his presence to begin our earthly sojourn?

May our yearning for home be the motivation we need to so live that we can return to our heavenly home with God our Father on a forever basis, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

Elders Lino Alvarez and Dallas N. Archibald, who were called as members of the Seventy since April conference, will now address us.

Elder Lino Alvarez

My dear brothers and sisters, I feel very humble as I stand at the same pulpit where so many men of God come to teach us the eternal truths of the everlasting gospel.

I pray that the Spirit of the Lord may be present this afternoon so that as I express myself in a language which is not my own, you may understand in your mind and in your heart what I will try to say, that his promise that we both may be edified and rejoice together may be fulfilled (see D&C 50:22). I ask you to have a prayer in your heart that this may be possible.

Gratitude

First of all I would like to express to my Heavenly Father gratitude for his love, his mercy, his patience, and, above all, his confidence in me. I would like to thank the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Seventy for everything they have taught me during the course of many years about the Savior and the way I can serve him better. I would also like to thank my mission president, who believed in me during my youth. He gave me confidence and nurtured my testimony of Christ and His restored gospel.

I come to this calling with a feeling of inadequacy but also with a great and solemn testimony that comes from God that I am willing to give my best to serve the Lord and his people. I received this calling through President Hinckley, who also called me as the stake mission president of the first stake in Santiago, Chile, in 1972 and later as president of the Mexico City South Mission in 1982.

Parents laid the foundation

As I have pondered about my childhood, my youth, and my adult life, I believe that the foundation for my beliefs was laid by my parents during the years of my childhood and youth. I wish to render a tribute to them. My father and mother, with no formal education, knew how to teach the eternal principles of the gospel. I am the tenth child in a family of twelve children—ten boys and two girls.

The Lord gave to Israel, through Moses, the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. I wish to call to your attention today the fifth of these commandments, which says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

There are two things that our parents did with all of their children for which we now honor them. First, they taught us correct principles and helped us walk uprightly before the Lord and live his commandments. Second, they taught us the value of work, personal integrity, and family unity. Even though not all of us are members of the Church, we have tried to live according to the principles they taught us.

Every year we have the opportunity to gather as a family—children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—with my father. He does what Lehi did before he died, when he gathered together his children and told them:

"And now that my soul might have joy in you, and that my heart might leave this world with gladness because of you, that I might not be brought down with grief and sorrow to the grave, arise from the dust, my sons, and be men, and be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things, that ye may not come down into captivity" (2 Nephi 1:21).

The Lord blesses us as we serve

When I was about to go on a mission, I worried about the same things that today worry the young men and young women who will also serve missions. I worried about work, my girlfriend, school, and family. When I was old enough to go on a mission, my father was almost sixty-six years old, and I thought, My father is old, and if I leave for two years, he may die and I will not see him anymore. Who will take care of my mother? She will be all alone when he is no longer at her side.

May I tell you that I served two years in the mission, I served in the Church schools in Chile for five years, I served as a mission president for three years and as a Regional Representative for six years, and my father is still here at the head of the family. He was born a month after President Benson, so last month he turned ninety-three years old.

I testify that when we serve the Lord with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength, he blesses us.

I also wish to render tribute to the parents of my loving companion, who taught her as my parents did me. I thank them for having accepted the gospel even before she was born.

Honor parents day by day

I testify that an excellent way to honor our parents is to keep the commandments and serve the Lord.

After having been set apart to serve in the Second Quorum of the Seventy, I, with my wife and one of our children, visited my father. We asked him to give me a blessing, something which I have always striven to do when I have received a new priesthood assignment. He laid his hands upon my head and gave me a short but grand blessing. He said, "Son, I bless you that the Holy Spirit may accompany you, your wife, and your children in everything you do." What more could I wish for?

I would also like to thank my sweet companion and my dear children, two of whom are now serving full-time missions, and the third is awaiting his call. Without their love and confidence I could do nothing. I love them dearly, and I trust them completely.

I invite all who are listening, young and old alike, to honor their parents day by day and to try to do those things that bring honor to them.

Testimony

I testify with all my heart that God lives, that his Son, Jesus Christ, honored him by keeping his commandments and obeying his will. Our Savior taught us this when he said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

I testify that the Savior is our example and model of life. We must strive every day to follow his teachings and do the things that he did, for "the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John 5:19).

I testify that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that through him the fulness of the gospel has been restored to bless the families of the earth. I also testify that Ezra Taft Benson is the prophet of God for our day and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true and living Church upon the face of the earth. I testify of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Dallas N. Archibald

Responsibilities of parents

Recently I had the opportunity to sit at the back of a chapel during a sharing time session of Primary and watch a lively group of youngsters keep a music teacher very busy. For a final song the director asked the children to sing "I Am a Child of God." They quieted down, and for the first song of the entire session the voices unified in quality instead of quantity. The words rang throughout the chapel with an angel-like resonance:

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,
Help me find the way.
Teach me all that I must do
To live with him someday.
[Hymns, no. 301]

These pleading words sank deep into my heart that day and stirred my soul. What a great burden of responsibility the Lord has placed upon us as parents: to take these children and lead them in the ways of holiness, to guide them through the perils of mortality, and to walk beside them on the straight and narrow path which leads to eternity. Yes, the responsibility is ours to teach them all they must do so that someday, as the mortal is changed to immortal, they will be prepared to return to the presence of the Father and dwell with him and their Elder Brother, Jesus Christ.

Parents in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon clearly shows the value of righteousness and dedication in parents. The first statement of Nephi is a tribute to his parents: "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1). Enos wrote, "And the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart" (Enos 1:3). Mormon recorded of Nephi and Lehi, the two sons of Helaman: "For they remembered the words which their father Helaman spake unto them. And these are the words which he spake" (Helaman 5:5). Here we have a tribute to a goodly parent and also the words which he spoke to his children. He reminded them of the names he had given them so that they would always seek to do good works and desire the precious gift of eternal life (see 5:6-7). Then he told them, "O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ" (5:9).

The reference to the words of King Benjamin shows that Helaman, as a parent, knew the scriptures and taught his children to follow the words of the prophets. He continued, saying, "And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation" (Helaman 5:12).

What better teaching could a parent provide for a child than that of following the prophets and building a sure foundation upon Jesus Christ? The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob instructed that once they have been taught and "obtained a hope in Christ," we may then teach them how to earn

riches so that they can use them "to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry" (Jacob 2:19). We must teach them all that they must do to live with Him, and the best teacher is example.

Teach with kindness and love

As I sat there in the back of the chapel, I silently asked myself, "Am I doing all the things which I must do? Can my wife and daughter walk alongside me with confidence that I will lead them into the celestial kingdom? 'Lead me, guide me, walk beside me. . . .' Stop. Stop for one minute and ask the same question of yourself: 'Can my spouse and children walk alongside me with confidence that I will lead them into the celestial kingdom?'" The Savior said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33).

The instructions are clear. We must teach, and we must be an example of those teachings. But many times in our zeal to persuade others to righteousness we begin to use force, which results in rebellion. Attempting to force others to accept our way of thinking will cause them to close their minds to our teachings and ultimately reject our words. They have their agency.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 121, the Lord explains the proper way to teach. He said, "Only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul" (121:41-42). How I love those words "enlarge the soul." Proper teaching will enlarge the soul.

For example, let us compare a child to an empty glass, and our knowledge and experience, which have accumulated over the years, to a bucketful of water. Logic and physics tell us that we cannot pour a bucketful of water directly into a small glass. However, by our using correct principles of transferring knowledge, the glass can be

enlarged. Those principles are persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness and meekness, love unfeigned, kindness, and pure knowledge. They will enlarge the glass, which is the soul of the child, allowing that child to receive much more than the original bucketful.

Behavioral psychologists have written libraries of books on this subject. The Lord gave us the same information in just a few verses of scripture. We must always teach, lead, and guide in a way which will create high levels of self-esteem in our children and others.

Emphasize the good

To create and maintain self-esteem, our words and our actions must always express to the individual that he or she is important and capable. The words the scriptures use are "to lift." The psychologists would say, "Reinforce the positive." The secret is simple. Always look for the good in the individual and lift; reinforce the positive by words and actions. Put-downs, words like *stupid* or *dummy*, or phrases like "Why can't you do anything right?" destroy self-esteem and shouldn't be part of our vocabulary. It is impossible to emphasize the good in others if negative words or phrases are readily available on the tips of our tongues or expressed through our gestures.

The plea behind the words "Walk beside me, Help me find the way" is this: "Lift me. Strengthen my feeble knees. Let me know that I am important and capable" (see D&C 81:5).

How to correct and discipline

When correction and discipline must take place, it is essential to continue lifting and strengthening, ensuring that the feelings of being important and capable are not lost. Again, in section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord explains how: "Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then show-

ing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproofed" (121:43).

As Elder Maxwell has observed, the word *betimes* is casually assumed to mean "from time to time" or "occasionally," when actually it means "early on." Therefore, correction must take place early on with the direction of the Holy Ghost and not in anger. One hundred and thirty-two years ago, in a discourse in this tabernacle, Brigham Young counseled, "Never chasten beyond the balm you have within you to bind up" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:125). The Lord said, "Showing forth afterwards an increase of love" (D&C 121:43).

The instructions on how to correct are clear and simple: early on, with the peace of the Holy Ghost, and with enough of the healing power within us to make sure that self-esteem is never wounded, ensuring always that the individual feels important and capable.

Oh, goodly parent, hear the words and respond accordingly:

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,
Help me find the way.

Teach me all that I must do
To live with him someday.

In the holy name of Jesus Christ,
amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Lino Alvarez and Dallas N. Archibald of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Seventy will then address us, and he will be followed by Elder C. Max Caldwell of the Seventy. Both of these Brethren were called since April conference.

The choir and congregation sang
"We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Merrill J. Bateman

"Search the scriptures"

On numerous occasions the Lord has commanded his disciples to search the scriptures in order to learn and live the doctrines of salvation. During his mortal ministry, the Savior stated, "Search the scriptures; . . . they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). During his appearance on the Western Hemisphere following his resurrection, Christ quoted from the scriptures and then said to the Nephites: "Ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently" (3 Nephi 23:1). In our day the Lord enjoins his followers to "search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and . . . shall all be fulfilled" (D&C 1:37).

The Savior revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that it is possible to hear his voice and know his words through the scriptures. He said:

"These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; . . .

"For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit . . . , and by my power you can read them one to another; . . .

"Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words" (D&C 18:34-36).

In order to come unto Christ and be perfected in him, each person needs to receive a testimony of the Lord's words. Some individuals falter because they fail to open the books, others because they read casually. As one would expect, there is a difference between diligent searching or pondering over the scriptures and casual reading. A Church history story illustrates the difference.

The search for a lost pioneer child

A small six-year-old boy wandered away from his handcart company during a storm and was lost. When the

storm subsided, Robert and Ann Parker realized their boy was missing and began searching. For two days an organized search was unsuccessful. The decision was made that the company must move on because of the approaching winter.

A pioneer journal records the following:

"Ann Parker pinned a bright [red] shawl about the thin shoulders of her husband and sent him back alone on the trail to search again for their child. If he found him dead he was to wrap him in the shawl; if alive, the shawl would be a flag to signal her. Ann and her children took up their load and struggled on with the company, while Robert retraced the miles of . . . trail, calling, and searching and praying for his helpless little son."

One suspects that he did not just casually look behind a few trees or leisurely walk along the trail, but that he vigorously investigated every thicket, every clump of trees and gully or wash.

"At last he reached a . . . trading station where he learned that his child had been found and cared for by a woodsman and his wife. [The boy] had been ill from exposure and fright. [But] God had heard the prayers of his people.

"Out on the trail each night Ann and her children kept watch and, when, on the third night the rays of the setting sun caught the glimmer of a bright red shawl [above her husband's head], the brave little mother sank in a pitiful heap in the sand. . . . [She] slept for the first time in six . . . days."

Search diligently, not casually

The story illustrates the difference between just looking and searching diligently. A casual, infrequent exposure to the scriptures will generally not open the door to the whisperings of the

Spirit or provide insights into the Savior's life and character. We need to search the scriptures with the same vigor of Robert hunting for his son and with the consistency of the mother searching the horizon if we expect to hear his voice and know his words. President Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve stated the following in a general conference address:

"Those who delve into the scriptural library . . . find that to understand requires more than casual reading or perusal—there must be concentrated study. . . . One who studies the scriptures every day accomplishes far more than one who devotes considerable time one day and then lets days go by before continuing."²

Importance of the scriptures to Lehi

The importance of possessing and searching the Lord's words is illustrated in the Book of Mormon. The prophet Lehi and his family had traveled from Jerusalem to the borders of the Red Sea and then a further three days' journey into the wilderness when the Lord reminded Lehi that he was spiritually unarmed. The family, in their haste to leave Jerusalem, had not taken the scriptures with them. They did not have the words of the Lord to earlier prophets.

Lehi was commanded in a dream to send his sons back to Jerusalem for a set of brass plates which contained the writings of the prophets and the genealogy of his forefathers. After considerable difficulty and time, the sons returned to the father's tent with the plates. After the family gave thanks to the Lord for the safe return of the sons, the Book of Mormon states that they "searched [the plates] and found that they were desirable; yea, even of great worth unto us, insomuch that we could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children" (1 Nephi 5:21).

The plates of brass coupled with their own records allowed the family to pass the words of the Lord from one generation to the next. Scriptures and prayer became the primary means by which each succeeding generation developed faith in Christ.

Blessings of searching the scriptures

There are certain blessings obtained when one searches the scriptures. As a person studies the words of the Lord and obeys them, he or she draws closer to the Savior and obtains a greater desire to live a righteous life. The power to resist temptation increases, and spiritual weaknesses are overcome. Spiritual wounds are healed.

Hold fast to the iron rod

Lehi's great visionary dream came soon after he had searched the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 8). In the dream Lehi saw a tree which produced a fruit which was exceedingly white, very sweet to the taste, and desirable above all other fruit. He saw a path leading to the tree and a rod of iron along the path. He saw mists of darkness on the path, which caused some to lose their way and wander off. Others reached the tree by holding to the rod, but then became ashamed, let go of the rod of iron, and fell away. According to the vision, the only way to reach the tree and become a permanent partaker of the fruit was to "continually [hold] fast" to the iron rod (1 Nephi 8:30).

What was the rod of iron? Nephi defined it as the "word of God"—the words of the living prophets and the scriptures, which point people to Christ. Nephi further stated that those who hearkened and held fast to the word of God would never perish. (See 1 Nephi 15:24.)

The tree in the dream is the tree of life, which represents God's love for us as expressed in the condescension of

the Father and the Son (see 1 Nephi 11). Holding fast to the iron rod builds faith in Christ and his work.

Nourish the seed

The prophet Alma, living five hundred years after Lehi, was strongly impacted by Lehi's vision of the tree of life. Alma, however, changes the imagery in an interesting way. He likens the word of God to a seed which is planted in the heart and then nourished. He states that if people will no more than desire to believe in Christ, the seed will sprout and grow, and they will feel a swelling inside as the seed enlarges the soul. The desire to believe, coupled with obedience, eventually turns to faith in Jesus Christ.

Alma states that continued nourishment will cause the seed to grow into the tree of life with fruit that is exceedingly white, sweet, and pure—"a tree springing up unto everlasting life" (Alma 32:41; see also 32:26-42). In Alma's example, the tree of life grows within each person to change his or her heart and soul. Holding fast to the iron rod in Lehi's dream is the equivalent.

Alma's explanation of the tree growing within and changing people's hearts gives light to an earlier set of questions that he asked Church members. The questions were: "Have ye

spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" (Alma 5:14). Changes in the heart and soul occur as a result of planting and nourishing the seed. Scripture study, prayer, obedience, and service are key elements in building faith in Christ.

President Benson, in the April 1986 general conference, expressed these thoughts: "However diligent we may be in other areas, certain blessings are to be found only in the scriptures, only in coming to the word of the Lord and holding fast to it as we make our way through the mists of darkness to the tree of life."³ Brothers and sisters, I testify that President Benson is the Lord's prophet, that Jesus is the Christ, and I pray that we may hear his voice by searching the scriptures, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Camilla W. Judd, in Kate B. Carter, comp., *Treasures of Pioneer History*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1952-57), 5:240-41; see also Allan K. Burgess, *How to Understand and Enjoy the Scriptures* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986), pp. 6-7.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 64.
3. "The Power of the Word," *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82.

Elder C. Max Caldwell

The meaning of charity

I have come to know something of the value of the Book of Mormon as a witness for Christ, and I treasure the teachings contained in its sacred pages. Today I would like to discuss one of its unique precepts.

As a young man on a mission, I recall reading Paul's words to the Corinthian Saints and pondering what he meant by the phrase "faith, hope,

charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13:13). I wondered why charity should be the greatest. *Charity* was a word I did not understand. Part of the reason for my dilemma was that the common use of the term *charity* did not seem to be consistent with the doctrinal or scriptural use.

As I searched the pages of the Book of Mormon, I gained a new view.

Mormon, an ancient prophet of the Americas, connected the word *charity* to the Savior. He declared that "charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever" (Moroni 7:47).

I considered what was meant by the phrase "love of Christ." That answer is critical because "the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love" (2 Nephi 26:30). If we must have charity, then we must know what it is. The phrase "love of Christ" might have meaning in three dimensions:

1. Love *for* Christ
2. Love *from* Christ
3. Love *like* Christ

Love for Christ

First, love *for* Christ. This concept proclaims Jesus as the object of our love, and our lives should be an external expression of our gratitude for him. Sometimes that is difficult to do. I once visited a high priests group meeting where an older brother taught us. He noted that "as a people we often pray, 'We thank thee for all the blessings we enjoy.' But what about the blessings we don't enjoy? It can be very hard to be thankful for those." This dear man had just experienced his first Christmas without his sweetheart in more than fifty years. It is difficult to be grateful to the Lord under circumstances we don't enjoy.

Our beloved President Benson told some of his experiences with the Saints in war-torn countries and shared the following: "One sister walked over a thousand miles with four small children, leaving her home in Poland. She lost all four to starvation and the freezing conditions. Yet she stood before us in her emaciated condition, her clothing shredded, and her feet wrapped in burlap, and bore testimony of how blessed she was" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, pp. 47-48; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, p. 33). Things we don't enjoy

must not overshadow our reasons to maintain our love for the Savior. Otherwise we may lose our perspective or become bitter, and our love for Christ may be lost.

How deeply do we love him? Does our love depend on favorable environments? Is it diminished or strengthened by our experiences? Is our love for him evident by our behavior and our attitude? Charity, or love *for* Christ, sustains us in every need and influences us in every decision.

Love from Christ

A second dimension of the meaning of charity is love *from* Christ. From a prophet of the Book of Mormon comes an inspired explanation. Speaking to the Lord, Moroni declared:

"Thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world. . . .

"This love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity" (Ether 12:33-34).

Through his compliance with the severe requirements of the Atonement, the Savior offered the ultimate expression of love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). And by permitting his Son to make such a selfless and suffering sacrifice, the Father provided us with an ultimate expression of his love as his gift to the rest of his children.

The Apostle John accurately testified of this infinite though conditional representation of the charity of the Gods when he wrote, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This gift of charity is to be received. The Savior's act of redemption for our sins is of no effect without our willingness to comply with the conditions of his atonement.

Speaking of the need for us to receive the divine love of God, Moroni prayerfully declared, "Except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father" (Ether 12:34).

Some years ago I prepared to teach a class on a subject I felt would be particularly difficult. The night before the scheduled class, I prayed for guidance and then retired, still troubled in my mind. When I awoke, a certain thought was introduced to my mind that I shared with the class later that morning. After the class, a young man spoke with me privately and said, "The lesson was for me. I now know what I have to do." Later I learned that he had come to that class as his first contact with the Church in many years. He then proceeded to get his life in order and eventually served a faithful mission. Presently he is experiencing the happiness associated with keeping eternal family covenants. He possesses the gift of charity because he received the atoning love of Christ.

Love like Christ

A third perception of charity is to possess a love that is *like* Christ. In other words, people are the object of Christlike love. Nephi said: "I have charity for my people. . . I have charity for the Jew. . . I also have charity for the Gentiles" (2 Nephi 33:7-9).

Since Nephi had such love for everyone, we wonder how he acquired it. He must have lived in anticipation of the divine directive that would later be proclaimed by the Savior as the key to the development of love: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; *as I have loved you*" (John 13:34; italics added).

Jesus' love was inseparably connected to and resulted from his life of serving, sacrificing, and giving in behalf of others. We cannot develop Christlike love except by practicing the process prescribed by the Master.

The Apostle John was not only loved by the Lord, but he also loved others *like* the Lord. John affirmed the process by saying, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

Is it a coincidence that missionaries give a portion of their lives in behalf of others, then come home and testify of their great love for the people they have served? Is it any wonder that bishops and other priesthood and auxiliary leaders who sacrifice for others are filled with love for those who are recipients of their labors? Is there a greater love among mortals than that of a mother, who offers all for her child? Many who desire to have charity like Jesus attain it as he did.

On one occasion my wife expected to be away for the weekend and asked one of the sisters in our ward to teach her Relief Society lesson. The week following the session, that sister came to our home and returned the instruction manual. She also brought to my wife a freshly baked loaf of bread and a handwritten note that read, "I love you. You are a special person. Thank you for thinking of me." She was grateful to have been asked to serve. She was full of the love of Christ.

Charity is not just a precept or a principle, nor is it just a word to describe actions or attitudes. Rather, it is an internal condition that must be developed and experienced in order to be understood. We are possessors of charity when it is a part of our nature. People who have charity have a love for the Savior, have received of his love, and love others as he does.

Charity in the scriptures

It may be of some significance to note that the word *charity* does not appear in a single verse in the Old Testament. Surely the prophets of ancient times understood the need for charity

as did the Apostle Paul and the prophets of ancient America. And surely those prophets knew and taught that "charity is the pure love of Christ" (Moroni 7:47). We are left to wonder if the enemies of Christ deliberately removed from the holy writings these saving truths as part of the plain and precious teachings that Nephi prophetically said would be removed (see 1 Nephi 13:20–29). Also, charity is only partially explained in the New Testament. But thankfully the Book of Mormon, another witness for Christ, has restored to us an understanding of this eternal precept. I testify that as we abide by this precept, we will draw nearer to God. Indeed, we will become more like him.

Individually and collectively, we can experience the peace and happiness enjoyed for nearly two hundred years anciently when "there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people" (4 Nephi 1:15). This I know, as I know the Savior lives, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Merrill J. Bateman and C. Max Caldwell of the Seventy.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

"See that ye be not troubled"

Living in these difficult times, brothers and sisters, requires each one of us to maintain a positive, hopeful perspective about the future. Today, more so than in the past, I am asked about the signs of the times and if I think the end of the world is near. My answer is the same one that Jesus gave some two thousand years ago:

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:32–33).

When Jesus was asked about the sign of His coming, he said:

"Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: *see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass*, but the end is not yet.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

"All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:6–8; italics added).

Acceleration of worldwide calamity

Although the prophecies tell us that these things are to take place, more and more people are expressing great alarm at what appears to be an acceleration of worldwide calamity. As members of the Church, we must not forget the Savior's admonition: "Be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass." These are difficult times, when the forces of nature seem to be unleashing a flood of "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places."

Recently I read a newspaper article that cited statistics from the U.S. Geological Survey indicating that earthquakes around the world are increasing in frequency and intensity. According to the article, only two major earthquakes (earthquakes measuring at least six on the Richter scale) occurred during the 1920s. In the 1930s the number increased to five, and then it decreased

to four during the 1940s. But in the 1950s, nine major earthquakes occurred, followed by fifteen during the 1960s, forty-six during the 1970s, and fifty-two during the 1980s. Already almost as many major earthquakes have occurred during the 1990s as during the entire decade of the 1980s.

The world is experiencing violent disorders, both physical and social. Here in the United States we are still reeling from two incredibly destructive hurricanes. People in the Philippines see no end to the devastation of the volcanic eruption of Mount Pinatubo. Famine grips portions of Africa, where tragic human suffering is prevalent. To a lesser degree, hunger afflicts millions, even in countries that have a high standard of living.

Political unrest, warfare, and economic chaos prevail in many parts of the world, and the plagues of pornography, drug misuse, immorality, AIDS, and child abuse become more oppressive with each passing day. The media busily satisfies an apparently insatiable appetite of audiences to witness murder, violence, nudity, sex, and profanity. Is not this the day of which Moroni spoke when he recorded: "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing" (Mormon 8:35). And then he prophesied of conditions of the world as they are today.

We must never give up hope

Brothers and sisters, whether or not these are indeed the last days or even "the beginning of sorrows" as the Savior foretold, some of us may find our lives laden with frustration, disappointment, and sorrow. Many feel helpless to deal with the chaos that seems to prevail in the world. Others anguish over family members who are being carried downstream in a swift, raging current of weakening values and

declining moral standards. Children particularly are suffering as society drifts further and further away from the commandments of God.

Many have even resigned themselves to accept the wickedness and cruelty of the world as being irreparable. They have given up hope. They have decided to quit trying to make the world a better place in which they and their families can live. They have surrendered to despair.

Admittedly we have ample reason to be deeply concerned because we see no immediate answers to the seemingly unsolvable problems confronting the human family. But regardless of this dark picture, which will ultimately get worse, we must never allow ourselves to give up hope! Moroni, having seen our day, counseled, "Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope" (Moroni 10:20).

The Lord is in control

To all who have harbored feelings of despair and an absence of hope, I offer the words of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . .

"Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:34, 36). "Even so am I in the midst of you" (D&C 6:32).

My message to you today, my brothers and sisters, is simply this: the Lord is in control. He knows the end from the beginning. He has given us adequate instruction that, if followed, will see us safely through any crisis. His purposes will be fulfilled, and someday we will understand the eternal reasons for all of these events. Therefore, today we must be careful not to overreact, nor should we be caught up in extreme

preparations; but what we must do is keep the commandments of God and never lose hope!

Turn to Christ for hope and safety

But where do we find hope in the midst of such turmoil and catastrophe? Quite simply, our one hope for spiritual safety during these turbulent times is to turn our minds and our hearts to Jesus Christ. The prophet Mormon taught:

“Ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.

“Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope” (Moroni 7:41–42).

Faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ, is absolutely essential for us to maintain a balanced perspective through times of trial and difficulty. Remember, nothing will occur in our lives that He does not understand. Alma taught, “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people” (Alma 7:11).

Please turn to Him if you are discouraged and struggling for direction in your life. Armed with the shield of faith, we can overcome many of our daily challenges and overpower our greatest weaknesses and fears, knowing that if we do our best to keep the commandments of God, come what may, we will be all right.

Of course that does not necessarily mean that we will be spared personal suffering and heartache. Righteousness has never precluded adversity. But faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—*real* faith, whole-souled and unshakable—is a power to be reckoned with in the universe. It can be a causative force

through which miracles are wrought. Or it can be a source of inner strength through which we find peace, comfort, and the courage to cope.

Hope grows out of faith

As we put our faith and trust to work, hope is born. Hope grows out of faith and gives meaning and purpose to all that we do. It can even give us the peaceful assurance we need to live happily in a world that is ripe with iniquity, calamity, and injustice.

As the end of the Savior’s mortal ministry drew near, He offered this reassuring hope to His beloved disciples: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

Hope is a precious principle by which to live. However, some among us may have lost all hope because of sin and transgression. A person can become so deeply immersed in the ways of the world that he sees no way out and loses all hope. My plea to all who have fallen into this trap of the adversary is to never give up! Regardless of how desperate things may seem or how desperate they may yet become, please believe me, you can always have hope. Always.

Repentance brings a father peace

Recently I had the privilege of performing the temple sealing ordinances for a wonderful family. It was a beautiful occasion, as such ceremonies almost always are. But if you had known the father of this family several years earlier, you would have understood what a miracle was taking place in the house of the Lord that day. With his permission I quote from a letter he wrote to me:

“I was born into the Church and was taught the gospel at my mother’s

knee. Through her diligence and perseverance, she kindled a small ember of testimony that never left me even through some of the roughest times of my life. In my teen years Satan hit me hard. It was during the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time of great turmoil, and Satan was hard at work on me. I was taken with the practice of free drugs, free love, free fun, and the rest of the world be damned. Beginning with my first drink of alcohol, I began to slowly deteriorate. After alcohol, other drugs were that much easier to use. In order to take drugs, you must become a good liar. You learn to do whatever it takes to conceal your behavior from others.

"After many years of living this way, all my moral fiber seemed to be completely eroded away. I had a minimal amount of conscience and had sunk to the depths of despair and depression. I watched friends die from drugs and suicide. As time passed, my friends and I were exposed to the criminal justice system. In fact, many of my former friends are still in prison. Had it not been for the small flicker of testimony instilled in me by my mother when I was a child, to know that Heavenly Father could still love me, I have reservations as to whether I would even be writing this letter today."

Some parents might have given up hope on this prodigal son, but not this man's mother. She continued to believe that he would find his way back to the teachings of his childhood and once again place his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. With the loving support of his family and friends, that is exactly what he did. Let me read again from his letter:

"If there is one thing I have learned, it is that no matter how lost you feel, no matter how low you may have sunk, there can be forgiveness and peace. I learned that the further one drifts from the Lord, the harder it is to return to Him and His teachings. But once I opened my heart and called

out in prayer to Heavenly Father to help me in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, I came to know the power of repentance and the blessings of obedience to God's commandments."

Brothers and sisters, I wish all of you could have been with us in the temple that day to feel the joy of hope fulfilled. I am sure you would have sensed, as I did, the rekindled love for God and the sublime happiness that filled the heart of my friend's mother as her four sons, their companions, and other family members surrounded her in the sealing room.

Faith, hope, and charity

The Apostle Paul taught that three divine principles form a foundation upon which we can build the structure of our lives. They are faith, hope, and charity. (See 1 Corinthians 13:13.) Together they give us a base of support like the legs of a three-legged stool. Each principle is significant within itself, but each also plays an important supporting role. Each is incomplete without the others. Hope helps faith develop. Likewise, true faith gives birth to hope. When we begin to lose hope, we are faltering also in our measure of faith. The principles of faith and hope working together must be accompanied by charity, which is the greatest of all. According to Mormon, "charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever" (Moroni 7:47). It is the perfect manifestation of our faith and hope.

Working together, these three eternal principles will help give us the broad eternal perspective we need to face life's toughest challenges, including the prophesied ordeals of the last days. Real faith fosters hope for the future; it allows us to look beyond ourselves and our present cares. Fortified by hope, we are moved to demonstrate the pure love of Christ through daily acts of obedience and Christian service.

The peace of God

I assure you, my brothers and sisters, that our Heavenly Father is aware of us individually and collectively. He understands the spiritual, physical, and emotional difficulties we face in the world today. In fact, they are all part of His plan for our eternal growth and development. And His promise to us is sure: "He that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome" (D&C 63:20).

The Savior promised that "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. . . . This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord" (3 Nephi 22:17).

May we all find the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phi-

liippians 4:7), which can be found only through charity, faith, and hope.

May I leave you my testimony that I know that the Lord Jesus Christ lives. He has restored His Church to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Our assurance of eternal life rests in our love of God and the keeping of His commandments. This knowledge gives me hope and faith. May it be so with each of you, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Bonfires of testimony

Many years ago, large packs of wolves roamed the countryside in Ukraine, making travel in that part of the world very dangerous. These wolf packs were fearless. They were not intimidated by people or by any of the weapons available at that time. The only thing that seemed to frighten them was fire. Consequently, travelers who found themselves away from cities developed the common practice of building a large bonfire and keeping it burning through the night. As long as the fire burned brightly, the wolves stayed away. But if it were allowed to burn out and die, the wolves would move in for an attack. Travelers understood that building and maintaining a roaring bonfire was not just a matter of convenience or comfort; it was a matter of survival. (See Mary Pratt Parrish, "Guardians of the Covenant," *Ensign*, May 1972, p. 25.)

We do not have to protect ourselves from wolf packs as we travel the

road of life today, but, in a spiritual sense, we do face the devious wolves of Satan in the forms of temptation, evil, and sin. We live in dangerous times when these ravenous wolves roam the spiritual countryside in search of those who may be weak in faith or feeble in their conviction. In his first epistle, Peter described our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion [that] walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith that "enemies prowl around thee like wolves for the blood of the lamb" (D&C 122:6). We are all vulnerable to attack. However, we can fortify ourselves with the protection provided by a burning testimony that, like a bonfire, has been built adequately and maintained carefully.

Unfortunately, some in the Church may believe sincerely that their testimony is a raging bonfire when it really is little more than the faint flickering of a candle. Their faithfulness has more

to do with habit than holiness, and their pursuit of personal righteousness almost always takes a back seat to their pursuit of personal interests and pleasure. With such a feeble light of testimony for protection, these travelers on life's highways are easy prey for the wolves of the adversary.

Strengthening Peter's testimony

The Savior understood that many of His followers would struggle under the rigors of true discipleship; consequently, He taught them how to build burning testimonies. The night before His crucifixion, Jesus shared the feast of the Passover with His twelve beloved Apostles, most of whom had been with Him throughout His ministry. At one point during this sacred evening, the Lord looked upon Peter, His senior Apostle and loyal friend. Knowing what would be required of Peter after the Ascension, the Lord said:

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and *when thou art converted*, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32; italics added).

Imagine for a moment that you are Peter. Three years ago a holy stranger invited you to set aside your fishing boat and nets, your means of support for yourself and your family, and then asked you to follow Him. You did so without hesitation, and for three years you have continued to follow and to love and support and sustain Him. You have seen Him confound the wise, comfort the weary and the afflicted, heal the sick, and raise the dead to life. You have seen Him conquer evil spirits, calm the troubled seas, and, for a few minutes at least, you even walked on the water toward Him. You were at His side when Moses and Elias appeared to Him; you saw Him transfigured before your very eyes. You have

committed your entire life to Him. And now He questions you by instructing you to strengthen your brethren "when thou art converted."

Peter was surprised. He assured the Lord, "I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (Luke 22:33). But Jesus knew and understood. He was not condemning Peter for lack of conviction; Peter demonstrated his conviction during the Lord's arrest. Rather, the Savior was telling Peter what he needed to do when his testimony became more secure.

Many testimonies are weak

As He knew Peter, the Lord understands you and me when our testimonies may not be the brightly burning bonfire you may think they are or want them to be. Perhaps in some cases that testimony is constructed unwisely, built on a social foundation of programs and personalities instead of the sure rock of personal revelation. Or perhaps you have allowed your testimony to flicker gradually through the years of disuse and spiritual complacency.

Regardless of the reason your testimony may be growing dim, the Savior lovingly urges you to come unto Him and become strengthened in Him. Said He to Moroni: "If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; . . . for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

Some people are weak in their faith and testimonies but are not even aware of how precarious their situation is. Many of them likely would be offended at the suggestion. They raise their right hand to sustain Church leaders and then murmur and complain when a decision does not square with their way of thinking. They claim to be obedient to God's commandments but do not feel at all uncomfort-

able about purchasing food at the store on Sunday and then asking the Lord to bless it. Some say they would give their lives for the Lord, yet they refuse to serve in the nursery.

The Savior spoke very explicitly about people who "draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me" (Isaiah 29:13). His words were:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Suggestions to fortify testimonies

None would want to hear the Lord speak such disappointing words of you. That is why you need to do everything in your power to be absolutely certain that your spiritual bonfire of testimony is burning brightly enough to keep the wolves of darkness away. You can always use more dry kindling. As the Apostle Paul taught, each of us has "come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). None of us has progressed so far in this life that we do not need to continually fortify our testimonies.

I offer three suggestions that will fan the flame of personal testimony as a protection against the wolves of evil that are prowling all around us to threaten our spiritual security.

Build testimony on faith in Christ

First, make sure your testimony is built upon a solid foundation of faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Even though we enjoy the fellowship of the Saints and

have strong feelings about the inspired programs of the Church, we must remember that we have only one sure anchor for our souls. It is stated in the words of the prophet Helaman when he taught his sons:

"And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall" (Helaman 5:12).

Perhaps you are one of the members of the Church whose first contact with the gospel came through the beautiful music of the Tabernacle Choir. Maybe your life was blessed by the Church welfare program when you followed prophetic counsel to store food and other necessities. These are marvelous, inspired aspects of the Church that God has provided to help bring his children to Christ. However, they are implements and not ends in themselves. The ultimate focus of our devotion must properly be our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

We often hear of members who have separated themselves from the Church because some leader, teacher, or member has said or done something to offend them. Others have had their faith shaken when the Brethren have taken a stand with which they disagree. In such cases I wonder about the faith of those people and whether it was grounded securely in a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ or merely based on their own ideas and social perceptions of what the Church and its members should be.

Scripture teaches us: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean

not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). In His moving prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, the Savior taught this profound truth: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Building a testimony on the foundation of a sincere, personal relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and on our faith in them should be our highest priority.

Build testimony through repentance

Anchored with that faith, we are ready for my second suggestion—another layer of kindling on the bonfire of testimony. It is humble, sincere repentance. Few things extinguish the fervor of the Holy Spirit in the heart of any individual more quickly than does sin. It dulls the spiritual senses, diminishes confidence and personal security, and separates the sinner from the Savior. One who carries the burden of unrepented sin is more likely to rationalize additional disobedience. The more sin is rationalized, the greater the possibility of destruction by Satan's wolves.

Few would argue the potential spiritual risk of major sins like murder or marital infidelity. But what about the person who uses an employer's time to complete personal projects, the person who sneaks into a pornographic movie, the student who cheats at school, the person who criticizes others unfairly, or the parent who thinks family home evening is a good idea—for someone else?

The simple fact is this: anything that does not draw us closer to God takes us away from Him. We have no middle ground, no foggy gray area where we can sin a little without suffering spiritual decline. That is why we must repent and come to Christ daily on submissive knees so that we can

prevent our bonfires of testimony from being snuffed out by sin.

Follow the Savior's example

My third suggestion is that we follow the example of the Savior. He set the pattern.

In any pursuit and under any condition, we can ask ourselves what Jesus would do and then determine our own course accordingly. For example, what sort of home teacher would the Savior be? Would He occasionally miss visiting families? Would He visit them without a message? Or would He minister to His families like the Good Shepherd that He is, with constant watch care and loving kindness? Deep in our hearts we know what kind of home teacher Jesus would be, just as we know what kind of bishop, teacher, Primary leader, clerk, or youth adviser He would be. Even though we could never in this life measure up completely to His standard of excellence, our attempt to do so will lead us to do far better than otherwise.

We can apply the same principle to other pursuits in the same way. What sort of parent would Jesus be? What sort of neighbor, employer, employee, student, or friend? If we live our lives to conform as nearly as possible to the pattern the Savior has set, our testimonies will be fortified continually and our spiritual bonfires will never be reduced to embers.

God will strengthen and uphold us

We live in perilous times. The influence of Satan often appears to be unchecked and overwhelming. Remember the promise that God has given to those who build and maintain brightly burning bonfires of testimony to counter the wolves that threaten us. This is His promise: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee;

yea, I will . . . uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

The strength of the Church lies in the depth and vitality of the personal testimonies of its members. Firm, secure testimonies will be the difference between faithfulness and disaffection.

I bear testimony that in order for us to enjoy a happy, rewarding, and spiritual life, we must make sure that our testimonies are built upon the foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, humble and sincere repentance, and following the example of the Savior.

I know that our Heavenly Father lives and loves each of His children. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. Christ's atonement provides for all of us immortality and the possibility of eternal life, the kind of life that God lives, if we will repent of our sins and will be true and faithful in keeping the commandments. Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. Through him the Lord restored the gospel of Jesus Christ in these the latter days. President Ezra Taft Benson is our prophet today. I testify of these divine truths in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the family choir from the Jordan Utah South and Riverton Utah regions for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon. The choir will now sing in closing "Beautiful Savior," and following the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder George R. Hill III, who was released this afternoon as a member of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder George R. Hill III offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 3, 1992. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. Jerold Ottley and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Richard L. Elliott was at the organ.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood session. President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching these proceedings in his apartment, sends his love and best wishes to all who are participating. He has asked that I conduct these services.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU

Marriott Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

Elders Marvin J. Ashton and Gene R. Cook and Bishop Robert D. Hales are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Monte J. Brough and Richard P. Lindsay are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon Elders Marion D. Hanks and Robert L. Backman were released as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and given emeritus status. Elders Charles Didier and L. Aldin Porter were sustained as members of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Bishops Henry B. Eyring and Glenn L. Pace were released as first and second counselors in the Presiding Bishopric, and both were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Bishop Eyring also becomes the Church Commissioner of Education. Bishops H. David Burton and Richard C. Edgley were sustained as first and second counselors to Bishop Hales in the Presiding Bishopric.

Elders George R. Hill III, John R. Lasater, Douglas J. Martin, Glen L. Rudd, Douglas H. Smith, and Lynn A. Sorensen were released from their service as Seventies.

Elders Carlos H. Amado, Benjamin B. Banks, Spencer J. Condie, and Robert K. Dellenbach were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elders Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Merrill J. Bateman, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, John B. Dickson, John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, V. Dallas Merrell, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, and Lowell D. Wood were sustained as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

Elders Merlin R. Lybbert, Clinton L. Cutler, and Ronald E. Poelman

were sustained to succeed Hugh W. Pinnock, Hartman Rector, Jr., and Clinton L. Cutler as the General Presidency of the Sunday School. Elders Stephen D. Nadauld and L. Lionel Kendrick were sustained to succeed Robert K. Dellenbach and Stephen D. Nadauld as counselors in the Young Men General Presidency.

Announcement was also made this afternoon of the design to construct temples in Hong Kong, to serve the needs of some of our people in that part of the world; in Hartford, Connecticut, to serve the needs of the people in New York and Boston and the New England area; and, at the proper time, in Utah County, to relieve the pressure on the Provo Temple, which is operating far beyond its designed capacity.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Robert Bowden, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered," following which Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered."

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour," and Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then speak to us.

The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Bible stories

My dear brethren, this is an important occasion, when holders of the holy priesthood all over the world gather for instruction and inspiration.

Like many of the older men in this gathering, I have sons and grandsons listening in various locations. We want this meeting to be valuable and interesting to the young men of the priesthood. I am directing my talk primarily to them.

When I was a boy, I spent most of my evenings reading books. One of my favorites was *Hurlbut's Story of the Bible*. Published by a Protestant minister to help teach Bible truths to young people, this book tells 168 stories from the Bible.

I loved these stories and read them many times. I will share some of my favorites and comment on their teachings and their impact on my life.

Abraham and Isaac

I begin with a story I thought I understood as a boy but did not begin to understand until later.

The Lord spoke to Abraham and told him to take his son Isaac and go to the top of a mountain in the land of Moriah "and offer him there for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:2).

The first time I read this story I didn't know what a burnt offering was. But I lived on a farm with animals and mountains nearby, so I could easily understand the rest of the story.

Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled one of his animals, and they started out. I thought that Isaac must have felt privileged to be with his father on such a trip.

On the third day, Abraham and Isaac climbed the mountain to worship. Like most young men, Isaac was curious. He saw the fire and the wood and

the knife they carried, "but," he asked his father, "where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Genesis 22:7). I did not realize until I had sons of my own how much pain Abraham must have felt when he answered simply, "My son, God will provide" (22:8).

When they came to the prescribed place, Abraham built an altar and laid wood upon it. Then, the Bible says, "Abraham . . . bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood" (Genesis 22:9). What did Isaac think when Abraham did such a strange thing? The Bible mentions no struggle or objection. Isaac's silence can be explained only in terms of his trust in and obedience to his father.

And then the Bible says, "Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son" (Genesis 22:10).

As you know, Abraham had passed his test, and the Lord saved young Isaac. "Lay not thine hand upon the lad," an angel commanded Abraham (Genesis 22:12). A ram whose horns were caught in a thicket became the offering, instead of Isaac.

As a young man, I saw mostly the adventure in that story, though I was surely impressed with Isaac's obedience. When I was older, I learned that the experience of Abraham and Isaac was what the scriptures call a *type*, which is a likeness or reminder of something else. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob said that the command for Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac was "a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son" (Jacob 4:5).

This story also shows the goodness of God in protecting Isaac and in providing a substitute so he would not have to die. Because of our sins and our mortality, we, like Isaac, are condemned to death. When all other hope is gone, our Father in Heaven provides the Lamb of God, and we are saved by his sacrifice.

The Apostle Paul taught that the scriptures are “given by inspiration of God” and are “profitable . . . for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). We obtain instruction in righteousness from the experiences recorded in the scriptures. They provide what we might call case studies of the results of keeping or breaking the commandments of God.

Joseph's integrity

One example of special importance to young people involved young Joseph, who was sold into Egypt. Though only a slave, Joseph's abilities were so impressive to his master that he was put in charge of all that his master had in the house and in the field (see Genesis 39:4–6). Then, in that position of prominence and power, Joseph met a test.

His master's wife tempted him to commit adultery with her. Joseph rejected her advances, telling her he would not betray the trust of her husband or the even greater trust he would violate by sinning against God in doing what Joseph called “this great wickedness” (Genesis 39:9). He rejected her again and again. Then one day, when no one else was in the house, she seized hold of his clothing. In a marvelously vivid description, the scripture says, “And he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out” (39:12).

What a persuasive instruction in righteousness! The same teaching was given in this modern revelation: “And go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (D&C 38:42). Those words command all of us to follow the example of Joseph.

The Lord's protection of Joseph

A common element in many of my best-loved Bible stories was the way the Lord protected his righteous and

faithful sons. When I was young, that was my favorite part of the story of Joseph.

We all remember how the jealous older sons of Jacob plotted to kill their favored younger brother. After seizing Joseph and throwing him into a pit, they decided to sell him into slavery instead. Even as they told their father that Joseph had been killed by wild beasts, the traders who had purchased him on the plains of Canaan were leading him down into Egypt and slavery. (See Genesis 37.)

In Egypt, Joseph was unjustly sent to prison. But even there he excelled, and the Lord blessed him. In time he came forth to interpret Pharaoh's dream, and he was made ruler of all Egypt. In that powerful position he became the instrument to save his people from famine and to love and forgive the brothers who had wronged him. (See Genesis 40–45.)

As a young boy, I was thrilled with Joseph's adventures and impressed with how the Lord had rescued him from the perils of murder, slavery, and prison. The first time I read the Book of Mormon, I found the statement that “Joseph . . . who was sold into Egypt . . . was preserved by the hand of the Lord” (1 Nephi 5:14). In later readings in the scriptures, I found that this kind of protection is available to all. For example, the Bible states that “the Lord preserveth the faithful” (Psalm 31:23) and that God “is a shield unto them that put their trust in him” (Proverbs 30:5).

David's faith and courage

Another favorite example of God's protecting care is the shepherd boy David. David had a firm faith in the God of Israel, and that faith gave him great courage.

When the armies of the Philistines were gathered to battle against the Israelites, the mighty Goliath came for-

ward and hurled his challenge to individual combat. King Saul and all Israel "were dismayed, and greatly afraid" (1 Samuel 17:11). Day after day he renewed his challenge, but no one would face him.

When young David came to the camp of Israel to deliver provisions, he heard Goliath's roar. In surprise David asked, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26). David asked if he could fight the man. The king refused, saying, "Thou art but a youth" (17:33). David replied with courage and faith: "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion . . . will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (17:37).

As David went onto the field of battle, Goliath mocked him for his youth, cursed him by his gods, and shouted that he would feed his flesh to the birds and beasts of the field (see 1 Samuel 17:42-44).

David's reply is one of the great expressions of faith and courage in all our literature. It thrilled me as a boy, and it still thrills me.

"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

"This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

"And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:45-47).

You all know what happened next. David stunned the Philistine with a sling-stone and cut off his head with his

own sword. Frightened by the fall of their champion, the Philistines fled. Shouting in triumph, the armies of Israel pursued them and won a great victory.

Countless young people have been inspired by this marvelous instruction in righteousness. At times all of us must stand against those who mock and revile. Some of us, sometime, will face some earthly power as mighty as Goliath. When that happens, we should emulate the courage of David, who was mighty because he had faith and he went forth in a righteous cause in the name of the Lord of Hosts.

The Lord shields the faithful

Our missionaries also seem weak and defenseless, powerless against the armaments of the adversary and those who serve him. But the Lord has promised them that he "will be their shield" (D&C 35:14), and that promise is fulfilled every day in many places around the world.

The shield the Lord gives to the faithful also protects us against our own harmful impulses. The revelation that commands modern Saints to refrain from alcohol, tobacco, hot drinks, and other harmful things promises the faithful that "the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:21).

The Lord protects Elisha

Another story of protection involved a prophet and his young servant. Because Elisha had helped the kingdom of Israel repel the Syrians, they sent a great army with horses and chariots to capture the prophet. When Elisha's young servant saw the armies surrounding their city, he cried out in fear, but Elisha reassured him:

"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

"And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:16-17).

The Lord intervened to confuse and blind the Syrians, and they were taken prisoners by the armies of Israel.

When I read this wonderful story as a boy, I always identified with the young servant of Elisha. I thought, If I am ever surrounded by the forces of evil while I am in the Lord's service, I hope the Lord will open my eyes and give me faith to understand that when we are in the work of the Lord, those who are with us are always more powerful than those who oppose us.

God's protection is a reality

Bible stories such as these do not mean that the servants of God are delivered from all hardship or that they are always saved from death. Some believers lose their lives in persecutions, and some suffer great hardships as a result of their faith. But the protection promised to the faithful servants of God is a reality today as it was in Bible times.

All over the world, faithful Latter-day Saints are protected from the powers of the evil one and his servants until they have finished their missions in mortality. For some the mortal mission is brief, as with some valiant young men who have lost their lives in missionary service. But for most of us the mortal journey is long, and we continue our course with the protection of guardian angels.

Protection from a robber in Chicago

During my life I have had many experiences of being guided in what I should do and in being protected from

injury and also from evil. The Lord's protecting care has shielded me from the evil acts of others and has also protected me from surrendering to my own worst impulses. I enjoyed that protection one warm summer night on the streets of Chicago. I have never shared this experience in public. I do so now because it is a persuasive illustration of my subject.

My wife, June, had attended a ward officers' meeting. When I came to drive her home, she was accompanied by a sister we would take home on our way. She lived in the nearby Woodlawn area, which was the territory of a gang called the Blackstone Rangers.

I parked at the curb outside this sister's apartment house and accompanied her into the lobby and up the stairs to her door. June remained in the car on 61st Street. She locked all of the doors, and I left the keys in the ignition in case she needed to drive away. We had lived on the south side of Chicago for quite a few years and were accustomed to such precautions.

Back in the lobby, and before stepping out into the street, I looked carefully in each direction. By the light of a nearby streetlight, I could see that the street was deserted except for three young men walking by. I waited until they were out of sight and then walked quickly toward our car.

As I came to the driver's side and paused for June to unlock the door, I saw one of these young men running back toward me. He had something in his right hand, and I knew what it would be. There was no time to get into the car and drive away before he came within range.

Fortunately, as June leaned across to open the door, she glanced through the back window and saw this fellow coming around the end of the car with a gun in his hand. Wisely, she did not unlock the door. For the next two or three minutes, which seemed like an

eternity, she was a horrified spectator to an event happening at her eye level, just outside the driver's window.

The young man pushed the gun against my stomach and said, "Give me your money." I took the wallet out of my pocket and showed him it was empty. I wasn't even wearing a watch I could offer him because my watchband had broken earlier that day. I offered him some coins I had in my pocket, but he growled a rejection.

"Give me your car keys," he demanded. "They are in the car," I told him. "Tell her to open the car," he replied. For a moment I considered the new possibilities that would present, and then refused. He was furious. He jabbed me in the stomach with his gun and said, "Do it, or I'll kill you."

Although this event happened twenty-two years ago, I remember it as clearly as if it were yesterday. I read somewhere that nothing concentrates the mind as wonderfully as having someone stand in front of you with a deadly weapon and tell you he intends to kill you.

When I refused, the young robber repeated his demands, this time emphasizing them with an angrier tone and more motion with his gun. I remember thinking that he probably wouldn't shoot me on purpose, but if he wasn't careful in the way he kept jabbing that gun into my stomach, he might shoot me by mistake. His gun looked like a cheap one, and I was nervous about its firing mechanism.

"Give me your money." "I don't have any." "Give me your car keys." "They're in the car." "Tell her to open the car." "I won't do it." "I'll kill you if you don't." "I won't do it."

Inside the car June couldn't hear the conversation, but she could see the action with the gun. She agonized over what she should do. Should she unlock the door? Should she honk the horn? Should she drive away? Everything she considered seemed to have the possi-

bility of making matters worse, so she just waited and prayed. Then a peaceful feeling came over her. She felt it would be all right.

Then for the first time I saw the possibility of help. From behind the robber, a city bus approached. It stopped about twenty feet away. A passenger stepped off and scurried away. The driver looked directly at me, but I could see that he was not going to offer any assistance.

While this was happening behind the young robber, out of his view, he became nervous and distracted. His gun wavered from my stomach until its barrel pointed slightly to my left. My arm was already partly raised, and with a quick motion I could seize the gun and struggle with him without the likelihood of being shot. I was taller and heavier than this young man and at that time of my life was somewhat athletic. I had no doubt that I could prevail in a quick wrestling match if I could get his gun out of the contest.

Just as I was about to make my move, I had a unique experience. I did not see anything or hear anything, but I *knew* something. I knew what would happen if I grabbed that gun. We would struggle, and I would turn the gun into that young man's chest. It would fire, and he would die. I also understood that I must not have the blood of that young man on my conscience for the rest of my life.

I relaxed, and as the bus pulled away I followed an impulse to put my right hand on his shoulder and give him a lecture. June and I had some teenage children at that time, and giving lectures came naturally.

"Look here," I said. "This isn't right. What you're doing just isn't right. The next car might be a policeman, and you could get killed or sent to jail for this."

With the gun back in my stomach, the young robber replied to my lecture by going through his demands for the third time. But this time his voice was

subdued. When he offered the final threat to kill me, he didn't sound persuasive. When I refused again, he hesitated for a moment and then stuck the gun in his pocket and ran away. June unlocked the door, and we drove off, uttering a prayer of thanks. We had experienced the kind of miraculous protection illustrated in the Bible stories I had read as a boy.

I have often pondered the significance of that event in relation to the responsibilities that came later in my life. Less than a year after that August night, I was chosen as president of Brigham Young University. Almost fourteen years after that experience, I received my present calling.

The righteous need not fear

I am grateful that the Lord gave me the vision and strength to refrain from trusting in the arm of flesh and to put my trust in the protecting care of our Heavenly Father. I am grateful for the Book of Mormon promise to us of

the last days that "the righteous need not fear," for the Lord "will preserve the righteous by his power" (1 Nephi 22:17). I am grateful for the protection promised to those who have kept their covenants and qualified for the blessings promised in sacred places.

These and all promises to the faithful children of God are made by the voice and power of the Lord God of Israel. I testify of that God, our Savior Jesus Christ, whose resurrection and atonement have assured immortality and provided the opportunity and direction toward eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just heard from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Twelve.

Elder Dean L. Larsen, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Gary J. Coleman, who was called since April conference as one of the Seventy.

Elder Dean L. Larsen

In behalf of the Presidency of the Seventy and the Quorum members, I would like to express a very warm welcome to Elders Eyring and Pace as they take their place now among the ranks of the Seventy. We also acknowledge the addition to the Seventies Quorums of the fifteen men whose names President Hinckley read to you earlier and who have been serving since mid-August. Our best wishes also to Bishop Edgley and Bishop Burton, who now take their places beside Bishop Hales in the Presiding Bishopric of the Church.

And we acknowledge our love and continuing deep respect and admiration for those men whose tenure as Seventies has concluded officially at this general conference.

The Lord will prosper the righteous

During the conference of the Church in Fayette, New York, in 1831, the Lord gave a revelation through Joseph Smith that contains a remarkable promise:

"I have made the earth rich," the Lord declared, "and behold it is my footstool, wherefore, again I will stand upon it.

"And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh;

"And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.

"And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of

your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away" (D&C 38:17–20).

The Lord has demonstrated throughout the generations that when the inhabitants of the earth remember him and are obedient to his direction, he will bless them not only with spiritual blessings but with material abundance as well.

Prosperity of Lehi's people

The scriptures contain many evidences of the Lord's willingness to prosper his people with the riches of the earth when they demonstrate that they will use this abundance prudently, with humility and charity, always acknowledging the source of their blessings.

When the people of Lehi arrived in the Americas from the Old World, they felt a great dependence upon the Lord as they established their homes and worked to provide for themselves. Nephi makes this entry in his record:

"And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things. . . .

"And the Lord was with us; and we did prosper exceedingly; for we did sow seed, and we did reap again in abundance. And we began to raise flocks, and herds, and animals of every kind. . . .

"And it came to pass that we began to prosper exceedingly, and to multiply in the land" (2 Nephi 5:10–11, 13).

Prosperity of Alma's people

This kind of material prosperity has always been a fragile thing. It has proved to be one of the greatest tests with which a people can be confronted. The essential human qualities and other factors that generate abundance

have always been difficult to sustain. We see this reflected in an episode that is described in the first chapter of Alma in the Book of Mormon.

As I read several of the verses from this account, make particular note of the elements that contribute to the material successes of the people and then the factors that lead to their subsequent misfortunes.

"And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength.

"And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely.

"And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace. . . .

"And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceedingly rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need—an abundance of flocks and herds, and fatlings of every kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and abundance of silk and fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely cloth.

"And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and

free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.

"And thus they did prosper" (Alma 1:26-31).

Obedience brings prosperity

It has always been so. When the lives of the people are in harmony with the Lord's will, all of the essential factors that produce the blessings God deigns to give to his children seem to come into line. Love and harmony prevail. Even the weather, the climate, and the elements seem to respond. Peace and tranquillity endure. Industry and progress mark the lives of the people. It is as the Lord has promised:

"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

"Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

"And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

"And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid" (Leviticus 26:3-6).

Forgetting the source of blessings

Perhaps the greatest tragedies of all time have occurred when people have received the promised blessings of the Lord and then have forgotten the source of their good life. Moses cautioned the people of Israel against this natural inclination when he said:

"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes. . . .

"Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

"And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

"Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, . . .

"And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17; italics added).

Alma's people become proud

Returning to the account in Alma to which I made earlier reference, not many years passed away from the time of prosperity described in such glowing terms until the people began to take all of the credit for the good times unto themselves. We find this sad entry in Alma's record:

"And it came to pass in the eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes. . . .

"The people of the church began . . . to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another" (Alma 4:6, 8).

Cycle of prosperity in Helaman's day

The same cycle occurred in the days of Helaman. At one point Helaman describes his people in this way:

"And it came to pass that in this same year there was exceedingly great prosperity in the church, insomuch that there were thousands who did join themselves unto the church and were baptized unto repentance.

"And so great was the prosperity of the church, and so many the blessings which were poured out upon the people, that even the high priests and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure" (Helaman 3:24-25).

It was not long until the full cycle was completed, however. Within five years from the period just cited, Helaman makes this report regarding members of the Church:

"And in the fifty and first year of the reign of the judges there was peace also, save it were the pride which began to enter into the church—not into the church of God, but into the hearts of the people who professed to belong to the church of God—

"And they were lifted up in pride, even to the persecution of many of their brethren" (Helaman 3:33-34).

These abrupt changes in the condition of the people led Helaman to lament:

"And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

"Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; . . . and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God" (Helaman 12:1-2).

Assess our own faith and obedience

It is one thing to look back upon the events of history. It is another to regard our own time. We have the Lord's assurance that he will bless and

prosper his people if they will keep his commandments and remember to look to him as the source of their blessings.

On the other hand, we must not forget that these blessings are conditional. As King Limhi warned his people, "For behold, the Lord hath said: I will not succor my people in the day of their transgression; but I will hedge up their ways that they prosper not; and their doings shall be as a stumbling block before them" (Mosiah 7:29).

As bearers of the priesthood to whom the Lord has entrusted the leadership for his work, we must look carefully at our own lives. And we must assess honestly the level of faith and obedience of our people. Too many of the indicators are not encouraging. Only a small percentage of the Church members worldwide are tithe payers today. For many who live in conditions of material poverty, there may be no other way to escape their impoverishment than to give obedience to this law. As I visit among the stakes of the Church, I find it is not uncommon to discover that fewer than 50 percent of the households are contributing to the fast offerings of the Church, and the trends are not improving.

We have reached a point where more of our adult men are becoming prospective elders than are receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood. About half of the endowed members of the Church hold current temple recommends. Reports of other violations of the Lord's law are a source of concern.

These indicators may seem to carry a direful tone, but as Enos declared in the Book of Mormon, sometimes it is necessary to resort to "exceedingly great plainness of speech" (Enos 1:23).

As the world continues to ripen in iniquity, our lives of necessity must become increasingly different from the world and its standard. It will be a great challenge for us. We must be better than we have ever been before. As we succeed, we have the sure promise

of the Lord that he will prosper us in every way necessary for our well-being. That is my faith and my testimony. But it is a conditional promise. May we

qualify for its fulfillment in our lives and in our time is my earnest prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Gary J. Coleman

Sure anchors and solid foundations

My brothers in the gospel, I come before you this night to express the feelings of my heart. I want you young men to know that there are sure anchors for our life in these troubled times. There are rock-solid foundations upon which we can build to guide us through the devastating storms of the latter days. Today we can enjoy the fulness of the gospel with careful attention to basic principles and practices. Living these concepts will aid our joyful completion of the course that leads to eternal life.

Conversion

While a young man, I walked paths of life that were different from those taught in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I lived by a mingling of the doctrines and commandments of men, having a form of godliness but with a lack of God-given truths and the power thereof. Religion was a vital part of my life as a youth. A religious home was at the core of our family life. Yet something was missing; something fundamental about the purpose of life was clouded and uncertain. While in my young adult years I was fortunate enough to become acquainted with kind Latter-day Saints who opened new gospel doors to me.

The doctrines of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ have become my path to eternal life and the fulness of joy here in mortality. Few things in life have become more dear to me than a knowledge of the reality of the Godhead. We are the literal spirit offspring

of God the Father. The life and mission of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, affects my life daily. The influence of the Holy Ghost from day to day is a great comfort.

I came into this Church because God has revealed Himself to latter-day prophets and they have testified of His reality. Upon asking God if the things of this gospel are true, I have received a witness more powerful than sight, more soul-assuring than words. The sweet witness by the power of the Holy Ghost that the truths of the restored gospel are upon the earth today has come to me.

Jesus is our only sure foundation

It has been my profound blessing to become a convert to this Church and to know without a doubt of the divinity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This resurrected, perfected being stands at the head of this Church. It is He upon whom we must build. It is He who is the chief cornerstone of our foundation. He is the rock of our salvation, the rock upon which not only the Church will be built, but our personal testimonies as well. No man, yea, no other name under heaven will suffice for our foundation. The prophet Helaman spoke of this sacred foundation most powerfully when he said:

"And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon

you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless woe, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall" (Helaman 5:12).

Not only must we build upon the sure foundation of Jesus Christ, but the prophet Jacob identified Him as the "safe foundation"! This stone, he said, shall be "the great, and the last, and the only sure foundation" (Jacob 4:15-16).

I agree with all the conviction of my being that Jacob's testimony is true. When the Apostle Peter boldly declared of Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:16-17). Christ will be revealed to us through the same process that God used with Peter. Christ is always the rock upon which each of us must build, even the rock of revelation.

Latter-day prophets lead us

I have come into this Church because latter-day prophets have been called by God to do His work. I remember the year, the month, the day, and even the very moment when my heart encompassed the testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. He did the work of a prophet, and he was an instrument in the hands of God to make His will known on this earth again.

God continues to raise up latter-day prophets, and I rejoice in the principle of continuous revelation for our day. I welcome the opportunity to sit at the feet of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—men whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators. Of these men, the Lord himself has said in our day, "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the

heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

As members of this Church we are, as the Apostle Paul testified, "No more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Blessings of the Restoration

I rejoice exceedingly at the restoration of the books of scripture for our use and training today. Of course the Book of Mormon is true! It talks of Christ; it speaks of those who rejoice in Christ; it is full of preachings of Christ; it prophesies of Christ and testifies to us and our children as to the source of our remission of sins. Of course it is another testament of Jesus Christ! Of course God speaks to men in these latter days as He did in former days! It is a certainty that revelation is in constant operation in this Church!

The authority of God upon this earth resides in the authorized priesthood holders of this Church. Without question, therefore, all the ordinances of salvation and eternal life are in this Church. That which is bound by true priesthood authority on earth is also bound in heaven.

Yes, the Restoration has brought to earth again the true doctrines and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Restoration affects every fiber of our being. It consumes every part of our mortal journey. It keeps us focused on which path we should walk upon in our daily search for meaning to life. There truly is a strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life by following the Savior and the living prophets. *We must accept them as the inspired trainers for our race of life.*

Press forward in Christ

"Wherefore," the prophet Nephi says, "ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

"And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God" (2 Nephi 31:20-21).

Part of our mortal training is to walk by faith, repent of our sins, and call upon the Lord in daily prayer. We rejoice in the moments when promptings by the Holy Ghost are kindly given, and we are urged along the proper path of life. But each of us faces many difficult times here in mortality. All sorts of voices are screaming at us from the stadiums of public opinion. Our course will never be the popular way of the world. There are obstacles strewn in our path upon which we may sprain an ankle or stub a toe. But we must keep going. We move on in the strength of the Lord, each accountable for our own performance at the end of

our mortal race. We must be able to declare with Paul:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

I am so grateful for my eternal companion and for the second generation of Latter-day Saints in our family who have also taken up the cause of Christ. May God help all of us to partake of the fulness of the restoration of this sacred gospel, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard Elders Dean L. Larsen and Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

We shall all stand now and sing two verses of "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Elder John Baird Dickson, a new member of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder John B. Dickson

My dear brethren of the priesthood, it is sincerely a great pleasure to stand before you this evening and share with you the feelings and gratitude that I have to know that God lives and that he loves us, that Jesus Christ is our Elder Brother and Savior, and that there is a prophet on the earth who can authoritatively say, "Thus saith the Lord." I treat with great reverence and humility the fact that the Lord has called me to serve as a Seventy and to witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ, and I will do

my very best to move the work ahead wherever I am assigned to labor.

I would like to speak to you about the importance of service in the kingdom of God and the importance of full-time missionary service in the lives of our young men and older couples.

Faith to overcome bone cancer and serve a mission

Without appearing to be self-serving, I would like to tell you young men

of the Aaronic Priesthood a little about my call to a full-time mission. The year was 1962, and a call was received from President David O. McKay to serve in the Mexican Mission. Shortly after receiving the call, I learned that I had bone cancer in my right arm and that the probability of my living many weeks was extremely low. A blessing was received from a wonderful father, wherein he blessed me with my life and that the mission call would be fulfilled and that I would have a family and be able to serve the Lord all my days.

The doctor congratulated me on being one who had great faith in the Savior but assured me that I didn't realize the seriousness of what I had. As some of you have noticed, I have only one arm as a result of that problem; but ten months after having my arm amputated, I entered the Mexican Mission full of excitement and ready to work. You see, young men, I had several years earlier committed to the Lord that I would serve a full-time mission and that I would not let anything stop me from fulfilling that call. Well, brethren, the doctor passed away twenty years ago, always amazed to see me still breathing, and he actually became quite interested in the Church.

Blessings of having only one arm

Brethren, I want you to know that having one arm for nearly thirty years has been one of the greatest blessings of my life. It hasn't been my greatest challenge, but it has been a great teacher to me, teaching me to be more patient and tolerant with others as I have had to learn to be more patient with myself. It has helped me to understand the necessity of our having challenges in life to help develop our character and stamina, helping us to become what the Lord ultimately wants us to become.

Our challenges may be physical, spiritual, economic, or emotional, but

if we will treat them as opportunities and stepping-stones in our progress, rather than barriers and stumbling blocks, our lives and growth will be wonderful. I have learned that between challenges it is very restful but that any real growth I have ever enjoyed has always come with a challenge.

"The Oyster"

There's a little poem by an unknown author that we might think about when problems come our way. It is called "The Oyster."

There once was an oyster
Whose story I'll tell,
Who found that some sand
Had worked under his shell.
Just one little grain
But it gave him a pain,
For oysters have feelings
That are very plain.
Now did he berate
This working of fate,
That left him in such a
Deplorable state?
Did he curse the government,
Call for an election,
And say that the sea
Should have some protection?
No! He said to himself
As he sat on the shelf,
"Since I cannot remove it,
I think I'll improve it."
Well, years passed by,
As years always do,
Till he came to his destiny,
Oyster stew!
But the small grain of sand
That bothered him so
Was a beautiful pearl
All richly aglow.
Now this tale has a moral,
For isn't it grand,
What an oyster can do
With a small grain of sand?
And what couldn't we do
If we'd only begin
With all of the things
That get under our skin?

Commit to serve a mission

Young men, how are you going to meet the challenges that face you and that might jeopardize an opportunity to serve? It might be vocational opportunities, a car, a girlfriend, an assorted variety of sins, or a myriad of other reasons. For the older brethren it might be a yacht, camper, fishing plans, or maybe not wanting to miss some expected weddings and births. Whatever your individual challenges might be, I would invite you this very night to get on your knees and commit to your Heavenly Father that you will not allow anything to stop you from fulfilling that wonderful opportunity to serve a full-time mission. If you haven't been called, let your bishop know of your desire to serve.

When in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew the Lord said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (25:40), he was talking about the importance of being of service to our fellowmen if we want to be worthy of his presence. What better way could there be to serve and to sacrifice than to accept a full-time mission call? At the same time, please realize that there are some handicaps and limitations that make other types of local service more practical than serving a full-time mission.

In the priesthood session of April conference, Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, "Now, my brethren, 'these are [your] days' (Helaman 7:9) in the history of the Church" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, p. 57; or *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 39). Yes, my young brethren, these are your days to be a part of 50,000, 75,000, and 100,000 missionaries serving in the army of the Lord, armed with peace, righteousness, and power.

Life isn't intended to be easy

While presiding over the Mexico City North Mission in the late seventies, we decided to open the work in an area called the Huasteca, where there was only one Latter-day Saint family in a vast area with several communities and small cities. After two years there were five hundred members of the Church in five branches and an organized district. This was done by a handful of nineteen- and twenty-year-old faithful missionaries and two wonderful couples, who gave of themselves to see that others of Heavenly Father's children might know and understand.

After the missionaries had been in the Huasteca for about three weeks, we received a phone call from one of them, and we could tell that he was slightly discouraged, not having yet received any mail, being in a hot area with high humidity, and learning about a culture that was new to all of us. After we had talked for a minute or two, I reminded him that we had talked about the fact that it wouldn't be easy. He said, "Oh, that's right, President; that's right. It wouldn't be easy. I knew it wouldn't be easy." Well, he went ahead with great enthusiasm and concluded his very successful work there and was released to return home.

A couple of months later, while he was at BYU, he and some of his former companions called Sister Dickson and me at the mission home in Mexico City at 2:30 in the morning, waking us from a very sound sleep. After a short conversation, I mentioned the fact that it was wonderful to talk with them but that it seemed a little late at night to be calling. He said, "I know, President, but you knew it wouldn't be easy."

Brethren, life is not intended to be easy, but I promise those that labor faithfully in the service of their fellowmen, and with determination handle every challenge properly and under the

influence of the Spirit, that they will be blessed with feelings of happiness which will permeate their whole souls. And these, my brethren, are blessings that mold and build us and that can never be taken away.

I leave you with my testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and my testimony of the blessings which accompany unself-

ish service and hard work that is done in his holy name, and I say it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Elder John Baird Dickson of the Seventy.

President Thomas S. Monson will now speak to us.

President Thomas S. Monson

What a glorious sight is before me tonight! Here in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, in the Assembly Hall, at the BYU Marriott Center, and gathered together in chapels scattered throughout the world is a mighty army of men—even the royal army of the Lord. We have been entrusted with the priesthood. We have been prepared for duty. We have been called to serve.

Samuel's response to the Lord's call

The experience of the boy Samuel, as he responded to the Lord's call, has ever been an inspiration to me, as it has no doubt been to each holder of the priesthood. We remember that the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. One evening as the boy slept, the Lord called him by name: "Samuel." And he answered, "Here am I." Thinking that Eli had called him, Samuel ran to him and repeated the declaration, "Here am I." He was advised to return to his sleep.

Three times the voice of the Lord came to him, with the same response. Then the Lord called a fourth time, repeating the boy's name twice: "Samuel, Samuel."

The lad's answer, as before, is a classic example for you and me. He responded:

"Speak; for thy servant heareth.

"And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which

both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle" (see 1 Samuel 3:1-11).

Young men, respond as Samuel

Most of you young men will one day receive a call to serve a mission. How I pray that your response will be as was Samuel's: "Here am I. . . . Speak; for thy servant heareth." Then will heavenly help be yours. Every missionary strives to be the missionary his mother thinks he is, the missionary his father hopes he is—even the missionary the Lord knows he can become.

I remember a missionary recommendation for one young man on which the bishop had written: "This candidate is the finest I have ever recommended. He has served as an officer in the deacons, teachers, and priests quorums of which he has been a member. He excelled scholastically and athletically in high school. I know of no finer young man. P.S. I am proud to be his father." President Spencer W. Kimball, then chairman of the Missionary Committee, mused, "I hope his parents will be content with his assigned mission. I know of no opening for him this morning in the celestial kingdom."

The temple in South Africa

Yes, sometimes expectations of those who love us are a bit beyond our capacity. Years ago, before a temple was completed in South Africa, the

Saints planning to visit a temple had to travel the long and costly route to London, England, or later to São Paulo, Brazil. When I visited South Africa, they, with all the strength of their hearts and souls, petitioned me to importune President Kimball to seek the heavenly inspiration to erect a temple in their country. I assured them this was a matter for the Lord and His prophet. They responded, "We have faith in you, Brother Monson. Please help us."

Upon returning to Salt Lake City, I discovered that a proposed temple for South Africa had already been approved and was to be announced immediately. When this occurred, I received a telegram from our members in South Africa. It read, "Thank you, Elder Monson. We knew you could do it!" You know, I believe I never did convince them that though I approved of the proposal, I did not bring it about.

Elder Jensen's decision to serve

Every call to serve is a human drama in the life of the recipient. I am certain that such has been the case with each of the Brethren who earlier today were sustained as new General Authorities. Let me share with you some marvelous lessons from the life of one of these Brethren, Jay E. Jensen, as recently reported in the *Church News* ("Spiritual Foundation Set Early in Life," 8 Aug. 1992, pp. 6, 14).

Elder Jensen speaks of turning points in his life. His spiritual awakening began when he was a small boy growing up in Mapleton, Utah. His parents held family night long before it became a Church program. He recalled that his father read to him lessons from the Book of Mormon. His mother's deep love for books also had a favorable impact on her son. However, it was when he read for himself Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision that the witness of its truth became a reality.

Upon graduation from high school, young Jay and his sweetheart, Lona, decided to get married and not wait for a call to serve a mission. "It nearly broke my father's heart," Elder Jensen related. "Mother told me that Dad just wept."

Two weeks later, and before wedding plans were finalized, Jay and Lona attended a sacrament meeting where a returned missionary reported his mission. The Spirit touched their hearts. They concluded to postpone marriage. Jay arose, went to the bishop's office, and reported for missionary service. The rest is history. Jay served in the Spanish-American Mission.

Lona moved to California for employment and served a stake mission. Upon the completion of Jay's mission, they were married in the Manti Temple. Elder Jensen's father lived long enough to see his son serve an honorable mission and marry in the temple. Sister Jensen has often said that sending her husband-to-be on a mission was the hardest thing she ever did, but that it was the most rewarding. "I would never do it differently. We could never have been as happy otherwise."

Today, Jay and Lona serve in Guatemala. He is a member of the Central America Area Presidency.

Reflecting on these turning points in the lives of Jay and Lona Jensen, we recall the observation, "The door of history turns on small hinges," and so do people's lives.

Temple work for Confederate soldiers

Fathers, grandfathers, are we reading to our sons and grandsons the word of the Lord? Returned missionaries, do your messages and your lives inspire others to stand up and serve? Brethren, are we sufficiently in tune with the Spirit that when the Lord calls, we can hear, as did Samuel, and declare, "Here am I"? Do we have the fortitude

and the faith, whatever our callings, to serve with unflinching courage and unshakable resolve? When we do, the Lord can work His mighty miracles through us.

One such miracle is taking place in the southern part of the United States in the area once referred to as the Confederacy. It pertains to family history and temple work. During the period between 1860 and 1865, this region literally became saturated with the blood of America's youth as soldiers by the hundreds of thousands perished. Even today, the earth here and there reveals a timeworn uniform button, a belt buckle, a spent bullet. But what of the men who fell while in the flower of their youth? Many had never married. Who was to do their temple work? Were they forever to be denied the blessings of eternal ordinances?

William D. Taylor, a Canadian with no ties to either side of the conflict that raged so long ago, found himself, together with wife and family, living in the old South and suddenly filled with a compelling interest in those who died while so young in years. An urgency came upon Brother Taylor to do something personally, a call to silent service.

In a letter to me dated July 20, 1992, Brother Taylor wrote: "It's been approximately one year since I last gave you an update on the extraction work that is being done for the Confederate soldiers (approximately four years since this project was started). The extraction has been progressing at a steady pace. As of this writing, we have sent for temple work just over 101,000 names. I am thankful for being allowed to do this work. It brings me joy unparalleled to anything I have ever known. It's hard to put my feelings into words. I exult when another regiment is prepared and ready to be sent to the temple, and my soul is pained when the information in the regimental history is insufficient for a soldier's work to be submitted."

A poet's words expressed Brother Taylor's feelings:

There I see them marching down the
lane,
One in blue and one in gray,
Now arm and arm again,
And there I see them rising toward
the Son,
Proud Rebels and proud Yankees,
Silent journey just begun.
[David Matthews, "Road to Gettys-
burg"]

Brethren, let me share with you a description of priesthood service pertaining to this work, as described by a priesthood leader. He wrote:

"On Saturday afternoon our Aaronic Priesthood young men and their leaders assembled at the temple to perform the baptismal work for the fallen soldiers. What a marvelous sight it was to see these young Aaronic Priesthood brethren being baptized by their own priesthood leaders. In almost every case, when the young brother had finished his fourteen or fifteen names, he would turn and embrace his leader and shed a few tears of joy. What an example of true priesthood love and service! I had the experience of being a witness at the font and gained firsthand knowledge of this and, in a few cases, the undeniable witness of the Spirit that those young soldiers who had died had accepted the baptisms that were being performed in their behalf by our Aaronic Priesthood brethren.

"We wrote down the name of each soldier who was baptized that glorious day so that the young men could have a brief history of the soldiers for whom they were baptized. I have no doubt that this experience will have a lifelong effect for good for all those who participated."

The statement of President Joseph F. Smith, in speaking of the redemption of the dead, provides a touching explanation of the joy felt by all who

participate in this and other similar endeavors:

"Through our efforts in their behalf their chains of bondage will fall from them, and the darkness surrounding them will clear away, that light may shine upon them and they shall hear in the spirit world of the work that has been done for them by their children here, and will rejoice with you in your performance of these duties."¹

Brother William Taylor, I salute you for your leadership in bringing eternal blessings to your "troops," who must indeed call your name blessed.

Service to Hurricane Andrew victims

When one holds the priesthood of God, he never knows when his moment of service may come. The challenge is to be ready to serve. On August 24, Hurricane Andrew slammed into the Florida coast south of Miami. Wind gusts exceeded two hundred miles per hour. It became the most costly disaster in United States history. Eighty-seven thousand homes were destroyed, leaving 150,000 homeless. Damages are estimated at 30 billion dollars. One hundred seventy-eight member homes were damaged, with forty-six of them destroyed.

A spearhead unit was deployed from the Church welfare facility in Atlanta before the storm hit, and it arrived at its appointed location just as the winds abated. The truck carried food, water, bedding, tools, and medical supplies—the first relief shipment to arrive in the disaster area.

Local priesthood and Relief Society leaders organized rapidly to assess injuries and damage and to assist in the cleanup effort. Three large waves of member volunteers, numbering over five thousand, labored shoulder to shoulder with disaster-stricken residents, helping to repair three thousand homes, a Jewish synagogue, a Pentecostal church, and two schools. Forty-

six missionaries from the Florida Fort Lauderdale Mission worked full time for more than two weeks unloading supply trucks, serving as interpreters, providing security and traffic control, and assisting with repairs.

Time will permit but a glance at several heartwarming accounts pertaining to this tremendous example of the priesthood in action.

1. One morning a call was received at the Kendall chapel. A lady explained that she understood the Church had a group of people who were going out to patch roofs and windows to keep the rains out. She was told that this was true, and she left her address. She was told that volunteers would be out soon to do whatever they could to assist. She then asked if she had to come and pay first and also whom should she pay. She was told that there would be no charge, at which she began to cry uncontrollably, finally managing to say, "I can only thank God for you people, for I have no means of paying anything."

2. Zack, a young man age nineteen who is now in the Missionary Training Center, accompanied a truckload of food, clothing, and other provisions sent by our members in central Georgia to help the victims of the hurricane. As Zack was leaving, his mother gave him some Cabbage Patch and other treasured dolls from her prized collection. Zack took particular pleasure in distributing those dolls to solemn-eyed little girls whose other toys were all destroyed.

3. A brother from Saint Anthony, Idaho, and other leaders in that area saw the terrible devastation suffered by the people of south Florida as the account appeared on television. They felt a compelling need to do something to help those who had been stricken. A decision was soon made to send an eighteen-wheeler filled with Idaho potatoes to Florida. The truck was loaded with boxes and sacks of potatoes and moved swiftly across the country to the site of the disaster.

The potatoes arrived in excellent condition. The missionaries unloaded the potatoes and soon divided them. It was amazing how welcome the potatoes were to the people of south Florida. They were so tired of eating fast foods that the potatoes were described as tasting almost like a dessert. In less than three days all of the potatoes were distributed to members and nonmembers alike. Hearts were tender and stomachs warmed by the kindness of those marvelous members in Idaho who had sent the potatoes.

4. Typical of the feelings experienced by those who put everything aside in their personal lives and rushed to the aid of their brothers and sisters are those expressed by a couple from Huntsville, Alabama. They wrote:

"[Our] second day [at the scene of the hurricane's devastation] was Sunday, but it seemed as crucial that we hurry with the work as it was for those who left the Salt Lake Valley on Sunday to rescue the handcart pioneers in dire straits. On the football and athletic fields of a high school that was our campground, each stake group held its own sacrament [and] testimony meeting before leaving for another day of work. We sang songs we knew. The sacrament was blessed and passed by priesthood holders in work clothes. We partook of the bread from frying pans and the water from picnic cups. The Spirit was still there. Due to a one-hour time limit for the meeting, not all who wanted could bear their [testimonies]. The closing song, 'I Am a Child of God,' reminded us we needed to push on to help His children."

5. One Spanish-speaking brother and his wife approached Elder Alexander Morrison, Area President for the North America Southeast Area, and said, "I have lost my life's savings. I have lost my home, my farm; all my avocados are destroyed. I have nothing." And then he smiled sweetly and

said, "But I have everything. I have the gospel of Jesus Christ."

God bless Elder Morrison, his counselors, and all fellow priesthood leaders; missionaries, both elders and sisters; and all the many thousands who have served so magnificently and unstintingly. Truly these responded as did Samuel: "Here am I."

The cleanup following Hurricane Andrew continues, as does the work of repair pertaining to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Iniki, which struck the island of Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands.

The priesthood in action

In these cataclysmic events and in the quiet challenges of individual lives, the priesthood is truly in action. Let us never despair, for this is the work of the Lord in which we are engaged. It has been said, "The Lord shapes the back to bear the burden placed upon it." The Master's counsel to all of us assembled tonight, to whom priesthood authority has been given and of whom priesthood service is expected, brings peace to the heart and comfort to the soul:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

To this divine truth I testify as I leave my witness with you that this work is true, that the priesthood does combine and present to our Heavenly Father a mighty army of righteousness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), pp. 469-70.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 in the morning. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which follows must be in their seats before 9:15.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules and use caution in your driving.

We express gratitude to this combined choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus for the beautiful music they have sung.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "How Great the Wisdom and the Love." The benediction will be offered by Elder Charles Didier, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now, brethren, if you'll bear with me for a few minutes, I'd like to say a few words in conclusion. I know you've been here a long time, and some of you are restless. Be at peace. It won't last forever.

I'd like to say that it is always an inspiration to participate in these great priesthood gatherings. There are many conventions and conferences held across the world, but there is no other meeting comparable to this.

The miracle of satellite transmission has made it possible for hundreds of thousands of us to gather unitedly in hundreds of halls. Each of us is a distinct individual, but we are all of one mind, of one purpose, of one faith, each ordained to that priesthood and authority which come from God our Eternal Father.

There are many more of you in halls outside Salt Lake City than there are in the Tabernacle from which we speak tonight. Our voices and images reach you from this grand old building on Temple Square. I wish that all of you might be here in this unique and wonderful place.

The Tabernacle: a unique building

This Tabernacle is certainly not the largest assembly hall in the world.

Six thousand can be seated here. There are now halls that seat ten times that number. But this one is different—different in its origin, different in its structure, different in its qualities.

I speak of it because this is its birthday. It was completed and first used for a gathering of the Saints 125 years ago in a similar October conference. Since then this has been the originating pulpit for the general conferences of the Church.

I wonder if, when Brigham Young first stood at this pulpit a century and a quarter ago, he ever thought this building would last so long or serve so well.

It is a peculiar building. I am not acquainted with any quite like it. It has a character, a spirit of its own. Those who sit beneath its great domed ceiling seem to sense this.

We recently hosted in this hall a convention of many officers of a part of the United States military forces. They were holding a conference here in Salt Lake City and wished to hear the Tabernacle Choir.

They came on a beautiful Sunday morning. I was asked to speak to them briefly, and I told them of this Tabernacle and its construction. The choir, accompanied by the 23rd Army Band, then presented a brief concert. As they concluded the concert, the choir sang

with mounting crescendo the "Battle Hymn of the Republic":

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the
coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage
where the grapes of wrath are
stored. . . .
His truth is marching on.
[*Hymns*, no. 60]

I looked about the hall and saw seasoned veterans of war with tears running down their cheeks. For many it was a great, moving experience. This building has a spirit, a quality unique and wonderful.

Building the Tabernacle

Four days after the 1847 arrival of the pioneers in this valley, Brigham Young touched his cane to the parched earth and said, "Here we will build a temple to our God." The ten acres on which the temple stands have come to be known as Temple Square. The first structure erected here was a bowery. It was a temporary, makeshift place of assembly. It consisted essentially of poles to support a flimsy roof of brush which afforded some shelter from the blistering sun. Then there was built just to the south of us what came to be known as the "Tabernacle" and later as the "Old Tabernacle." It was a structure with a gabled roof and walls that could provide a measure of comfort in both winter and summer.

But these people in this wilderness outpost were driven by a tremendous vision. They believed without a doubt that they were building the kingdom of God on earth. Their faith matched their vision. They determined to build a larger hall that would accommodate thousands.

The dimensions were established — 150 feet wide by 250 feet long. How could this be done in their circumstances? They had no steel with which to make girders. They had neither bolts

nor nails nor screws in any significant quantity. That was 1864, and the railroad would not arrive in this territory until five years later.

Bridges had been built in the East and here, using what was known as the Remington design. But to think of using this for a roof structure must have seemed preposterous to many. Nonetheless, the work went forward.

The location was determined — immediately west of the temple then under construction. The design as it was worked out called for forty-four sandstone buttresses, or pillars. They were erected in an oval configuration. They were anchored on substantial footings. With the addition of doors and skirting, these buttresses became the walls of the building.

Sandstone was brought from the mountains to the east, dressed and shaped to exact and rigid patterns. Limestone was likewise brought from the mountains and burned to be used for plaster and mortar. The great challenge was to create a roof resting on and sprung from these sandstone piers. Wooden scaffolding was erected. Great quantities of lumber were brought from the mountains and sawed into timbers. These were assembled in such a way as to form a great lattice work of triangles which would grow stronger under the stress of weight. Where the timbers crossed, holes were bored and wooden dowels inserted. The holes were tight, and as the dowels were driven in, a timber would split now and then. Strips of green rawhide were bound about the timber. The builders knew that when rawhide dries it shrinks, and the split would be tightened. The timber bridgework occupies nine feet of space between the ceiling and the roof covering. I suppose no one had seen anything like this before. It made possible this great hall without interior pillars to support the roof.

Skeptics, of which there are always many, said that when the interior scaffolding

folding was taken down, the roof would come with it.

But the scaffolding was removed and the roof remained intact. It has so remained now for 125 years. Engineers periodically check it. They marvel and find no deterioration or weakening.

A symbol of faith

It was built in this remote area thirteen hundred miles from the frontier towns along the Mississippi and eight hundred miles from the settlements on the Pacific coast. To me it is a miracle building. I think of the skill of those who designed it and know that there must have been great inspiration behind that skill. I think of *faith* as I reflect on the time and circumstance of its construction. It is truly a tabernacle, built in the wilderness, from which the voice of the servants of the Lord should go forth to the world.

It is *the* Tabernacle. We so speak of it. It is the Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, which has come to be known by millions upon millions across the world, who for more than sixty-three years have listened to broadcasts of the choir originating from this hall.

Though built of wood in the days of the poverty of our people, though designed and constructed without modern engineering and architectural expertise, it has stood and served for 125 years, a unique and wonderful house of worship and culture.

In imagination I can see Brigham Young standing here and looking up at the men putting together the timbers and saying, "Build it strong, boys. Build it strong!"

Building our own tabernacles

Our bodies, my brethren, our minds are the tabernacles of our spirits. He who is the Father of those spirits would have us build strength and

virtue into these personal tabernacles. Only in such strength is there safety and growth and happiness. If there is one great ringing message I take from the builders of this structure, it is this: *Be strong!*

This is the same challenge spoken by prophets and leaders who walk the pages of our scriptures. For example, great was King David. Tremendous were his strengths. But there was a tragic weakness within him. He knew it, and when the days "drew nigh that he should die . . . he charged Solomon his son, saying,

"I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;

"And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself" (1 Kings 2:1-3).

That is sound counsel for every man and boy who holds the priesthood of God.

Be strong in self-discipline

Be strong—be strong in the discipline of self. How many otherwise good men squander their strength and dissipate their will and literally destroy their lives because they have not the power of self-discipline?

Addictive power of pornography

Let me read to you from a letter I received from a man ashamed to sign his name. He writes:

"I am a 35-year-old male and am a convert to the Church of more than ten years. For most of my adult life I have been addicted to pornography. I am ashamed to admit this. My addiction is as real as that of an alcoholic or a drug addict.

"I was first introduced to this material as a child. I was molested by an older male cousin, and pornography was used to attract my interest. I am convinced that this exposure at an early age to sex and pornography is at the root of my addiction today. I think it is ironic that those who support the business of pornography say that it is a matter of freedom of expression. I have no freedom. I have lost my free agency because I have been unable to overcome this. It is a trap for me, and I can't seem to get out of it. Please, please, please, plead with the brethren of the Church to not only avoid but eliminate the sources of pornographic material in their lives. . . .

"Finally, President Hinckley, please pray for me and others in the Church who may be like me to have the courage and strength to overcome this terrible affliction."

Brethren, there is neither happiness nor peace to be gained from surrendering to the weakness of indulging in these things which degrade and destroy. When such material is on television, turn off the set. Stop being a boob in front of the tube. Avoid titillating videotapes as you would a foul disease. They are in the same category. Stay away from pornographic magazines and other destructive literature. There is too much of good to see; there is too much of wonderful reading to be experienced to waste time and destroy character and willpower in submitting to such destructive rot.

Be strong in standing for right

Be strong—in standing for the right. We live in an age of compromise and acquiescence. In situations with which we are daily confronted, we know what is right, but under pressure from our peers and the beguiling voices of those who would persuade us, we capitulate. We compromise. We acquiesce. We give in, and we are ashamed of our-

selves. As men of the priesthood we must cultivate the strength to follow our convictions.

Columbus's faith and strength

The entire world is celebrating this month the five hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, his biographer, says, "This night of October 11–12 [1492] was one big with destiny for the human race, the most momentous ever experienced aboard any ship in any sea" (*Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1942], p. 223).

In my private commemoration of this event, I have read and reread one important and prophetic verse from the Book of Mormon and also a very long biography of Christopher Columbus.

That verse from Nephi's vision states, "And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land" (1 Nephi 13:12).

We interpret that to refer to Columbus. It is interesting to note that the Spirit of God wrought upon him. After reading that long biography, a Pulitzer winner of forty years ago, titled *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, I have no doubt that Christopher Columbus was a man of faith, as well as a man of indomitable determination.

I recognize that in this anniversary year a host of critics have spoken out against him. I do not dispute that there were others who came to this Western Hemisphere before him. But it was he who in faith lighted a lamp to look for a new way to China and who in the process discovered America. His was

an awesome undertaking—to sail west across the unknown seas farther than any before him of his generation. He it was who, in spite of the terror of the unknown and the complaints and near mutiny of his crew, sailed on with frequent prayers to the Almighty for guidance. In his reports to the sovereigns of Spain, Columbus repeatedly asserted that his voyage was for the glory of God and the spread of the Christian faith. Properly do we honor him for his unyielding strength in the face of uncertainty and danger.

Be strong in the quality of mercy

Be strong, my brethren, in the quality of mercy. It is easy to be a bully in one's home, in one's business, in one's speech and acts. This sick world so cries out for kindness and love and mercy. These virtues become an expression of strength rather than weakness on the part of any holder of the priesthood of God. Be strong with that strength of which Isaiah spoke when he said:

"Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you" (Isaiah 35:3-4).

"And in doing these things," says the Lord to each of us in modern revelation, "thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and wilt promote the glory of him who is your Lord.

"Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:4-5).

Be strong in honesty

Be strong, my brethren, with the strength of simple honesty. How easy it is to "lie a little, take the advantage of

one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor" (2 Nephi 28:8).

Nephi so describes the people of his day, as he also describes so many of our day. How easy it is for us to say, "We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent" (Articles of Faith 1:13). But how difficult for so many to resist the temptation to lie a little, cheat a little, steal a little, bear false witness in speaking gossipy words about others. Rise above it, brethren. Be strong in the simple virtue of honesty.

Be strong in the faith

Be strong—in the faith by which you walk and in the Church of which each of us is a member. This is the work of God Almighty. It is the most precious of all causes. It needs your strength.

I give you these mighty and wonderful words of Paul written to the Ephesian Saints:

"Finally, my brethren," he says, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. . .

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:10-12, 14-16).

I hope, my brethren, that perhaps this tremendous building in which we meet, now used for 125 years by the Latter-day Saints as our Tabernacle, will remind each of us of the strength we must nurture within ourselves while living in these mortal personal tabernacles, which are the gift and creation of God.

Be strong in testimony

Brethren, *be strong in your testimony of Jesus Christ*, the Son of God. He is the chief cornerstone of this great work. Of His divinity and reality I bear solemn witness. He is the Lamb without blemish, who was offered for the sins of the world. Through His pain and because of His suffering I find reconciliation and eternal life. He is my

Teacher, my Exemplar, my Friend, and my Savior, whom I love and worship as the Redeemer of the world. In His holy name, amen.

The choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

Elder Charles Didier offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 4, 1992. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Praise Ye the Lord." President Monson then opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 162nd semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the conference in his apartment, has asked me to conduct this session.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders L. Tom Perry, John H. Groberg, and Hans B. Ringger are seated on the stand.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners

and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We note that the conference is being relayed for the first time to satellite downlink locations in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, and Jamaica.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, will provide the music for this session. The choir opened these services by singing "Praise Ye the Lord" and will now sing "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee," following which Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen offered the invocation.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Emergency in an airplane

A few weeks ago, while returning from a regional conference, we had an experience that remains vivid in my mind. As we approached the airport, the captain came on the public address system and spoke in crisp and authoritative tones: "We have an emergency! Please give me your attention. We have an emergency, and the cabin crew will give you instructions. For your own safety, please do what they ask you to do."

The crew sprang into action. This was the moment for which their training had prepared them. Every one of them knew precisely what to do. All utensils were quickly secured in locked containers.

Passengers were shifted to put strong men at each emergency exit.

We were told to remove our glasses, lower our heads, and firmly grasp our ankles.

A woman with a baby seated immediately behind me was crying. Others could be heard sobbing. Everyone knew that this was not just an exercise, but that it was for real and that it was serious.

A man emerged from the flight deck door. He recognized me and stooped down to say, "I am an off-duty pilot. The primary control system has failed, but I think we are going to be all right. They have managed to get the landing gear down and the flaps down."

Strangely, I felt no fear. In many years of flying, I have had experiences when I *have* known fear. But on this occasion I felt calm. I knew that a redundancy system had been built into the plane to handle just such an emergency and that the crew had been well trained.

I also knew that the effectiveness of that redundancy system would be known in a minute or two when the rubber hit the runway.

That moment came quickly. To the relief of everyone, the plane touched down smoothly, the landing gear held in place, the engines were reversed, and the aircraft was brought to a stop.

Fire engines were standing nearby. We were towed to the gate. The crew was appropriately applauded, and some of us expressed to the Lord our gratitude.

The Lord's backup system

I have reflected on this experience in terms of the Church of which we are members. The head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His Church. But the earthly head is our prophet. Prophets are men who are endowed with a divine calling. Notwithstanding the divinity of that calling, they are human. They are subject to the problems of mortality.

We love and respect and honor and look to the prophet of this day, President Ezra Taft Benson. He has been a great and gifted leader, a man whose voice has rung out in testimony of this work across the world. He holds all the keys of the priesthood on the earth in this day. But he has reached an age where he cannot do many of the things he once did. This does not detract from his calling as a prophet. But it places limitations on his physical activities.

We have seen comparable situations in times past. President Wilford Woodruff grew old in office. So did Presidents Heber J. Grant, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, and, more recently, Spencer W. Kimball.

Some people, evidently not knowing the system, worry that because of the President's age, the Church faces a crisis. They seem not to realize that there is a backup system. In the very nature of this system, there is always on board a trained crew, if I may so speak of them. They have been thoroughly

schooled in Church procedures. More importantly, they also hold the keys of the eternal priesthood of God. They too have been put in place by the Lord.

I hope I will not sound presumptuous in reminding you of the unique and tremendous system of redundancy and backup which the Lord has structured into His kingdom so that without interruption it may go forward, meeting any emergency that might arise and handling every contingency with which it is faced. To me it is a wondrous and constantly renewing miracle.

Keys given to all Apostles

Yesterday afternoon we sustained Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator, and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We next sustained his Counselors and then the members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. With fifteen men so described, endowed, and sustained, one not familiar with the Church might feel that there would be great confusion. But the Lord's kingdom is one of order. There is no confusion in its leadership.

When a man is ordained to the apostleship and set apart as a member of the Council of the Twelve, he is given the keys of the priesthood of God. Each of the fifteen living men so ordained holds these keys. However, only the President of the Church has the right to exercise them in their fullness. He may delegate the exercise of various of them to one or more of his Brethren. Each has the keys but is authorized to use them only to the degree granted him by the prophet of the Lord.

Such agency has been given by President Benson to his Counselors and to the Twelve according to various responsibilities delegated to them.

Authority of the First Presidency

According to the revelation of the Lord, "of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:22).

This "Presidency of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, have a right to officiate in all the offices in the church" (D&C 107:9).

Further pertaining to this principle, "it is according to the dignity of his office that he [the president] should preside over the council of the church; and it is his privilege to be assisted by two other presidents, appointed after the same manner that he himself was appointed.

"And in case of the absence of one or both of those who are appointed to assist him, he has power to preside over the council without an assistant; and in case he himself is absent, the other presidents have power to preside in his stead, both or either of them" (D&C 102:10-11).

Counselors in the First Presidency

We who serve as Counselors recognize and know the parameters of our authority and our responsibility. Our only desire is to assist and help our leader with the tremendous burdens of his office. The Church is growing large, with more than eight million members now. It is moving across the world. Its program is extensive, complex, and deals with a host of elements. The responsibilities are many and varied.

But I can say that regardless of the circumstances, the work goes forward in an orderly and wonderful way. As it was during the time when President Kimball was ill, we have moved without hesitation when there is well-established policy. Where there is not firmly

established policy, we have talked with the President and received his approval before taking action. Let it never be said that there has been any disposition to assume authority or to do anything or say anything or teach anything which might be at variance with the wishes of him who has been put in his place by the Lord. We wish to be his loyal servants. We ask no honor for ourselves. We simply desire to do that which needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and according to policies on which the President has expressed himself.

Duties and authority of the Twelve

Now, as I have indicated, there are twelve others on whom have been conferred the keys of the apostleship. They are, as the revelation describes them, "the twelve traveling councilors . . . called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

"And they form a quorum, equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned" (D&C 107:23–24).

You ask, can there be two separate bodies with equal authority without confusion? Yes. The Lord has given the answer to this. He has said, "The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:33).

Concerning this matter, President Joseph F. Smith said: "The duty of the Twelve Apostles of the Church is to preach the gospel to the world, to send it to the inhabitants of the earth and to bear testimony of Jesus Christ the Son of God, as living witnesses of his divine mission. That is their special calling and they are always under the direction of the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when that presidency is intact, and there is

never at the same time two equal heads in the Church—never. The Lord never ordained any such thing, nor designed it. There is always a head in the Church, and if the Presidency of the Church are removed by death or other cause, then the next head of the Church is the Twelve Apostles, until a presidency is again organized of three presiding high priests who have the right to hold the office of First Presidency over the Church" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], pp. 177–78).

Here then, my brothers and sisters, is the remarkable plan of the Lord for the governance of His earthly kingdom. The authority to conduct its affairs was received in this dispensation under the hands of Peter, James, and John, who were ordained by the Lord when He was on the earth. And, as we have seen, there is order in the exercise of that authority.

Called of God by prophecy

I wish now to say a few words about the men who are members of the Quorum of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I know all of those presently serving. I have known all who have filled these chairs in the last sixty years. I am confident that no one of them ever aspired to office. No one campaigned for it. I think none ever thought himself worthy of it. This is a singular and remarkable thing.

In the United States we presently are in a campaign to elect men and women to public office. Millions upon millions of dollars are being spent in the process, with hundreds of thousands working to promote the interests of their favorite candidates.

How different it is with the work of the Lord. No faithful member of this Church would think of applying for ecclesiastical office. Rather, "we believe that a man must be called of God,

by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof" (Articles of Faith 1:5).

The Lord Himself said of the Twelve whom He selected, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16).

I am confident that no man was ever called as a General Authority of this Church, certainly none I have known, who did not get on his knees, confessing his weaknesses and pleading with the Lord to safeguard him against temptation and any wrongdoing, and asking for the strength and the wisdom and the inspiration to perform well that which he is called upon to do.

Love and unity among Church leaders

I feel that I know my Brethren. I know my leader, President Benson. I have knelt with him in prayer and heard his petitions. I know his heart, and I can testify of its goodness. I know his love, and I can testify of its reality. I know his prophetic pleading, and I can testify of its sincerity.

I know my associate in the Presidency, Thomas S. Monson. I know of his strength and desire to advance our Father's kingdom.

I know each of the Twelve in seniority, from President Howard W. Hunter to Elder Richard G. Scott.

These are my associates in this the work of the Almighty. As I said before, none sought this sacred office. Each was called and, in some instances, made serious sacrifice in accepting the call. We pray together. We meet in solemn assembly in the house of the Lord. Periodically we partake together the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and renew our covenants with Him who is our God, taking upon ourselves anew the name of the Lord, of whom we are called to testify.

As Brethren, we discuss various problems that come before us. Each man is different. We speak from various backgrounds and experiences. We discuss ways to improve and strengthen the work. At the outset of these discussions, there may be various points of view. But before the discussion is ended, there is total unanimity, else no action is taken. The Lord Himself has declared that such unity is an absolute necessity.

Is this a different kind of government? It is the government of the kingdom of God on the earth. It is unique in its organization. It is a system under which, if one man is unable to function, the work does not stumble or falter. To revert to my earlier illustration, there is a crew aboard with long, in-depth training. There is a system, a divinely mandated system, under which there is backup and redundancy to move the work and govern the Church in all the world, regardless of difficulties that may befall any of its leaders.

My Brethren of whom I have spoken are Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. I bear witness of their integrity. I bear witness of their faith. I bear witness of the voice of inspiration and revelation in their calls. Every one is a man of tested strength. But the greatest of these strengths lies in the acknowledgment that he must have divinely given direction and blessing if he is to perform acceptably.

We have only the Lord's agenda

Now, in conclusion, do you believe this body of men would ever lead this Church astray? Remember whose church this is. It carries the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who stands as its head. His is the power to remove any who is found remiss in his duty or who is teaching that which is not in harmony with His divine will.

I say for each and all that we have no personal agenda. We have only the

Lord's agenda. There are those who criticize when we issue a statement of counsel or warning. Please know that our pleadings are not motivated by any selfish desire. Please know that our warnings are not without substance and reason. Please know that the decisions to speak out on various matters are not reached without deliberation, discussion, and prayer. Please know that our only ambition is to help each of you with your problems, your struggles, your families, your lives.

May I say, by way of personal testimony, that for more than a third of a century I have served as a General Authority of this Church. For twenty of those years I sat in the circle of the Council of the Twelve. For eleven-plus years I have served as a Counselor in the First Presidency. I know how the system works. I know that it is divine in its plan and in its authority. I know that there is no desire to teach anything other than what the Lord would have taught. He has said that "the decisions of these quorums, or either of them, are to be made in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity" (D&C 107:30). It is in this spirit that we seek to serve.

Receive teachings in faith

He further said, concerning that which is taught by His servants, that "those who receive it in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life;

"But those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation" (D&C 20:14-15).

When we plead with our people to observe the Sabbath day, to refrain from making it a day of merchandising, we are repeating only that which the Lord declared anciently and which He

has confirmed through modern revelation. When we decry gambling, we are reiterating only what has been said by prophets who have gone before. When we urge the strengthening of the foundations of our homes, we are doing only that which will bless the lives of our families. When we urge our people to live the law of tithing, we are repeating only that which the Lord spoke of anciently and confirmed anew in this dispensation for the blessing of His people. When we warn against pornography, immorality, drugs, and such, we are doing only that which prophets have always done.

Watchmen unto Israel

Ours is the responsibility outlined by Ezekiel: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezekiel 3:17).

We have no selfish desire in any of this, other than the wish that our brethren and sisters will be happy, that peace and love will be found in their homes, that they will be blessed by the power of the Almighty in their various undertakings in righteousness.

I thank all who with uplifted hands and generous hearts sustain us and uphold us in these responsibilities.

This work will never fail

May the Almighty bless you, my beloved brethren and sisters. This is the work of God, our Eternal Father, who lives and rules in the universe. It is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, the Living Son of the Living God. It has been established upon the earth with divine authority, with a prophet and other leaders called through the voice of revelation and trained through long years of service. It will never fail. It will continue to succeed.

I make a promise to all who uphold and sustain it, and who strive with faith and prayer to live its principles, that they will be blessed with happiness and accomplishment in this life and joy and eternal life in the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Richard G. Scott

The rope swing

Some of the sweetest memories of my childhood center in the occasional summer and fall days spent with my brothers at Uncle Zene's farm in rural Virginia. There we hiked through woods with fragrant wildflowers. We marveled at flying squirrels, colorful birds, and even occasionally discovered a fox or pheasant. Meandering streams invited us to catch sunfish, and a cool, pure spring satisfied our thirst. There were roasted hot dogs, potato salad, sweet pickles, and of course hot apple pie with homemade ice cream. Every turn of the crank heightened our anticipation of that seldom-savored treat. But the most treasured experience was the rope swing Uncle Zene had hung in a tall tree near a beautiful brook. Its long gliding passes provided hours of pure joy. We would arch our backs and fling our legs and feet to see who could go the fastest and highest. It was sheer delight.

Once, to treat me to even more excitement, my brother Gerald put me on the wooden seat, then rotated the swing until the ropes were twisted in a double row of knots. With a mighty thrust he launched me into a spin of ever-increasing velocity. At first there was a feeling of exhilaration as I began

to pick up speed. That short-lived pleasure was quickly replaced by increasing feelings of dizziness, nausea, and just plain terror. When the horrible experience was over, I couldn't walk without falling, my head reeled, and I was certain my stomach would never again be the same.

Throughout it all, Gerald jumped with glee. When I finally fell out of the seat, he shouted, "Wasn't that terrific?"

My mind thought, "You're crazy," but my mouth said, "Yeah, that was great. Get in and I'll show you how much fun it is."

Satisfying worldly appetites

I wonder if some of you are doing the same thing in your own life. Instead of enjoying the countless edifying experiences, precious wholesome relationships, and wondrous beauties of the earth the Lord has given for our happiness, do you pursue excitement beyond the bounds He has set? Do you seek transitory stimulation, even recognizing that it is always followed by powerful negative feelings? Do tantalizing emotions stimulate your appetite, creating an insatiable thirst for more? Does that thirst override the motiva-

tion to improve that should result from the negative harvest of transgression? Is your focus on satisfying appetite through increased participation, even though you begin to sense that inevitably it will bring very unpleasant consequences? Have you wondered how and when you will stop?

Even though you publicly defend strongly your actions, privately in moments of sober contemplation you may have recognized that you are in trouble. While outwardly you may blame others for your problems, inside you may have already discovered that indulgence in violation of trust and denial of truth leads to ever-diminishing options. One backs himself ever farther into a corner. Finally there seems to be no way out, and a sense of hopelessness sets in.

I have no interest but to help you. Will you listen? I may challenge some of your fixed ideas, but please listen for a few minutes.

Use agency to obey truth

You may be tired of others trying to run your life—always telling you what to do. After all, you have the right to make your own choices. That is correct. You have that right. It is your agency. The secret to solving problems in your life will be found in understanding and using the eternally beneficial interaction of your *agency* and His *truth*.

The Master said:

“He that keepeth [the] commandments receiveth truth and light. . . .

“Light and truth forsake that evil one. . . .

“And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men” (D&C 93:28, 37, 39; italics added).

He also declared, “Every man may act in doctrine and principle, . . . according to the *moral agency* which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable . . . in the

day of judgment” (D&C 101:78; italics added).

These scriptures teach how to overcome the effects of wrong choices, whether they be lying, stealing, gambling, addiction to alcohol or drugs, immorality, inflicting abuse, or anything like it. Simply stated, one must use his *agency to obey truth*.

Heavenly Father has defined truth

When others give you advice, have you ever said, “I just don’t believe the way you do. Those are your standards and your principles. I have my own”? Please understand that no one can change truth. Rationalization, overpowering self-interest, all of the arguments of men, anger, or self-will cannot change truth. Satan knows that, so he tries to create an atmosphere where one unwittingly begins to feel that he can not only choose what to do, but can determine what is right to do. Satan strives to persuade us to live outside truth by rationalizing our actions as *the right of choice*.

But our Eternal Father defined truth and established what is right and wrong before the creation of this earth. He also fixed the consequences of obedience and disobedience to those truths. He defended our right to choose our path in life so that we would grow, develop, and be happy, but *we do not have the right to choose the consequences of our acts*. Those who willfully, consistently disobey His commandments will inevitably learn that truth. Joseph Smith was inspired to record, “When we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21).

Please understand, no one has the privilege to choose what is right. God reserved that prerogative to Himself. Our agency does allow us to choose among alternate paths, but then we are bound to the consequence God has decreed. Later, if we don’t like where the

path takes us, the only out is through repentance.

Our Heavenly Father gave us truth, some as statements of cause and effect. We call them commandments. They guide our life to happiness. He knew that Satan would try to persuade some to live without fixed standards in life so that decisions would be based on current circumstances, what appears convenient, or what provides the greatest personal return. In this way, Satan removes the power of truth from one's life so he can take that soul captive.

Faith and obedience bring healing

If you are trapped and there seems to be no way out, remember what Robert Frost taught: "The best way out is always through" ("A Servant to Servants," line 56). You must face the challenge and conquer it. The way through is based on faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His commandments. It is the only way to permanently cure the damage to mind and spirit caused by unrighteous acts. It also provides healing, within the bounds of eternal law, to a body devastated by the effects of transgression.

It may be hard in your state of mind to understand that. Please believe me. He will help you when you do it His way. A prophet said, "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is *far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?*" (Mosiah 5:13; italics added). Read and learn about the Savior until you know Him, then trust Him.

You may have found that change is hard. But know you *can* do it. You may wonder why you are not believed when you decide to change from a life of disobedience to one of integrity and compliance to truth. Recognize that it takes time to build a reputation that overcomes the effects of past deliberate decisions to deceive and to take advantage of others—but it is worth it.

Have you noticed that no matter how worthy your intent and how many procedures you follow precisely, if you make the tiniest mistake with a computer, it will not respond? All of your effort is futile. That is *not* the way the Lord works. There is nothing tricky about His commandments. He wants you to succeed. Where there is purity of heart and real intent, it is known to the Lord. Your obedience to truth and proper use of agency open the door to His divine help. At first, perhaps only you and He will believe your sincerity. But you will be rewarded by the joy that comes from positive personal progress. In time, others will recognize your consistent righteous acts and support you.

Accepting help from others

Many people offer advice, but one's suggestions often directly contradict another's. How do you know whom to believe? Ask yourself these questions:

- What motivates the offer of help?
- Does your common sense confirm it is right? If so, it will be consistent with the teachings of the Savior.
- Has the advice offered been followed in the giver's life? Has it improved the quality of that life?

Honest evaluation of advice against these standards will help you decide whether it is motivated for your benefit or another's self-interest. A true friend is not one who always encourages you to do what you want to do, but one who helps you do what you know you ought to do.

You can block the corrective power of truth in your life by constantly letting others protect you from the consequences of your unworthy acts, without being smart enough to change your life. Your failure to properly respond to help will fix false concepts in your mind, and you will see no need to repent. Your negative patterns will be reinforced, not rejected.

How can one decide when to help you and when to let you grow from facing reality? The Lord has provided the answer. When you show genuine remorse, a contrite heart, a recognition of guilt, movement in the direction of improvement even though there may be slippage—when there is acceptance of responsibility for improper acts, support and help are needed and will be productive. Should you continue to manipulate, blame others for improper decisions, be deceitful and determined to continue the path of transgression by camouflage or cover-up, you are reinforcing false principles and have chosen to head for a showdown with tough reality.

Begin healing now

It is one thing to know how to heal your damaged life. It is quite another to do it. You will change only when you recognize that it will bring lasting personal benefit. Deep down you know that breaking commandments does not bring anything productive and does cause a lot of grief for yourself and others. Don't wait to hit bottom. That is painful and could leave physical scars that can't be healed.

You can fool others who want to believe you, but you cannot deceive the Lord. Because of His justice, He will one day have to confront you with the consequences of your unrepented acts. No one wants that to happen. Some transgressions are so powerful that it is unlikely that you will begin to overcome them without another's help. Seek that help. In time, with the strength that comes from continued use of agency to live truth, you will be healed through the Savior. Please find someone you trust who is trustworthy, who understands agency and truth. You can begin anywhere—with a friend, a loved one, a competent professional, or a solid member. As you

gain confidence, see your bishop. He has priesthood keys that will help you. Begin now and don't stop until you understand and obey the teachings of the Savior and receive His healing power in your life. Otherwise, the cure will be incomplete.

This comment, used by permission of one someone else helped, shows how the Lord gives healing through a priesthood leader when he acts as an inspired instrument:

"I so appreciated your words of wisdom and kindness. I have felt such a strength from the Lord. My testimony is growing step by step each day.

"I still have heartache and pain, but now I realize that it is for my own good and that there is light at the end of the tunnel. The blessing you gave me under the direction of the Spirit truly changed me. I am finally able to have hope and know that I will work through this time. I am able to look forward to each new day."

The Savior heals permanently

I testify that the Savior heals permanently. He said:

"Have ye any that . . . are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them. . . .

"For I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you. . . .

"And he did heal them every one" (3 Nephi 17:7–9; italics added).

I testify that the Savior will heal you as you choose to obey truth and use your agency according to His counsel.

May the Lord soften your heart that you may know the things we have discussed are true. May he give you the courage and strength to begin to be healed *now*. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "A Psalm of Peace."

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the choir singing "A Psalm of Peace."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "I Stand All Amazed," following which we shall

hear from Elder Marion D. Hanks, who was granted emeritus status yesterday after having served as a General Authority for thirty-nine years.

The choir and congregation sang "I Stand All Amazed."

Elder Marion D. Hanks

Anyone who has been permitted to serve as we have is honored beyond personal merit. We know that and are grateful.

Choose to love and obey the Lord

The Bible declares that God is the Father and the God of the spirits of all mankind (see Numbers 16:22; Hebrews 12:9). The Apostle Paul taught the people at Athens that we are God's "offspring" and the Romans that "the Spirit . . . beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Acts 17:28-29; Romans 8:16-17).

Because of our Father's great love for his children and because of his commitment to freedom of choice for them, mankind has from the beginning enjoyed the opportunity to choose for themselves. John declares in the first few verses of his gospel that Christ "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). Scripture also records that "the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:16; see also D&C 84:45-46). There is an accompanying significant scripture that explains why not every person walks by the light and why some do not choose good over evil: "The Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that *hearkeneth* to the voice of the Spirit" (D&C 84:46; italics added).

Our Heavenly Father desires that all mankind be led by the light, but that blessing will not be imposed upon anyone. Christ stands at the door and knocks; those who wish to have him enter and sup with them must hear his voice and "open the door" (Revelation 3:20). Thus two great principles on which the gospel is centered, love and agency, are plainly taught. Each of us is here to learn to love and give and hearken to the Spirit and choose to do the will of the Father. God wants his offspring and heirs to become all that we can be, to qualify for our inheritance. But we must choose; we are the decision makers, and he will not relieve that responsibility. As early as the book of Deuteronomy, it is written:

"I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; . . . therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and . . . obey his voice" (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19-20).

Light shines through all the world

Through the light of the Lord, truth in some measure has reached many avenues and elements and levels of life. It has been a great satisfaction to me to find so much that is so good in so many places and from so many sources. President Joseph F. Smith spoke of the united members of the Godhead as the "fountain of truth" and said:

"From this fountain all the ancient learned philosophers have received

their inspiration and wisdom—from it they have received all their knowledge. If we find truth in broken fragments through the ages, it may be set down as an incontrovertible fact that it originated at the fountain, and was given to philosophers, inventors, patriots, reformers, and prophets by the inspiration of God” (“Fountain of Truth,” *Improvement Era*, June 1907, p. 629).

Earlier and subsequent leaders of the Church have similarly testified. In every field of activity in which I have been involved, I have had the privilege of association with people of character and quality who shared much of value with me. Consider this special example of the wisdom of a beloved Quaker teacher and writer, Rufus Jones, who said:

“Vital religion cannot be maintained and preserved on the theory that God dealt with our human race only in the far past ages, and that the Bible is the only evidence we have that our God is a living, revealing, communicating God. If God ever spoke, He is still speaking. He is the great I Am, not the great He Was” (*A Flash of Eternity*).

This is a significant expression of fundamental truth. Our own understanding of that principle is that God communicates with his children, and that he has revealed, does now reveal, and will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to his kingdom (see Articles of Faith 1:9).

Half Hallel offered at Passover

Jewish tradition helps us further appreciate the nature of our Heavenly Father in the tender practice of the Half Hallel offered at Passover in celebration of the historic exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt and their passing through the Red Sea. When they reached the sea, the pursuing Egyptian armies overtook them. Through Moses, God divided the

waters, “and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground” (Exodus 14:22). The Egyptians went in after them. Then Moses stretched his hand again over the sea, and the waters returned. The Israelites were safe, and the Egyptian armies were drowning. Triumphantly the people began to sing hymns of praise to the Lord. But the Almighty stopped them and said, “How can you sing hymns of praise and jubilation when so many of my children are drowning in the sea?”

In remembrance of that event, Jewish people during the latter period of Passover include abridged or shortened psalms of praise, Half Hallel, as part of the celebration.

Truly, light from the Source has shone through all the world. We rejoice in this and have a humble witness to bear: God *is* a living, revealing, communicating Father.

Fuller light through the Restoration

When there are joined with the rich resources of ancient prophets and writers in the Bible the supporting and enhancing truths available in the scriptures of the Restoration, those welded treasures bring clarifying light and knowledge to the most important questions mankind has asked through the ages, and now asks, and in the future will continue to ask with increasing concern as populations and interpretations multiply. They deal with the truth about God and Christ and the Holy Spirit—the Godhead, about man himself, about mortal life and its meaning and purposes, and about eternity and its promises.

No immunity from afflictions

A significant example of this fuller light is in response to the expanding catalog of concerns that face mankind—individuals, institutions,

countries, civilization. The Psalmist thousands of years ago cried, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble" (Psalm 31:9). He then spoke of problems, some of which sound strangely familiar to a modern ear. This very hour in our troubled world, calamity and destruction, fear, starvation, and conflict beleaguer the earth; afflictions and adversities burden many lives. Books multiply dealing with personal and family and societal troubles. Often they seem to agree that the right question to ask is not why good people have trials, but how shall good people respond when they are tried? The scriptures help us answer some important questions:

- Does God promise his children immunity from trouble and affliction?
- Is tribulation evidence of his displeasure?
- Did the prophets of old and Christ and his Apostles live without adversity?
- Did he promise his followers that they would be spared trouble?

Scripture responds. The Sermon on the Mount speaks to those who mourn, who are poor in spirit, who are reviled and persecuted, who have evil spoken against them falsely (see Matthew 5:3-4, 11).

The counsel is to turn the other cheek when smitten and to go the extra mile when forced. Mentioned are those who trespass, who are enemies, who curse and hate and spitefully use innocent others. The sun shines on the evil and the good; the rain falls on the just and the unjust (see Matthew 5:39-45).

To early leaders in the Church came the admonition, "Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many" (D&C 24:8).

God does not deny us the experience we came here to have. He does not insulate us from tribulation or guarantee immunity from trouble.

The Lord helps us in our afflictions

Much of the pain we suffer and inevitably impose upon others is self-induced through our own bad judgment, through poor choices.

And for that, help is offered. To the penitent sinner comes the assurance that God will forgive, forget, and never mention our sins of which we have truly repented.

But much that happens to us in this life we cannot control; we only respond. Knowing what God has promised can provide the courage and faith we need. We are assured in the scriptures that we may know of a surety that the Lord does visit his people in their afflictions (see Mosiah 24:13-14), and that "whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 36:3).

Jesus said to those who mourned the loss of a loved one, "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

Said he to the lonely and the hopeless and those who are afraid, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Thus the promise is that in times of sorrow and affliction, if we endure and remain faithful and put our trust in him and are courageous, the Lord will visit us in our afflictions, strengthen us to carry our burdens, and support us in our trials. He'll be with us to the end of our days, lift us at the last day to greater opportunities for service, and exalt us at last with him and reunited loved ones, and he will consecrate our afflictions to our gain.

God weeps with us

One of the experiences that has reached the deep center of my soul in

recent years was to hear a choice bishop share with others in a meeting the tender feelings of his heart concerning the loss of his wife to cancer, an experience many other husbands and wives and families well understand.

Twenty years earlier he had watched his mother pass through severe suffering before she died, and he had carried with him through the years a sense of resentment for the anguish she had endured. With his wife's ordeal, however, harsh as it was for her and in a measure for her family, his anger sublimated into a closer spiritual relationship with the Lord, and he was able more gracefully to share her burden.

Shortly before she died, his wife asked him to give her a blessing for relief from the intense pain. They both wept as he laid his hands on her head and talked with the Lord, "and," he said, "I felt the spiritual presence of our Father in Heaven. I had the strongest sensation that someone else was there weeping with us!" Near the end, severely physically debilitated, she said, "Never have I been more whole!"

They had felt the strong sensation that He was there, "weeping with us." Of course; why not? Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus; he wept over Jerusalem's portending afflictions; and he wept when he came to the American continent and knelt with his people, and especially when "he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them" (3 Nephi 17:21; see also 17:22; John 11:35; Luke 19:41).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

This is an appropriate moment to thank Elder Hanks for his influence on my life in so many moments over so many years.

Carry the Son's legacy of love

At home last evening after our meetings yesterday, we opened a note from a lovely Latter-day Saint mother, widowed by the death of her husband in an accident two years ago. She and her choice family have taken comfort, she said, from a framed statement on the wall of my office:

"To believe in God is to know that all the rules will be fair, and that there will be wonderful surprises."

I thank God for his love and the love of his Son. Those who have taken upon themselves the name of his Son as we have done must carry the burden of the legacy he left us—of love and mercy and service, accepting our heritage of hope and helpfulness, and joining our believing and our doing in working for the relief of the ills and the sufferings of humanity. God help us in honoring that commission, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Jehovah, Lord of Heaven and Earth."

President Monson

Elder Marion D. Hanks has just spoken to us, lifting our spirits as he has done so many times before. We wish him well and love him. He was followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Jehovah, Lord of Heaven and Earth."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

To those whose discipleship is casual

Eighteen years ago from this same pulpit, I pled with those who stood indecisively on the "porch" of the Church

to come fully inside (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, pp. 14–16; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, pp. 12–13). Today my plea is to those members already inside but whose discipleship is casual, individuals whom we love, whose gifts and talents are much needed in building the kingdom!

Any call for greater consecration is, of course, really a call to all of us. But these remarks are not primarily for those who are steadily striving and who genuinely seek to keep God's commandments and yet sometimes fall short (see D&C 46:9). Nor is this primarily for those few in deliberate noncompliance, including some who cast off on intellectual and behavioral bungee cords in search of new sensations, only to be jerked about by the old heresies and the old sins.

Instead, these comments are for the essentially "honorable" members who are skimming over the surface instead of deepening their discipleship and who are casually engaged rather than "anxiously engaged" (D&C 76:75; 58:27). Though nominal in their participation, their reservations and hesitations inevitably show through. They may even pass through our holy temples, but, alas, they do not let the holy temples pass through them.

Characteristics of casual disciples

Such members accept callings but not all of the accompanying responsibilities; hence, their Church chores must often be done by those already "anxiously engaged." Some regard themselves as merely "resting" in between Church callings. But we are never in between as to this soaring call from Jesus: "What manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27; see also Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48). It is never safe to rest regarding that calling! In fact, being "valiant" in one's testimony of Jesus includes striving to

become more like Him in mind, heart, and attributes (D&C 76:79). Becoming this manner of men and women is the ultimate expression of orthodoxy!

All are free to choose, of course, and we would not have it otherwise. Unfortunately, however, when some choose slackness, they are choosing not only for themselves, but for the next generation and the next. Small equivocations in parents can produce large deviations in their children! Earlier generations in a family may have reflected dedication, while some in the current generation evidence equivocation. Sadly, in the next, some may choose dissension as erosion takes its toll.

While casual members are not unrighteous, they often avoid appearing to be too righteous by seeming less committed than they really are—an ironic form of hypocrisy.

Some of these otherwise honorable members mistakenly regard the Church as an institution, but not as a kingdom. They know the doctrines of the kingdom, but more as a matter of recitation than of real comprehension.

Casual members are usually very busy with the cares and the things of the world—much as honorable Amulek once was. Called many times, he would not hear. He really knew concerning the truths of the gospel, but Amulek would not acknowledge that he knew (see Alma 10:4–6).

One common characteristic of the honorable but slack is their disdain for the seemingly unexciting duties of discipleship, such as daily prayer, regular reading of the scriptures, attendance at sacrament meeting, paying a full tithe, and participating in the holy temples. Such disdain is especially dangerous in today's world of raging relativism and of belching sensualism, a world in which, if many utter the name of Deity at all, it is only as verbal punctuation or as an expression of exclamation, not adoration!

Striving for greater consecration

In contrast, those sincerely striving for greater consecration neither cast off their commitments nor the holy garment. They avoid obscenity, keep the law of chastity, pay their tithes, and love and serve their spouses and children. As good neighbors, they "bear one another's burdens," "mourn with those that mourn," "comfort those . . . in need of comfort," and valiantly "stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:8-9).

When the determination is first made to begin to be more spiritually settled, there is an initial vulnerability; it is hard to break with the past. But once we begin, we see how friends who would hold us back spiritually are not true friends at all. Any chiding from them reflects either resentment or unconscious worry that somehow they are being deserted. In any attempt to explain to them, our tongue is able to speak only "the smallest part" (Alma 26:16). We continue to care for them, but we care for our duty to God more. Brigham Young counseled candidly: "Some do not understand duties which do not coincide with their natural feelings and affections. . . . There are duties which are above affection" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:65).

Consecrate all, not a portion

Likewise it is only fair to warn that any determination to seek greater consecration will soon expose what we yet lack, a painful but necessary thing. Remember the rich, righteous young man who was told by Jesus, "One thing thou lackest?" (Mark 10:21). Ananias and Sapphira, otherwise good members of the Church, "kept back" a portion instead of consecrating their all (see Acts 5:1-11). Some would never sell Jesus for thirty pieces, but they would not give Him their all either!

Unfortunately, we tend to think of consecration only in terms of property and money. But there are so many ways of keeping back part. One might be giving of money and time and yet hold back a significant portion of himself. One might share talents publicly yet privately retain a particular pride. One might hold back from kneeling before God's throne and yet bow to a particular gallery of peers. One might accept a Church calling but have his heart more set on maintaining a certain role in the world.

Still others find it easier to bend their knees than their minds. Exciting exploration is preferred to plodding implementation; speculation seems more fun than consecration, and so does trying to soften the hard doctrines instead of submitting to them. Worse still, by not obeying, these few members lack real knowing (see John 7:17). Lacking real knowing, they cannot defend their faith and may become critics instead of defenders!

A few of the latter end up in the self-reinforcing and self-congratulating Hyde Park corner of the Church, which they provincially mistake for the whole of the Church, as if London's real Hyde Park corner were Parliament, Whitehall, Buckingham Palace, and all of England combined!

Consecration may bring challenges

Only greater consecration will cure ambivalence and casualness in any of us! As already noted, the tutoring challenges arising from increased consecration may be severe but may reflect the divine mercy necessary to induce further consecration (see Helaman 12:3). If we have grown soft, hard times may be necessary. Deprivation may prepare us for further consecration, though we shudder at the thought. If we are too easily contented, God may administer a dose of divine discontent. His long-suffering thus becomes very

necessary to maximize our agency and development. But He is not an indulgent Father.

We "cannot bear all things now," but the Lord "will lead [us] along," as we "give place" in our thoughts and schedules and "give away" our sins, which are the only ways we can begin to make room to receive all that God can give us (D&C 78:18; 50:4; Alma 32:27, 28; 22:18).

Each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus!

Consecration requires surrender

Consecration is the only surrender which is also a victory. It brings release from the raucous, overpopulated cell block of selfishness and emancipation from the dark prison of pride. Yet instead of striving for greater consecration, it is so easy to go on performing casually in halfhearted compliance as if hoping to "ride to paradise on a golf cart" (Henry Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979], p. 125).

But is being consecrated and "swallowed up" a threat to our individuality? (see Mosiah 15:7). No! Heavenly Father is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new and the real self. It is not a question of losing our identity but of finding our true identity!

When at last we are truly pointed homeward, then the world's pointing fingers of scorn can better be endured. As we come to know to Whom we belong, the other forms of belonging cease to mean very much. Likewise, as Jesus begins to have a real place in our lives, we are much less concerned with losing our places in the world. When our minds really catch hold of the significance of Jesus' atonement, the world's hold on us loosens (see Alma 36:18-19).

Increased consecration is not so much a demand for more hours of

Church work as it is for more awareness of Whose work this really is! For now, consecration may not require giving up worldly possessions so much as being less possessed by them.

Obedience is emancipating

Only when things begin to come into focus "with an eye single" do we see "things as they really are"! (Jacob 4:13). What a view awaits! Only to the degree that we respond to life's temptations as Jesus did, who "gave no heed unto them," will we be "free"—free at last! (D&C 20:22; John 8:32).

True orthodoxy thus brings safety and felicity! It is not only correctness but happiness. Strange, isn't it, even the very word *orthodoxy* has fallen into disfavor with some? As society gets more and more flaky, a few rush forward to warn shrilly against orthodoxy!

Remember how, with Pharaoh's angry army in hot pursuit, ancient Israel aligned themselves with the Lord's instructions? Moses stretched forth his hand and the Red Sea parted. With towering walls of water on each side, Israel walked through the narrow passage obediently, and no doubt quickly! There were no warnings about conforming on that day!

There are passages ahead which will require similar obedience, as prophets lead the "men [and women] of Christ" in a straight and narrow course (see Helaman 3:29).

Becoming more like Jesus in thought and behavior is not grinding and repressing, but emancipating and discovering! Unorthodoxy in behavior and intellect is just the opposite. A little pornography may not only lead to child and spouse abuse, but it slowly sucks out the marrow of self-esteem. A little tendency to gossip can lead not only to bearing serious false witness, but more often to malicious whispers which, unfortunately, "memory will warehouse as a shout" (C. S. Lewis,

The Quotable Lewis, ed. Owen Barfield and Jerry Root [Wheaton, Ill.: Tindale Publications, 1989], p. 425). A little criticism of the Brethren, which seems harmless enough, may not only damage other members but can even lead to one's setting himself up as a substitute "light unto the world" (2 Nephi 26:29). Yes, happily, some such prodigals do come back, but they usually walk alone, unaccompanied by those they once led astray!

"Settle this in your hearts"

Jesus counseled His disciples, "Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you" (JST, Luke 14:28). Getting thus settled precedes consecration. The Prophet Joseph Smith said gospel knowledge "does away with darkness, suspense and doubt" and that "there is no pain so awful as that of suspense" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 288). Being settled keeps us from responding to every little ripple of dissent as if it were a tidal wave. We are to be disciples, not oscillators, like a "reed shaken with the wind" (Matthew 11:7). More members need the immense relief and peace which can come from being "settled," without which those individuals will be like "the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Isaiah 57:20).

There is another special reason to become settled: we will live in a time in which "all things shall be in commotion" (D&C 88:91; 45:26). The uncertainties, upheavals, and topsy-turviness of today's world will be such that those who vacillate and equivocate will be tossed about by severe turbulence.

Press forward as Jesus did

Finally, if we shrink from deeper consecration, then we are not worthy of Him who, for our sake, refused to "shrink" in the midst of His deepening agony during the Atonement! (D&C 19:18). Instead, Jesus pressed forward, giving His all and completing His marvelous "preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:19).

Consider, what if Jesus' Mortal Messiahship had consisted only of remarkable sermons? Or was further enhanced with healings and other miracles—but without Gethsemane's and Calvary's awful but consecrated hours of the Atonement? How then would we regard Jesus' ministry? Where would mankind be?

Brothers and sisters, whatever we embrace instead of Jesus and His work will keep us from qualifying to enter His kingdom and therefore from being embraced by Him (see Mormon 6:17).

May we get settled and prepare now for that marvelous moment then, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

The choir sang "More Things Are Wrought by Prayer."

President Monson

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Twelve, has just addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "More Things Are Wrought by Prayer."

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will conclude this session by singing "We Have Partaken of Thy Love." The benediction will be offered by Elder Douglas H. Smith, who was released yesterday as a member of the Seventy.

This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

Reading of the Savior's miracles

Almost forty years ago I received an invitation to meet with President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., a Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, a statesman of towering stature, and a scholar of international renown. My profession then was in the field of printing and publishing. President Clark made me welcome in his office and then produced from his old rolltop desk a large sheaf of handwritten notes, many of them made when he was a law student long years before. He proceeded to outline for me his goal of producing a harmony of the Gospels. This goal was achieved with his monumental work *Our Lord of the Gospels*.

Recently I took down from my library shelf a personally inscribed, leather-bound copy of this classic treatment of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. As I perused the many pages, I paused at the section entitled "The Miracles of Jesus." I remembered as though it were yesterday President Clark asking me to read to him several of these accounts while he sat back in his large leather chair and listened. This was a day in my life never to be forgotten.

President Clark asked me to read aloud the account found in Luke concerning the man filled with leprosy. I proceeded to read:

"And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

"And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him" (Luke 5:12-13).

He asked that I continue reading from Luke concerning the man afflicted with palsy and the enterprising manner in which he was presented for the attention of the Lord:

"And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

"And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

"And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke 5:18-20).

There followed snide comments from the Pharisees concerning who had the right to forgive sins. Jesus silenced their bickering by saying:

"Whether [it] is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.

"And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God" (Luke 5:23-25).

President Clark removed from his pocket a handkerchief and wiped the tears from his eyes. He commented, "As we grow older, tears come more frequently." After a few words of good-bye, I departed from his office, leaving him alone with his thoughts and his tears.

Bearing tragedy and adversity

As I reflect on this experience, my heart fills with gratitude to the Lord for His divine intervention to relieve the suffering, heal the sick, and raise the dead. I grieve, however, for the many, similarly afflicted, who knew not how to find the Master, to learn of His teachings, and to become the beneficiaries of His power. I remember that President Clark himself suffered

heartache and pain in the tragic death at Pearl Harbor of his son-in-law, Mervyn S. Bennion, captain of the battleship *West Virginia*. That day there had been no ram in the thicket, no steel to stop the shrapnel, no miracle to heal the wounds of war. But faith never wavered, and answered prayers provided the courage to carry on.

So it is today. In our lives, sickness comes to loved ones, accidents leave their cruel marks of remembrance, and tiny legs that once ran are imprisoned in a wheelchair.

Mothers and fathers who anxiously await the arrival of a precious child sometimes learn that all is not well with this tiny infant. A missing limb, sightless eyes, a damaged brain, or the term "Down's syndrome" greets the parents, leaving them baffled, filled with sorrow, and reaching out for hope.

There follows the inevitable blaming of oneself, the condemnation of a careless action, and the perennial questions: Why such a tragedy in our family? Why didn't I keep her home? If only he hadn't gone to that party. How did this happen? Where was God? Where was a protecting angel? *If, why, where, how*—those recurring words do not bring back the lost son, the perfect body, the plans of parents, or the dreams of youth. Self-pity, personal withdrawal, or deep despair will not bring the peace, the assurance, or help which are needed. Rather, we must go forward, look upward, move onward, and rise heavenward.

It is imperative that we recognize that whatever has happened to us has happened to others. They have coped, and so must we. We are not alone. Heavenly Father's help is near.

Job's faith and courage

Perhaps no other has been so afflicted as the man Job, who was described as "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed

evil" (Job 1:1). He prospered by every measurement. In other words, he had it all made. Then came the loss of literally everything: his wealth, his family, his health. At one time the suggestion was made that he "curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). Job's summation of his faith, after ordeals demanded of few others, is a testimony of truth, a proclamation of courage, and a declaration of trust:

"Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book!

"That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

"Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:23-27).

Let me share with you a brief look into the lives of others, to learn that after the tears of a day of despair, a night of sorrow, "joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

Eve Gail McDaniel's accomplishment

Just two years ago, Eve Gail McDaniel and her parents, Bishop and Sister Jerry Lee McDaniel of the Reedsport Oregon Ward, came to my office and presented as a contribution to the Church Historical Department a copy of the Book of Mormon which Eve had written, by hand, and placed in three large binders. Eve, then twenty-eight, was born September 18, 1962. A case of meningitis when she was a baby resulted in brain damage. She cannot read, but she copied the entire Book of Mormon, letter by letter, over a period of about eighteen months. In doing so, she learned to recognize certain words and phrases, such as *commandments* and *nevertheless*. Her favorite—and she glowed as

she repeated the phrase—was “And it came to pass.” Eve reflected the joy of accomplishment, even the smile of success. Her parents rejoiced in her gladness of heart and buoyancy of spirit. Heaven was very near.

Angelic handicapped children

On another occasion, near the Christmas season, I had the opportunity to meet in the Church Office Building with a group of handicapped children. There were about sixty in the group. My heart literally melted as I met with them. They sang for me “I Am a Child of God,” “Rudolph, the Red-nosed Reindeer,” and “As I Have Loved You, Love One Another.” There was such an angelic expression on their faces and such a simple trust expressed in their comments that I felt I was on sacred ground. They presented to me a beautiful booklet in which each one had prepared a special page illustrating those blessings for which he or she was most thankful at Christmastime. I commend the many teachers and families who work behind the scenes in bringing a measure of comfort, purpose, and joy to these special children. They brightened my entire day.

The Shumways rise above adversity

Several years ago, Brigham Young University honored with a presidential citation Sarah Bagley Shumway, a truly remarkable woman of our time. The citation contained the words: “It is often within our homes and among our own family members that the eternally significant—but usually unheralded—dramas of daily living occur. The people in these plain but important places bring stability to the present and promise to the future. Their lives are filled with struggle and deep feeling as they face circumstances that rarely fit neatly within the formulae of plays, films and newscasts. But their victories,

however slight, strengthen the boundaries through which the history of future generations must pass.”

Sarah married H. Smith Shumway, then her “friend and sweetheart of nine years,” in 1948. The courtship was longer than most because Smith, an infantry officer in World War II, was blinded and severely wounded by a land-mine explosion in the advance on Paris, France. During his long rehabilitation, Sarah learned braille so that she could correspond with him in privacy. She couldn’t tolerate the idea of others reading her letters aloud to the man she loved.

Something of the spirit of this young couple comes to us in the simple candor of Smith Shumway’s proposal of marriage. Finally home in Wyoming after the war, he told Sarah, “If you will drive the car and sort the socks and read the mail, I will do the rest.” She accepted the offer.

Years of study led to a successful career, eight accomplished children, a host of grandchildren, and lives of service. The Shumways, along life’s pathway, have faced problems of a child with severe deafness, a missionary son developing cancer, and a twin granddaughter injured at birth.

My family and I had the privilege to meet the entire Shumway clan at Aspen Grove a year ago. It was our joy to be with them. Each wore an identifying T-shirt on which was a map depicting the location of each child and family, along with the names of all. Brother Shumway, with justifiable pride, pointed to the location on his shirt of his precious ones and beamed the smile of gladness. Only then did I ponder that he had never seen any of his children or grandchildren. Or had he? While his eyes had never beheld them, in his heart he knew them and he loved them.

At an evening of entertainment, the Shumway family was on the stage at Aspen Grove. The children were asked, “What was it like growing up in a

household with a sightless father?" One daughter smiled and said, "When we were little, occasionally we felt Daddy should not have too much dessert at dinner, so without telling him, we would trade our smaller helping with his larger one. Maybe he knew, but he never complained."

One child touched our hearts when she recounted, "When I was about five years old, I remember my father holding my hand and walking me around the neighborhood, and I never realized he was blind because he talked about the birds and other things. I always thought he held my hand because he loved me more than other fathers loved their children."

Today Brother Shumway is a patriarch. Who would you guess learned typing skills so as to be able to type the many blessings he gives? You're correct: his beloved wife, Sarah.

Smith and Sarah Shumway and their family are examples of rising above adversity and sorrow, overcoming the tragedy of war-inflicted impairment, and walking bravely the higher roadway of life.

The smile that shines through tears

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the poetess, wrote:

It is easy enough to be pleasant,
When life flows by like a song,
But the man worth while is one who
will smile,
When everything goes dead wrong.
For the test of the heart is trouble,
And it always comes with the years,
And the smile that is worth the
praises of earth
Is the smile that shines through tears.
["Worth While"]

Melissa Engle's triumph and miracle

May I conclude with the inspiring example of Melissa Engle of West

Valley, Utah. Melissa is featured in the August 1992 issue of the *New Era*. She tells her own story:

"When I was born I only had a thumb on my right hand because the umbilical cord got wrapped around my fingers and [severed them]. My dad wanted to find something I could do to strengthen my hand and make it useful. Playing the violin seemed like a natural because I wouldn't have to finger with both hands, like you would with a flute. . . .

"I've been playing for about eight years now. I take private lessons, and I have to work at things like a paper route to help pay for them. I get to [my violin] lessons by riding a bus across town. . . .

"A highlight [of my life] was Interlochen, located on a lake in Michigan, one of the best music camps in the world for [youth]. I sent in my application for the eight weeks of intensive music training and couldn't believe I [was] accepted.

"The only problem was money. It costs thousands of dollars, and there was no way [I could] make that much before the deadline. So I prayed and prayed, and about a week before I had to send in the money, I was called into the office of a man who had a grant for someone with a handicap who was pursuing the arts. That, to me, was a miracle. . . . I'm really grateful for it" ("Something You Really Love," *New Era*, Aug. 1992, pp. 30-31).

Melissa, when she received the grant, turned to her mother, who had been anxious not to see her daughter disappointed and had thus attempted to curb her enthusiasm and hope, and said, "Mother, I told you Heavenly Father answers prayers, for look how He has answered mine."

He that notes a sparrow's fall had fulfilled a child's dream, answered a child's prayer.

God's promises to those who suffer

To all who have suffered silently from sickness, to you who have cared for those with physical or mental impairment, who have borne a heavy burden day by day, year by year, and to you noble mothers and dedicated fathers—I salute you and pray God's blessings to ever attend you. To the children, particularly those who cannot run and play and frolic, come the reassuring words: "Dearest children, God is near you, Watching o'er you day and night" (*Hymns*, no. 96).

There will surely come that day, even the fulfillment of the precious promise from the Book of Mormon:

"The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame. . . .

"And then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God" (Alma 40:23, 25).

From the Psalm echoes the assurance:

"My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. . . .

"He that keepeth thee will not slumber.

"Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:2-4).

Count your blessings

Through the years the Latter-day Saints have taken comfort from the favorite hymn remembered from our youth:

When upon life's billows you are
tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking
all is lost,
Count your many blessings; name
them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the
Lord has done. . . .

Are you ever burdened with a load
of care?

Does the cross seem heavy you are
called to bear?

Count your many blessings; ev'ry
doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days
go by. . . .

So amid the conflict, whether great
or small,

Do not be discouraged; God is over
all.

Count your many blessings; angels
will attend,

Help and comfort give you to your
journey's end.

[*Hymns*, no. 241]

To any who from anguish of heart and sadness of soul have silently asked, "Heavenly Father, are you really there? . . . Do you hear and answer every . . . prayer?" (*Children's Songbook*, p. 12), I bear to you my witness that He is there. He does hear and answer every prayer. His Son, the Christ, burst the bands of our earthly prisons. Heaven's blessings await us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Tabernacle Choir sang "We Have Partaken of Thy Love."

Elder Douglas H. Smith offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, Octo-

ber 4, 1992. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Richard L. Elliott at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks as the meeting began:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson is watching this session in his apartment. We send our love to him.

To those in the Assembly Hall, we note that Elders Richard G. Scott, Jacob de Jager, and Jack H. Goasland are seated on the stand.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and accompanied by

Richard Elliott, will provide the music for this session.

We shall open with the choir singing "High on the Mountain Top." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Glen L. Rudd, who was released yesterday as a member of the Seventy.

The choir sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Glen L. Rudd offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "He, Watching over Israel," and Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "He, Watching over Israel."

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Seek learning by study and by faith

I am grateful for the power of the choir, the power of music to introduce a spirit of reverence and worship.

We are counseled to "seek . . . diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118).

The words *study* and *faith* each portray a type of education. First, we are commanded to "teach one another the *doctrine* of the kingdom. Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in

doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God" (D&C 88:77-78; italics added).

And we are also "to obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion" (D&C 93:53; see also 88:79).

The Church must concentrate on moral and spiritual education; we may encourage secular education but not necessarily provide it.

The spirit of gathering

There is much said in the scriptures about the gathering of the Saints.

In the early days the call went out to converts all over the world to gather to Zion. And they came, first as a trickle and then as a stream. The Zion to which they came was under terrible persecution and was greatly strengthened by their very numbers.

Because there were no public schools, the Church opened schools. Even in our own generation, schools have been established where there were none.

Something of the spirit of gathering touched our schools. I can remember, as supervisor of seminaries, attending stake conferences with the General Authorities to recruit students for our Church schools.

In an area conference held in Mexico City in 1972, Bruce R. McConkie said:

"[The] revealed words speak of . . . there being congregations of . . . covenant people of the Lord *in every nation, speaking every tongue, and among every people* when the Lord comes again. . . .

"The place of gathering for the Mexican Saints is in Mexico; the place of gathering for the Guatemalan Saints is in Guatemala; the place of gathering for the Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; and so it goes throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth. . . . Every nation is the gathering place for its own people" (in Conference Report, Mexico and Central America Area Conference 1972, p. 45; italics added).

The following April, President Harold B. Lee quoted those words in general conference and, in effect, announced that the pioneering phase of gathering was now over. The gathering is now to be out of the world into the Church in every nation (see Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 7; or *Ensign*, July 1973, pp. 4-5).

As public schools became available, most of the Church schools were

closed. At once, seminaries and institutes of religion were established in many nations. Some few schools are left over from that pioneering period, Brigham Young University and Ricks College among them.

Now BYU is full to the brim and running over. It serves an ever-decreasing percentage of our college-age youth at an ever-increasing cost per student. Every year a larger number of qualified students must be turned away simply because there is no room for them.

Leaders and members plead for us to duplicate these schools elsewhere. But we cannot, nor should we, attempt to provide secular education for all members of the Church worldwide. Our youth have no choice but to attend other schools.

Those who cannot attend Church schools have been counseled by the First Presidency to gather where there is an institute of religion. The institute program will be greatly enhanced for your benefit.

Some of you live in countries where schooling is relatively easy to obtain. Others must struggle simply to learn to read and to write because schools, or the means to attend them, are beyond your reach.

Some of you require special education because of learning disabilities or limitations in what you can hear or see or how you can move about.

For many it is a matter of money. The economic condition of your family or your country makes getting an education seem like an impossible dream.

No respecter of persons

You who find schooling easily available must remember this: "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35; see also Moroni 8:12; D&C 1:35; 38:16).

The Lord does not, and the Church cannot, admit to favoritism toward those who are able to obtain professional degrees as compared to those who seek training in a practical field or those who have little or no schooling at all.

Unless you have the vision of the ever-growing millions of members all over the world, you may not understand why the Brethren make the decisions we make concerning Church schools.

The end of a tradition

This summer at a family reunion, Sister Packer and I announced the end of a family tradition. Our ten children and some of our grandchildren have attended BYU. It will not be possible for all of our grandchildren to follow that tradition.

We advised them to follow the counsel of the Brethren. If they cannot attend a Church school, and this will be increasingly the case, they should gather with other members of the Church at a school where an institute of religion is available to them. Then, as they study secular subjects, they may learn the "covenants and church articles" as the scriptures tell us we should (D&C 42:13).

They will not be judged on how many degrees they hold or how extensive their schooling may be, but on how well educated they are in those things which are of eternal value.

We told our family that we will be quite as proud of them learning a trade as we would a profession. We will be equally pleased with them if they choose vocational schools and make their living with their hands.

After all, education continues as long as we live. If there is ever an end to secular learning, surely there is no end to spiritual learning.

The Lord's work moves forward on the strength of those who labor in

the workaday world: the apprentice, artisan, journeyman, laborer, office worker, waitress, and, in a class by itself, homemaker.

A warning

We must not ignore these warnings in the Book of Mormon:

"The people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and *their chances for learning*; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive *great learning* because of their riches.

"Some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceedingly humble; . . .

"And thus there became a great inequality . . . insomuch that the church began to be broken up" (3 Nephi 6:12-14; italics added).

Jacob warned us of those who "when they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish." He added, "But to be learned is good *if they hearken unto the counsels of God*" (2 Nephi 9:28-29; italics added).

A second tuition

For those privileged to attend a Church school, there is a tuition other than money which we must require of you—a tuition of conduct and performance. Students who enroll in Church schools do so after an interview with their bishop and, beginning this year, with their stake president. They must commit to a standard of conduct consistent with faithful Church membership.

Occasionally a bishop will interview one who easily qualifies scholastically but who has not kept the standards of the Church. Perhaps the bishop will reason, "The atmosphere at

a Church school will reform this one." Bishops should not do that. It is not fair to the literally thousands who are totally faithful but must be turned away because there is no room.

And if, while enrolled, a student is found to be transgressing or in violation of standards pledged at the time of enrollment, however hard it may be upon the bishop, the student, or the parents, continued enrollment at a Church school must be called into question.

Dedicated faculty

Our faculties and staff are a miracle—men and women who have the highest academic degrees, many of them having been acclaimed for outstanding achievement. They are at once men and women of humility and faith.

We are grateful for teachers who will challenge students to high scholarship but would not even think of undermining testimony or acting in any way subversive to the progress of the Church and kingdom of God.

Because of such quality teachers, our schools can be unsurpassed in meeting the standards set by those who accredit schools, yet unique in mission, and contribute much to the Church even though a growing number of eligible students cannot enroll.

Because salaries of faculty and staff are paid from the tithes of the Church, there is a standard for them as well. A Church university is not established to provide employment for a faculty, and the personal scholarly research is not a dominant reason for funding a university.

The educational Mount Everest mentioned by President Kimball will not be achieved solely through the prominence of the faculty (see "BYU Inaugurates Ninth President," *Church News*, 22 Nov. 1980, p. 4). It will be

reached through the achievement of the students.

The purpose

Our purpose is to produce students who have that rare and precious combination of a superb secular education, complemented by faith in the Lord, a knowledge of the doctrines He has revealed, and a testimony that they are true.

For those very few whose focus is secular and who feel restrained as students or as teachers in such an environment, there are at present in the United States and Canada alone over 3,500 colleges and universities where they may find the kind of freedom they value. And we are determined to honor the trust of the tithe payers of the Church.

Students at other schools soon learn that some professors deliberately undermine faith and challenge your moral and spiritual values. You in turn must be free, even in our own schools, to return that challenge and defend your right to believe in God, to keep the covenants you have made through baptism and which you renew through the sacrament.

A dream worth pursuing

We encourage our youth in every country to get an education even if at times it seems hopeless. With determination and faith in the Lord, you will be blessed with success. It is a dream well worth pursuing.

On one occasion I spent a few minutes with a young man who had left high school and entered the military. Now he was trying to decide what to do with his life. I encouraged him to return to finish high school.

I did not provide him with money; the Church had no school for him, not even a scholarship. In those few minutes I simply taught him that self-reliance which is such a part of our

way of life. Even though over age, he returned to finish high school, and now he provides for his family and encourages his children in their search for truth.

Follow the leaders

Since I touched upon the subject of the gathering of the Saints, I must read a verse from the Doctrine and Covenants:

"I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11).

There are some among us now who have *not* been regularly ordained by the heads of the Church and who tell of impending political and economic chaos, the end of the world—something of the "sky is falling, chicken licken" of the fables. They are misleading members to gather to colonies or cults.

Those deceivers say that the Brethren do not know what is going on in the world or that the Brethren approve of their teaching but do not wish to speak of it over the pulpit. Neither is true. The Brethren, by virtue of traveling constantly everywhere on earth, certainly know what is going on and by virtue of prophetic insight are able to read the signs of the times.

Do not be deceived by them—those deceivers. If there is to be any gathering, it will be announced by those who have been regularly ordained and who are known to the Church to have authority.

Come away from any others. Follow your leaders, who have been duly ordained and have been publicly sustained, and you will not be led astray.

The Lord said:

"The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

"Light and truth forsake that evil one. . . .

"I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:36–40).

God grant that as a church and as families and as individuals we can bring up our children, our youth, in light and truth and that they may receive the testimony of Him of whom we bear witness—our Redeemer, our Savior, even Jesus Christ—for which I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder David B. Haight, also a member of the Twelve, and he will be followed by Sister Betty Jo Jepsen, First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency.

Elder David B. Haight

Forever I will gratefully acknowledge our Lord's blessings to me, which I do again at this time.

As directed, we have assembled "to worship the King, the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 14:16) and to be built up in our faith and desires for righteousness. We testify to one another of our Master and receive counsel from those

appointed to administer the affairs of His kingdom here on earth.

Conferences of this Church are far more than a convention where views are expressed or policies adopted by vote, but they are assemblies where the mind and the will of the Lord is manifested by His servants. The Church is not a democracy—it is a kingdom.

Warning against moral decline

Thoughtful, concerned people in many areas and nations of the world, as well as Latter-day Saints, are concerned with the growing pressures and influence of a disturbing cultural movement downgrading social and religious values and standards of morality. Each succeeding generation has weakened or lessened previously held Christ-centered ideals and values.

Michael Hirsley, who writes for the *Chicago Tribune*, recently observed that predicting America's religious future is risky business—that "the nation's most widely accepted prejudice is anti-Christian" (*The Billings Gazette*, 16 May 1992).

The actual signs of the times are threatening. Where will they lead? I, for one, am concerned.

Previous periods of moral decline brought forth divine attention. In past times, as at present, prophets of God have delivered a voice of warning. The Lord said to Ezekiel, "I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word . . . , and give them my warning from me" (Ezekiel 3:17).

From what we are witnessing happening in the world around us, I am impressed today to raise a voice of warning for mankind to prepare—by repentance—for the great day of the Lord (see D&C 1:11–12).

Parable of the squirrel and the dog

I am indebted to Elder Dallin Oaks for an account, a modern-day parable which I refer to as the parable of the bushy-tailed squirrel, the tree, and the dog, which illustrates my concern:

As two men walked across an eastern university campus, they were attracted by a crowd of people surrounding a large maple tree. As they approached, they noticed that the

crowd was being amused by the antics of a fox-tailed squirrel circling the tree, climbing it, and running back down again. A red Irish setter dog crouched nearby, intently watching the squirrel. Each time the squirrel ran up the tree out of sight, the dog would slowly creep toward the tree. The squirrel paid little attention as the dog crept closer and closer, patiently biding its time. People watching this entertaining drama unfold knew what could happen, but they did nothing until in a flash the dog, catching the squirrel unaware, had it in the grip of his sharp teeth.

The people then rushed forward in horror, forcing the dog's mouth open to rescue the squirrel. It was too late. The squirrel was dead. Anyone could have warned the squirrel or held back the dog. But they had been momentarily amused and had watched silently while evil slowly crept up on good. When they rushed to the defense, it was too late.

We see around us daily that which is portrayed in this parable. We sit idly by, watching as an insidious stream of profanity, vulgarity, and demeaning behavior, a mocking of righteous ideals and principles, invades our homes and lives through most types of media, teaching our children negative values and moral corruption. We then become upset when our children perform differently than we would wish and social behavior continues to deteriorate.

Governments abandoning God's principles

One newspaper headline reads, "The Battle Lines Are Clearly Drawn for America's . . . Cultural War." The article then asks:

"Who determines 'the norms by which we live . . . and govern ourselves' [?]? Who decides what is right and wrong, moral and immoral, beautiful and ugly . . . ? Whose beliefs shall form the basis of law? . . .

"Our [cultural challenge] is about 'who we are' and 'what we believe' " (Patrick J. Buchanan, *Salt Lake Tribune*, 13 Sept. 1992, sec. A, p. 15).

Cal Thomas of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that some see "the state as either equal or superior to God in human affairs. Theirs is an uninvolved god who trickles down blessings when we want them, but whose commands are to be ignored when he asks us to do something we don't want to do.

"The fact is that our laws came from a standard of righteousness that was thought to promote the common good, or 'general welfare.' . . . That standard has been abandoned as biblical illiteracy has flourished, thanks in part to the state's antipathy toward immutable and eternal truths.

"William Penn warned, 'If we are not governed by God, then we will be ruled by tyrants.' One's view of God and his requirements for our personal lives determines one's view of the role of the state in public life. . . .

"Benjamin Franklin . . . observed that if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without God's knowledge, 'can an empire rise without his aid?'"

"The late philosopher-theologian Francis Schaeffer wrote that 'God has ordained the state as a *delegated* authority; it is not autonomous. The state is to be an agent of justice, to restrain evil by punishing the wrongdoer, and to protect the good in society. When it does the reverse, it *has no proper authority*. It is then a usurped authority and as such it becomes lawless and is tyranny.' . . .

"This is what the culture war is about. It is a conflict between those who recognize an . . . existing God who has spoken about the order of the universe, the purpose of the state and the plan for individual lives and those who think those instructions are unclear, or open to interpretation, or that God is irrelevant to the debate or doesn't exist and we are on our own. . . .

"[Thirty years ago] students could still pray and read the Bible in school, abortion was illegal and 'gay rights' meant the right to be happy. . . . The issue now is whether we will become our own god" (Cal Thomas, *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 Sept. 1992, sec. A, p. 18).

No wonder Isaiah, speaking under inspiration, declared, "Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

Unchangeable, God-centered principles and ideals adopted by our Founding Fathers not only form the basis of freedom but are the rivets that hold it together. There is a vast difference between principles that are unchangeable and preferences where there is a choice.

There should be no question about our standards, our beliefs—about who we are!

Faith and courage of pioneers

Eyewitnesses of participants declare of the faith and courage of the converts who left their homes in America or Scotland or Sweden, as well as their families and material possessions, to join with Brigham Young and thousands of pioneers in establishing the Zion Joseph spoke about in the far west. Joseph Smith—their prophet, teacher, and friend—had seen God! He saw the living Christ! Few of all ever created have ever glimpsed such a vision—Peter, James, and John; Moses; Abraham; and Adam—only a few, ever. Joseph Smith belonged to an elite group who had been tried, trusted, and found true. He was one of those described by Abraham as one of the "noble and great ones" (Abraham 3:22) who became one of the Lord's choice servants while here on earth.

Courageous and faithful people by the tens of thousands heard and believed the glorious message of a new hope for a better way of life. Did they expect to find riches at the end of the

newly found rainbow? A life of comfort and ease? To the contrary! There was to be heartache, cold, pain, and hunger—with insults and injury, including tragic loss of life. It was the assurance they knew and felt of divine direction that expanded their faith to withstand such hardships.

Men and women of strong physical and spiritual strength conquered the wilderness and established what Isaiah saw seven hundred years before the birth of Christ when he wrote:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the . . . Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2–3).

What was their purpose? What was their motive? Not for the gold in California, but that they might worship God Almighty according to the dictates of their conscience. Such was their motive—to establish the Lord’s Church and teach the eternal principles revealed to their prophet, Joseph Smith. They had risked everything they had and were willing to endure any hardship. The recorded history of their journey and of the early beginnings in this valley is one of civilization’s finest hours.

There was little inviting in this endeavor except faith. In fact, they had been warned that nothing would grow; now farms, cities, and towns flourish. They were builders, not destroyers. They had a majestic dream of great things and lofty ideals—of homes and gardens, temples and meetinghouses, schools and universities. It would take work—hard work—and everyone’s best efforts to make it happen. They became experienced colonizers and bene-

factors to our nation and to humanity. Many of us are products of that early inspired colonization—its teachings and blessings of the value of hard work coupled with desire and faith for a better way of life.

The depth of their faith in a living God and their loyalty and obedience, as well as their solid foundation of righteousness, inspire us today. They believed that they had started on their way toward perfection—a process to be pursued laboriously throughout a lifetime. President Kimball declared, “[But] to each person is given a pattern—obedience through suffering, and perfection through obedience” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 168).

Their pathway was straight, uncluttered, unbending: they were to live the commandments of God and endure to the end. Today we know how we should live. We know right from wrong.

Teach children the Lord’s ways

We are to teach and train our children in the ways of the Lord. Children should not be left to their own devices in learning character and family values, or in listening to and watching unsupervised music or television or movies as a means of gaining knowledge and understanding as to how to live their lives!

The Lord has clearly commanded that parents are to teach their children to do good (see Alma 39:12) and to teach them “the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, [or] the sin [shall] be upon the heads of the parents. . . .

“And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:25, 28).

“And ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked;

neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God. . . .

"But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another" (Mosiah 4:14-15).

Obedience will protect us

A concerned God—by His own finger—wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. They represent the basic law of the Almighty and have formed the underlying elements of civil and religious law ever since.

The Sermon on the Mount, given by our Lord Himself, details principles and instructions of heavenly origin.

Both of these divine statements of instruction—principles of which are so effectively taught in much greater detail in the Book of Mormon and

the Bible and our other scriptures—if obeyed, will strengthen mothers and fathers and sons and daughters, who all have equal duty to study the scriptures and gain strength and understanding of eternal things.

The only sure way to protect ourselves and our families from the onslaught of the teachings of the world is to commit to live the commandments of God; to attend our Church meetings, where we can learn and be strengthened in our testimonies and partake of the sacrament to renew our covenants; and to prepare ourselves to worthily enter the temple, where we may find a refuge from the world and a place of renewal of our capacity to cope with the evils of the world. I so declare to you as I leave you my witness and testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Sister Betty Jo N. Jepsen

A friend of mine was encouraging her children to get into the car so they would not be late for their Sunday meetings. "Please hurry, Matthew," she said. "I'm coming, I'm coming," came a voice from somewhere in another part of the house. Mother replied, "Yes, and so is Christmas!"

At that moment three-year-old Matthew appeared in the nearby doorway, and he said, "Oh, goody, goody, I just love Christmas." Today I am here to tell you that I just love Christmas too. And one of the wonderful things about being members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that we make the events of the Christmas season a part of our day-to-day living.

Pondering the Savior's birth

As I read the account of the birth of my Savior, I long to have the experi-

ence the Wise Men had—to be led by a star; or to experience what the shepherds did—to be invited to Bethlehem, invited by a choir of angels. I want to kneel at the manger and smell the clean straw and see that tiny baby with His earthly mother, to witness for myself this miracle. I believe that in every mortal there is an instinctive desire to come unto Christ. Perhaps we have a basic human need, because each of us is a child of God, to make that commitment to the spiritual part of our being. We each try to meet this need according to what we know.

As members of His true Church, perhaps we do not need to be taught new things as much as we need to be reminded of what we already know. This is what pondering the birth of our Savior does for all of us. I believe it reminds our mortal minds of things our spirits already know.

The invitation to come unto Christ

In this latter day I have been invited to witness marvelous things for myself. The invitation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Come unto Christ" and "Come back," is meant for each of God's children. This invitation has stood true since Jesus said to His disciples, "Come, follow me" (see Matthew 4:19). Through the dispensations, prophets have issued the same invitation to all who will listen.

The prophet Alma, the son of Alma, carried this important message to the members in Zarahemla who needed to be reminded. The prophet said:

"Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you. . . .

"Yea, come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness" (Alma 5:33, 35).

As a baptized member of the Church, I hear the invitation and I wonder, How do I get there from here? Because I know the Lord intends to include all of us in this invitation, my personal, honest response is the same as my friend Matthew's: "I'm coming." Now what is my duty? Alma reminded the people of Zarahemla of their duty, ending with the important phrase, "Come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness" (Alma 5:35; see also 4:3). By using Alma's counsel as our guide, come with me on a journey to remember what we can do to answer His invitation.

Search the word of God

We can search the word of God. Through studying and pondering the scriptures and the words of the latter-day prophets, we can *feast* upon the words of Christ, and the words will tell us all the things that we should do (see

2 Nephi 32:3). Then we must *nourish* the word and allow it to *take root* (see Alma 32:41-43). After we hearken to the word and hold fast to it, we are promised that temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary will not overpower us (see 1 Nephi 15:24). We will be able to recognize the truth when we hear it just as the shepherds and the Wise Men knew when they were told about the Savior's birth. The scriptures are the word of God and a light to us and the world, and we can follow this light as if it were our guiding star.

Pray

We can pray. We can call upon our Heavenly Father in the name of our Savior. Prayer provides an opportunity for us to express gratitude. Taking an inventory of our blessings fills us with hope. "Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love" (Moroni 7:48).

We can ask for what we need hour by hour and minute by minute. It is possible to have this personal conversation with our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ by kneeling in prayer, just as surely as if we could kneel beside the manger and see the Savior there.

Participate in the saving ordinances

We can participate in the saving ordinances. We are reminded of our baptismal covenants by partaking of the sacrament. The sacrament prayers help us remember the Savior and His goodness. We can live worthy to participate in the temple ordinances. These ordinances are the culminating act of conversion of mortal men and women, and they fulfill that need for an earthly commitment to heavenly knowledge. We can consider our visits to the temple as a personal pilgrimage to a sacred place, as the shepherds must have considered their journey to that humble manger.

Increase our talents

We can increase our talents. These are the gifts we bring. The talents we have come from our Heavenly Father, and to honor Him we can develop and expand them and then return them to Him. All of us possess some talent which we can practice, increase, and offer. Are you regularly practicing your talents? Perhaps your talent is kindness or gratitude. How about being cheerful, helpful, and unselfish? How about practicing that winning smile? The Wise Men brought their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We can bring our talents.

Serve others

We can serve others. Serving others in any way is an indication of our desire to respond to the Savior's invitation to come unto Him. How about a checkup on our service to others? Let's ask ourselves, Will I make that visit to my homebound friend? Will I open my mouth to defend and testify of the truth? Will I give of my worldly goods? Do I share some of my fresh, productive time with my children? Do I serve with joy in my Church calling?

There are times I feel overwhelmed with the calling I have, but I trust in the Lord to give me courage and help me do His will. Likely most of you want to feel secure and safe and quietly live within boundaries which are familiar and comfortable. However, without the risk of new experiences and challenging calls to serve, we fail to grow and are not as useful in the work of building the Lord's kingdom as we need to be. Just as the shepherds left familiar terrain in dark of night for a new experience, we are called to leave secure and comfortable settings to serve and to gain experience.

As if we had trod to Bethlehem

I believe that each of us can recreate that familiar scene in Bethlehem in our own lives. We can have a star to follow just as the Wise Men did. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). The scriptures can light our way, and our testimonies can be a light from within. The voices of angels can be the voices of our beloved prophet and His servants. We can kneel at the feet of our Savior just as literally as the shepherds and the Wise Men, but we do it in prayer. The gifts we bring are our talents. We can shout "Hosanna" like that angelic choir and spread the good news by bearing our testimonies. Each new day is an opportunity to bind ourselves to act according to what we know (see D&C 43:8). By *works of righteousness* we can come unto Christ each day of our lives just as if we had trod in our sandaled feet the rocky path to Bethlehem, holding a staff or bearing gifts.

I pray that Heavenly Father will help us be wise men and wise women—wise enough to accept His invitation, nourish His word, and follow a "straight course to eternal bliss" (Alma 37:44). May we all cheerfully answer, "I'm coming." For I testify that "if a man bringeth forth good works he hearkeneth unto the voice of the good shepherd, and he doth follow him" (Alma 5:41). This I do in the name of the "shepherd [who] hath called after you and is still calling after you" (Alma 5:37), Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Sister Betty Jo Jepsen, first counselor in the Primary General Presidency, and Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve, who spoke just before her.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Nearer, My God,

to Thee.” Elders John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, and Augusto A. Lim, each of whom was sustained as a newly called Seventy, will speak to us following the singing.

The choir and congregation sang
“Nearer, My God, to Thee.”

Elder John E. Fowler

At the beginning of this ministry I gratefully acknowledge your sustaining vote and the continuing love and support of my eternal companion, my children, parents, and family.

A sacred place to declare God's word

As this tabernacle was dedicated on October 9, 1875, President John Taylor read the following words of petition and dedication in Brigham Young's inspired prayer:

“We dedicate and consecrate that portion of this house where our President and thy servants now are, to be a holy and sacred place wherein thy servants may stand forth to declare thy words and minister unto thy people in the name of thy Son for ever. . . .

“May thy holy angels and ministering spirits be in and round about this habitation, that when thy servants are called upon to stand in these sacred places, to minister unto thy people, the visions of eternity may be open to their view, and they may be filled with the spirit and inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the gift and power of God; and let all thy people who hearken to the words of thy servants drink freely at the fountain of the waters of life, that they may become wise unto salvation” (*Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1875, p. 724).

Since the beginning of this latter-day work, those who have stood to address the Saints have done so only after much reflection, contemplation, fasting, and prayer. Surely each speaker has sought for “the visions of eternity” that he might be “filled with the spirit and inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the gift and power of God.” The hope

in each of their hearts, as in mine today, has been to bless the lives of those who will hear and hearken with words that will cause them to become “wise unto salvation.”

Hear the voice of the Lord

Do the members of the Church truly understand the importance of the messages spoken from this pulpit in general conference sessions and other special meetings held in the Tabernacle? Do they understand their responsibility to “hear the voice of the Lord” through the voice of his servants? (D&C 1:14). For certainly, “whether by [the Lord's] voice or by the voice of [his] servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

Do our members understand that the inspired counsel and direction they receive from the leaders of the Church come as a voice of warning from a loving Heavenly Father who knows the various calamities that “should come upon the inhabitants of the earth”? (D&C 1:17). “The anger of the Lord *is* kindled, and his sword *is* bathed in heaven, and it shall fall upon the inhabitants of the earth” (D&C 1:13; italics added).

“Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear” (D&C 1:11).

Spiritual poverty and darkness

Because many “know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12), people of the world are impoverished for the word of God, spoken in clarity and plainness by true servants of the Lord and lived in a

spirit of obedience by his disciples. Spiritually bankrupt lives of individuals and families stand as mute testimony of the futility of attempting to live in today's society without revealed direction from our Heavenly Father through his prophets and Apostles. How much of the evil in the world, how much of the suffering and sorrow and sadness could be eliminated if people would hearken to the inspired instructions of the leaders of the Church spoken from this pulpit.

We are concerned at the number of lives being lived in relative spiritual darkness when available to each are the words of the prophets in our day. And these prophetic utterances become a "lamp unto [the] feet, and a light unto [the] path" of each of Heavenly Father's children willing to listen and then live in conformity with revealed truth (Psalm 119:105).

President Benson has taught, "Success in righteousness, the power to avoid deception and resist temptation, guidance in our daily lives, healing of the soul—these are but a few of the promises the Lord has given to those who will come to His word" ("The Power of the Word," *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82).

Importance of conference messages

Accordingly, with great urgency we invite all to come to the source of the fountain of light and truth, even the revealed word of God as taught in the scriptures and by the present prophets and Apostles and other general leaders of this Church. We invite all to hear and hearken to the messages of this and other recent conferences.

President Benson's recent instruction on this point is timeless: "For the next six months your conference edition of the *Ensign* should stand next to your standard works and be referred to frequently. As my dear friend and brother [President] Harold B. Lee said,

we should let these conference addresses 'be the guide to [our] walk and talk during the next six months. These are the important matters the Lord sees fit to reveal to this people in this day'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 97; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 84).

And hear these inspired statements from three conference addresses by President Marion G. Romney:

"In this conference we have been greatly entertained at times with eloquent oratory. We have been taught by great teachers. We have heard enough truth and direction in this conference to bring us into the presence of God if we would follow it. We have been taken on to the spiritual mountain and shown visions of great glory, but how many of us have heard that voice saying we would have a part therein" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1954, pp. 132-33).

"What we get out of general conference is a build-up of our spirits as we listen to those particular principles and practices of the gospel which the Lord inspires the present leadership of the Church to bring to our attention at the time. . . . He knows why he inspired the other brethren who have talked in this conference to say what they have said. It is our high privilege to hear, through these men, what the Lord would say if he were here. If we do not agree with what they say, it is because we are out of harmony with the Spirit of the Lord" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, pp. 126-27).

"Today the Lord is revealing his will to all the inhabitants of the earth, and to members of the Church in particular, on the issues of this our day through the living prophets, with the First Presidency at the head. What they say as a presidency is what the Lord would say if he were here in person. This is the rock foundation of Mormonism. . . . So I repeat again, what the presidency say as a presidency is what the Lord would say if he were here, and it is scripture. It should

be studied, understood, and followed, even as the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants and other scriptures. Those who follow this course will not interpret what they say as being inspired by political bias or selfishness; neither will they say that the brethren are uninformed as to the circumstances of those affected by their counsel; or that their counsels cannot be accepted because they are not prefaced by the quotation, "Thus saith the Lord."

"Those . . . who will through mighty prayer and earnest study inform themselves as to what these living prophets say, and act upon it, will be visited by the spirit of the Lord and know by the spirit of revelation that they speak the mind and will of the Father" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1945, p. 90).

Prophets' words bless the faithful

What of the volumes of teachings from our beloved prophet and President, Ezra Taft Benson? He is now in the fiftieth year of service as a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Moses, his hands have become somewhat heavy from his ministry (see Exodus 17:11-12), but his words, spoken from this pulpit throughout his inspired ministry, will continue to bless the lives of the faithful.

In an inspired statement from a much earlier day, Elder John A. Widtsoe spoke of the utterances of the men who have stood at the head of the Church:

"When [prophets] speak under the influence of [their] prophetic power, they amplify or add to the body of revelation possessed by the Church. They guide us in the maze of contending forces. Each one . . . uses past revelation and the new, to meet the needs of the people of his day. The discourses of these men . . . should be read and observed as inspired messages for our guidance toward joy on earth and hereafter" (in *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946], pp. xi-xii).

Hearken to the prophets' messages

Therefore we repeat our plea that members and others return to the messages of our beloved prophet. We should read them and heed them. And as we hearken to those messages, along with the other words of the living prophets and leaders spoken from this pulpit, may we become "wise unto salvation."

It is my witness that President Ezra Taft Benson, his Counselors, and the members of the Council of the Twelve are apostles and prophets of the Lamb of God and that this Church, and its work of bringing souls to Christ, rests solidly upon the foundation of the goodness, faith, and unity of our living apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ lives and is the very cornerstone of this work of salvation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jay E. Jensen

I am so thankful for my wife and children. To enjoy their love, confidence, and support is one of the greatest blessings of my life. I express my heartfelt gratitude to parents who loved and lived the gospel, and also to

my brothers and sisters, from whom I have learned so much. I thank my Brethren of the General Authorities for their kind and gentle tutoring. I express my gratitude to all with whom I have worked over the years and to

those who expressed their love and support for me in this new calling. I go forward with faith in the Lord and His leaders, relying on the promises of the Lord that we do not receive callings such as these but what we have been foreordained to the same.

Try the power of the word

I love the scriptures. I testify that they are the word of God. I have likened a verse from Alma to my life: the scriptures have had a great tendency to lead me to do that which is just; yea, they have had a more powerful effect upon my mind than the sword or anything else which has happened unto me; therefore I have tried the virtue of the word of God (see Alma 31:5).

President Benson counseled, "Immerse yourselves in [the scriptures] daily so you will have the power of the Spirit" ("The Power of the Word," *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82).

President Kimball said, "I find that when I get casual in my relationships with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures, the distance narrows and the spirituality returns" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 135).

Remember also the promises

While presiding over a South American mission, I traveled to a distant city to interview missionaries, hold a zone conference, and conduct a district conference. I discovered among the missionaries some problems. In the district conference, other serious problems dealing with members and leaders surfaced. In my mind the negative out-

weighed the positive with both missionaries and members, leaving me frustrated and disappointed. After four days of interviews and meetings, I boarded the airplane with a heavy heart to return home.

I often read scriptures while traveling, and I turned to them for comfort and direction. I read a few of my favorite passages. While turning the pages, I stopped at the third section of the Doctrine and Covenants. I was deeply touched by the first five verses as they applied to my concerns.

When I read a verse, I often insert my name in it. I did so with verse 5 and found the help I needed to remove my gloomy feelings: "Behold, you [Jay Jensen] have been entrusted with these things, but how strict were your commandments; and remember also the promises which were made to you [Jay Jensen]" (D&C 3:5).

The words "remember also the promises" struck me with unusual power. I identified with the Prophet Joseph Smith when he read James 1:5. The words "remember also the promises" seemed to "enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on [them] again and again" (Joseph Smith—History 1:12). During those four days I had focused on nothing but problems. I had not stopped to consider one single promise.

I had with me on the airplane that day a copy of my patriarchal blessing. I read it, noting several marvelous promises. I reviewed in my mind the promises given to me when I was set apart as a mission president. I turned to additional scriptures and pondered the promises in each one. I learned then and have had reinforced to me again and again that when we search the scriptures, we will come to know that "they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled" (D&C 1:37).

Categories of promises

The Lord has promised us specific blessings for reading and studying the scriptures. To identify these promises, a helpful exercise for me has been to make two columns on a sheet of paper and at the top of one column write the words "Promises for This Life" and in the other column the words "Promises for the Next Life." When I find a promise, I note the reference and the promise under one of the two columns.

I have found repeated in different places in the scriptures two major promises for reading and studying the scriptures that pertain to the next life: one is exaltation, and the other is eternal life. For example, Nephi said, "Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, . . . Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20).

The surprising discovery was that most promises that come to us for reading and studying the scriptures pertain to mortality. Three categories of promises to consider are promises of power, promises of increase, and other promises. Time will permit me to cite but a few of these.

Promises of power

Consider the following five promises of power:

1. *Power to overcome evil.* Nephi taught, "Whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, . . . the fiery darts of the adversary [could not] overpower them unto blindness" (1 Nephi 15:24; see also Psalms 17:4; 119:98–101, 104; Helaman 3:29–30).

2. *Power to live righteously.* Alma "did . . . preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty" (Alma 4:19). The Psalmist said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105; see also 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Helaman 15:7–8).

3. *Power to teach convincingly.* Alma and the sons of Mosiah "had searched the scriptures diligently . . . and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God" (Alma 17:2–3; see also 2 Timothy 3:16). To Hyrum Smith the Lord said, "First seek to obtain my word . . . ; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men" (D&C 11:21; see also 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Alma 4:19; 31:5; D&C 84:85).

4. *Power to call down the powers of heaven.* Jacob said that "we search the prophets . . . and our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea" (Jacob 4:6; see also Helaman 10:4–5).

5. *Power to change the heart and disposition.* Samuel taught the Nephites that the Lamanites were "led to believe the holy scriptures, . . . which are written, which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them" (Helaman 15:7; see also 1 Nephi 15:20). Three marvelous promises.

Promises of increase

Consider now the following promises of increase:

1. *Increase in hope and joy.* The Apostle Paul taught that "we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4; see also 1 Nephi 11:25; Jacob 2:8; 4:6; Alma 44:5; D&C 19:23).

2. *Increase in spirituality.* "The preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just" (Alma 31:5; see also 2 Nephi 4:15–16; Moroni 6:4).

3. *Increase in knowledge and understanding.* Nephi taught that "the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3). To Joseph

Smith the Lord said, "The holy scriptures are given of me for your instruction" (D&C 33:16; see also Psalms 19:7; 119:98-101; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Alma 12:10; 17:2-3; D&C 18:34-36).

4. *Increase in the power of discernment.* "The word of God . . . is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil" (Helaman 3:29). "And whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37; see also Hebrews 4:12).

5. *Increase in testimony.* From the Doctrine and Covenants: "You can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words" (D&C 18:36; see also Psalm 19:7).

Other promises

In addition to these general categories of promises of power and increase,

there are other promises, such as "for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8) and as Joseph Smith said, "Faith comes by hearing the word of God" (*History of the Church*, 3:379).

President Howard W. Hunter has said: "When we . . . read and study the scriptures, benefits and blessings of many kinds come to us. This is the most profitable of all study in which we could engage" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 90; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 64).

May we "remember also the promises." I testify that the scriptures are the word of God. I love them. I testify that God lives. He is our Father. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. They appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith just as he said they did. President Ezra Taft Benson is God's prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Augusto A. Lim

Gospel blessings in the Philippines

I would like to express my love and appreciation to my eternal companion for the support and love that she has completely extended to me through all these years of membership in this Church. I suppose many of you already know I came from the Philippines, home to close to 67 million people, the Pearl of the Orient, but now a land devastated by earthquakes, typhoons, floods, and even volcanic eruptions. I will not, however, talk about the calamities that have caused much hardship and tested the faith of our people, but I would rather talk about the great spiritual blessings that have been experienced in abundance as the gospel is spread in the land.

The restored gospel was first introduced by Latter-day Saint servicemen and women while serving in the Philippines near the end of World War II,

but missionary work officially started in the Philippines on April 28, 1961, when Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, then a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, met with a small group of members at the American War Memorial Cemetery in the suburbs of Manila to offer a prayer invoking the blessing of the Lord on the missionary work in the Philippines (see Manuscript History of the Southern Far East Mission).

Before giving his prayer, President Hinckley, in a brief talk, made this prophetic statement: "What we begin here will affect the lives of thousands upon thousands of people in this island republic, and its effects will go from generation to generation for great and everlasting good" (quoted in Conference Report, Philippine Islands Area Conference 1975, p. 20).

After his brief remarks, President Hinckley offered a prayer in which he said:

"We invoke Thy blessing, Father dear, upon the missionaries who shall come [here], that Thy Spirit may touch their hearts, that their lives may be clean and virtuous, that their examples may be marvelous before the people, [that] they may be blessed, as it were, with the 'gift of tongues,' that they shall speak the language of the people, that they shall work with singleness of purpose to Thy name's honor and glory, that they shall go forth without fear, [that none shall stay them, and] that they shall declare with teaching and testimony, [the] restoration of Thy holy work for the blessing of Thy children. Father, give them joy and courage and faith and satisfaction in their labors, and make them fruitful.

"We invoke Thy blessings upon the people of this land, that they shall be friendly and hospitable and kind and gracious to those who shall come here, and that many, yea Lord, we pray that there shall be many thousands who shall receive this message and be blessed thereby. Wilt Thou bless them with receptive minds and understanding hearts, and with faith to receive, and with courage to live the principles of the gospel, and with a desire to share with others the blessings which they shall receive. We pray that there shall be many men—faithful, good, virtuous, true men—who shall join the Church and who shall receive the blessings of the priesthood, and who shall accept and grow in leadership, [that Thy work here shall be handled largely by local brethren,] under the direction of those who hold the keys in this day and time, according to the law and order of Thy church" (in Manuscript History of the Southern Far East Mission, 30 June 1961, pp. 9–10).

Church growth in the Philippines

A few days after that historic meeting, the first four full-time missionaries arrived from the Southern Far East

Mission, based in Hong Kong. From a handful of members in 1961, the Church in the Philippines has since grown at a remarkable rate, now increasing by more than two thousand members per month. As a result of close correlation between the full-time missionaries and members, membership is now three hundred thousand distributed in forty-eight stakes, sixty-five districts, and thirteen missions. Five of the thirteen mission presidents, all of the eight Regional Representatives, and all stake and district presidents are now native Filipinos. Sixty to seventy percent of the more than two thousand full-time missionaries now laboring in the field are also native Filipinos. And now, standing majestically on elevated grounds, overlooking a valley where hundreds of thousands live in the heart of metro Manila, is the Manila Philippines Temple.

Grateful for good missionaries

Surely the prayer of President Hinckley is being fulfilled as thousands of young men and women, as well as elderly couples, are responding to the clarion call of the Lord "that it is my will that you should proclaim my gospel from land to land, and from city to city, yea, in those regions round about where it has not been proclaimed" (D&C 66:5).

After three years of working closely as mission president with these young, devoted, upright, and virtuous missionaries, I am humbled and grateful for the good they do. These young ambassadors of the Lord leave the comfort of home and the companionship of loved ones and go to foreign lands or places far from home, bearing strong testimonies of the Savior, teaching the gospel with faith and sure knowledge of its truthfulness. My testimony has been strengthened as I see the great effort of missionaries to overcome homesickness and adapt

to new environments, new customs, new languages they must learn, and food so different from Mother's home-cooked meal in their noble desire to proclaim the gospel to the world.

I am a witness to the daily acts of sacrifices of these missionaries as they cheerfully endure hardships like energy-sapping walks of many kilometers, or riding on their bicycles under the heat of the burning sun or the cold monsoon rain, and the discomfort of riding on fully loaded jeeps driving at high speed along bumpy and dusty roads to reach teaching appointments on time.

Indeed our modern-day heralds of truth laboring in the Philippines and other lands work hard and pray constantly to be worthy instruments of the Lord in testifying and challenging all to come unto Christ through repentance and baptism, "teaching them to [do] all things" which the Lord has commanded (Matthew 28:20).

Like the sons of Mosiah, "they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God" (Alma 17:2). And "they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God" (17:3). And "they did suffer much, both in body and in mind, such as hunger, thirst and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit" (17:5). But after the completion of an honorable mission, like Ammon, one of the sons of Mosiah, these missionaries can also say, "My joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God" (Alma 26:11).

Reasons for the Church's growth

We are also witnessing the literal fulfillment of the prayers and blessings for the people of our land given by President Hinckley that lovely April

morning in 1961. Many thousands have been touched by the Spirit as the gospel message is brought to many homes by committed missionaries, with the help of members who willingly share the blessings of their Church membership.

We are often asked the reasons behind this phenomenal growth in membership. I can only venture some opinions. First, being perhaps the only Christian country in Asia for many centuries now has prepared the people for the coming of the gospel. The Philippines' being considered the third largest English-speaking country in the world certainly makes it easier for people to understand the message of the gospel and is the reason for the fast development of the leadership skills of its members.

But more important is the humble nature of the people and their dependence on the Lord for the things they stand in need of, making them receptive to the promptings of the Spirit. Because of economic difficulties experienced in the Philippines, the gospel is the answer, and rightly so, to the people's prayer for a better way of life.

As a result of the gospel-centered lives of many Latter-day Saints, people around them see changes in their lives that in turn give them hope. Member families may still live in humble homes with dirt or bamboo floors and walls, but because of their positive response to the gospel plan, and through their obedience to the Lord's commandments, they receive the promised blessings. As a result, people see the changes in these families who are now living in a more sanitary condition and are healthier, more educated, always ready and delighted to help others, grateful for what they have, no matter how humble, and generally happier. They have obeyed the Lord's counsel to "learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in

me" (D&C 19:23). Generally, however, the faith, devotion, and living of correct gospel principles by the members have improved their lives not only spiritually but also temporally, for did not the Lord say that the "willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days"? (D&C 64:34).

That the Lord will continue to bless our people with joy and peace of mind as they obey His commandments

and the counsels of our leaders in the midst of adversity is my humble prayer in Jesus' name, amen.

President Hinckley

Elders John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, and Augusto A. Lim of the Seventy have spoken to us.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder James E. Faust

As this conference comes to a close, I wish to speak of a priceless heritage. I acknowledge the faithful pioneers in all of the countries of the world who have helped establish the Church in their lands. First-generation members of the Church are indeed pioneers. They are and have been men and women of deep faith and devotion. Today, however, I speak primarily of the priceless legacy which belongs to the descendants of all pioneers, but especially to those who came into this valley and settled in Utah and other parts of western America.

Reenacting the handcart trek

In celebration of July 24th this year, we joined the Saints of the Riverton Wyoming Stake. Under the direction of President Robert Lorimer and his counselors, the youth and youth leaders of that stake reenacted part of the handcart trek which took place in 1856. We started early in a four-wheel-drive van and went first to Independence Rock, where we picked up the Mormon Trail. We saw Devil's Gate a few miles up the road. Our souls were subdued when we arrived at the hallowed ground of Martin's Cove, the site where the Martin Handcart Company, freezing and starving, waited for the rescue wagons to come

from Salt Lake City. About fifty-six members of the Martin Handcart Company perished there from hunger and cold.

It was an emotional experience to see the Sweetwater River crossing where most of the five hundred members of the company were carried across the icy river by three brave young men. Later, all three of the boys died from the effects of the terrible strain and great exposure of that crossing. When President Brigham Young heard of this heroic act, he wept like a child and later declared publicly: "That act alone will ensure C. Allen Huntington, George W. Grant and David P. Kimball an everlasting salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, worlds without end" (quoted in Solomon F. Kimball, "Belated Emigrants of 1856," *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1914, p. 288).

We went farther along the trail to the site where the members of the Willie Handcart Company were rescued. We felt that we were standing on holy ground. At that site twenty-one members of that party died from starvation and cold. We continued to travel up over Rocky Ridge, seven thousand three hundred feet high. This is the highest spot on the Mormon Trail. The two-mile ascension to Rocky Ridge gains over seven hundred feet in altitude. It was very difficult for all of the

pioneers to travel over Rocky Ridge. It was particularly agonizing for the members of the Willie Handcart Company, who struggled over that ridge in the fall of 1856 in a blizzard. Many had worn shoes, and the sharp rocks caused their feet to bleed, leaving a trail of blood in the snow.

As we walked over Rocky Ridge, two square nails and an old-style button were picked up. No doubt these objects were shaken loose going over the sharp rocks. My soul was sobered to be in that historic spot. Several of my ancestors crossed that ridge, though none was in the handcart companies. Not all of my forebears who started in the great exodus to the West made it even to the Rocky Ridge. Two of them died at Winter Quarters.

As I walked over Rocky Ridge, I wondered if I have sacrificed enough. In my generation I have not seen so much sacrifice by so many. I wonder what more I should have done, and should be doing, to further this work.

A few miles farther, at Radium Springs, we caught up with 185 young people and their leaders from the Riverton stake, who had been pulling handcarts in reenactment of the handcart treks. We bore testimony of the faith and heroism of those who struggled in agony over that trail 136 years ago.

Bodil Mortinsen and James Kirkwood

We went on to Rock Creek Hollow, where the Willie Handcart Company made camp. Thirteen members of the Willie company who perished from cold, exhaustion, and starvation are buried in a common grave at Rock Creek Hollow. Two additional members who died during the night are buried nearby. Two of those buried at Rock Creek Hollow were heroic children of tender years: Bodil Mortinsen, age nine, from Denmark; and James Kirkwood, age eleven, from Scotland.

Bodil apparently was assigned to care for some small children as they crossed Rocky Ridge. When they arrived at camp, she must have been sent to gather firewood. She was found frozen to death leaning against the wheel of her handcart, clutching sagebrush.

Let me tell you of James Kirkwood. James was from Glasgow, Scotland. On the trip west, James was accompanied by his widowed mother and three brothers, one of whom, Thomas, was nineteen and crippled and had to ride in the handcart. James's primary responsibility on the trek was to care for his little four-year-old brother, Joseph, while his mother and oldest brother, Robert, pulled the cart. As they climbed Rocky Ridge, it was snowing and there was a bitter cold wind blowing. It took the whole company twenty-seven hours to travel fifteen miles. When little Joseph became too weary to walk, James, the older brother, had no choice but to carry him. Left behind the main group, James and Joseph made their way slowly to camp. When the two finally arrived at the fireside, James, "having so faithfully carried out his task, collapsed and died from exposure and over-exertion" (private letter, Don H. Smith to Robert Lorimer, 20 Feb. 1990, quoting account of Don Chislett).

Rescuing the handcart companies

Also heroic were the rescuers who responded to President Brigham Young's call in the October 1856 general conference. President Young called for forty young men, sixty to sixty-five teams of mules or horses, wagons loaded with twenty-four thousand pounds of flour to leave in the next day or two to "bring in those people now on the plains" (LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* [Glendale, Ca.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1960], p. 121). The rescuers went swiftly to relieve the suffering travelers.

When the rescued sufferers got close to the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young convened a meeting on this block. He directed the Saints in the valley to receive the sufferers into their homes, make them comfortable, and administer food and clothing to them. Said President Young: "Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles; some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted. . . . We want you to receive them as your own children, and to have the same feeling for them" (Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, p. 139).

When the rescuers brought the Willie handcart pioneers into this valley, it is recorded by Captain Willie: "On our arrival there the Bishops of the different Wards took every person, who was not provided with a home, to comfortable quarters. Some had their hands and feet badly frozen; but everything which could be done to alleviate their sufferings, was done. . . . Hundreds of the Citizens flocked round the wagons on our way through the City, cordially welcoming their Brethren and Sisters to their mountain home" (James G. Willie, in *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 9 Nov. 1856, p. 15).

The legacy of the pioneers

These excruciating experiences developed in these pioneers an unshakable faith in God. Said Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson Kingsford, "But I believe the Recording Angel has inscribed in the archives above, and that my sufferings for the Gospel's sake will be sanctified unto me for my good" (*Leaves from the Life of Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson Kingsford* [Ogden, Utah: 1908], p. 7).

In addition to the legacy of faith bequeathed by those who crossed the plains, they also left a great heritage of love—love of God and love of mankind. It is an inheritance of sobriety,

independence, hard work, high moral values, and fellowship. It is a birthright of obedience to the commandments of God and loyalty to those whom God has called to lead this people. It is a legacy of forsaking evil. Immorality, alternative life-styles, gambling, selfishness, dishonesty, unkindness, addiction to alcohol and drugs are not part of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here in Utah there is a voter decision about gambling to be made in a few weeks. The Church is not retreating from its stand on this issue. But as contests and issues heat up, we counsel members of the Church to be tolerant and understanding. We all have our moral agency, but if we use it unwisely, we must pay the price. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., said, "We may use our agency as to whether we shall obey or disobey; and if we disobey we must abide the penalty" (*Fundamentals of the Church Welfare Plan* [address at bishops' meeting, 6 Oct. 1944], p. 3).

Consecrated through their suffering

I cannot help wondering why these intrepid pioneers had to pay for their faith with such a terrible price in agony and suffering. Why were not the elements tempered to spare them from their profound agony? I believe their lives were consecrated to a higher purpose through their suffering. Their love for the Savior was burned deep in their souls, and into the souls of their children, and their children's children. The motivation for their lives came from a true conversion in the center of their souls. As President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "When there throbs in the heart of an individual Latter-day Saint a great and vital testimony of the truth of this work, he will be found doing his duty in the Church" (*Ensign*, May 1984, p. 99).

Above and beyond the epic historical events they participated in, the pioneers found a guide to personal

living. They found reality and meaning in their lives. In the difficult days of their journey, the members of the Martin and Willie handcart companies encountered some apostates from the Church who were returning from the West, going back to the East. These apostates tried to persuade some in the companies to turn back. A few did turn back. But the great majority of the pioneers went forward to a heroic achievement in this life, and to eternal life in the life hereafter.

Francis Webster, a member of the Martin company, stated, "Everyone of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities" (quoted in David O. McKay, "Pioneer Women," *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1948, p. 8). I hope that this priceless legacy of faith left by the pioneers will inspire all of us to more fully participate in the Savior's work of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of his children.

Invitation to come back

You who are among the descendants of these noble pioneers have a priceless heritage of faith and courage. If there are any of you who do not enjoy fellowship with us in the gospel of Jesus Christ, we invite you to seek to know what instilled such great faith in your ancestors and what motivated them to willingly pay such a terrible price for their membership in this Church. To those who have been offended or lost interest or who have turned away for any reason, we invite all of you to join in full fellowship again with us. The faithful members, with all their faults and failings, are humbly striving to do God's holy work across the world. We need your help in the great struggle against the powers of darkness so prevalent in the world

today. In becoming a part of this work, you can all satisfy the deepest yearnings of your souls. You can come to know the personal comfort that can be found in seeking the sacred and holy things of God. You can enjoy the blessings and covenants administered in the holy temples. You can have great meaning and purpose in your lives, even in the profane world in which we live. You can have strength of character so that you can act for yourselves and not be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26).

A few years ago the First Presidency of the Church issued the invitation to all to come back:

"We are aware of some who are inactive, of others who have become critical and are prone to find fault, and of those who have been disfellowshipped or excommunicated because of serious transgressions.

"To all such we reach out in love. We are anxious to forgive in the spirit of Him who said: 'I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.' (D&C 64:10)

"We encourage Church members to forgive those who may have wronged them. To those who have ceased activity and to those who have become critical, we say, 'Come back. Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints.'

"We are confident that many have [wanted] to return, but have felt awkward about doing so. We assure you that you will find open arms to receive you and willing hands to assist you" ("An Invitation to Come Back," *Church News*, 22 Dec. 1985, p. 3).

At the close of this great conference and on behalf of my Brethren, I sincerely and humbly reiterate that request. And we open our arms to you. I so declare in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Faust, for your moving testimony. I may say that it was my privilege recently to dedicate three monuments on that pioneer trail in the areas of which he spoke, monuments which were erected by the people of the Riverton Wyoming Stake, and that we have acquired the property at Rock Creek Hollow, where were buried the thirteen who died in one night and the two the next day.

Before hearing the closing remarks of President Thomas S. Monson, we express appreciation to all who have provided the inspiring and uplifting music heard during this conference.

We thank city officials and many others: the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance;

the ushers and interpreters; and those responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for coverage of the conference.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems who have made their facilities available. Thank you, one and all. And thank you, my beloved brethren and sisters, for your attendance on this great occasion. May the Lord bless you.

Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "God So Loved the World." The benediction will be given by Elder Lynn A. Sorensen, who was released yesterday as a member of the Seventy. The conference will then stand adjourned for six months.

President Thomas S. Monson

A glorious conference

Someone said, "Parting is such sweet sorrow." That's the feeling that we have today.

Traditionally the President of the Church, the Lord's prophet, seer, and revelator, provides the concluding expressions of a general conference and gives his blessing to all. Humbly and respectfully I respond to the assignment to represent him at this time.

This has been a glorious conference. The prayers have been sincere and from the heart; the music and singing have lifted us heavenward and given us an upward reach we thought perhaps was beyond our grasp. The Brethren who have spoken, and Sister Jepsen, have declared the word of God and touched our hearts with their inspired messages. We are all better for having been a part of the conference.

We sustain and love President Benson

President Benson's chair has remained unoccupied during the conference sessions, which brings some sadness to our hearts. His ready smile, the wave of his hand, the declarations of truth that have marked his influence have been missed. However, President Benson, we are pleased and grateful that you have been a part of the conference through television. Our hearts go out to you in the passing of your beloved eternal companion, Flora. How thankful we are for the sacred covenant that binds you two sweethearts together for all eternity! The entire Church joins in a mighty prayer to our Heavenly Father that you may be cradled in the palm of His hand and blessed according to your need and His divine purposes. We sustain you. We follow you. We love you—our prophet.

Closing words at conference

President Benson revered President David O. McKay, who supervised his missionary labors in Great Britain those long years ago. President McKay closed a conference with these words:

"As we come to this parting hour, I hope that the teachings and life of the Master seem to you all to be more beautiful, more necessary, and more applicable to human happiness than ever before. . . . Accepting him as my Redeemer, Savior, and Lord, I accept his gospel as the plan of salvation, as the one perfect way to human happiness and peace."¹

President Joseph Fielding Smith, for whom President Benson had such great love, said as he concluded a conference:

"Now I pray that our Father in heaven will bless his people—bless them abundantly and in full measure.

"I pray that the Saints shall stand firm against the pressures and enticements of the world; that they shall put first in their lives the things of God's kingdom; that they shall be true to every trust and keep every covenant."²

President Harold B. Lee, boyhood friend and companion, and later esteemed associate of President Benson in the Lord's work, declared:

"I can't leave this conference without saying to you that I have a conviction that the Master hasn't been absent from us on these occasions. This is his church. . . . He isn't an absentee master; he is concerned about us. He wants us to follow where he leads."³

President Spencer W. Kimball, who was sustained as an Apostle and member of the Council of the Twelve at the same time as President Benson, closed a general conference by saying:

"As each one of these wonderful sermons has been rendered I've listened with [rapt] attention, and I have made up my mind that I shall go home

and be a [better] man than I have ever been before."⁴

President Benson, these have been declarations from four of your associates who have been an ongoing influence in your life. You, yourself, have said in a similar close of a conference:

"May we all go to our homes rededicated to the sacred mission of the Church as so beautifully set forth in these conference sessions—to 'invite all to come unto Christ' (D&C 20:59), 'yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him' (Moroni 10:32)."⁵

At parting

My brothers and sisters, I know the love President Benson has for you, for the Lord, and for His work. He would urge us to keep the commandments, sanctify our homes, and perfect our lives. May we, in unity, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, achieve these three objectives. Doing so will bring joy to our souls, peace to our prophet's heart, and the smile of God's approval on our efforts.

Sing we now at parting
One more strain of praise.
To our Heavenly Father
Sweetest songs we'll raise.
For his loving kindness,
For his tender care,
Let our songs of gladness
Fill this Sabbath air.⁶

The work is true. Jesus is the Christ. Ezra Taft Benson is a prophet of God. I so testify and pray that heaven's blessings may attend all of us, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Oct. 1965, p. 144; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1965, p. 1160.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 162; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 110.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1972, p. 176; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 134.

4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1977, p. 113; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 75.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 97; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 84.
6. *Hymns*, no. 156.

The choir sang "God So Loved the World."

Elder Lynn A. Sorensen offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, sang at the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a family choir from the Jordan Utah South and Riverton Utah regions, conducted by Roger L. Sorenson. John Longhurst was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus provided the music. Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden conducted the

choir, and Richard L. Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Clay Christiansen and Richard L. Elliott were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard L. Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the conference

INDEX

A

Alvarez, Elder Lino	31
Gratitude; Parents laid the foundation; The Lord blesses us as we serve; Honor parents day by day; Testimony	
Archibald, Elder Dallas N.	33
Responsibilities of parents; Parents in the Book of Mormon; Teach with kindness and love; Emphasize the good; How to correct and discipline	
Ashton, Elder Marvin J.	27
Yearning for home; An anchor, a port, a refuge; President Benson's childhood home; Yearning for our heavenly home; Young Women anxious to go home; The prodigal son turns homeward; Being homesick isn't all bad; Heartbreak of having no home; Satan wants us to forget about home; Our spiritual heritage; Focus on what really matters; Pursue things higher than the earth; "See that ye fall not out"	
Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of Church	25
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2

B

Backman, Elder Robert L.	15
An emeritus General Authority; An example for retired people; Growing physically; Growing mentally; Growing socially; Growing spiritually; Enduring to the end; Retired couples as missionaries; Couples can learn languages; Looking forward to new opportunities; Instruments in the Lord's hands	
Ballard, Elder M. Russell	41
"See that ye be not troubled"; Acceleration of worldwide calamity; We must never give up hope; The Lord is in control; Turn to Christ for hope and safety; Hope grows out of faith; Repentance brings a father peace; Faith, hope, and charity; The peace of God	
Bateman, Elder Merrill J.	36
"Search the scriptures"; The search for a lost pioneer child; Search diligently, not casually; Importance of the scriptures to Lehi; Blessings of searching the scriptures; Hold fast to the iron rod; Nourish the seed	

C

Caldwell, Elder C. Max	38
The meaning of <i>charity</i> ; Love for Christ; Love from Christ; Love like Christ	

Church Authorities and Officers, Sustaining of	25
Coleman, Elder Gary J.	60
Sure anchors and solid foundations; Conversion; Jesus is our only sure foundation; Latter-day prophets lead us; Blessings of the Restoration; Press forward in Christ	
Conference Music, Summary of	123

D

Dickson, Elder John B.	62
Faith to overcome bone cancer and serve a mission; Blessings of having only one arm; "The Oyster"; Commit to serve a mission; Life isn't intended to be easy	

F

Faust, Elder James E.	117
Reenacting the handcart trek; Bodil Mortinsen and James Kirkwood; Rescuing the handcart companies; The legacy of the pioneers; Consecrated through their suffering; Invitation to come back	
Fowler, Elder John E.	109
A sacred place to declare God's word; Hear the voice of the Lord; Spiritual poverty and darkness; Importance of conference messages; Prophets' words bless the faithful; Hearken to the prophets' messages	

G

General Authorities Present	1
General Priesthood Session	49

H

Haight, Elder David B.	102
Warning against moral decline; Parable of the squirrel and the dog; Governments abandoning God's principles; Faith and courage of pioneers; Teach children the Lord's ways; Obedience will protect us	
Hanks, Elder Marion D.	85
Choose to love and obey the Lord; Light shines through all the world; Half Halleluials offered at Passover; Fuller light through the Restoration; No immunity from afflictions; The Lord helps us in our afflictions; God weeps with us; Carry the Son's legacy of love	

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session)	70
The Tabernacle: a unique building; Building the Tabernacle; A symbol of faith; Building our own tabernacles; Be strong in self-discipline; Addictive power of pornography; Be strong in standing for right; Columbus's faith and strength; Be strong in the quality of mercy; Be strong in honesty; Be strong in the faith; Be strong in testimony	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session)	3
Sustaining President Benson; The last and great dispensation; Follow the course	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session)	76
Emergency in an airplane; The Lord's backup system; Keys given to all Apostles; Authority of the First Presidency; Counselors in the First Presidency; Duties and authority of the Twelve; Called of God by prophecy; Love and unity among Church leaders; We have only the Lord's agenda; Receive teachings in faith; Watchmen unto Israel; This work will never fail	
Hunter, President Howard W.	22
The beacon in the harbor of peace; Jesus is the only unfailing beacon; Love your enemies; Be more forgiving; Christ taught with authority and love; "It is I; be not afraid"; Fix our eyes on Jesus	
J	
Jensen, Elder Jay E.	111
Try the power of the word; Remember also the promises; Two categories of promises; Promises of power; Promises of increase; Other promises	
Jepsen, Sister Betty Jo N.	106
Pondering the Savior's birth; The invitation to come unto Christ; Search the word of God; Pray; Participate in the saving ordinances; Increase our talents; Serve others; As if we had trod to Bethlehem	
L	
Larsen, Elder Dean L.	56
The Lord will prosper the righteous; Prosperity of Lehi's people; Prosperity of Alma's people; Obedience brings prosperity; Forgetting the source of blessings; Alma's people become proud; Cycle of prosperity in Helaman's day; Assess our own faith and obedience	
Lim, Elder Augusto A.	114
Gospel blessings in the Philippines; Church growth in the Philippines; Grateful for good missionaries; Reasons for the Church's growth	

M

Maxwell, Elder Neal A.	88
To those whose discipleship is casual; Characteristics of casual disciples; Striving for greater consecration; Consecrate all, not a portion; Consecration may bring challenges; Consecration requires surrender; Obedience is emancipating; "Settle this in your hearts"; Press forward as Jesus did	
Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session)	65
Samuel's response to the Lord's call; Young men, respond as Samuel; The temple in South Africa; Elder Jensen's decision to serve; Temple work for Confederate soldiers; Service to Hurricane Andrew victims; The priesthood in action	
Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday afternoon session)	121
A glorious conference; We sustain and love President Benson; Closing words at conference; At parting	
Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session)	93
Reading of the Savior's miracles; Bearing tragedy and adversity; Job's faith and courage; Eve Gail McDaniel's accomplishment; Angelic handicapped children; The Shumways rise above adversity; The smile that shines through tears; Melissa Engle's triumph and miracle; God's promises to those who suffer; Count your blessings	
Music, Summary of Conference	123

N

Nelson, Elder Russell M.	4
Where is wisdom? Seek education; Beware of unbalance; Contemporary challenges; Wisdom found	

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	51
Bible stories; Abraham and Isaac; Joseph's integrity; The Lord's protection of Joseph; David's faith and courage; The Lord shields the faithful; The Lord protects Elisha; God's protection is a reality; Protection from a robber in Chicago; The righteous need not fear	

P

Pace, Bishop Glenn L.	12
Strengthening personal testimonies; The train of the Church; Time for spiritual revival; Storms of disaster and disobedience; Prepare by learning obedience; Golden moments of adversity; Being valiant in our testimonies	

Packer, Elder Boyd K. 98
Seek learning by study and by faith; The spirit of gathering; No res-
pecter of persons; The end of a tradition; A warning; A second
tuition; Dedicated faculty; The purpose; A dream worth pursuing;
Follow the leaders

Paramore, Elder James M. 9
Personal prisons; The Savior will deliver us; Prisons that come from
sin; Deceit in business; Do unto others; Freed from the prison of
alcohol; Jesus unlocks the doors; Repent to be free

Perry, Elder L. Tom 18
Moroni's voice of warning; Warning to Church members; Successes in
Utah; Many members seek worldly pursuits; Stand firm in your con-
victions; Warning to unbelievers; Moroni's voice of hope; Obey and
serve to overcome gloom; Finding the joys of eternity

Priesthood Session, General 49

S

Saturday Afternoon Session 25

Saturday Morning Session 2

Scott, Elder Richard G. 81
The rope swing; Satisfying worldly appetites; Use agency to obey
truth; Heavenly Father has defined truth; Faith and obedience bring
healing; Accepting help from others; Begin healing now; The Savior
heals permanently

Summary of Conference Music 123

Sunday Afternoon Session 97

Sunday Morning Session 75

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers 25

W

Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B. 45
Bonfires of testimony; Strengthening Peter's testimony; Many testi-
monies are weak; Suggestions to fortify testimonies; Build testimony
on faith in Christ; Build testimony through repentance; Follow the
Savior's example; God will strengthen and uphold us

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-third
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 3 and 4, 1993

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-third
Annual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
April 3 and 4, 1993

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Copyright © 1993 by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

All Rights Reserved
Printed in the United States of America

THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 163rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1993, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 3 and 4, 1993. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 3, 1993, at 6:00 P.M.

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

The First Presidency: ¹Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell

Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

The Presidency of the Seventy: Dean L. Larsen, James M. Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, and L. Aldin Porter

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Benjamin B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Joe J. Christensen, D. Todd Christofferson, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Jacob de Jager, Robert K. Dellenbach, Loren C. Dunn, Henry B. Eyring, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goaslind, John H. Groberg, F. Melvin Hammond, W. Eugene Hansen, Harold G. Hillam, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Glenn L. Pace, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, Merrill J. Bateman, C. Max Caldwell, Albert Choules, Jr., Gary J. Coleman, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis,¹ Julio E. Dávila, John B. Dickson, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, Lloyd P. George, Han In Sang, Jay E. Jensen, Malcolm S. Jepps, Cree-L Kofford, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, John M. Madsen, Helvécio Martins, Gerald E.

¹President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Clinton L. Cutler were excused.

Melchin, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 163rd Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1993, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Praise to the Man." President Monson then made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 163rd annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference in his apartment, has requested that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders David B. Haight, Adney Y. Komatsu, and Eduardo Ayala are seated on the stand.

We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference pro-

ceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Clinton L. Cutler, who are excused. We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, civic leaders, and church leaders who are present with us. And we express our appreciation to the Kauai Hawaii Stake for these beautiful flowers.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sisters Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ, is providing the music for this session. The chorus opened the session by singing "Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah" and will now favor us with "The Day Dawn Is Breaking."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "The Day Dawn Is Breaking."

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi offered the invocation.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is customary for the President of the Church to open each conference, to greet the Saints worldwide, and to set the tone of all that follows. Since President Benson is unable to be with us in person, I respond to his invitation to speak in his behalf. For the most part, I will present his actual words.

Last Wednesday, President Hinckley and I had a most delightful visit with President Benson. He greeted us warmly, flashed that friendly smile all of us love, and made us feel most welcome. When President Hinckley outlined the plans for conference and asked the President if it was his wish that we go forward with the arrangements and extend his love to all, he responded with a resounding "Yes!" We understand his concerns. We share his love, and we bring to you his blessings. This giant of the Lord merits our constant prayers and our abiding faith.

"The Mountain of the Lord's House"

On Friday, March 26, Sister Monson and I attended and participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony formally opening a truly magnificent exhibit in the museum west of Temple Square. It is entitled "The Mountain of the Lord's House" and depicts the fascinating forty-year saga required for the construction of the Salt Lake Temple. Where possible, I urge all of you to see the exhibit and feel the spirit it conveys. Tuesday, April 6, the Salt Lake Temple will have a birthday. One hundred years will have passed since that glorious day when it was dedicated.

While visiting the exhibit, a reporter asked me the question, "Would President Benson like this exhibit?"

I answered, "He would love it!"

President Benson's love for temples

President Benson has always loved temples and temple work. When he felt better, each Friday he and Sister Benson

would enter the temple to participate in a session. We knew our First Presidency meeting that morning must accommodate this commitment. One morning I commented that I had to get busy and do some of my own family names that were prepared. With a smile and a twinkle in his eye, the President said, "Brother Monson, if you're too busy, why not let Sister Benson and me do your names for you." Needless to say, we found time to do the work ourselves.

President Benson's own expressions indicate this love for temples. He reflected:

"I remember so well, as a little boy, coming in from the field and approaching the old farm house. . . . I could hear my mother singing 'Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?' . . . I can still see her in my mind's eye bending over the ironing board . . . with beads of perspiration on her forehead." She was ironing long strips of white cloth, with newspapers on the floor to keep them clean. "When I asked her what she was doing, she said, 'These are temple robes, my son. Your father and I are going to the temple at Logan.'"

"Then she put the old flatiron on the stove, drew a chair close to mine, and told me about temple work—how important it is to be able to go to the temple and participate in the sacred ordinances performed there. She also expressed her fervent hope that some day her children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren would have the opportunity to enjoy those priceless blessings." He continued, "I am happy to say that her fondest hopes in large measure have been realized."

Temples are gateways to heaven

On another occasion, President Benson instructed us: "Sometimes in the peace of lovely temples, the serious problems of life find their solutions. [At times] pure knowledge flows to us there under the influence of the Spirit." Said he: "I am

grateful to the Lord for temples. The blessings of the House of the Lord are eternal. They are of the highest importance to us because it is in the temples that we obtain God's greatest blessings pertaining to eternal life. Temples really are the gateways to heaven."

He said: "May we remember always, as we [visit and work in these glorious temples], that the veil may become very thin between this world and the spirit world. I know this is true." He declared, "It is well also that we keep in mind that it is all one great program on both sides of the veil and it is not too important whether we serve here or over there, as long as we serve with all our heart, might, mind, and strength."²

President Benson, your words are welcomed. We have heard them. We shall

follow them. They, like the temples you so much love, are as a refuge from life's storms—even a never-failing beacon guiding us to safety.

I echo the feelings of one and all, President Benson, in saying we love you and ever pray for you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple," *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, p. 8.
2. "Temple Memories" (address given at the Denver Colorado Temple dedication, 25 Oct. 1986).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Youth, live morally clean lives

This morning I want to speak primarily to the young men and young women of the Church. I pray for the Spirit to help me inspire you young people to want to live righteous lives.

Some of you may not understand our Heavenly Father's plan well enough to appreciate how important living a morally clean life is if you want to enjoy peace, happiness, and self-esteem. When you understand, the truths of the gospel will give you the guidance you need to be worthy members of the Church. When you accept the basic principles of the gospel and commit to live them, you will have the spiritual insight that will help you be young men and women of purity, integrity, and faith.

Unfortunately we live in a world that is awash in all kinds of moral pollution, including drugs, violence, filthy language, and pornography in literature, and videotapes, films, and television shows that promote illicit sex and promiscuity as

being normal. A national debate is raging to make elective abortion acceptable.

With challenges like these, you need to remember that you do not face them alone. There are people who love you and want you to be happy. We want the very best for you. Most especially, your Father in Heaven loves you and wants you to have joy and happiness. He has made marvelous promises to His faithful children who love Him, who are baptized, and who keep His commandments.

Baptismal covenants

When you entered the waters of baptism, you made a promise to the Lord that you would "humble [yourselves] before God, . . . and witness before the church that [you] have truly repented of all [your] sins, and are willing to take upon [yourselves] the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by [your] works that [you] have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of [your] sins" (D&C

20:37). You were therefore bound by covenant to “a godly walk and conversation, . . . walking in holiness before the Lord” (D&C 20:69).

Many of you were baptized when you were eight years old, and you may not realize that this is the promise you made to your Heavenly Father when you were baptized. Always remember that you are under this covenant. Your Heavenly Father has promised in return that He will give marvelous blessings to those who honor their covenants, keep His commandments, and endure faithfully to the end. They will be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise and will be “given *all* things” (D&C 76:55; italics added; see also 76:50–54, 70), including an inheritance in the celestial kingdom (see 2 Nephi 31:16–20).

The Apostle Paul wrote that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Those who live clean lives and keep the commandments “shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever” (D&C 76:62). They “shall have eternal life, . . . the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

Priesthood covenants

I remind you young men who have been ordained to the priesthood that you have made an additional covenant with God. When you were ordained, you made a sacred promise with the Lord that you would honor your priesthood faithfully. (See D&C 84:33–42.) We are pleased to know that many of you are true and faithful in every way to your priesthood covenants and are preparing yourselves to receive the Lord’s promised blessings. Unfortunately we know also that too many young men of the priesthood pay little attention to the serious nature of their sacred promises made with Heavenly Father.

Keeping covenants helps resist Satan

Let me explain why you young men and women must keep your covenants you have made with God. In the pre-mortal world before we left the presence of Heavenly Father, He warned and cautioned us about new experiences we would have in mortality. We knew that we each would have a physical body of flesh and bone. Never having been mortal before, we had no experience dealing with the temptations of mortality. But Heavenly Father knew and understood. He charged us to control our mortal bodies and to make them subject to our spirits. Our spirits would have to master the physical temptations that our bodies would encounter in a temporal world. Spiritual power over the influence of Satan comes to us by keeping the commandments of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Being here on earth for the first time in our eternal existence, we are away from the protective presence of our Father in Heaven and are subject to the influence of Satan and his followers. Remember that Satan even tried to tempt the Savior into betraying the promises He had made to God. After Jesus was baptized, He went into the wilderness to fast and pray for forty days. Satan chose that moment during Christ’s hunger and physical weakness to tempt Him. But Jesus did not succumb; He stood firm.

Satan will seek to tempt us at times and in ways that exploit our greatest weaknesses or destroy our strengths. But his promises of pleasure are short-lived deceptions. His evil design is to tempt us into sinning, knowing that when we sin we separate ourselves from our Heavenly Father and the Savior, Jesus Christ. We begin to move away from Heavenly Father’s promised blessings toward the misery and anguish in which Satan and his followers languish. By sinning we put ourselves in Satan’s power.

Now, my dear young friends, I understand the struggles you face every day in keeping the commandments of the

Lord. The battle for your souls is increasingly fierce. The adversary is strong and cunning. However, you have within your physical body the powerful spirit of a son or daughter of God. Because He loves you and wants you to come home to Him, our Father in Heaven has given you a conscience that tells your spirit when you are keeping the Lord's commandments and when you are not. If you will pay more attention to your spiritual self, which is eternal, than to your mortal self, which is temporary, you can always resist the temptations of Satan and conquer his efforts to take you into his power.

The trap of sinning a "little"

You must be honest with yourself and remain true to the covenants you have made with God. Do not fall into the trap of thinking you can sin a little and it will not matter. Remember, "the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance" (D&C 1:31). Some young men and women in the Church talk openly about sexual transgression. They seem to forget that the Lord forbids all sexual relations before marriage, including petting, sex perversion of any kind, or preoccupation with sex in thought, speech, or action. Some youth foolishly rationalize that it is "no big deal" to sin now because they can always repent later when they want to go to the temple or on a mission. Anyone who does that is breaking promises made to God both in the premortal life and in the waters of baptism. The idea of sinning a little is self-deception. Sin is sin! Sin weakens you spiritually, and it always places the sinner at eternal risk. Choosing to sin, even with the intent to repent, is simply turning away from God and violating covenants.

Gratefully, many of you young men honor your priesthood, and many young women "stand for truth and righteousness" as stated in the Young Women's motto (*Young Women Leadership Handbook* [1992], p. 5). We commend you for your fidelity and integrity.

For those who have strayed, the Savior has provided a way back. But it is not without pain. Repentance is not easy; it takes time—painful time! You deceive yourself if you believe you can break the promises you have made with Heavenly Father and suffer no consequence.

Study For the Strength of Youth

You sustain the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. We prepared for you a pamphlet entitled *For the Strength of Youth*. Most of you know that this inspirational pamphlet contains guidelines to help you measure your moral conduct. I urge you to read every word over and over again so you will understand what the Lord and His Church expect of you. The First Presidency message is so important that I will quote a few statements from it.

"Our beloved young men and women,

"We want you to know that we love you. We have great confidence in you. Because of that, we talk to you frankly and honestly. . . .

"God loves you as He loves each and every one of His children. His desire, purpose, and glory is to have you return to Him pure and undefiled, having proven yourselves worthy of an eternity of joy in His presence. . . .

"We counsel you to choose to live a morally clean life. The prophet Alma declared, 'Wickedness never was happiness' (Alma 41:10). Truer words were never spoken!

"You cannot do wrong and feel right. It is impossible! . . .

"We pray that you—the young and rising generation—will keep your bodies and minds clean, free from the contaminations of the world, that you will be fit and pure vessels to bear triumphantly the responsibilities of the kingdom of God in preparation for the second coming of our Savior" (pp. 3–5).

Please make sure you have a copy of the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* and regularly read it. Carry the small wallet-sized summary card with you. Read carefully the section in the pamphlet that teaches principles of sexual purity, and follow the counsel with exactness.

Repentance is the way back

Those of you who have been unwise and have transgressed should read and pray about the section on repentance. This is also very important, so I will quote a few statements from this section:

"Some people knowingly break God's commandments. They plan to repent before they go on a mission or receive the sacred covenants and ordinances of the temple. Repentance for such behavior is difficult and painful and may take a long time. It is better to not commit the sin. Certain sins are of such gravity that they can put your membership in the Church and your eternal life at risk. Sexual sins are among those of such seriousness.

"Where choices have already led to sexual impurity, repentance is the way back. Talk to your parents and your bishop. They love you and will explain to you how to repent and put your life in order again. Follow their counsel.

"The miracle of forgiveness is real, and true repentance is accepted by the Lord. Full repentance of some sins requires that we not only confess and resolve them with the Lord but that we also do so with the Church. The bishop and stake president have been appointed by revelation to serve as judges in these cases.

"Only the Lord can forgive sins, but these priesthood leaders can assist the transgressor in the process of repentance. . . . If you have sinned, the sooner you begin to make your way back, the sooner you will find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness" (pp. 17-18).

Stake and mission presidents and bishops and branch presidents recently received instructions from the First Presidency on recommending worthy and qualified members for full-time missionary service. Brethren, we expect that you will teach youth leaders, parents, and the youth these long-established principles. Missionaries must be morally clean and spiritually prepared by you to serve the Lord in today's world. I urge you to follow the instructions precisely and to do all in your power to help young people avoid any sin that could disqualify them for service in the kingdom of God.

Honestly assess obedience to covenants

My dear young friends, I encourage you to take time each week to be by yourself, away from television and the crowd. Have your scriptures with you, and as you read, ponder, and pray, take an honest look at your life. Evaluate where you stand with the promises you have made with Heavenly Father. If you have a problem, talk it over with the Lord in earnest and humble prayer. Counsel with your parents; they will help you. Your bishop and your Young Men and Young Women adult leaders will help. They love you and want you to be at peace with yourself so you can partake of the sacrament worthily each week. When all is said and done, however, only you know if you are living true to your covenants made with God.

You will be grateful, when the day comes for you to attend the temple, that you followed the counsel of the Lord and chose to be morally clean. May God bless each of you young men and women with a pure heart and a sincere desire to serve the Lord worthily.

I know this Church is true. I know God lives and Jesus is the Christ. I know that if you, the youth of the Church, will have the courage to keep your covenants and follow the counsel of your parents and Church leaders, you will have the desire and the strength to live worthy lives. You then will be prepared for your

responsibilities in your homes, in the Church, and in your communities and will be prepared to return to your Heavenly Father. May God bless every one of our precious youth, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."

President Monson

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."

Elder J. Richard Clarke of the Presidency of the Seventy will now address us. He will be followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley, who was sustained as Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric at the October conference.

Elder J. Richard Clarke

First, may I thank my grandchildren, who have been praying the last couple of weeks that their grandfather would have the Spirit of the Lord with him on this occasion.

The Lord of Life

Springtime in Utah brings the anticipated renewal of life. Easter approaches, and once again we ponder the Resurrection and our Father's plan of salvation. The miracles of nature and the gospel combine to remind us that the Lord of Life is a God of miracles.

For many, perhaps the most spectacular miracle would be the raising of someone from the dead. The scriptures describe the supreme joy of the widows of Zarephath and Nain whose dead sons were restored to life (see 1 Kings 17:17-24; Luke 7:11-15). The most dramatic episode tells how the Savior went to the sepulcher of His beloved friend Lazarus, who had lain dead for four days. Asking them to take away the stone, "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes" (John 11:43-44).

Being born again through Christ

The Prophet Joseph Smith shared a profound insight which I'll rephrase in the

form of a question: *Is it any more incredible that one could be raised from the dead than to be spiritually reborn?* (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 191).

John the Apostle taught that the highest manifestation of our Heavenly Father's love was to send "his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9).

Few understood this during His ministry. The intellectual Nicodemus was impressed with the miracles of Jesus; but even with extensive knowledge of the scriptures he could not grasp the doctrine of spiritual rebirth, the transformation of the human soul, what it means to be born again (see John 3:1-10).

Nature provides some striking parallels. The late film producer Cecil B. DeMille shared this experience:

"One day as I was lying in a canoe, a big black beetle . . . climbed up to the canoe. I watched it idly for some time.

"Under the heat of the sun, the beetle proceeded to die. Then a strange thing happened. His glistening black shell cracked all the way down the back. Out of it came a shapeless mass, quickly transformed into beautifully, brilliantly-colored life. . . . There gradually unfolded iridescent wings from which the sunlight flashed a thousand colors. . . . The blue-green body took shape.

"Before my eyes had occurred a metamorphosis—the transformation of a hideous beetle into a gorgeous dragonfly. . . . I had witnessed . . . a miracle. Out of the mud had come a beautiful new life. And the thought came to me that if the Creator works such wonders with the lowliest of creatures, what may not be in store for the human spirit!"

My testimony today is that through Jesus Christ we can be born again. We can change. We can change completely. And we can stay changed.

Such complete changes require the power of God. He gives this promise to His covenant people:

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: . . . and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezekiel 36:26–27).

What must we do to be born again?

The king of the Lamanites was stirred by the power of the Spirit when taught the gospel. He asked Aaron: "What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? . . . that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit? . . . I will give up all that I possess . . . that I may receive this great joy" (Alma 22:15).

Note Aaron's prescription: "If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins . . . and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest" (22:16).

Prostrating himself before the Lord, the king pled, "If thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee" (22:18).

Rebirth of John and Shirley Withers

From the pages of our missionary journal comes an event repeated often throughout the missions of the Church.

John and Shirley Withers were successful advertising executives. They were on the fast track, indulging themselves in worldly pleasures. When contacted by our missionaries, they were impressed by their clean, sparkling countenances so unlike other young men they had known.

As the Spirit touched their hearts, the conversion miracle began. Their previous behavior became incompatible with gospel principles. A new set of priorities and values replaced worldly interests. Alcohol and tobacco habits became expendable, although with great effort. Modesty became the dress standard. Prayer, scripture study, and Relief Society and priesthood service became the focus. They were baptized and received the Holy Ghost.

As Sister Clarke and I, with some of our missionaries, assembled in the Salt Lake Temple, John and Shirley Withers, with their children, were sealed together as an eternal family. Their countenances reflected the resplendent beauty of the emancipation of the soul. We witnessed a spiritual rebirth as if from the grave.

Spiritual rebirth in a prison

I recently participated in a religious service in a state prison. As the inmates shared their testimonies, I was moved by their remorse for the behavior that necessitated their incarceration. But more impressive were their expressions of love for the Savior and hope for His mercy and forgiveness as they prayed that their repentance would be acceptable to Him.

May I share these words from one in that meeting. In reading the Book of Mormon, he has discovered the healing balm and the compassion of a loving Savior. I quote:

"Over the past month the Lord has given me so many blessings. He's changed my heart. He's taken away the anger, hatred, and fear. He's replaced these with love and hope. He's also taken away my foul mouth and my desire for

tobacco. He's helping me overcome many fleshly weaknesses.

"I always believed I had a relationship with the Lord. I see now how self-serving that relationship was. When I read about Korihor it really hit me hard. I used a lot of the same justifications and rationalizations to create a 'malleable god' that I could shape to meet my wicked needs.

"I truly want to be baptized . . . a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I believe it is His Church and know my lifelong search is over."

The role of the Atonement in spiritual rebirth

Spiritual conversion is preceded by an intense desire for change and an admission that we need divine help. Only those who humbly open their hearts have the courage to admit error and place their trust in the Lord for forgiveness and redemption.

I do not know how our Savior actually performs the sanctifying miracle of the Atonement, how He takes upon Himself our anguish of mind and body and assumes our pain and guilt; but I know He does. This leads me to these conclusions:

1. The incomprehensible severity of His suffering should convince us that we are loved and very important to our Heavenly Father. Otherwise, why would such suffering be permitted?

2. Our Savior's sacrifice had to be a voluntary act of mercy, the shedding of innocent blood, the just for the unjust, the perfect for the imperfect.

3. The Atonement must be infinite and eternal, available to all mankind.

4. I believe, to use an insurance phrase, we must pay the deductible. We must experience sorrow enough, suffering enough, guilt enough so we are conscious and appreciative of the heavier burden borne by the Savior.

My soul pains when His atonement is treated lightly, when the blessing of repentance is reduced to simply "taking care of it with the bishop," when there is brief confession without humility or godly sorrow. This attitude of entitlement rather than privilege was recently expressed by a young Church member who wrote:

"I have done bad things that I knew were bad because I've been taught that ever since I can remember. . . . I know repentance is a great gift. Without it I would be lost. I am not ready to repent of my sins; but I know that when I am ready, I can."

Such indulgence in premeditated sin shows pitiful misunderstanding of repentance. As Amulek warned, we must not procrastinate the day of our repentance until the end (see Alma 34:32-35). Judgment for us could be today or tomorrow. We must not risk our opportunity to repent. Salvation is not just an escape from the penalty of sin but deliverance from sinfulness. The truly penitent not only seek forgiveness for past sins but plead for the Savior to purge their hearts of the desire or appetite for sin.

5. Finally, we must acknowledge the gift and comply with the conditions so that redemption might be complete. Love motivates our obedience to God. To express our love and gratitude for the Atonement, we covenant with our Heavenly Father to take upon us the name of His Son and to bear witness of Him at all times and in all places, observing His commandments (see Mosiah 18:8-10).

I bear my solemn witness that full acceptance of the Atonement, with the saving ordinances of the gospel, changes lives. Through Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life, we can be raised from a death of error and sin to a spiritual rebirth of hope and eternal joy. He lives. He loves us. He pleads with us to come unto Him and find peace. That we may do so is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

"Keep the faith"

As a young returned missionary, I and my returned missionary friends routinely bade our farewells with the words "Keep the faith." While this was a cliché given casually with very little thought, the admonition is serious, and it is the Lord's.

The Apostle Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy, declared, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Keeping the faith to the end has always been our charge. In the eighteenth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord admonishes, "And as many as repent and are baptized in my name, which is Jesus Christ, and endure to the end, the same shall be saved" (18:22).

I shall never forget the impression left upon me when President Joseph Fielding Smith, in his ninety-fifth year, exclaimed, "I hope to endure to the end in this life." Today, perhaps more than ever before, our faith is challenged on all fronts. This should not surprise us as it is part of God's plan. As Abraham proved himself to the Lord with unwavering faith when he took his son Isaac to the mountain to be sacrificed, we also must prove our devotion, our endurance, and our faith to our Heavenly Father.

Trials can increase our faith

We all face the normal and the expected challenges of mortality. We experience illness, we encounter transgression, we work through the difficulties of repentance, we sometimes wrestle with rebellion, and we deal with the stresses of providing for our families. These are expected. These we prepare for, and these we cope with.

For the faithful, the normal tests and trials of life need not be the enemy of faith. While we don't necessarily look forward to these obstacles and challenges, we accept them, and we build our lives and faith from them. To the faithful, the

very obstacles that we overcome draw us closer to our Heavenly Father by helping us develop a humble, submissive spirit and causing us to be grateful and appreciative of those blessings that flow from a loving Father. In short, these experiences can and often do increase our faith. The faithful do not pray to be spared the trials of life but pray that they may have the strength to rise above them. In so doing they come closer to Heavenly Father and to that state of perfection they are seeking.

Successes can test our faith

For Latter-day Saints, often the greater testing of faith—the subtle but more serious testing—comes not from the normal obstacles of mortality but from the successes of mortality. There is a strong relationship, even a cause-effect relationship, between faith and the required virtues of humility and a submissive heart, which have always been key ingredients of faith. So-called temporal achievements, whether materialistic or intellectual, when untempered with the principles of the gospel and the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, often move a person away from the fundamental principles that foster faith.

When our successes are received without proper acknowledgment to Him who is the grantor of all blessings, these same successes often lead to false pride and a deterioration of the virtues that bring us to faith. When our successes lead to self-aggrandizement or the substitution of our earthly learning for Heavenly Father's will, we jeopardize the principles upon which our faith is founded. Anything that erodes humility and submissiveness is indeed a threat to faith.

Whatever our station in life, whatever our achievements, no matter how great, a submissive heart and a humble spirit are still fundamental to our faith. We must guard against letting our worldly

successes or earthly learning become a substitution for spiritual wisdom and divine direction given through the prophets.

Warnings about worldly achievements

In the Book of Mormon, Mormon explains the deteriorating condition of the Nephites resulting from their misplaced sense of achievement in earthly matters: "For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure" (Alma 4:8).

The Lord further warns us against relying solely upon man's strength and wisdom. He said, "Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 28:31).

Jacob further enlightens us with the following: "O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish" (2 Nephi 9:28). Jacob then clarifies so we may all understand that learning under the proper circumstances has an important place in our lives. He explains, "But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (9:29).

There are the so-called learned people who have let their intellect undermine their spiritual moorings and who would also attempt to lead the faithful away from those who are appointed by the Lord to lead. There are those who feel that our leaders are out of touch with the realities of the day. They would attempt

to lead members by substituting their own knowledge for the revelations from God to His prophets. And unfortunately there are those who would so follow. Christ warned, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

In an attempt to further prepare the Saints against the inevitable threatening wolves, Paul the Apostle gave this warning: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). Where might these wolves get sheep's clothing that is so authentic as to deceive the Lord's flock? Could it be they are clothed with exceeding riches and fine clothing, as Mormon warned? (see Alma 4:8). The vainness and frailties and foolishness of men, the learned that hearken not unto the commandments of God, as Jacob warned? (see 2 Nephi 9:28). Could it be that sometimes they may clothe themselves to appear as righteous shepherds, that even the very elect might be deceived?

Look to the Lord in humility

Yes, like Abraham of old, our faith is going to be tested. We will suffer sickness, pain, death, and tragedy. This is inevitable. This is a *major reason* why we opted to participate in mortality. We can endure these trials and tribulations because we can draw upon the gifts of heaven, which will help us see them for what they are. As we conquer them, we are drawn closer to our Heavenly Father. We feel His love, gain His knowledge and truth. We are able to meet the test and endure these to the end.

But it is that which we may not recognize for what it is that we must be concerned about—the substitution of man's will for God's inspired direction. Let us not be led astray by the sophistry of man, untempered by the principles of the gospel and the Spirit of the Lord. Let us not lose sight of those enduring God-

given principles of humility and the submissive heart that have sustained us since the restoration of the gospel. Let us seek truth and guidance from a loving Father. Let us look to our Father in Heaven and His living prophets and personal revelation for guidance. When the prophets speak, let us listen and obey.

I bear solemn witness that God lives, that He cares enough to direct His prophets for our blessing and edification. I bear witness that as we seek direction from our Father, as we follow the prophets, our faith will be sustained and enlarged. And so, my brothers and sisters, my farewell words to you today, not given casually and not given without meaning and contemplation, but given

with the soberness and the sincerity of my heart, are simply "Keep the faith." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder J. Richard Clarke of the Presidency of the Seventy and Bishop Richard C. Edgley, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel," following which we shall hear from Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy.

The chorus and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick

Scriptures are a divine road map

When we left our heavenly home to take this trip through mortality, we received instructions and divine directions that would assist us in returning home safely to our Heavenly Father. These directions were clearly communicated to prepare us for our earthly experiences.

Our Heavenly Father continues to communicate with us through revelation. These revelations are communications of divine directions. They may come to us personally or through the voice of the Lord's chosen servants—the prophets, seers, and revelators. Those revelations received by prophets are given to us in the form of scripture or by the voice of the living prophets. Thus the scriptures become a road map, a set of divine directions to assist us on our journey through mortality and our return trip home. Just as a road map that is not read, scriptures that are not searched are of little value to us in providing directions.

Are we studying our divine directions daily? When was the last time we checked our celestial compass to see if we

are still on course? The road to the celestial kingdom is one way. When we fail to search the scriptures, we may find ourselves going the wrong way on a one-way highway.

What constitutes scripture?

The Savior gave us a clear concept of what constitutes scripture. Speaking of the early elders in this dispensation, he said, "And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord" (D&C 68:4).

Scriptures reveal the divine desires of the Lord in our behalf. Each of us should have a burning desire to search the scriptures diligently and daily to seek the will of the Lord in our life. For some it may be necessary to develop the discipline to search the scriptures daily.

Love and appreciate the scriptures

How do we feel about the scriptures? Do we have the same love for the scriptures that Nephi expressed when he said:

"For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them. . . .

"Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard" (2 Nephi 4:15-16).

We should show great respect and reverence for these sacred revelations. We should have feelings of gratitude for those who recorded and preserved these revelations for our research.

Jacob, one of the four major writers of the Book of Mormon, expressed concerns that he could write but a small portion of his words on the plates. He recorded that he would be limited in his writing "because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates" (Jacob 4:1).

Even with the difficulty of the task, Jacob felt it important to use a portion of the plates to express his tender feelings as to how he hoped we would receive the words he had written. He said, "And we labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren and our children will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them that they may learn with joy and not with sorrow, neither with contempt" (Jacob 4:3).

Some have suffered death to make it possible for us to have the scriptures today. Historically, the scriptures in the Bible were reserved for the clergy, with the reading of them by others being denounced. At times laws even prohibited the public or private reading of them. What a marvelous blessing we have to not only possess the most complete collection of scripture in history but also to have the freedom to search and to use them!

Purpose of the scriptures

One of the most sacred purposes for which the scriptures were written was to make it possible for all to know Christ. The scriptures teach and testify of Jesus Christ. They teach us much that we need to know and do to return to the presence of

the Savior. John was specific in giving the purpose of the scriptures when he said, "But these [things] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

Nephi bore witness as to the reason he had recorded the revelations when he said, "And I, Nephi, have written these things unto my people, that perhaps I might persuade them that they would remember the Lord their Redeemer" (1 Nephi 19:18).

Scriptures are necessary for spiritual survival

The scriptures should be of the greatest importance in our lives. Our spiritual survival during the stresses of our society and the temptations of our time is greatly dependent upon the strength we will receive from searching the scriptures and listening to the words of the prophets, seers, and revelators.

People as well as nations perish without scriptures. The scriptures are spiritual food for our spirits, which is just as important as physical food for our bodies. It was so important for Lehi to have the scriptures and records which were engraved on the brass plates that the Lord commanded Nephi to slay Laban in order to obtain them. The Lord knew of their importance for the spiritual nourishment of Lehi and his descendants. He explained, "It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13).

In contrast, the Mulekites, who migrated to the American continent shortly after Lehi and his family left Jerusalem, failed to bring with them any sacred scriptures or records. Omni recorded the condition of a nation without scriptures:

"They had had many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time; and their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them; and

they denied the being of their Creator" (Omni 1:17).

Even more serious than their continuous contentions and wars and the corruption of their language was the tragedy that they did not know the Savior. The pattern is the same for individuals as it is for nations. Without searching the scriptures, they cease to know the Savior.

Search the scriptures

The Savior provided counsel as to the way we should study scripture. He said, "And now, whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them" (3 Nephi 10:14).

The Prophet Joseph Smith counseled: "Search the scriptures—search the revelations . . . and ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to His glory nothing doubting, He will answer you by the power of His Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves and not for another. You will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 11–12).

It is not enough to read the scriptures. Random reading results in reduced retention. We must search for specifics. We must seek for truth and increased understanding of its application in our lives.

Suggestions for scripture study

If we are to be effective in our study of the scriptures, we must prepare for it to be a special spiritual experience. The following suggestions may be helpful.

1. *Schedule.* Schedule a time to search the scriptures daily. Scripture study is such an essential part of our spiritual development that we must take time and make it a priority in our daily schedule. Our spirits should never be deprived

of the much-needed spiritual nourishment which comes from scripture study. Without this spiritual food our spirits become starved and weakened to temptation.

President Kimball taught the principle that "no father, no son, no mother, no daughter should get so busy that he or she does not have time to study the scriptures and the words of modern prophets" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, p. 71; or *Ensign*, May 1976, p. 47).

2. *Pray.* We should begin and end each study session with prayer. We must invite the Spirit to teach us. Nephi taught that "the mysteries of God shall be unfolded . . . by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 10:19).

3. *Search.* To search is to seek, to explore, to examine carefully. As we study we should do so with purpose, searching for specifics and an expansion of our vision of eternal truth. We must search for principles, doctrines, answers to questions, and solutions to problems. We should look for doctrinal relationships and for possible hidden meanings of that which has been recorded.

4. *Ponder.* To ponder is to meditate, to think, to feast, and to treasure. It is more than a mental method; it is a spiritual striving to obtain and to understand truth. We should follow the process taught by the Savior to the Nephites as he taught them sacred principles. He then instructed them, "Go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow" (3 Nephi 17:3).

We should ponder the meanings of the things we learn from our search of the scriptures. The Apostle Paul instructed the Philippian Saints to "think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). To think involves forming mental images in the mind and focusing intently upon that which has been discovered. Nephi counseled to "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do"

(2 Nephi 32:3). To feast is to consume, to digest, to absorb.

As we ponder, we should follow the counsel of the Savior when he said, "Treasure up in your minds continually the words of life" (D&C 84:85). This implies that we should repeat in our minds the principles we have learned and draw upon them in each of our decisions.

5. *Relate.* Nephi has counseled to "liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23). We must read as if the Lord were speaking directly to us in a personal manner.

6. *Apply.* President Marion G. Romney counseled: "Learning the gospel from the written word . . . is not enough. It must also be lived. . . . One cannot fully learn the gospel without living it" ("Records of Great Worth," *Ensign*, Sept. 1980, p. 4). As we learn a principle, we must make a real effort to apply it and to live it in our life.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Titles of respect

When I was young, I learned that great respect was owed to those who held the office of bishop. As a sign of that respect, we always addressed our bishop as Bishop Christensen or Bishop Calder or Brother Jones. We never called our bishop *Mr.* or by his first name, as we did in speaking to others. With the bishop, we always used an honored title.

When I was seventeen, I joined the Utah National Guard. There I learned that a soldier must use certain words in speaking to an officer. I saw this as another mark of respect for authority. I also observed that this special language served as a way of reminding both the soldier and the officer of the responsibilities of their positions. I later understood that same reasoning as explaining why full-time

We will return home safely

The scriptures are priceless possessions. If we search the scriptures, seeking for the plain and precious principles, the Lord will reveal his will unto us and we will be richly blessed. If we research the revelations and respond correctly to them, we will return home safely to Heavenly Father. To this I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

President Monson

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

missionaries should always be called by the dignified titles of *elder* or *sister*, or the equivalent in other languages.

In my legal training I became familiar with the formal language lawyers use to address judges during court proceedings. After graduation I worked for a year as a law clerk to the chief justice of the United States. We always used the formal title of his office, Chief Justice. Similarly, communications to our most senior government leaders should be addressed in a particular way, such as Mr. President, Your Excellency, or Your Majesty. The use of titles signifies respect for office and authority.

The words we use in speaking to someone can identify the nature of our relationship to that person. They can also remind speaker and listener of the responsibilities they owe one another in that

relationship. The form of address can also serve as a mark of respect or affection.

The language of prayer

So it is with the language of prayer. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches its members to use special language in addressing prayers to our Father in Heaven.

When we go to worship in a temple or a church, we put aside our working clothes and dress ourselves in something better. This change of clothing is a mark of respect. Similarly, when we address our Heavenly Father, we should put aside our working words and clothe our prayers in special language of reverence and respect. In offering prayers in the English language, members of our Church do not address our Heavenly Father with the same words we use in speaking to a fellow worker, to an employee or employer, or to a merchant in the marketplace. We use special words that have been sanctified by use in inspired communications, words that have been recommended to us and modeled for us by those we sustain as prophets and inspired teachers.

The special language of prayer follows different forms in different languages, but the principle is always the same. We should address prayers to our Heavenly Father in words which speakers of that language associate with love and respect and reverence and closeness. The application of this principle will, of course, vary according to the nature of a particular language, including the forms that were used when the scriptures were translated into that language. Some languages have intimate or familiar pronouns and verbs used only in addressing family and very close friends. Other languages have honorific forms of address that signify great respect, such as words used only when speaking to a king or other person of high rank. Both of these kinds of special words are appropriately used in offering prayers in other languages

because they communicate the desired feelings of love, respect, reverence, and closeness.

Modern English has no special verbs or pronouns that are intimate, familiar, or honorific. When we address prayers to our Heavenly Father in English, our only available alternatives are the common words of speech like *you* and *your* or the dignified but uncommon words like *thee*, *thou*, and *thy*, which were used in the King James Version of the Bible almost five hundred years ago. Latter-day Saints, of course, prefer the latter. In our prayers we use language that is dignified and different, even archaic.

The men whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators have consistently taught and urged English-speaking members of our Church to phrase their petitions to the Almighty in the special language of prayer. President Spencer W. Kimball said, "In all our prayers, it is well to use the pronouns *thee*, *thou*, *thy*, and *thine* instead of *you*, *your*, and *yours* inasmuch as they have come to indicate respect" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 201). Numerous other Church leaders have given the same counsel (see Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1951, p. 175; Bruce R. McConkie, "Why the Lord Ordained Prayer," *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, p. 12; and L. Tom Perry, in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, pp. 14-15; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 13).

Perhaps some who are listening to this sermon in English are already saying, "But this is unfamiliar and difficult. Why should we have to use words that have not been in common use in the English language for hundreds of years? If we require a special language of prayer in English, we will discourage the saying of prayers by little children, by new members, and by others who are just learning to pray."

Brothers and sisters, the special language of prayer is much more than an artifact of the translation of the scriptures

into English. Its use serves an important, current purpose. We know this because of modern revelations and because of the teachings and examples of modern prophets. The way we pray is important.

Prayer language of prophets

The English words *thee*, *thou*, *thy*, and *thine* occur throughout the prayers the prophets of the Lord have revealed for use in our day.

A revelation given in 1830, the year the Church was organized, directs that the elder or priest who administers the sacrament "shall kneel . . . and call upon the Father in solemn prayer, saying: O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ" (D&C 20:76-77, 79).

The prayer offered at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836 is another model that illustrates the language of prayer used by the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"And now, Holy Father, we ask thee to assist us, thy people, with thy grace, in calling our solemn assembly, . . .

"That thy glory may rest down upon thy people, and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that thy holy presence may be continually in this house" (D&C 109:10, 12).

This prophetic model of the language of prayer has been faithfully followed in all of the sacred petitions by which the prophets have dedicated temples to the Lord. Exactly one hundred years ago this week, at a spot not far from where I stand, President Wilford Woodruff began the dedicatory prayer of the Salt Lake Temple with these words:

"Our Father in heaven, thou who hast created the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein; thou most glorious One, . . . we, thy children, come this day before thee, and in this house which we have built to thy most holy name, humbly plead the atoning blood of thine Only Begotten Son, that our sins may be remembered no more against us

forever, but that our prayers may ascend unto thee and have free access to thy throne, that we may be heard in thy holy habitation" (*Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, 7 Apr. 1893, p. 2; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Salt Lake Temple," *Ensign*, Mar. 1993, p. 2).

When the Prophet Joseph Smith was imprisoned in the jail at Liberty, Missouri, he wrote an inspired prayer, which we now read in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Note the special language the Prophet used in addressing our Father in Heaven:

"O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place? . . .

"Remember thy suffering saints, O our God; and thy servants will rejoice in thy name forever" (D&C 121:1, 6).

Other prayers offered by the Prophet Joseph Smith also use the special, formal language of prayer (see *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984], pp. 283-84, 536-37).

To cite more recent examples, we are all aware that the prayers offered at these general conferences of the Church always use the special language of prayer we have learned from the examples of modern prophets and teachers.

We are also guided by the special language we read in the prayers recorded in the King James Version of the Bible and in the Book of Mormon.

The Savior's prayer language

We have scriptural record of three beautiful translated prayers the Savior offered during his earthly ministry. They are models for all of us. Notable in each of these prayers are the words *thee*, *thou*, *thy*, and *thine* instead of *you*, *your*, and *yours*.

In teaching his disciples what we call the Lord's Prayer, the Savior said, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9; see also 3 Nephi 13:9).

In his great intercessory prayer, uttered on the night before his crucifixion, the Savior used these words:

"Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee....

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:1, 3).

The Book of Mormon records this prayer the Savior offered during his visit to the righteous remnant of Israel on the American continent following his resurrection:

"Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen. . . .

"Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words" (3 Nephi 19:20–21).

Special language shows respect

The special language of prayer that Latter-day Saints use in English has sometimes been explained by reference to the history of the English language. It has been suggested that *thee*, *thou*, *thy*, and *thine* are simply holdovers from forms of address once used to signify respect for persons of higher rank. But more careful scholarship shows that the words we now use in the language of prayer were once commonly used by persons of rank in addressing persons of *inferior* position. These same English words were also used in communications between persons in an intimate relationship. There are many instances where usages of English words have changed over the centuries. But the history of English usage is not the point.

Scholarship can contradict mortal explanations, but it cannot rescind divine commands or inspired counsel. In our day the English words *thee*, *thou*, *thy*, and *thine* are suitable for the language of prayer, not because of how they were used anciently but because they are currently obsolete in common English

discourse. Being unused in everyday communications, they are now available as a distinctive form of address in English, appropriate to symbolize respect, closeness, and reverence for the one being addressed.

I hope this renewal of counsel that we use special language in our prayers will not be misunderstood. Literary excellence is not our desire. We do not advocate flowery and wordy prayers. We do not wish to be among those who "pray to be heard of men, and to be praised for their wisdom" (Alma 38:13). We wish to follow the Savior's teaching, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matthew 6:7; see also 3 Nephi 13:7). Our prayers should be simple, direct, and sincere.

We should also remember that our position on special prayer language in English is based on modern revelations and the teachings and examples of modern prophets. It is not part of the teachings known and accepted by our brothers and sisters of other Christian and Jewish faiths. When leaders or members of other churches or synagogues phrase their prayers in the familiar forms of *you* or *your*, this does not signify a lack of reverence or respect in their belief and practice but only a preference for the more modern language. Significantly, this modern language is frequently the language used in the scriptural translations with which they are most familiar.

Become mature in prayer language

We are especially anxious that our position on special language in prayers in English not cause some to be reluctant to pray in our Church meetings or in other settings where their prayers are heard. We have particular concern for converts and others who have not yet had experience in using these words.

I am sure that our Heavenly Father, who loves all of his children, hears and

answers all prayers, however phrased. If he is offended in connection with prayers, it is likely to be by their absence, not their phraseology.

When one of our daughters was about three years old, she did something that always delighted her parents. When we called her name, she would usually answer by saying, "Here me is." This childish reply was among the sweetest things her parents heard. But when she was grown, we expected her to use appropriate language when she spoke, and of course she did. As the Apostle Paul said, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11).

The same is true of prayer. Our earliest efforts will be heard with joy by our Heavenly Father, however they are phrased. They will be heard in the same way by loving members of our Church. But as we gain experience as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we need to become more mature in all of our efforts, including our prayers.

Take time to learn prayer language

Men and women who wish to show respect will take the time to learn the special language of prayer. Persons spend many hours mastering communication skills in other mediums, such as poetry or prose, vocal or instrumental music, and even the language of access to computers. My brothers and sisters, the manner of addressing our Heavenly Father in prayer is at least as important as these.

It requires a little time for adults to learn how to use the language of prayer. But it is not really very difficult. In fact, we are more than 75 percent of the way in English prayers when we simply delete *you* and *your* and substitute *thee* and *thy* (see Don E. Norton, Jr., "The Language of Formal Prayer," *Ensign*, Jan. 1976,

pp. 44-47). The special language of prayer is even easier in most other languages.

Teach prayer language to children

Modern revelation commands parents to "teach their children to pray" (D&C 68:28). This requires parents to learn and pray with the special language of prayer. We learn our native language simply by listening to those who speak it. This is also true of the language with which we address our Heavenly Father. The language of prayer is easier and sweeter to learn than any other tongue. We should give our children the privilege of learning this language by listening to their parents use it in the various prayers offered daily in our homes.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "It is a great thing to inquire at the hands of God, or to come into His presence" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 22). The special language of prayer reminds us of the greatness of that privilege. I pray that all of us will be more sensitive to the importance of using this reverent and loving language as we offer our public and private prayers.

I testify that this is the Church of Jesus Christ, which our Savior has restored in these latter days with the authority and duty to preach his gospel and his commandments to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve has just addressed us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Dedication of the Salt Lake Temple

Just before the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple, President Wilford Woodruff and his Counselors issued an epistle to the Saints. While a hundred years have passed, it might have been issued today. They said:

"During the past eighteen months . . . political campaigns have been conducted, elections have been held. . . .

"We feel now that . . . before entering into the Temple to present ourselves before the Lord . . . , we shall divest ourselves of every harsh and unkind feeling. . . .

" . . . Thus shall our supplications, undisturbed by a thought of discord, unitedly mount into the ears of Jehovah and draw down the choice blessings of the God of Heaven!"¹

When the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated, it had been fifty-seven years since the Lord appeared in the Kirtland Temple, keys were bestowed, and Elijah appeared, fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi 2,200 years earlier.

There were to have been temples at Independence, at Far West, and on Spring Hill at Adam-ondi-Ahman, but those temples were never built.

It had been fifty-two years since the Lord had commanded the Saints to build a temple in Nauvoo and warned that if they did not complete it within the allotted time, "your baptisms for your dead shall not be acceptable unto me; and if you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God."²

The Saints built the temple, but they were driven away, and it was destroyed by the mobs.³

Colonel Thomas L. Kane wrote:

"They succeeded in parrying the last sword-thrust" of the mobs until "as a closing work, they placed on the entablature of the front . . .

"The House of the Lord:

"Built by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"Holiness to the Lord!

" . . . It was this day," he wrote, that "saw the departure of the last elders, and the largest band that moved in one company together. The people of Iowa have told me, that from morning to night they passed westward like an endless procession. They did not seem greatly out of heart, they said; but, at the top of every hill before they disappeared, were to be seen looking back . . . on their abandoned homes, and the far-seen Temple and its glittering spire."⁴

The Saints disappeared beyond the western horizon, beyond Far West, where the cornerstones set seven years earlier were still in place—led by prophets and Apostles who held the keys of the priesthood and who carried in their minds the ordinances of the temple and the authority to administer the new and everlasting covenant.

Beginnings of the Salt Lake Temple

When the Saints trickled into the Salt Lake Valley, all they owned, or could hope to get, was carried in a wagon, or they must make it themselves.

They marked off the temple site before even the rudest log home was built.

There was an architect in that first company, William Weeks, who had designed the Nauvoo Temple. But the hopeless desolation was too much for him. When President Young went east in 1848, Brother Weeks left, saying, "They will never build the temple without me."⁵

Truman O. Angell, a carpenter, was appointed to replace him. He said: "If the President and my brethren feel to sustain a poor worm of the dust like me to be Architect of the Church, let me . . . serve them and not disgrace myself. . . . May the Lord help me so to do."⁶

The isolation, which gave some relief from the mobs, was itself an obstacle. Where would they get sledgehammers and wedges with which to split out building blocks of granite? They didn't carry many of those in handcars, or in wagon boxes either.

In 1853 the cornerstone was set, and ox teams began dragging granite stones from the mountains twenty miles away.

"'Good morning, Brother,' one man was heard to say to a teamster. 'We missed you at the meetings yesterday afternoon.' 'Yes,' said the driver of the oxen, 'I did not attend meeting. I did not have clothes fit to go to meeting.' 'Well,' said the speaker, 'Brother Brigham called for some more men and teams to haul granite blocks for the Temple.'

"The driver, his whip thrown over his oxen, said, '... We shall go and get another granite stone from the quarry.'"⁷

President Woodruff had watched men cut out granite stones seventy feet square and split them into building blocks.⁸ If there was no mishap (and that would be an exception), that teamster, "too poorly clad to worship," could return within a week.⁹

The foundation

The wicked spirit, which had inspired Governor Boggs of Missouri to issue the order to exterminate the Saints and broods forever and always over the work of the Lord, had followed them west.

President Young had said when they entered the Valley, "If they let us alone ten years we would ask no odds of them."¹⁰ Ten years to the day a messenger arrived with word that Johnston's army was marching west with orders to "settle the Mormon question."

President Young told the Saints:

"[We] have been driven from place to place; ... we have been scattered and peeled. ...

"... We have transgressed no law, ... neither do we intend to; but as for any

nation's coming to destroy this people, God Almighty being my helper, they cannot come here."¹¹

The settlements were evacuated, and the Saints moved south. Every stone was cleared away from Temple Square. The foundation, which after seven years' work was nearing ground level, was covered over, and the block was plowed.

Later, when the foundation was uncovered, they found a few cracks. It was torn out and replaced.

Sixteen large, inverted granite arches were built into the new foundation. There is no record as to why they did that. That manner of construction was unknown in this country then. If someday perchance there be a massive force wanting to lift the temple from beneath, then we shall know why they are there.

Building the temple

Construction inched upward. A young married couple might have visited the construction site and returned with teenage grandchildren to the yet unfinished temple.

As the temple neared completion, James F. Woods was sent to England to gather genealogies,¹² and it was the beginning of a sacred family history work beyond anything that man had ever imagined.

John Fairbanks and others were sent to France to learn to paint and to sculpt "so that the Lord's name may be glorified through ... the arts."¹³

He left seven children for his wife to look after. He could not bear to part with her in public, so two of the children walked with him to the station for a tearful parting.¹⁴

Women contributed no less than the men to the building of the temple. Perhaps only another woman can know the sacrifice a woman makes to see that something that must be done, that she cannot do herself, is done. And only a good man knows in his heart of hearts the depth of his dependency upon his wife—

how she alone makes what must be done worth doing.

In the throng on the day of dedication was a seven-year-old boy from Tooele who would carry a clear memory of that event and a clear memory of President Wilford Woodruff for another ninety years. LeGrand Richards would one day serve in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as his father before him had done.

When he was twelve, LeGrand heard President Woodruff give his last public address. Even after he was ninety years old, Elder Richards bore clear testimony to us of those sacred events.

There have been many visitations to the temple. President Lorenzo Snow saw the Savior there. Most of these sacred experiences remain unpublished.

A place to restore the fulness of the priesthood

However imposing the Salt Lake Temple may be, the invisible temple within is the same in all temples. The ordinances are the same, the covenants equally binding, the Holy Spirit of Promise equally present.

On the day ground was broken for the Salt Lake Temple, President Brigham Young said: "Very few of the Elders of Israel, now on earth, . . . know the meaning of the word endowment. To know, they must experience; and to experience, a temple must be built."¹⁵

The Lord, commanding the Saints to build the temple in Nauvoo, said:

"For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore . . . the *fulness of the priesthood*."¹⁶

"I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the *priesthood* thereof."¹⁷

"For therein are the keys of the holy priesthood ordained."¹⁸

Priesthood conferred by ordination

Some members of the Church are now teaching that priesthood is some kind of a free-floating authority which can be

assumed by anyone who has had the endowment. They claim this automatically gives one authority to perform priesthood ordinances. They take verses of scripture out of context and misinterpret statements of early leaders—for instance, the Prophet Joseph Smith—to sustain their claims.

What is puzzling is this: with all their searching through Church history and their supposed knowledge of the scriptures, they have missed the *one simple, obvious absolute* that has governed the bestowal of priesthood from the beginning, said as simply as this:

"We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."¹⁹ The priesthood is conferred through ordination, not simply through making a covenant or receiving a blessing. It has been so since the beginning. Regardless of what they may assume or imply or infer from anything which has been said or written, past or present, specific ordination to an office in the priesthood is the way, and the only way, it has been or is now conferred.

And the scriptures make it very clear that the only valid conferring of the priesthood comes from "one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church."²⁰

Remember, it was the resurrected John the Baptist, "under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek,"²¹ who came, in person, to restore the Aaronic Priesthood,²² and it was the resurrected Peter, James, and John who came, in person, to restore the Melchizedek Priesthood²³—facts in Church history except for which our claim to priesthood authority would be invalid.

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that the angel who appeared to Cornelius sent him to Peter to be taught because "Peter could baptize, and angels could not, so long as there were legal officers

in the flesh holding the keys of the kingdom, or the authority of the priesthood"; and that while the Lord called Paul as "minister and . . . witness" on the road to Damascus,²⁴ he sent him to Ananias to receive instruction and authority.²⁵

The priesthood is an everlasting covenant. The Lord said, "All who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the *foundation of the world*."²⁶

Do not miss that one simple, obvious absolute: the priesthood ever and always is conferred by ordination by one who holds proper authority, and it is known to the Church that he has it. And even when the priesthood has been conferred, an individual has no authority beyond that which belongs to the specific office to which one has been ordained. Those limits apply as well to an office to which one is set apart. Unauthorized ordinations or settings apart convey nothing—neither power nor authority of the priesthood.

If they seek to do mischief with the priesthood and with the sacred things of the temple, the Lord has said he would "blind their minds, that they may not understand his marvelous workings."²⁷

Rededicating ourselves to the Lord

In that epistle issued at the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple, the First Presidency also said:

"Can men and women who are violating a law of God, or those who are derelict in yielding obedience to His commands, expect that the mere going into His holy house and taking part in its dedication will render them worthy to receive, and cause them to receive, His blessing?"

"Do they think that repentance and turning away from sin may be so lightly dispensed with?"

"Do they dare, even in thought, thus to accuse our Father of injustice and partiality, and attribute to Him carelessness in the fulfillment of His own words?"

"Assuredly no one claiming to belong to His people would be guilty of such a thing."²⁸

The Lord promised the Saints at Nauvoo:

"If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate [the temple site] that it shall be made holy.

"And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the *voice of my servants* whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place.

"But if they will not hearken to my voice, *nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed*, they shall not be blest."²⁹

On this hundredth anniversary of the dedication of the temple, may we each dedicate ourselves anew to the service of the Lord.

Say the word *temple*. Say it quietly and reverently. Say it over and over again. *Temple. Temple. Temple*. Add the word *holy*. *Holy Temple*. Say it as though it were capitalized, no matter where it appears in the sentence.

Temple. One other word is equal in importance to a Latter-day Saint. *Home*. Put the words *holy temple* and *home* together, and you have described the house of the Lord!

May God grant that we may be worthy to enter there and receive the fulness of the blessings of His priesthood, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith, in James H. Anderson, "The Salt Lake Temple," *Contributor*, Apr. 1893, pp. 284–85.
2. D&C 124:32.
3. See Don F. Colvin, "A Historical Study of the Mormon Temple at Nauvoo, Illinois" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962).
4. *The Mormons: A Discourse* (pamphlet, discourse delivered before The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 26 Mar. 1850), pp. 20–21; Archives Division, Church His-

- torical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as Church Archives.
5. See Thomas Bullock Journals, 1844–1850, 8 July 1848; Church Archives.
 6. Truman O. Angell Journal, 1857–1868, 28 May 1867; Church Archives.
 7. David O. McKay, Salt Lake Temple dedication services, 21 May 1963, pp. 7–8.
 8. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 4 July 1889; Church Archives.
 9. David O. McKay, Salt Lake Temple dedication services, 21 May 1963, pp. 7–8.
 10. In *Journal of Discourses*, 14:108; see also 5:226.
 11. In *Journal of Discourses*, 5:226.
 12. Abraham H. Cannon Journal, 13 July 1891; Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; hereafter cited as BYU Library.
 13. John Fairbanks Diary; BYU Library.
 14. John Fairbanks Diary; BYU Library.
 15. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941), pp. 415–16.
 16. D&C 124:28; italics added.
 17. D&C 124:42; italics added.
 18. D&C 124:34.
 19. Articles of Faith 1:5.
 20. D&C 42:11.
 21. Joseph Smith—History 1:72.
 22. D&C 13.
 23. John came as a translated being. See D&C 7.

24. Acts 26:16.
25. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 265.
26. D&C 132:5, italics added; see also D&C 124:33.
27. D&C 121:12.
28. “The Salt Lake Temple,” p. 284.
29. D&C 124:44–46; italics added.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing “God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand.” The benediction will then be given by Elder W. Mack Lawrence of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until two o’clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang “God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand.”

Elder W. Mack Lawrence offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 163rd Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1992, at 2:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a single-adult choir from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake institutes. Richard L. Openshaw conducted

the choir, and Richard L. Elliott was the organist.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Hinckley made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this second general session of the 163rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints. We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Clinton L. Cutler, who are watching the proceedings of the conference on television.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are listening or watching by means of television, cable, radio, and satellite transmission in various parts of the world.

We express appreciation to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and cable systems for their cooperation in making their facilities available to carry this conference to members and friends in many countries.

We note that Elders Neal A. Maxwell and Jeffrey R. Holland are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

The music for this session will be provided by a single-adult choir from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake institutes, under the direction of Brother Richard L. Openshaw, with Brother Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will begin this session by singing "Arise, O Glorious Zion." The invocation will be offered by Elder Alexander B. Morrison of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Arise, O Glorious Zion."

Elder Alexander B. Morrison offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Oh Say, What Is Truth?" President Thomas S. Monson will then present the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "Oh Say, What Is Truth?"

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that Council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A.

Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy the following Brethren who have been serving as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Elders F. Melvin Hammond, Kenneth Johnson, and Lynn A. Mickelsen. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is also proposed that we sustain Neil Linden Andersen and David Todd

Christofferson as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. We invite the new Seventies to take their places on the stand at this time. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your vote of love and support.

President Hinckley

My brothers and sisters, we have a Church Audit Committee. The Audit Committee is an independent agency appointed to examine all Church financial

records and reports. Having done so, the committee is asked to make a report to the conference.

This committee is composed of David M. Kennedy of Salt Lake City, former secretary of the treasury of the United States and former internationally prominent bank executive; Ted E. Davis of Salt Lake City, certified public accountant and former university executive and bank president; Donald D. Salmon of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, chartered accountant and auditor general of the province of Alberta; and James B. Jacobson of Los Angeles, prominent business executive and distinguished civic leader in Southern California.

Brother Davis will now present to the conference their report, following which Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, will present the statistical report of the Church for 1992.

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1992

Ted E. Davis

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren:

The Audit Committee is independent of all Church officers, employees, and operations and has access to all records relevant to the committee's responsibility. We have reviewed the adequacy of controls over receipts and expenditures of funds and other procedures that safeguard assets of the Church and its controlled organizations, including budgeting, accounting, and auditing systems, and the related financial statements of the Church for the year ending December 31, 1992.

Expenditures of Church funds for the year were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes, composed of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed by revelation. The Appro-

priation and Budget committees administer major expenditures within approved budgets.

The Auditing Department staff consists of certified public accountants and similarly qualified auditors and is independent of all other departments. It performs financial audits, operational audits, and audits of computer systems for all Church operations worldwide. Incorporated businesses owned or controlled by the Church, for which accounts are not maintained in the Finance and Records Department, are audited by internal auditors of the Church or independent professional auditing firms. Audits of local units are performed locally. Local audit procedures are established, and audit reports are reviewed by the Auditing Department.

Based on our review of the financial and operating controls and the audit reports and responses, we are of the opinion that the budgeting, accounting, auditing,

and other control procedures have maintained adequate accountability for Church assets and obligations. In all material respects, all Church funds received and expended during the year ending December 31, 1992, have been controlled and accounted for in accordance with established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee
David M. Kennedy
Ted E. Davis
Donald D. Salmon
James B. Jacobson

The Church Statistical Report for 1992

F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 1992. The statistics which follow are based on 1992 reports available prior to this conference.

Church units

Stakes.....	1,919
Districts.....	601
Missions.....	276
Wards and branches	20,081
Nations and territories with organized wards or branches	146

Church membership

Total membership	8,406,895
Eight-year-old children of record baptized during 1992	77,380
Converts baptized during 1992...	274,477

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	46,025
------------------------------	--------

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Robert E. Sackley of the Second Quorum of the Seventy; Elder John H. Vandenberg, emeritus General Authority; Elder H. Verlan Andersen, former member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy; Sister Flora Amussen Benson, wife of President Ezra Taft Benson; Sister Sara Merrill Tanner, widow of President N. Eldon Tanner, Counselor in the First Presidency; Sister Ariana S. Vandenberg, widow of Elder John H. Vandenberg; and Sister Ruth Pingree Smith, widow of Elder Joseph F. Smith, former Patriarch to the Church. We also announce the passing in December 1991 of Sister Velma N. Simonsen, former counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency.

President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren. Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker this afternoon.

Elder David B. Haight

I rejoice with each of you as we have joined in the sustaining of our Church leaders. We welcome Brothers Neil Andersen and Todd Christofferson as new General Authorities. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the continuing growth of the Church as evidenced by so

many new members, more missionaries, more temples, more ward and stake meetinghouses. We are growing, and we will continue to grow as we reach out and assist those individuals seeking hope and salvation.

Available to all is our message that Jesus Christ is the literal Son of God and our Redeemer, through whom salvation comes; that Joseph Smith is the revealer of the knowledge of Christ and of salvation in this age; that the Book of Mormon is a witness of the divinity of Christ; and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's Church upon the earth and the only organization having the authority to teach the gospel and administer its ordinances. We invite all to partake of the blessings these truths make possible.

San Diego temple open house

Today is the final day of our public showing of the new San Diego California Temple. When the gates close tonight, more than 700,000 people will have taken advantage of that opportunity.

The first two days of the open house were set aside for state and local civic leaders, clergy of other faiths, business and education leaders, and the media and the press. Several hundred accepted the invitation. It was my privilege, along with others, to welcome and speak to these guests and answer their questions.

Early in the morning on the first day, ignoring the rain, these invited guests stood in line to enter a house of the Lord. They quietly and reverently walked through the temple, gazing in amazement at the architectural beauty and appointments fitting a house of the Lord. They came to see for themselves what they had heard and read about.

Rabbi Wayne Dosick wrote in the *San Diego Jewish Times*:

"The Temple is built . . . of earthly materials to construct a place that inspires heavenly awe. This Mormon Temple uses sweeping architecture to create a space that invokes the celestial heavens that is awesome." He continued, "We thank them for reminding us how holy a place a mere building can be" ("Open House Update," *San Diego Jewish Times*, 20 Mar. 1993).

Many moving accounts have come to our attention as a result of this open house; countless hearts have been touched. Over eight thousand individuals with special needs came in wheelchairs, bringing relatives or friends to assist them. One young son paused at the entrance to the temple to carefully clean and polish the wheelchair his father was in before entering the sacred interior of the temple. A devoted father lifted his frail fifteen-year-old daughter in his arms as he carried her from her wheelchair into the brides' dressing room. She looked around and said, "Oh, this is so beautiful." With a smile on her lips and with tears in her eyes, she gently laid her head on her father's shoulder and said, "This is where I want to come to be married someday." This young girl had come to the temple from the hospital, where she has spent most of the past five years, her wish to see the temple fulfilled.

Those who have attended the open house not only have been touched by its beauty, but notes and comments indicate that many have felt a deep reverence and profound emotional impact.

The purpose of temples

For more than one hundred years that same feeling has entered the hearts of vast numbers of visitors to this Temple Square as they have seen and felt the majesty and unsurpassed beauty of the Salt Lake Temple. One hundred years after its dedication, it proudly stands as a regal monument of the faith, industry, and vision of the Saints of God who built it.

But even more majestic than the temple itself is the vision of the purpose of temples which guided the builders. That purpose is to redeem all mankind who are obedient to the laws and commandments of God.

The gospel in its fulness was revealed to Adam, and undoubtedly all religious practices are derived from the remnants of the truth given to Adam. Some religious practices given in those

early days have, no doubt, been corrupted as they have been handed down through the ages. But faithful members who understand the eternal nature of the gospel—of God's holy purpose to bring to pass the eternal life of man—understand clearly why the history of man seems to revolve around the building and use of temples (see John A. Widtsoe, "Temple Worship," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly*, Apr. 1921, pp. 53–54).

Temples in all ages

Saints of all ages have had temples in one form or another. There is evidence that temple worship was customary from Adam to Noah and that after the Flood the holy priesthood was continued; therefore, we have every reason to believe the ordinances of the temple were available to those entitled to receive them (see Widtsoe, "Temple Worship," p. 52).

The Lord "commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, . . . that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was" (D&C 124:38).

In Exodus the Lord instructed Moses in meticulous detail regarding the specifications and requirements for the building of the tabernacle. "Though this was but a tent it was elaborately furnished and appointed, the choicest possessions of the people being used in its construction" (James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1924], p. 153).

It was to be portable and movable throughout the wanderings of the Israelites and served their spiritual needs for more than five hundred years. Utility and sublime grandeur were blended in the construction of this unique edifice. This was also true of Solomon's temple, which superseded the tabernacle as the permanent sanctuary of the Lord, and of temples built by His authority today.

The center of the community in ancient Israel was the temple. It is an institution of the greatest antiquity.

Redeeming the dead

One of the purposes of temples is to provide a place where redemption of the dead may be made possible by providing the necessary saving ordinances for them by living proxies.

A great responsibility is associated with the supernal work of the redemption of the dead. In a funeral sermon for his close friend King Follett, Joseph the Prophet said, "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead" (*History of the Church*, 6:313).

In seeking after our dead ancestors, we may have visions of tedious poring over musty books and microfilms and years of searching unless we possess the vision of this great latter-day work and understand how to proceed.

The Church Family History Department has microfilmed vital records for about two billion individuals. All that we have to do for a given ancestor is hope his or her records exist—and then find them.

Three principles to guide your search

It isn't always easy. But as you pursue your search, keep these three principles in mind:

First, the Lord never asks the impossible—often the difficult, but never the impossible.

Some may feel that they have conscientiously sought the Spirit in the task of finding ancestral information without success and therefore attribute their lack of success to insufficient faith. If you have felt this way, I suggest patience. Give the Lord time. Have faith that in His due time, all of the information you need will become available. But in the meantime, ask the Lord to direct your attention to other ancestors whose information is more accessible.

There is also available to you another valuable source of help. Knowledgeable family history consultants are now available in your ward and stake to assist you in your searching for your ancestors.

Second, begin where you are. Take one step at a time. You know key information about the lives of your parents. Record their information and then move backward a generation at a time, watching for unbaptized, unendowed, and unsealed ancestors.

Third, don't try to do everything at once. King Benjamin taught, "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27).

Prayerfully determine what you should do for your ancestors. Many factors affect this: what other family members might have done already, your own abilities and interests, the time you have available. But it is important that you *do something*.

Luella Boyd's temple attendance

Regular temple attendance is one of the simplest ways you can bless those who are waiting in the spirit world. If you live near a temple, partake of the opportunity to go *often* and *regularly*. If you live some distance from a temple, plan excursions so that you too might be uplifted and edified through this most satisfying and much-needed labor of love.

Eighty-three-year-old Luella Boyd, a widow, would leave her home in Basin, Wyoming, at five o'clock in the morning, drive seven hours to the temple in Idaho Falls, arriving about noon, and then participate in four endowment sessions. The next morning she would be at the temple as it opened and attend eight more sessions, going without lunch. On the third day she would start at five o'clock in the morning and complete four endowments by noon, then drive home to Basin, Wyoming, arriving at eight o'clock in the

evening. Sixteen sessions, six hundred miles, three days, eighty-three years old! One year she did this *eleven* times, missing only one month because of bad weather.

The most exceptional part of this story is that she currently is serving as a Family History missionary right here in Salt Lake City. Remember, Sister Boyd is eighty-three years old. And you and I think we are busy! What a marvelous spirit and dedication! She is one of 365 full-time Family History missionaries serving in Salt Lake having a remarkable spiritual experience.

Saviors on Mount Zion

After you have accomplished the temple work for your immediate ancestors, identify the difficult-to-find ancestors, serve in Family Record Extraction, or create a computer version of your family records to share with family members and others through the Church's Ancestral File™. All of these activities help provide the sacred ordinances of the temple for your ancestors. If you will do this, you will know the indescribable joy of being a savior on Mount Zion to a waiting ancestor whom you have helped.

The Lord has poured out His Spirit upon His children, which is manifest in new technology, simplified procedures, and expanding resources, which enable us to accelerate our progress in the redemption of the dead.

Needed information will come

When we have conscientiously done all we can to locate records of our ancestors, the Lord will direct our attention to obscure records in unlikely places where ancestral information has been preserved.

A dedicated Family History missionary could not read the microfilm information for one woman. He could not decipher it. He knelt at his work area to ask the Lord for help but still could not read the microfilm. He knelt again and

petitioned the Lord but still could not read it. The third time he knelt down and suggested to the Lord that he felt that this woman was waiting for her work to be done and if he couldn't read the microfilm, how could this take place? As he got up and looked at the microfilm again, it was perfectly clear.

I believe that when you diligently seek after your ancestors—in faith—needed information will come to you even when no mortal records of their lives are available.

A vast and grand work

Our labor for our ancestors is part of the divine plan of our Heavenly Father. It is a momentous assignment given to His Church, which we *will* complete because He has ordained it. This work is a powerful witness of the divine mission of Joseph Smith, through whom it was revealed.

Elder John A. Widtsoe made this remarkable statement: "When the history of human thought shall be written from the point of view of temple worship, it may well be found that temples and the work done in them have been the dominating influence in shaping human thought from the beginning of the race. Even today," he continued, "political con-

troversies are as nothing in determining the temper of a people, as compared with religious sentiments and convictions, especially as practiced in the temples of the people" ("Temple Worship," p. 52).

The salvation of our Heavenly Father's children from Adam and Eve to the present generation is the most important work in time and eternity. Our joy—or our disappointment—in the eternities may hinge on our willing participation in this great latter-day work.

President Spencer W. Kimball said, "The more clearly we see eternity, the more obvious it becomes that the Lord's work . . . is one vast and grand work with striking similarities on each side of the veil" ("The Things of Eternity—Stand We in Jeopardy?" *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, p. 3).

God bless us to love our ancestors and to be worthy of temple participation. I declare this work is true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder David B. Haight has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder John M. Madsen, followed by V. Dallas Merrill, who were called as members of the Seventy since last April conference.

Elder John M. Madsen

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of joy and gratitude for the transcendent events which took place in the Kirtland Temple 157 years ago today. And I wish to pay humble tribute to my parents, who raised me "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Enos 1:1).

"I the Lord am with you"

I love the words of the Lord given to all who are called and appointed to go

forth and preach the gospel in these latter days: "O ye my servants . . . , be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come" (D&C 68:5–6).

All who know and understand the glorious work of redemption wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ and all who know of his majesty and power and promises understand why they are to be of good

cheer. They who have come to know him do not fear! They look unto him in "every thought." They "doubt not," and they "fear not" (D&C 6:36). They know that he, the Lord Jesus Christ, is with them and that he will stand by them! (see D&C 6:32; 29:4-7; 32:3; 84:87-88).

"Be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you."

A sacred charge: "Bear record of me"

Following this comforting and sacred promise is a serious and equally sacred charge, even a commandment which cannot be ignored: "And ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come" (D&C 68:6).

Why this sacred charge, this commandment of the Lord to his servants? The Lord answers:

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

"For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me" (D&C 132:22).

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

All nations will know the Lord's identity

No doctrine is more fundamental to an understanding of the plan of salvation than the doctrine which reveals the true identity and role of Jesus Christ.

But how are all the nations of the earth to come to an understanding of the true identity of the Lord Jesus Christ? Consider these prophecies:

• "The time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread

throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (Mosiah 3:20).

• "These last records [clearly referring to the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scriptures] . . . shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved" (1 Nephi 13:40).

• "And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth" (Moses 7:62).

God's instrument to gather his elect

President Benson has plainly declared that "the Book of Mormon is the instrument that God designed to 'sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather [His] elect' " (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, p. 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 4). We have no more sacred privilege, and no more urgent and sacred responsibility, than to bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God! And we have no more effective instrument with which to accomplish this sacred task than the record which God has prepared for that very purpose, even the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ! In its pages, as in the other standard works of the Church, the true identity of the Lord Jesus Christ stands forever revealed—past, present, and future!

The Book of Mormon's witness of Jesus

Concert halls are filled at Christmas-time by people in many lands throughout the world who, with reverence and rejoicing, stand and sing the triumphant and

immortal words of Isaiah, set to the music of Handel's *Messiah*:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (JST, Isaiah 9:6).

But who is this child? Who is this son? And "whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42). Who is this "mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," spoken of by Isaiah? The Book of Mormon "verifies and clarifies" who he is! (Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988], p. 13).

He is Jesus Christ, born into this world as the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father (see 2 Nephi 25:12; Jacob 4:5, 11; Alma 5:48; 9:26; 12:33-34; 13:5), and the Son of Mary "after the manner of the flesh" (1 Nephi 11:18-24; 2 Nephi 2:4, 8; 31:7; 32:6; Mosiah 3:8).

He is Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior and Redeemer of the world (see 1 Nephi 1:19; 10:4-17; 15:13-14; 2 Nephi 2:6-10), of whom all the prophets testified (see 3 Nephi 11:10; Mosiah 3:13; Helaman 8:13-23), who came into the world so "that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name" (Mosiah 3:9; see also 2 Nephi 31:2-21; Alma 32:21-43).

He is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who was "judged of the world, . . . lifted up upon the cross" (1 Nephi 11:32-33), and crucified (see 1 Nephi 19:9-10, 13-15; 2 Nephi 6:9; 10:3-5; 25:12-13; Mosiah 3:9; 15:7-9) to "atone for the sins of the world" (Alma 34:8; see also Mosiah 3:11-18; Alma 22:14; 33:22-23).

He is Jesus Christ, who, before descending to come down from heaven to dwell among the children of men (see Mosiah 3:5), was none other than the Great Jehovah (see Moroni 10:34; D&C 110:3-4; Abraham 1:16; 2:6-8), the

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see 1 Nephi 19:7-15; Mosiah 7:19-20; Helaman 8:13-23), the Holy One of Israel (see 2 Nephi 6:9), who gave the law unto Moses on the mount! (see 3 Nephi 15:5).

He is Jesus Christ, "the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning" (Mosiah 3:8; see also 2 Nephi 9:6; Alma 11:39; 3 Nephi 9:15; D&C 38:1-3; 76:24), whose infinite atonement (see 2 Nephi 2:6-10; 9:5-10; Alma 34:8-16; 36:17-18) brings the resurrection of the dead (see 2 Nephi 9:10-13, 21-22; Jacob 4:11-12; Alma 11:42-45; 40:23; Helaman 14:15-19).

He is Jesus Christ, "the Eternal Judge of both [the] quick and [the] dead" (Moroni 10:34; see also 2 Nephi 2:9-10; 9:13-17, 41; Mosiah 3:10, 18; 3 Nephi 27:13-15; 28:31; Mormon 3:20-22).

He is Jesus Christ, "the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity" (Mosiah 3:5).

"O ye my servants . . . , be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the Living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come" (D&C 68:5-6).

I know and bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, that he was and is the Great Jehovah, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. I know that he atoned for the sins of the world and that he was resurrected with a glorious body of flesh and bone. I bear witness that he lives and that he soon will come again to rule and reign as "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords" (Revelation 19:16). May we truly "flood the earth with the Book of Mormon" (Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, p. 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 5), that all who will may come unto him and be saved, I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder V. Dallas Merrell

I wish for each one of you to know of the profound love that I feel for you.

Dr. Bloom extols Joseph Smith

I am intrigued as knowledgeable people of the world comment on the influence and power of the Church.

I would like to share with you some observations of Harold Bloom, who is a Jewish religious scholar. Dr. Bloom is a distinguished professor at both New York and Yale universities.

Professor Bloom has written about the power and future of the Church, and he extols Joseph Smith as “an authentic religious genius, unique in our . . . history,” and praises “the sureness of his instincts, his uncanny *knowing* precisely what [was] needful for the inauguration of a new faith” (*The American Religion* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992], pp. 82–83).

Joseph Smith and Mormonism, he says, have contributed to the world “a more human God and a more divine man” (p. 100). Bloom says, “I also do not . . . doubt that Joseph Smith was an authentic prophet. Where in all American history can we find his match?” (p. 95). “Nothing else in all of American history strikes me as . . . equal to the early Mormons, to Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Parley and Orson Pratt, and the men and women who were their followers and friends” (p. 79).

I am pleased to add my perspective to the impressive conclusions of Dr. Bloom. He wrote about how differently a believer might perceive Mormonism, and I am a believer. I am also one who has spent decades of academic and professional work researching and advising institutions on matters of leadership and power, and I wish to share with you my understanding about the *real* power of the Church. I invite each of you to think with me about several reasons why the true

character and power of this work transcends the genius of any man.

Sources of the Church’s real power

In the first place, the power of the Church is based on divine authority. God the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith and directed the restoration of their Church. Jesus Christ has chosen and ordained those who hold exclusively the priesthood keys to unlock and direct God’s work. The power and authority of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles extend to Christ’s ordained work in all the world. He has appointed the Apostles and the Seventy to travel in all nations to build up and regulate the Church. The Lord also calls “standing ministers” (D&C 124:137) to stay and bless us where we are and has affirmed the validity of his ordained representatives: “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). Those in authority have no question about whose work this is and for whom we labor.

Secondly, immense power comes from our divinely mandated purpose. The Church’s goal is not social standing, nor is it political or economic power. Our purpose is to invite all people to come unto Christ and be perfected in Him. Revealed gospel doctrines give us vision and perspective about God and His plan for our salvation. The Church is a divine instrument to help us qualify for eternal life, which is life with God. That is our sacred purpose, and it shapes everything about the Lord’s kingdom.

The power of the Church is also related to its essential work. Our work is to teach correct doctrine and principles of the gospel and to provide all humankind with saving ordinances so that they will receive “all that [the] Father hath” (D&C 84:38). President Howard W. Hunter has declared that the Church “has a compre-

hensive and inclusive message . . . restored to meet the needs of all mankind" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, p. 23; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, pp. 18–19). Indeed, the Church is establishing an expansive family that includes every race, creed, tongue, and gender, the poor and needy, sinners and saints, the living and the dead in the merciful, just, and fair operations of God's plan for all of His children.

We are empowered by faithful Latter-day Saints who are disciples of Jesus Christ, not just members of the Church. The power of the Church is based profoundly on discipleship that is rooted in individual faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our faith is demonstrated at the waters of baptism, by worthily partaking of the sacrament, in temple worship, and in the integrity of our daily lives. True disciples seal their faith in service that is motivated by love for the Savior and for the people of the earth.

The strength of the Church is also rooted in obedience to the principle of stewardship. We acknowledge that all we possess belongs to God. We and all brothers and sisters who preceded us come as one, in common, to bring our offerings of tithes, time, and talents for building the kingdom of God. We strive to lift one another as neighbors and to establish ourselves as a covenant community whose lives are centered in Christ.

Finally, the source of the Church's power involves continuous improvement. Our most fundamental doctrines impel us to improve, individually and collectively. We counsel one with another. We pray together and in secret. We acknowledge our weaknesses, search scriptures, and ponder course adjustments. We receive the righteous benefits from heavenly inspired gifts of science, technology, and art. We correlate, correct, and realign, bringing all truth we are capable of receiving to harmonize our lives and the leadership and organization of this work with the teachings and perfect example of our leader, Jesus Christ.

The only organization that will not fail

Some, as Dr. Bloom suggests, might have a "healthy fear" of the future power of the Mormons (*The American Religion*, p. 86). To them we answer humbly, This is the ongoing work of the Almighty. This is not the church of Joseph Smith. It is the Church of Jesus Christ. It is the only organization in all the world that will not fail. We are witnessing today the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Daniel: The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall fill the whole earth and shall stand forever (see Daniel 2:29–45).

Heber C. Kimball's optimism

Professor Bloom complimented the patience of our Church leaders. Patience is born of justified optimism. Elder Heber C. Kimball, an early Apostle, provides an impressive illustration. He returned from a mission to England in 1838 to find that half of the members in Kirtland, Ohio, had left the Church. The Prophet Joseph Smith and several key leaders were imprisoned for five months. Five of the Apostles and two of the Three Witnesses had apostatized. Thousands of the Saints in Missouri were being mobbed and driven from their torched homes. Entering this bleak situation, Elder Kimball wrote: "I can truly say that I have never seen the Church in a better state since I have been a member of it. What there [is] left are firm and steadfast, full of love and good works. They have lost all their earthly goods, and are now ready to go and preach the Gospel to a dying world!" (in Orson F. Whitney, *The Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967], p. 246).

Joseph Smith's optimism

At that same time, Joseph Smith penned these inspiring words from Liberty Jail: "What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in

its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints" (D&C 121:33).

With grand optimism the Prophet Joseph wrote to the editor of the *Chicago Democrat*: "No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

The divine character of the Church

We rejoice that the future belongs to our Master, who created this world, provided the plan of salvation, and established this Church. He himself declared, "For I, the Lord, have put forth my hand to exert the powers of heaven; ye cannot see it now, yet a little while and ye shall

see it, and know that I am, and that I will come and reign with my people" (D&C 84:119).

No other institution has the divine character as does The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That is because it has true authority, revealed purpose, a divine work, committed disciples, a vision of our stewardship, and impelling principles of eternal progress. To these things I humbly and gratefully testify in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have listened to Elders John M. Madsen and V. Dallas Merrell of the Seventy.

The congregation and the choir will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." Elder David E. Sorensen, who also was called as a Seventy since last April, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder David E. Sorensen

When our oldest children were still small, we lived on a busy street here in Salt Lake City. My wife, Verla, and I were concerned about the danger that street presented to our children. We used every opportunity to reinforce the importance of staying away from the street. In addition, this was a time in our children's lives when they were learning about temples and eternal families. So our children's prayers regularly included this request: "Please help us to be married in the temple and stay out of the street."

One day after some of our neighbor's children had gone home after playing at our house, my wife received a call from their mother. One of her children had heard a prayer while he was visiting

us and had offered this variation when he said his own prayer at home: "Please help us stay out of the temple and get married in the street."

I trust that that particular prayer was not received exactly the way it was phrased, but I do have a strong testimony of the importance of prayer in shaping our lives.

The Savior's teachings about prayer

The Savior puts great emphasis on prayer in the Book of Mormon. He repeatedly and personally prayed with and for the Nephites. And after He did this, He asked them to follow His example:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him.

"And as I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church, among my people who do repent and are baptized in my name. Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you" (3 Nephi 18:15-16; see also 3 Nephi 18:24; 19:17-34; 27:21).

In fact, Christ specifically exhorts the Nephites at least ten times to "pray unto the Father in [his] name" (3 Nephi 18:19; see also 3 Nephi 13:6-9; 14:11; 17:3; 18:20-21, 23; 20:31; 21:27; 27:2-7, 9, 28).

Christ taught that prayer is indispensable at each step of the perfection process, but especially at the very beginning. For example, He taught that one of the key reasons for the restoration of the gospel was so scattered Israel could pray to the Father in the name of Christ:

"Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that *they may call on the Father in my name*" (3 Nephi 21:27; italics added).

Furthermore, He taught that we in the Church are to pray on behalf of those who are investigating the Church (see 3 Nephi 18:23-30). He encouraged those who had heard His words to ponder them and to pray to the Father in His name for increased understanding (see 3 Nephi 17:3). And, of course, He showed us that even perfected people, such as Himself, should pray constantly.

At each level of our progression toward becoming like our Heavenly Father, prayer is a necessary step. Once we have tasted of His goodness, Christ encourages us to pray often—in secret, in our families, in our churches, and in our hearts, continually asking specifically for the things which we need—telling us, "And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you" (3 Nephi 18:20).

The key to salvation

Christ taught the Nephites that prayer is more than just a means to receive our Father in Heaven's generosity; rather, prayer itself is an act of faith as well as an act of righteousness. Prayer is the defining act of the worshiper of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is because the act of prayer itself can change and purify us, both individually and as a group. As our Bible Dictionary states, "The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them" (p. 753).

In other words, prayers bring our desires and the desires of our Father into harmony, thus bringing us both the blessing we are seeking and also the blessing of greater unity with the Father. This practice is key to the collective and individual salvation of women and men.

Elder Hyrum M. Smith expressed this idea well when he wrote, "The prayer of faith is the secret of the strength of the Church" (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, rev. ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 194).

Prayers during son's illness

I have seen this verified in my own life. While we were living in California, one of our sons was seriously injured in an automobile accident. His skull was badly fractured, and doctors gave us very little encouragement that he would survive. Three days after he was admitted to the hospital, he contracted meningitis, and his condition worsened. Our family doctor and neighbor came to our home and said, "All we can do now is pray."

And pray we did. For several weeks our neighbors, friends, and business associates joined us in praying for our son and for our own strength. After almost a month, our son's condition finally stabi-

lized and then improved, and we were blessed to see him eventually recovered and smiling again.

I would not wish a similar experience on anyone, but that terrible, difficult period taught us the principle that President Thomas S. Monson has taught the Church. Said he, "Prayer is the passport to spiritual power" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, p. 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, p. 47). During our son's illness, we saw and felt the spiritual power of prayer! Our ward had never prayed harder than it did then, and I don't think the members had ever been closer to each other. Our family was sustained by the collective faith and prayers of our friends. And even as our hearts were breaking in fear that we might lose our son, we felt closer to our Heavenly Father and more aware of our dependency on Him than at almost any other time in our lives.

Prayer changes our souls

While the blessings we ask for and receive through prayer are undeniably magnificent, the greatest blessing and benefit is not the physical or spiritual blessings that may come as answers to our prayers but the changes to our soul that come as we learn to depend on our Heavenly Father for strength.

One mother told the following experience that helps to explain this idea. She said, "Sometimes while we are eating, one of my children will get my attention and signal to me while his mouth is full of food. Grunting and waving, he will try to motion for me to do something for him. I know perfectly well that what he wants is for me to pour him a glass of milk, but I will wait until he uses words to ask me before I will do it. It's not that I can't understand what he wants but that I feel it is important for him to learn how to communicate well."

In much the same way that parents tutor their children in communication and courtesy, I believe that our Heavenly Father teaches us to pray because the very

act of praying will improve us. We worship our Father in Heaven as all-knowing and all-powerful. Surely, as our Creator, He knows our cares, our worries, our joys, our struggles without our informing Him. The reason our Heavenly Father asks us to pray cannot be that we are able to tell Him something He does not already know. Rather, the reason He asks us to pray is that the process of learning to communicate effectively with Him will shape and change our lives as much as we are changed by learning to communicate as children.

President Gordon B. Hinckley teaches it this way:

"There is something in the very posture of kneeling that contradicts the attitudes described by Paul: 'proud . . . heady, highminded.' . . .

"There is something in the act of addressing Deity that offsets a tendency toward blasphemy and toward becoming lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

"The inclination to be unholy, as Paul described it, to be unthankful, is erased as together family members thank the Lord for life and peace and all they have" ("The Blessings of Family Prayer," *Ensign*, Feb. 1991, p. 4).

Aside from participating in the ordinances of the gospel, there is no other time in our lives when we can renew our spiritual life and improve our understanding of our place before Heavenly Father the way we can when we pray. As we humble ourselves to approach our God and thoughtfully consider His grace and great love for us, we will become a more holy and reverent people, more able to receive the blessings He will willingly pour out on us. Truly, the prayer of faith is the secret of the strength of the Church.

I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration. Ezra Taft Benson is our prophet. The Book of Mormon's gold plates are a reality, as were the appearances of Moroni and many other angels who instructed the Prophet

Joseph Smith in response to his prayers. The restoration of the priesthood is real and eternal. It is the binding force for such divine ordinances as baptisms and sealings as administered by the Church today. The First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Our great missionary program

For a few hours nearly every week I have an experience that leaves me profoundly touched with gratitude, awe, and confidence in the future. As a step in the pattern used by the First Presidency to call, through inspiration, full-time missionaries, each week some of the Twelve review from five hundred to eight hundred recommendations from all over the world. Each call and assignment is made by the Spirit through the Lord's Apostles. Each candidate's history is a vignette of sacrifice, devotion, testimony, and faith.

Some who do not understand our spiritual roots are baffled by our missionary program. They cannot believe young women are willing to devote one and one-half years and young men two years to teach religious principles under a rigorous daily schedule with the highest standards of personal discipline while forgoing dating and all other private interests. Nor can they fathom why such youth work to finance their missions, at times with the help of family or friends, when they cannot choose where or with whom they will serve.

Such youth are joined by couples who leave comfortable homes, grandchildren, and recreation, often multiple times, for distant parts of the world to live under the most humble circumstances. A few learn a foreign language; many experience vastly different cultures, accepting challenges they are not sure they can cope

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder David E. Sorensen of the Seventy.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

with. Yet these youth and couples return from service given at great personal sacrifice, thanking the Lord for the privilege. There is nothing like it in the world.

The power of correct principles

What creates this valiant force of over 48,000 missionaries voluntarily serving others? Whence cometh their strength? The answer lies in the *power of correct principles*. I will explain.

Man has always benefited from obedience to true principles. The fearless Polynesians in precarious craft crossed an immense ocean for destinations thousands of miles away. That feat was accomplished not by chance but by adherence to sound principles of celestial navigation. They prepared carefully and did not succumb to temptations to deviate from their course or delay en route. In like manner, you and I can be assured of reaching worthy objectives in life by understanding and consistently following correct principles rooted in revealed truth.

Principles are anchors of safety. They are like the steel anchors a mountaineer uses to conquer otherwise impossible cliffs. They will help you have confidence in new and unfamiliar circumstances. They will provide you protection in life's storms of adversity.

All of the self-inflicted tragedy that occurs today from violation of the Lord's commandments could be avoided by careful, consistent observance of revealed

truth. The productive power of correct principles can make your life a joyous, satisfying experience.

Mothers' nurturing influence

We can understand what motivates missionaries to sacrifice to serve others by examining their early youth. Proverbs records this principle: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

When, as mothers, you are consistently in the home, at least during the hours the children are predominantly there, you can detect the individual needs of each child and provide ways to satisfy them. Your divinely given instincts help sense a child's special talents and unique capacities so you can nurture and strengthen them. Consider these examples of how the compassionate love and sensitivity of parents, particularly mothers, bless children's lives:

A mother overheard her son, four, tell his brother, six, "I don't believe in Jesus." The brother responded, "You have really hurt my feelings." Sensing a need, the mother reinforced the younger boy's understanding of the Savior. She placed a picture of the Redeemer in his room and continued to teach all of her children more about the Master. Sometime later, the younger son commented, "Mom, you're my best friend—next to Jesus."

Another lovely mother has consistently read scriptures to her children to teach them truth. While overseas with no satisfactory schools, she spent much time and energy painstakingly tutoring them—with amazing results. Once the father went to help their five-year-old daughter with evening prayer. He found her kneeling, sharing her tender feelings with her Heavenly Father. Sensing his presence, she looked up. He said, "Do you know how wonderful it makes Father in Heaven feel when you talk to Him?" She responded, "Oh, Daddy, I will always talk to my Father in Heaven." Such is the pure

heart of a five-year-old who has been carefully, spiritually nurtured.

Another mother read gospel stories to her children from a young, formative age. Once, as she read of the crucifixion of the Savior, her two-and-one-half-year-old son sobbed. She realized that he was a spiritually sensitive child. Through the years that child has become a righteous, disciplined young man who loves the Lord and keeps His commandments. Profanity, so prevalent today, is particularly offensive to him. As he shuns it and other evils, he is criticized for being too "churchy." While it is difficult now, as he continues his resolve to be righteous, he will become a powerfully strong husband, father, and leader.

When two-year-old Clayton overheard the family sharing feelings about his grandmother serving in Swaziland, Africa, his little heart was touched. Often he would fold his arms, bow his head, and say, "Gam-ma on mission. Jesus. Amen." When she returned, he did not recognize her until she said, "This is your missionary grandma." Instantly he broke into a smile, ran, and threw his arms around her. Each grandchild now wants to be a missionary.

Honor to mothers who remain home

What enduring fruits will result from seeds of truth you carefully plant and thoughtfully cultivate in the fertile soil of your child's trusting mind and heart? Recently I reviewed the history of many missionaries and found a powerful correlation between exceptional missionaries and mothers who chose to remain home, often at great financial and personal sacrifice. With the names changed, I share excerpts of bishops' and stake presidents' comments about real missionaries. It is but a fraction of the many thousands of examples available. They reflect honor to mothers who sacrificed to remain home for their children's benefit.

"Kevin is one of the finest young men I have known. He is a natural leader,

gifted, intelligent, and multitalented, with whom people feel comfortable. He has read the Book of Mormon six times and has a strong testimony acquired through study, service, trial, and sacrifice. He currently has a full scholarship to medical school."

"Loraine is one of the most remarkable young women in the Church. She will be a delight to any mission president."

"Roy is the type of young man I would hope for my daughter someday."

"Brad is one of the finest young men I have ever known. He is honest and true, bright, well organized, and a hard worker. He handles challenges as if the Lord were speaking in his ear."

"Carol has kept herself worthy while a cheerleader in high school and college. She is one of the most loved and looked-up-to among her peers. She is strong, and her love for the Lord is evidenced in her '1,000-watt' glow."

"Pierre comes from a strong family. He is not swayed by peer pressure, has always been a leader, prays regularly, studies the scriptures, is close to family and the principles of the gospel. He does the uncomfortable things first."

"Mark is possibly the best-prepared young man I have ever recommended. He has taken many under his arm and stabilized their lives because of his testimony and love. One of eleven children, he indicated he would be fasting and praying during the week his mission is being considered."

"Marie is strong, motivated, smart, dedicated, and knows where she is going. She comes from a strong home where gospel-centered ideals and values were successfully transferred to her. During her entire life she has been an outstanding example of service and righteous living."

"Dale has a strong foundation in the gospel from his own study and the influence of a very supportive family. The eldest of five children, he has always done the right things. He had a driver's license,

but when insurance rates increased, he voluntarily turned it in."

"Rodney is a very impressive young man. He spent a short time in the military and got his whole platoon to pray with him before tests; several went to church with him."

"Sonya is almost too good to be true!"

"Mac is on athletic scholarship and is close to attaining his goal of representing his country in the Olympics this fall, yet he has decided it's time to serve his mission."

"Marco is a pure vessel, not demonstrative but steady. One of eight, he recently earned his Eagle rank, delayed not by apathy but because he has worked hard since thirteen to help support his large family."

"Layne is a gentle giant, predisposed to set a good example. A fine student, he delayed higher education to earn money for his mission. He sold the horses he loves to help with family finances."

"Lee is completely dependable and responsible. To illustrate his faith, his mother at this moment is hovering between life and death, yet he is anxious to serve. He said, 'That is what the Lord wants and my parents want.'"

There are many thousands of youth like those I have just described, and more just keep coming.

How grateful you mothers of youth like these must feel as you see some of the fruits of your sacrifice. You have a vision of the power of obediently, patiently teaching truth because you look beyond the peanut butter sandwiches, soiled clothing, tedious hours of routine, struggles with homework, and long hours by a sickbed.

President Benson has taught that a mother with children should be in the home. He also said, "We realize . . . that some of our choice sisters are widowed and divorced and that others find themselves in unusual circumstances where, out of necessity, they are required to work

for a period of time. But these instances are the exception, not the rule" (Ezra Taft Benson, *To the Mothers in Zion* [pamphlet, 1987], pp. 5–6). You in these unusual circumstances qualify for additional inspiration and strength from the Lord. Those who leave the home for lesser reasons will not.

Dealing with disobedience

Parents, don't make the mistake of purposefully intervening to soften or eliminate the natural consequences of your child's deliberate decisions to violate the commandments. Such acts reinforce false principles, open the door for more serious sin, and lessen the likelihood of repentance.

Some of you have children who do not respond to you, choosing entirely different paths. Father in Heaven has repeatedly had that same experience. While some of His children have used His gift of agency to make choices against His counsel, He continues to love them. Yet, I am sure, He has never blamed Himself for their unwise choices.

Focus on the family

As a mother or father, are you in trouble because the pressures of the world lead you from effectively fulfilling your divine role? Is your life unconsciously fueled with the burning desire for more things that could compromise eternal relationships and the molding of a child's developing character? You must be willing to forgo personal pleasure and self-interest for family-centered activity, and not turn over to church, school, or society the principal role of fostering a child's well-rounded development. It takes time, great effort, and significant personal sacrifice to "train up a child in the way he should go." But where can you find greater rewards for a job well done?

You may not have the blessing of being raised in an understanding family, yet your use of correct principles will

mold, strengthen, and give purpose to your lives.

Find and follow correct principles

Joseph Smith's inspired statement, "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves," still applies (quoted by John Taylor, in *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, p. 339). The Lord uses that pattern with us. You will find correct principles in the teachings of the Savior, His prophets, and the scriptures—especially the Book of Mormon.

While easy to find, true principles are not easy to live until they become an established pattern of life. They will require you to dislodge false ideas. They can cause you wrenching battles within the secret chambers of your heart and decisive encounters to overcome temptation, peer pressure, and the false allure of the "easy way out." Yet as you resolutely follow correct principles, you will forge strength of character available to you in times of urgent need. Your consistent adherence to principle overcomes the alluring yet false lifestyles that surround you. Your faithful compliance to correct principles will generate criticism and ridicule from others, yet the results are so eternally worthwhile that they warrant your every sacrifice.

Anchor your life in Christ

Now, the most important principle I can share: Anchor your life in Jesus Christ, your Redeemer. Make your Eternal Father and His Beloved Son the most important priority in your life—more important than life itself, more important than a beloved companion or children or anyone on earth. Make their will your central desire. Then all that you need for happiness will come to you.

I solemnly testify that your Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son live, that they know you, that they love you, that they want to help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Elder James E. Faust, also of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder James E. Faust

Strengthening the family

At this Easter season I extend to all who are participating in these services my warmest greetings and prayers for your happiness and well-being. On this day we remember that the risen Lord has charged us with the responsibility to build the kingdom of God on earth. With this charge in mind, I hope to add a few thoughts that may strengthen the most important of all institutions—the family.

In recent times, society has been plagued with a cancer from which few families have escaped. I speak of the disintegration of our homes. Immediate corrective treatment is urgent. In what I have to say, I do not wish to offend anyone. I affirm my profound belief that God's greatest creation is womanhood. I also believe that there is no greater good in all the world than motherhood. The influence of a mother in the lives of her children is beyond calculation. Single parents, most of whom are mothers, perform an especially heroic service.

Importance of caring fathers

I hasten to acknowledge that there are too many husbands and fathers who are abusive to their wives and children and from whom the wives and children need protection. Yet modern sociological studies powerfully reaffirm the essential influence of a caring father in the life of a child—boy or girl. In the past twenty years, as homes and families have struggled to stay intact, sociological studies reveal this alarming fact: much of the crime and many of the behavioral disorders in the United States come from homes where the father has abandoned the chil-

dren. In many societies the world over, child poverty, crime, drug abuse, and family decay can be traced to conditions where the father gives no male nurturing. Sociologically it is now painfully apparent that fathers are not optional family baggage.

We need to honor the position of the father as the primary provider for physical and spiritual support. I state this with no reluctance because the Lord has revealed that this obligation is placed upon husbands. "Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken" (D&C 83:2). Further, "All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age" (D&C 83:4). In addition, their spiritual welfare should be "brought to pass by the faith and covenant of their fathers" (D&C 84:99). As regards little children, the Lord has promised that "great things may be required at the hands of their fathers" (D&C 29:48).

Both parents are important

It is useless to debate which parent is most important. No one would doubt that a mother's influence is paramount with newborns and in the first years of a child's life. The father's influence increases as the child grows older. However, each parent is necessary at various times in a child's development. Both fathers and mothers do many intrinsically different things for their children. Both mothers and fathers are equipped to nurture children, but their approaches are different. Mothers seem to take a dominant role in preparing children to live within their families, present and future. Fathers seem best equipped to prepare children to

function in the environment outside the family.

One authority states: "Studies show that fathers have a special role to play in building a child's self-respect. They are important, too, in ways we really don't understand, in developing internal limits and controls in children." He continues: "Research also shows that fathers are critical in establishment of gender in children. Interestingly, fatherly involvement produces stronger sexual identity and character in both boys and girls. It is well established that the masculinity of sons and the femininity of daughters are each greater when fathers are active in family life" (Karl Zinsmeister, "Do Children Need Fathers?" *Crisis*, Oct. 1992).

Parents in any marital situation have a duty to set aside personal differences and encourage each other's righteous influence in the lives of their children.

The status of women

Is it not possible to give to woman-kind all the rights and blessings that come from God and legal authority without diminishing the nobility of God's other grand creation, manhood? Eliza R. Snow stated in 1872:

"The status of women is one of the questions of the day. Socially and politically it forces itself upon the attention of the world. Some . . . refuse to concede that woman is entitled to the enjoyment of any rights other than . . . the whims, fancies or justice . . . men may choose to grant her. The reasons which they cannot meet with argument they decry and ridicule; an old refuge for those opposed to correct principles which they are unable to controvert. Others . . . not only recognize that woman's status should be improved, but are so radical in their extreme theories that they would set her in antagonism to man, assume for her a separate and opposing existence; and . . . show how entirely independent she should be." Indeed, she continued, they "would make her adopt the more reprehensible phases of character

which men present, and which should be shunned or improved by them instead of being copied by women. These are the two extremes, and between them is the 'golden mean' " ("Woman's Status," *The Woman's Exponent*, 15 July 1872, p. 29).

The priesthood: guiding authority

Many people do not understand our belief that God has wisely established a guiding authority for the most important institutions in the world. This guiding authority is called the priesthood. The priesthood is held in trust to be used to bless all of God's children. Priesthood is not gender; it is blessings from God for all at the hands of the servants He has designated. Within the Church this authority of the priesthood can bless all members through the ministration of home teachers, quorum presidents, bishops, fathers, and all other righteous brethren who are charged with the administration of the affairs of the kingdom of God. Priesthood is the righteous power and influence by which boys are taught in their youth and throughout their lives to honor chastity, to be honest and industrious, and to develop respect for, and stand in the defense of, womanhood. Priesthood is a restraining influence. Girls are taught that through its influence and power to bless, they can fulfill many of their desires.

Holding the priesthood means following the example of Christ and seeking to emulate his example of fatherhood. It means constant concern and caring for one's own flesh and blood. The man who holds the priesthood is to honor it by eternally cherishing, with absolute fidelity, his wife and the mother of his children. He is to extend lifelong care and concern for his children, and their children. The plea of David for his rebel son is one of the most moving in all of the scriptures, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33).

Marriage is the first priority

I urge each husband and father of this Church to be the kind of a man your wife would not want to be without. I urge the sisters of this Church to be patient, loving, and understanding with their husbands. Those who enter into marriage should be fully prepared to establish their marriage as the first priority in their lives.

It is destructive to the feeling essential for a happy marriage for either party to say to the other marriage partner, "I don't need you." This is particularly so because the counsel of the Savior was and is to become one flesh: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh" (Matthew 19:5-6).

It is far more difficult to be of one heart and mind than to be physically one. This unity of heart and mind is manifest in sincere expressions of "I appreciate you" and "I am proud of you." Such domestic harmony results from forgiving and forgetting, essential elements of a maturing marriage relationship. Someone has said that we should keep our eyes wide open before marriage and half shut afterward (Magdeleine de Scudéry, in John P. Bradley, et al., comp., *The International Dictionary of Thoughts* [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 472). True charity ought to begin in marriage, for it is a relationship that must be rebuilt every day.

I wonder if it is possible for one marriage partner to jettison the other and become completely whole. Either partner who diminishes the divine role of the other in the presence of the children demeans the budding femininity within the daughters and the emerging manhood of the sons. I suppose there are always some honest differences between husband and wife, but let them be settled in private.

Covenants between men and women

The importance of this subject emboldens me to say a word about covenant

breaking. It must be recognized that some marriages just fail. To those in that circumstance, I extend understanding because every divorce carries heartache with it. I hope what I say will not be disturbing. In my opinion, any promise between a man and a woman incident to a marriage ceremony rises to the dignity of a covenant. The family relationship of father, mother, and child is the oldest and most enduring institution in the world. It has survived vast differences of geography and culture. This is because marriage between man and woman is a natural state and is ordained of God. It is a moral imperative. Those marriages performed in our temples, meant to be eternal relationships, then, become the most sacred covenants we can make. The sealing power given by God through Elijah is thus invoked, and God becomes a party to the promises.

"Just cause" for breaking covenants

What, then, might be "just cause" for breaking the covenants of marriage? Over a lifetime of dealing with human problems, I have struggled to understand what might be considered "just cause" for breaking of covenants. I confess I do not claim the wisdom or authority to definitively state what is "just cause." Only the parties to the marriage can determine this. They must bear the responsibility for the train of consequences which inevitably follows if these covenants are not honored. In my opinion, "just cause" should be nothing less serious than a prolonged and apparently irredeemable relationship which is destructive of a person's dignity as a human being.

At the same time, I have strong feelings about what is not provocation for breaking the sacred covenants of marriage. Surely it is not simply "mental distress" or "personality differences" or having "grown apart" or having "fallen out of love." This is especially so where there are children. Enduring divine counsel comes from Paul:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, [and] to love their children" (Titus 2:4).

Cure for decaying family life

In my opinion, members of the Church have the most effective cure for our decaying family life. It is for men, women, and children to honor and respect the divine roles of both fathers and mothers in the home. In so doing, mutual respect and appreciation among the members of the Church will be fostered by the righteousness found there. In this way the great sealing keys restored by Elijah, spoken of by Malachi, might operate "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse" (D&C 110:15; see also Malachi 4:6).

The sealing power in our daily lives

President Joseph Fielding Smith stated concerning the keys of Elijah: "This sealing power bestowed upon Elijah, is the power which binds husbands and wives, and children to parents for time and eternity. It is the binding power existing in every Gospel ordinance. . . . It was the mission of Elijah to come, and restore it so that the curse of confusion and disorder would not exist in the kingdom of God" (*Elijah the Prophet and His Mission* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957], p. 5). Confusion and disorder are all too common in society, but they must not be permitted to destroy our homes.

Perhaps we regard the power bestowed by Elijah as something associated only with formal ordinances performed in sacred places. But these ordinances become dynamic and productive of good only as they reveal themselves in our daily lives. Malachi said that the power of Elijah would turn the *hearts* of the fathers

and the children to each other. The heart is the seat of the emotions and a conduit for revelation (see Malachi 4:5-6). This sealing power thus reveals itself in family relationships, in attributes and virtues developed in a nurturing environment, and in loving service. These are the cords that bind families together, and the priesthood advances their development. In imperceptible but real ways, the "doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul [and thy home] as the dew from heaven" (D&C 121:45).

"Fathers, come home"

I so testify that the blessings of the priesthood, honored by fathers and husbands and revered by wives and children, can indeed cure the cancer that plagues our society. I plead with you, Fathers, come home. Magnify your priesthood calling; bless your families through this sacred influence, and experience the rewards promised by our Father and God. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Faust.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time. We emphasize that's mountain standard time because tomorrow we'll be on mountain daylight saving time. And therefore it's very important that before you retire tonight you turn your clocks ahead one hour so you'll be here on time tomorrow.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 in the morning.

We express gratitude to the single-adult choir from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake institutes

for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon.

And we repeat our expressions of appreciation to those who own and operate the many facilities of radio broadcasting, television broadcasting, cable broadcasting, and other means which have carried the proceedings of this general conference far and wide across the world. We note that we now have, as a part of this undertaking, more than 3,500 other halls connected by satellite into which the proceedings of this conference are being carried. It has become a mammoth and tremendous thing, the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

May I express appreciation for these beautiful flowers which are in the Tabernacle here on Temple Square. They are the gift of the Saints from the island of

Kauai in Hawaii. A few months ago that island was terribly devastated by Hurricane Iniki. These flowers have grown from the plants that were destroyed at that time and have been sent to us by air as an expression of gratitude to our Father in Heaven for his hand in restoring that which was lost, and as an expression of love on the part of those who are there in behalf of those of us who are here.

The choir will now sing in closing "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Rulon G. Craven of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

Elder Rulon G. Craven offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 163rd Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 3, 1993. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir from Ricks College. Clyde Luke and Kevin Brower directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was at the organ.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood session of the conference.

President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching these proceedings in his apartment, sends his love and best wishes to all who are participating in this session and has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct. Elder Clinton L. Cutler is also

excused this evening, and he too is watching these proceedings on television.

The services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

We note that Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Horacio A. Tenorio, and Kenneth Johnson are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and that Elders W. Eugene Hansen and Graham W. Doxey are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon Elders F. Melvin Hammond, Kenneth Johnson, and Lynn A. Mickelsen, who had been serving as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, and Elders Neil Linden Andersen and David Todd Christofferson were called as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from Ricks College under the direction of Brothers Clyde Luke and Kevin Brower, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "See the Mighty Angel Flying," following which Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "See the Mighty Angel Flying."

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now favor us with "Sweet Hour of Prayer." Following the choir number, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve will speak to us.

The choir sang "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Honoring the priesthood

Brethren, relatively little is written on my subject.¹ Yet we are all expected to know about it. I speak of honoring the priesthood.

This is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He who stands at the head of His restored Church so ordered His priesthood "that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world" (D&C 1:20). Remarkable! He chose to honor us with His priesthood. So we honor Him by honoring His priesthood—both its power and those who bear it. By so doing, men, women, and children throughout the world will be blessed. Honoring the priesthood fosters respect, respect promotes reverence, and reverence invites revelation.²

President Ezra Taft Benson has specifically asked us to follow proper priesthood protocol—principles, he noted, "that many of us have learned by observation while listening to senior brethren." He said, "Protocol is a long-established practice prescribing complete deference to . . . an order of correct procedure."³ I will quote from President Benson and other leaders because, as you will

note, much of my message pertains to that protocol.

Types of organizations

Differences exist in practice and organization between the Lord's Church and man-made institutions. Men and women may form associations for and among themselves and be governed by stipulations that are mutually acceptable. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, however, is neither a democracy nor a republic. His is a kingdom—the kingdom of God on earth. His is a hierarchical church, with ultimate authority at the top. The Lord directs His anointed servants. They testify to all the world that God has again spoken. The heavens have been opened. A living linkage has been formed between heaven and earth in our day.

That supreme authority is supported by a firm foundation following an organizational pattern established anciently. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, with Apostles and prophets and all the gifts, powers, and blessings that characterized the Church in earlier days (see 1 Corinthians 12:28).

Leaders and titles

Secular and spiritual institutions have differing patterns of leadership. Man-made organizations are governed by officers with titles that designate rank or accomplishment. A military officer, judge, senator, doctor, or professor is properly addressed by title. We appropriately honor individuals who have attained such positions.

In contrast, the kingdom of God is governed by the authority of the priesthood. It is not conferred for honor, but for a ministry of service. Priesthood titles are not created by man; neither are they for adornment, nor do they express mastery. They denote appointment to service in the work of the Lord. We are called, sustained, and ordained—not by ourselves but “by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof” (Articles of Faith 1:5; see also Hebrews 5:4).

Titles pertaining to the holy priesthood deserve our utmost care and respect. Each member of the First Presidency is addressed and spoken of as “President” (see D&C 107:22). The title *President* is also used when referring to the presidency of a stake or mission, and in reference to a quorum or branch president. The title *Apostle* is sacred. It has been given of God and belongs only to those who have been called and ordained as “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23). An Apostle speaks in the name of Him whose special witness he is. This hallowed title is not used in ordinary forms of address. The preferred title for one of the Twelve is *Elder* or *Brother*.

The title *bishop* is also expressive of presidency; the bishop is the president of the Aaronic Priesthood in his ward and the presiding high priest of the ward organization. Reverently we refer to him as “the bishop.”

Elder is a sacred title shared by all who bear the Melchizedek Priesthood.

General counsel

May I offer counsel of a general nature, first with comments about General Authorities. We recognize them as instruments in the hand of the Lord, yet realize that they are ordinary human beings. They require haircuts, laundry services, and occasional reminders just like anyone else. President Benson once shared with us a story to illustrate this. He said:

“Orson F. Whitney . . . was a great man to concentrate. One day when he was traveling by train, he was so preoccupied that he did not notice the train pass the station where he was to get off. So he had to [be driven] back to where he should have been. Meanwhile the stake president waited and waited. . . . Finally when he decided that something had more than likely happened to Brother Whitney and he was not going to make it, they commenced the meeting. As Elder Whitney approached, he was greeted by the opening hymn, which was ‘Ye Simple Souls Who Stray.’”⁴

We honor such a man because of his extraordinary calling. His official acts are valid on earth and in heaven. Well do I remember the first time I met one of the General Authorities. It was a feeling beyond description. Though I was but a boy, immediately—almost instinctively—I rose to my feet. Even now I feel that same way when one of the Brethren enters the room. A General Authority is an oracle of God.

Often we speak of *keys* of priesthood authority. Fifteen living men—the First Presidency and the Twelve—have been ordained as Apostles and have had *all* keys of priesthood authority conferred upon them. President Gordon B. Hinckley recently explained:

“Only the President of the Church has the right to exercise [those keys] in their fulness. He may delegate the exercise of various of them to one or more of his Brethren. . . .

“Such agency has been given by President Benson to his Counselors and

to the Twelve according to various responsibilities delegated to them.”⁵

Under assignment from the First Presidency and the Twelve, General Authorities confer the appropriate keys upon presidents of stakes and of missions, who in turn confer the needed keys upon bishops and upon quorum and branch presidents.

Assigned to each man who bears the priesthood is a loving leader because “mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion” (D&C 132:8).

That order also defines bounds of revelation. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one, to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves.”⁶ That same principle precludes receiving revelation for anyone outside one’s defined circle of responsibility.

Honoring the priesthood also means to honor your personal call to serve. A few do’s and don’ts may be helpful:

- **Do** learn to take counsel. Seek direction from file leaders and receive it willingly.

- **Don’t** speak ill of Church leaders.

- **Don’t** covet a calling or position.

- **Don’t** second-guess who should or should not have been called.

- **Don’t** refuse an opportunity to serve.

- **Don’t** resign from a call. **Do** inform leaders of changing circumstances in your life, knowing that leaders will weigh all factors when prayerfully considering the proper timing of your release.

The one who extends *and* the one who receives a call are both under obligation of accountability. I quote from Elder James E. Talmage:

“Those through whom the call came to him . . . are as surely held answerable for their acts as is he for his; and of every one shall be demanded a strict and personal accounting for his stewardship, a report in full of service or of neglect, of

use or abuse in the administration of the trust to him committed.”⁷

Some aspects of the priesthood are *not* related to position or title. Authority to administer a priesthood blessing, for example, is dependent only upon ordination and worthiness. The Lord would not withhold blessings from any of His children for want of a priesthood holder with a particular calling. Every elder in the Church holds the same priesthood as the President of the Church.

Brethren, please remember: the highest degree of glory is available to you only through that order of the priesthood linked to the new and everlasting covenant of marriage (see D&C 131:1–4). Therefore, your first priority in honoring the priesthood is to honor your eternal companion.

Specific counsel

Now for counsel more specific. **Husbands and fathers:** with your dear partner, shape attitudes at home. Establish a pattern of prayer. Pray regularly and vocally for your priesthood and auxiliary leaders, both local and general. Your manners of courtesy at home and of reverence in the chapel will be copied by members of your family. Help your loved ones follow proper channels when they seek guidance. Teach that counsel should be obtained from trusted parents and leaders on a local level, not from General Authorities. In the past two decades, the First Presidency has sent out essentially the same letter six times to reaffirm that policy.

Fathers, you understand the principle of *temporal* self-reliance and try to provide for a year’s supply, stored at home. Please also consider the need for *spiritual* food and self-reliance—not just for a year, but for a lifetime—also stored at home. A worthy father should have first opportunity to administer blessings to members of his family. As time moves on, his sons may then draw from that

spiritual reservoir, worthy to administer to their own families and to their parents.

Now to **young men** who bear the Aaronic (or preparatory) Priesthood: if you honor it and prepare for and are worthy of a call to be a missionary, I promise that you will “speak in the name of God the Lord” and bring His light to searching souls. To them you will be as a ministering angel, remembered with love forever. (See D&C 13.)

Though I next speak to our beloved **presidents and bishops**, the principles apply to all. When one who presides over you comes into a meeting where you have been presiding, please consult with him immediately for instruction. Determine his desires. Be certain to allow adequate time for a message from him. A poignant illustration was once related by Elder James E. Faust:

“I learned some time ago of the distress felt by members of a stake in this valley when their stake presidency was reorganized. The presiding officer was one of the most venerated and unique Apostles in all the history of the Church. [Elder] LeGrand Richards was then in his nineties but was sharp and alert. During the conference, the local people who were called on to speak took most of the time. As a result, Elder Richards had only ten or fifteen minutes remaining in the meeting. What did he do? Go overtime? No. He bore a brief testimony and closed the meeting on time.

“The members of the stake did not necessarily want to go overtime. . . . They were upset, however, because the local membership, who would have other opportunities to hear from their local leaders, would never again, and in fact never did again, have an opportunity to hear from this venerable Apostle. In short, the speakers did not respect the presiding officer.”⁸

When a presiding General Authority has spoken, no one speaks following him. After the meeting has concluded, presidents and bishops, remain at the side of your file leader until excused. He may be

impressed to give additional teaching or direction. And you may also prevent problems. For example, if a member asks a question of your leader that should not be directed to him, you are there to respond.

Now for comments about the **stake high council**. It has no president. It has no autonomy and meets, even when divided into committees, only upon call from the stake presidency. Although high councilors may be seated in the order of their call to the council, no member has seniority over another.

In contrast, **seniority** is honored among ordained Apostles—even when entering or leaving a room. President Benson related to us this account:

“Some [years] ago Elder Haight extended a special courtesy to President Romney while they were in the upper room in the temple. President Romney was lingering behind for some reason, and [Elder Haight] did not want to precede him out the door. When President Romney signaled [for him] to go first, Elder Haight replied, ‘No, President, you go first.’

“President Romney replied with his humor, ‘What’s the matter, David? Are you afraid I’m going to steal something?’”⁹

Such deference from a junior to a senior Apostle is recorded in the New Testament. When Simon Peter and John the Beloved ran to investigate the report that the body of their crucified Lord had been taken from the sepulcher, John, being younger and swifter, arrived first, yet he did not enter. He deferred to the senior Apostle, who entered the sepulcher first. (See John 20:2–6.) Seniority in the Apostleship has long been a means by which the Lord selects His presiding high priest.

Rebuke and repentance

Brethren, these matters are important. More than a century and a half ago, the Lord issued a sharp rebuke to His people. These are His words:

“Verily, condemnation resteth upon you, who are appointed to lead my Church, . . . and also upon the Church; and there must needs be a repentance and a reformation among you, in all things, in your examples before the Church and before the world, in all your manners, habits and customs, and salutations one toward another; rendering unto every man the respect due the office, calling, and priesthood whereunto I, the Lord, have appointed and ordained you.”¹⁰

If any among us are also guilty of treating as trivial such things that are sacred, we may repent and resolve to honor the priesthood and those to whom the Lord has entrusted its keys.

Brethren, to all mankind we proclaim these everlasting truths: “The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world” (D&C 107:8). This power holds “the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church” (D&C 107:18). May we fully honor that priesthood, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. The reader may wish to consult James E. Talmage, “The Honor and Dignity of Priesthood,” in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 4:305–9.
2. President George Q. Cannon said: “[Honoring the President of the Church] will cause us to draw nearer unto the

Father and live so that we shall receive revelation from him for ourselves, that the knowledge of the Spirit shall be in our hearts, that the voice of the true Shepherd will be known to our ears, that when we hear it we will know it. . . . This is the privilege of the Latter-day Saints, and the man and woman in this Church who does not live so as to enjoy this privilege comes short of being what he should be” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:110).

3. “The Unique Commission of a General Authority” (address delivered at a General Authority training meeting, 2 Oct. 1985), p. 5.
4. “Commission,” p. 1.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1992, p. 77; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, p. 54.
6. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 21.
7. *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:306.
8. James E. Faust, “A Seventy Is a General Authority” (address delivered at a special training session for the Seventy, 29 Sept. 1987), p. 4.
9. “Commission,” p. 9.
10. *History of the Church*, 2:177.

President Monson

We have heard from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder F. David Stanley, who was called since last April conference as one of the Seventy.

Elder John K. Carmack

Using full priesthood power

Beloved brethren, in this very room there’s quite enough power to do anything we’re called to do. We are the priesthood of God.

Recently Elder Tai and I stayed in the Everest Hotel in Kathmandu, Nepal. One evening the electric power failed. Fortunately two small candles and matches were provided. But instead of about four hundred watts of electric

power to light our rooms, our candles yielded only two candlepower, not enough light to allow us to continue our work.

The priesthood of God is potentially a greater source of power than electricity. Collectively priesthood brethren perform well, but we fall far short of our potential. Why? Could our problem be that we fail to tap our greatest source of power in exercising our priesthood? Do we trade electricity for candles?

Faith is the priesthood's power source

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the priesthood's dynamic power source. By failing to put faith first in our callings, we reduce the priesthood's light and power. Other obstacles also block its beneficial rays.

Oliver Cowdery thought he could translate under the flickering light of a candle. The Lord instructed him, "Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith" (D&C 8:10).

Past priesthood leaders such as Peter, Paul, Joseph, and Brigham accomplished amazing results in their callings. How? They all did it with faith. They had no computers or fax machines. Their power depended on faith. Jesus often answered pleas for his miraculous intervention by saying, "According to your faith be it unto you" (see Matthew 9:29; 15:28).

Temptation to rely on tangible tools

Rather than relying on faith, we are tempted to stay with the comfortable and tangible tools of our temporal lives to accomplish priesthood callings. The Church has also provided some tools. These tools are useful. They have helped us achieve success, power, and control over our time. They include our natural intelligence; education and training; and preparation with manuals, handbooks, agendas, and budgets.

We operate with diligent, purposeful effort using management concepts and systems we have learned. I wouldn't say a word against these tools. They serve us well. Often they have come themselves through a process of faith and inspiration, trial and error, and intelligent effort. After all, the Lord said, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing" (D&C 88:119).

Add faith, however, and priesthood service becomes magnificent. Two candles suddenly burst into four hundred watts of light. More to the point, we tap into the Lord's power source, and our actions move in rhythm with His. The Lord compensates for our deficiencies. Vast, unseen reservoirs of dynamic power supply our needs.

Nephi relied on faith

The Lord commanded His Apostles to believe in Him, saying, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do" (John 14:12; see also 14:11). Clearly the power to do great works comes from faith in Christ.

Let's look at a well-known example. Nephi and his brethren received an assignment from the Lord. The assignment was to go and obtain the brass plates from Laban. They tried wisdom, charm, and persuasion—tools they were comfortable using. They even offered to trade precious things from their family treasure in exchange for the plates. Nothing worked. In fact, they fled for their lives, accused of robbery.

Only then did Nephi turn to pure faith. Here's how it worked. He convinced himself that the Lord had assigned him to get the plates. Next he conceived the mental energy and trust to try again, saying, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded" (1 Nephi 3:7). Without knowing what he would do, Nephi began moving forward while his brothers skulked outside the city walls. "I was led by the Spirit, not knowing

beforehand the things which I should do" (4:6). Now he was moving by faith—confidence in the unknown, hope in things unseen. You know the rest.

Notice that faith and trust in the Lord came first. Then came action. Nephi had no plan except confidence in the Lord. It was really a "ready, fire, aim" approach, the opposite of conventional wisdom. Laman and Lemuel thought it foolhardy. Then the Lord's plan unfolded with Nephi being guided by unseen hands.

Walking by faith in Vietnam

Often this is the way faith works. I was assigned, for example, to escort Elder and Sister Bateman and Elder and Sister Steadman to their missionary assignments as English teachers in Hanoi, Vietnam. We planned and organized, but we had more questions than answers. After completing our planned agenda, we still had one full day unplanned. More remained to be done, but what and where?

That morning we decided to act by faith by walking out our doors. Events swept us through an amazing day of welcoming ceremonies at the Hanoi Children's Palace, dinner in our honor with Operation Smile Vietnam, and other activities planned by our hosts. Our hosts had been too busy to communicate their plans to us, but the Lord knew them and moved us into place like pawns on a chessboard.

The power of faith

In the *Lectures on Faith*, prepared by brethren under the direction of Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio, the authors asked: "What are we to understand by a man's working by faith? We answer—we understand that when a man works by faith he works by mental exertion instead of physical force. It is by words, instead of exerting his physical powers, with which every being works when he works by faith" (7:3).

A brief but profound phrase in the book of Abraham describes the complete power of God's faith: "There is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it" (Abraham 3:17). With faith we can get the right things to do into our hearts and the words and mental exertion to do them. It may require leaving unstructured time in our planning and on our agenda. Then faith would have some air to breathe.

Although faith often includes positive thinking, it is much, much more than that. Faith taps into divine sources and is a manifestation of unity and partnership with the Lord. Even the ideas and words formulated by faith come by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the power to accomplish the words formed by faith comes from God.

Even more important, faith leads directly to eternal life because in exercising faith we come to know God and His power, and we become like Him.

The brethren explained in their *Lectures on Faith* that "the plan of salvation . . . was a system of faith—it begins with faith, and continues by faith; and every blessing which is obtained in relation to it is the effect of faith" (7:17).

Overcoming obstacles to faith

Priesthood leaders need balance, wisdom, and tools that help them organize, but why can't we add the power of faith that is available? I know that many of you already do that.

It sounds easy, doesn't it? Maybe to some of you it sounds too general and simplistic. Well, in a way it is easy, but there are serious obstacles to overcome before we can add the power source of faith in our service. The hardest step may be to decide that faith comes first. Then we must overcome the obstacles. Our greatest obstacle is often unworthiness. To really have faith, we must cleanse the instruments of faith—our minds, our bodies, and our spirits.

Ironically, if we are unworthy it seems that the order of using gospel principles is, for that period of time, reversed. First repentance, then faith. Arguably, repentance was first sparked by a particle of faith, but gaining the power of faith sometimes requires repentance first.

Pride and arrogance block out faith.

Self-sufficiency, often through financial success, high educational attainment, fame, and honor among men, can keep us from having faith.

Religious fanaticism can damn our faith. In religion, as in other things, sometimes more is less.

Alcohol, drugs, salacious entertainment, pornography, and accumulation of material things clog the arteries of faith; and fear, guilt, bitterness, and resentment can choke faith. Yes, Satan throws up many obstacles. He doesn't want us to have faith.

Now go back over the list of obstacles. Do you notice any of these in children? No wonder the Lord suggested that we seek faith like that of little children.

Faith not exclusive to priesthood

Brethren, faith is not an exclusive tool of the priesthood. The Roman centurion held no priesthood, but through faith he asked the Lord to heal his servant. He added that he was not worthy to have Jesus come to his home, although he was a man whose authority others obeyed. He said, "But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Matthew 8:8). Jesus marveled at his faith. "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (8:10).

The gentile woman of Canaan also tapped into the source of power. Evil spirits had vexed her daughter, and she sought in faith to have Jesus cast the evil spirits out. Jesus, probably testing her faith, explained that He was sent to minister only to those of Israel. She simply would not be denied. "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Jesus exclaimed, "O

woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matthew 15:27-28).

Brethren, we can learn much about faith from such sisters as the woman of Canaan, from our friends of other faiths such as the Roman centurion, and especially from our children. No matter how we learn to use the power of faith, we need to have it to accomplish the awesome tasks assigned to us.

Use gifts of the Spirit more fully

Also, we need to use more fully the gifts of the Spirit, all of which operate through faith. These gifts are available to us today. Even the ultimate power—to raise the dead—is occasionally exercised by those of great faith. The sick are healed, the blind see, the lame walk, and evil spirits are cast out—all through faith and priesthood power in combination. I feel we do not enjoy enough spiritual gifts in our priesthood callings.

We can start by adding the ingredients of faith identified in the *Lectures on Faith*:

1. To know and accept that God exists.
2. To know His correct character, attributes, and perfections.
3. To know that the course of life we are now pursuing is according to God's will. (See 3:2-5.)

Let's add these three elements to our priesthood power tools. We can't do it unless we sanctify our lives and add more spiritual depth to our knowledge.

Two candlepower or 400 watts?

Now, what shall we do to put faith foremost? If we listen carefully, we will discover the key to Simon Peter's faith in the challenge given to him by the Savior prior to His resurrection:

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

"But I have prayed for thee, *that thy faith fail not*: and when thou art con-

verted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32; italics added).

Perhaps it is time that we humble ourselves and overcome the obstacles to faith, and then become converted as Peter did. Why go through life with two candle-power when more than four hundred watts are available? The tasks are so great! How can we possibly take the gospel to all the world and redeem the

dead at the same time? I don't know, but the power and energy to do so must and will come by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, brethren, let's plead fervently with the Lord as the Apostles of old did: "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). Then let's use our increased faith as the primary power source in all of our callings. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder F. David Stanley

The principle of work

More than 6,000 years ago, father Adam received the commandment, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Genesis 3:19).

Some 2,700 years ago a Greek poet observed that "in front of excellence the immortal gods have put sweat, and long and steep is the way to it" (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 1.287, in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968], p. 67).

My young friends of the Aaronic Priesthood and you trainers of this great army of Christ, the principle of work has been taught from the foundation of the world. It is the bottom line of any forward motion of success. The frightening disappearance of work as a part of our basic ethic is alarming. We constantly hear statements such as "It's too hard," "Give me something easier," "I want it now," and "I can't wait that long" coming from our young people. The ugly disease of "nothing to do" is growing in epidemic proportions among us. It undermines the basic fabric of our nations. The prophet Ezekiel clearly defined iniquity as an "abundance of idleness" (Ezekiel 16:49).

We are what we are as a people because our ancestors were not afraid of honest, hard work. Our forefathers understood the necessity of it; sheer survival demanded it. A common ingredient

among all successful people is an understanding of what constitutes paying the price of success. Basic in that formula of paying the price is an inner determination that "I'll do whatever it takes." That means, "I'll work hard, with integrity, to achieve my goal."

Work comes before blessings

Hard work is a blessing of God. It involves going after it "with all your heart, might, mind and strength" (D&C 4:2). That alone is the difference between the average and the excellent.

Great athletes are hard workers. Points, rebounds, assists, tackles, goals, and home runs are all the result of long hours of painstaking practice and hard work. The bulk of that practice will always be on your own, away from the coach. Victory is brought to pass by one's personal diligence and commitment to hard work. The view of a champion, and the glory that surrounds him, must never be overshadowed by the long process of becoming one. There is a time of preparation and a time of victory. The second mile of hard work is what makes the difference between the exhilaration of achievement and the acceptance of mediocrity.

While I served as a mission president, many times missionaries would say to me, "But, President, I want baptisms now."

My answer was then and always will be, "You must work hard, be diligent, be humble, and exercise your prayers of faith."

"It's too hard"

Young men, are you spending too much time desiring what you want to be instead of establishing a course of discipline and working hard on what you are going to be? As I sat with two of our missionaries in a home one night, they challenged a young investigator to begin reading the Book of Mormon. His answer overwhelmed us as he sat in his recliner sipping from a twelve-ounce container from the corner convenience store. He said, "It's too hard."

Someone once said, "Thou, O God, [doth give us] all good things at the price of labor" (David Hume, *Human Nature*, in Burton Stevenson, sel., *The Macmillan Book of Proverbs, Maxims, and Famous Phrases* [New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948], p. 1331).

This young man had felt the Spirit; but, alas, the seed was sown on stony ground, and he was not willing to work hard and pay the price to gain his individual testimony. We feared that evening that by saying "It's too hard," he may have made a decision that could jeopardize his eternal life.

The secret of missionary work

Among the saddest events for all mission presidents is observing elders and sisters coming into the mission field not having learned how to work. President Ezra Taft Benson gave us a powerful key in one of his addresses on missionary work: "One of the greatest secrets of missionary work is work! If a missionary works, he will get the Spirit; if he gets the Spirit, he will teach by the Spirit; and if he teaches by the Spirit, he will touch the hearts of the people and he will be happy. There will be no homesickness, no worrying about families, for all time and talents

and interest are centered on the work of the ministry. Work, work, work—there is no satisfactory substitute, especially in missionary work" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 200).

There you have it, fathers and trainers of future missionaries. There you have it, my young friends who are now preparing for your missions and you who are currently serving. If you want to be successful, start with the bottom line of *work*. Recently we noticed a surge in baptisms in one of our missions. The mission president was asked the reason for the surge. He said, "Baptisms come from hard work. We must work smarter and much harder."

The prophet Alma said it very well while glorying in the success of Ammon and his brethren. He said, "Behold, they have labored exceedingly" (Alma 29:15).

That is a pure definition of work.

Say less and do more

Just over eight months ago a monstrous hurricane swept into Florida. Jack Demaree of the Montgomery Alabama Stake and many like him drove over two thousand miles round trip, using their vacation time to assist the hurricane victims. He brought back an article from a Florida newspaper: "In hot, humid conditions Saturday, about 12,000 volunteers—including 9,000 Mormon church members from six states who brought chain saws, plywood and tar paper—swarmed into South Florida. . . . So many people [were] at work that only two hundred showed up Saturday morning for an outdoor prayer service . . . despite the . . . prediction that more than 5,000 would attend" (Sheryl Stolberg, "Tent Cities Begin to Fill In," *Ocala, Florida, newspaper*, 6 Sept. 1992).

In my conversation with Brother Demaree about his experience, he said, "All I did was cut up trees that were blown down by the hurricane."

Brethren, using that as an analogy, cutting trees is more important than thinking about cutting trees or planning to cut

trees. We are becoming the world experts in meeting, thinking, planning, and organizing about working the work, but we need to *do it*. We need to *work*.

While many are sitting and saying and even shouting great swelling words of marginal effectiveness, hard-working Latter-day Saints will always be found diligently doing. Contrary to the belief of many, *say* and *sit* will never replace *diligently do*. When you accept an assignment or commit to work for someone, work for him. Your integrity to that commitment will follow you throughout life. Any group of young men in any quorum knows who the workers are—those hallowed, quiet few who simply know how to *get it done*. My young friends of the Aaronic Priesthood, say less and do more. Get it done.

Teaching youth to work

I am so grateful for parents who taught me how to work. There was no option in our home. It was an absolute requirement.

Fathers of Zion, teach our youth the value of honest, hard work. There is no substitute, no other alternative. Be careful that you don't train up couch potatoes. With all the advantages each of us desires to place before our children, be sure that undergirding all is the absolute of honest, hard work. Young men, learn it and do it. Let it become a part of you.

God lives, and I know it. This is his work, and he expects each of us to do it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders John K. Carmack and F. David Stanley of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Now Let Us Rejoice," following which we shall hear from Bishop H. David Burton, who was sustained as First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric at October conference.

The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."

Bishop H. David Burton

One of my heroes, Nephi, often used the phrase "My soul delighteth." Tonight my soul delighteth to be part of the many thousands who have gathered to learn more about our priesthood responsibilities.

Hero: Nolan Ryan

Next Monday the words "Play ball!" will ring out in major league baseball parks throughout the United States and Canada. I am saddened because one of my heroes, pitcher Lynn Nolan Ryan, Jr., recently announced that this baseball season will be his last.

Nolan will likely be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame the first year he

is eligible. He will be remembered for his record twenty-seven major league seasons. His 95-mile-an-hour fastball is legendary; 5,600-plus strikeouts is a record that will stand for a very, very long time. Nolan Ryan is not only a great baseball pitcher; he is a wonderful, sensitive human being.

A successful baseball pitcher is able to hurl the ball with velocity and accuracy. His pitches are disguised in order to deceive the batter. A pitcher, by changing his grip on the ball or the way he releases it from his hand, makes the ball curve, slide, drop, wobble, or slow down as it approaches the batter. In baseball, good pitchers, like Nolan Ryan, are masters at deceiving batters.

Satan's false heroes

In life, he who is the greatest deceiver of all has tremendous influence. He has many names but is best known as Satan, or the devil. And he knows that "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9).

Make no mistake about it, my young brethren, Satan is the commander in chief of deception. He is not satisfied with just taking prisoners; he wants the souls of men. One of his insidious strategies is to progressively soften our senses regarding what is right and wrong. Satan would have us convinced that it is fashionable to lie and cheat. He encourages us to view pornography by suggesting that it prepares us for the real world. He would have us believe that immorality is an attractive way of life and that obedience to the commandments of our Father in Heaven is old-fashioned. Satan constantly bombards us with deceptive propaganda desirably packaged and carefully disguised. Satan creates false heroes who, if emulated, will lead us to the depths of sin.

On the other hand, carefully selected heroes can give us a pattern for our lives and serve as our role models. They can give us courage to walk the road of life righteously. I have several heroes other than Nephi and Nolan Ryan.

Hero: Spencer W. Kimball

One evening I was working late in the Church Office Building. When I called for an elevator to go home, my mind was preoccupied. In my absent-mindedness I began to enter the elevator when a hand shot out to shake my hand and a voice firmly said, "I'm Spencer Kimball. Who might you be?" In my surprise I could not remember who I was. There stood one of my heroes; I finally mumbled something vaguely resembling my name. When I think of President Kimball, I think of *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, I think of lengthening our stride, "do it now," the priesthood for all worthy

males, and, most of all, conquering adversity. He will always be one of my heroes.

Heroes: Alma and Amulek

Alma, the high priest of the church of God, unsuccessfully attempted to preach repentance to his Nephite brethren in the city of Ammonihah. He left that city very, very discouraged. An angel appeared to him and said: "Behold, I am sent to command thee that thou return to the city of Ammonihah, and preach again unto the people of the city; yea, preach unto them. Yea, say unto them, except they repent the Lord God will destroy them" (Alma 8:16). Alma returned as commanded.

Amulek lived in that city of Ammonihah. He told of this experience: "As I was journeying to see a very near kindred, behold an angel of the Lord appeared unto me and said: Amulek, return to thine own house, for thou shalt feed a prophet of the Lord; yea, a holy man, who is a chosen man of God; for he has fasted many days because of the sins of this people, and he is an hungered, and thou shalt receive him into thy house and feed him, and he shall bless thee and thy house" (Alma 10:7).

Amulek returned and took Alma into his house to eat and to rest. Amulek was called to be Alma's missionary companion. On one occasion they were bound, beaten, and thrown into prison for preaching repentance. In response to their pleas, the Lord caused the walls of the prison to fall, killing those who had imprisoned them.

Alma and Amulek listened to the angel. They responded to the call to missionary service, and they preached repentance. They stood tall in the face of adversity and imprisonment. They are heroes whose lives are worthy of emulation.

Heroes: bishops

Through the years, each of my bishops has been a hero to me. Our current

bishop, Bishop Stephen G. Stoker, is a hero to our family.

I am grateful to bishops who helped me as a young man prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. One patient, loving bishop helped me understand that missionary service was far more important than perfecting my golf game, which had been the chief ambition of my teen years.

Today I enjoy playing golf with my sons and sons-in-law. When the boys are playing well, they extend a challenge. With nimble bodies, they hit the ball much farther than I. Because they haven't yet mastered the notion that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, I remain competitive. In their eagerness to hit the ball hard, they often drive it off the fairway or out of bounds.

Young men, place your faith and trust in your bishop. Let him help you live close to the straight line of righteousness and stay within the bounds our Father in Heaven has set. If you have strayed from that straight line, let your bishop help you change your course before the deceptive practices of Satan have you firmly in their grasp. I hope the Lord has reserved a special place in the eternities for good bishops.

Hero: my dad

Heavenly Father knew that *this* strong-willed son needed a good father. He picked out a great one for me. My dad's devotion to his children and grandchildren consumed much of his time. He loved the Lord and was about the Lord's errand throughout his days. He was not only my dad; he was one of my heroes.

Dad was the president of my priests quorum and bishop of our ward during my teenage years. You who have been a bishop's son know that sometimes performance expectations tend to be a little high for bishops' sons.

During Dad's tenure as bishop, a new meetinghouse was built in our area. Local financial shares were partially ful-

filled by providing labor. Often I arrived home to find a note on the kitchen table inviting me to join Dad in working on the new building. These invitations were not always received with great warmth and enthusiasm. It seemed to me that the bishop's son received more than his fair share of invitations to work on the new meetinghouse.

As the building neared completion, landscaping commenced. The priesthood brethren were extended a work opportunity to haul fertilizer to the site. Because the bishop was a part of the expedition, the bishop's son felt an obligation to respond. We drove to a mountain sheep corral. Into a large truck we shoveled very finely ground, dry sheep fertilizer. The wind blew much of what we threw into the truck back to us. This unsavory material gathered in our eyes, throats, noses, ears, and down our backs. I can't ever remember being more uncomfortable. I'm afraid I verbalized my feelings with emotion. When we arrived back at the meetinghouse to unload the material, I found my new bike had been stolen. My complaining was loud. Why would the Lord permit someone to steal my bike when I was about His work?

When Dad and I arrived home, we showered and sat down to an evening meal. My complaining about the day and my lost bike continued. As we knelt in prayer, Dad thanked Heavenly Father for the opportunity of the day's service and expressed love for me. He asked forgiveness for the person who had taken the bike. He noted his sorrow for the loss but expressed gratitude that it wasn't his son who had committed the theft. Dads make great heroes. I pray that if you are fortunate enough to have a father close by, he can be your hero. Dads, live in such a way that your sons and others can look up to you as heroes.

Bond with righteous heroes

Exceptional baseball batters have the gift of superb eyesight as well as excep-

tional eye-to-hand coordination. They can even see the strings on the baseball and detect the direction the ball is rotating. The batter can then better attempt to respond to the deception of the pitcher. Our Heavenly Father has given each of us such a gift to help identify and withstand the deception of Satan. It is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

I pray that you proud bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood will listen and respond to the promptings of the Holy Ghost and bond with righteous heroes in standing tall against the evils espoused by the master of deception.

I know that our Father in Heaven lives and that His Son is our Savior and Redeemer. I know they love us and want us to be successful. Of this I bear testimony in His holy name, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, has just spoken to us. It will now be my opportunity to present a few remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

Search and destroy

During the seemingly never-ending years of the Vietnam conflict, we frequently heard through the media's blaring voice the term *search and destroy*. This phrase helped explain to the public the peculiar nature of combat in that area of dense jungle, oppressive heat, and debilitating disease.

This war was not marked by large-scale battles on open terrain. Rather, the enemy was often not visible—but nonetheless highly dangerous—thereby leading to the concept of search and destroy. Casualties were high, suffering rampant, and destruction everywhere to be found. We will never know how many cried out their own expression of the biblical question, “Is there no balm in Gilead?”¹ The world sighed profound relief when conflict ceased and peace prevailed.

Search and rescue

I was thinking of the term *search and destroy* this past winter as I visited with a neighbor and friend in beautiful Heber Valley east of Salt Lake City.

Some snowmobile adventurers had been lost for a several-day period in the backcountry of high winds, penetrating cold, and eerie silence. My friend Johnny told me of the desperate plight of the lost and referred to the anxiety of their families. He mentioned that he was a member of the county search-and-rescue force, whose members left their businesses and farms and went in search of the lost and missing.

The searchers had prayed for a break in the winter weather, knowing the critical element of time in such a rescue. Their prayers were answered; the weather cleared. Surveying each grid of the vast area through high-powered field glasses as the helicopter flew back and forth through the mountains and ravines, the search party finally spotted the lost party. Then came the difficult task of reaching and retrieving the courageous group. All was well. The lost were found. Lives were spared. Worry and fear yielded to joy and jubilation.

Johnny, with heartfelt emotion, said to me, “I love to search and rescue. Just to look into the faces of those who could have died and feel, as well as see, their profound gratitude fills my body and soul

with compassion and thanksgiving. I've never before experienced anything quite like it."

Perhaps he was witnessing the personal understanding of the Lord's pronouncement, "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."² Or maybe Johnny was feeling the penetrating declaration of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who said, "It is better to save the life of a man than to raise one from the dead."³

My thoughts turned to that favorite song from Sunday School, the one that always brings tears to my eyes and compassion to my heart:

Dear to the heart of the Shepherd,
Dear are the "ninety and nine";
Dear are the sheep that have wandered
Out in the desert to pine.
Hark! he is earnestly calling,
Tenderly pleading today:
"Will you not seek for my lost ones,
Off from my shelter astray?"

The next verse reflects our response to the Shepherd's plea:

Green are the pastures inviting;
Sweet are the waters and still.
Lord, we will answer thee gladly,
"Yes, blessed Master, we will!
Make us thy true undershepherds;
Give us a love that is deep.
Send us out into the desert,
Seeking thy wandering sheep."⁴

Worldwide humanitarian service

Tonight I express the gratitude of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles and all the General Authorities of the Church to members worldwide for your generosity and sacrifice in contributing your time, talents, and means through fast offerings and other service to alleviate suffering and to bless lives.

In the past twelve months, for example, the LDS Church participated in more than 350 hunger relief, community development, and in-kind projects in Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America,

the Caribbean, and the United States and Canada.

Included in the 1992 projects were such diverse activities as shipping more than 7.6 million pounds of sorted, used clothing—more than 190 container loads—to overseas and domestic destinations for distribution to refugees, displaced families, and other needy. Special attention was given to needs in Africa, where clothing, blankets, and other supplies and more than a million pounds of food were authorized for famine relief and community development. Another half-million pounds of food were contributed to food banks and feeding programs for the homeless and other needs in the United States and abroad.

Couples are now serving full-time humanitarian service missions in Europe, Africa, Asia, Mongolia, and Latin America. Individual doctors, nurses, educators, and others have served short-term consulting assignments with government ministries, hospitals, schools, and other institutions in many countries. Some projects have attacked the causes of poverty and suffering by supporting community development efforts of the local people.

Though the Church sometimes implements programs directly, efforts to carry out relief and development projects are often handled through agencies which have established reputations for honest, effective service, including the American Red Cross, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Salvation Army, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Community Services, and other religious and civic organizations. All of this is in addition to the vast help extended by bishops of wards, presidents of branches, and leaders of missions to members of the Church throughout the world. The words of a Western Hemisphere prophet, uttered centuries ago, are still heard and followed today. King Benjamin reminded his people that "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God."⁵

Scriptural searches and rescues

From that same sacred record we contemplate the words spoken of the people during the reign of Alma, son of Alma: "They did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need."⁶

The book of Luke, in one chapter, provides us two related parables which prompt our thinking and guide our footsteps in following the Master. First is the parable of the lost sheep, and second the parable of the prodigal son. The Lord began:

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

"And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."⁷

In the parable of the prodigal son, we remember that one son wasted his substance and was reduced to near starvation. I ponder the line "and no man gave unto him."⁸ Finally, when he came to himself he returned to the land of his father, expecting nothing but a rebuke and reprimand:

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."⁹

To the faithful son who was a bit critical of his father's actions toward his brother came the same response: "Thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."¹⁰

Search and rescue: Lawrence Bryson

Could I leave that long-distant time and faraway place to share with you examples of the guiding influence of the Master Shepherd and how we, in the fulfillment of our assignments, whatever they may be in His service, can see the evidence of His divine help and feel the touch of His gentle hand.

I served as a bishop during the period of the Korean War. We had received from Church headquarters a letter indicating that bishops should send a personal letter to each serviceman every month, along with a copy of the Church magazine at that time, the *Improvement Era*, and a subscription to the *Church News*. That took a little doing. In our large ward we had about eighteen servicemen. We did not have much money. The priesthood quorums, with effort, supplied funds for the subscriptions to the publications, and I took care of the letter writing. From my experience in the navy at the end of a previous war, I knew the importance of receiving word from home.

One day the sister who took the shorthand for those individually dictated letters said to me, "Bishop Monson, don't you ever get discouraged?"

I said, "No, I don't. Why?"

"Do you realize," she explained, "that this is the seventeenth consecutive monthly letter you have sent to Lawrence Bryson, and you have never received a reply?"

I said, "Well, send number seventeen. It might do the job." And it did. I received a reply from an APO number, San Francisco. Brother Bryson, far away in the Pacific, had written a short letter which began: "Dear Bishop, I ain't much at writing letters [I could have told him that seventeen months sooner], but today has been a special day. I have been ordained a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. My group leader has stayed close to me, and I am grateful to him." Then he said, "By the way, thanks for the *Church News*. Thanks for the magazine. But a special thanks for your letter which comes each month."

Years later at a stake conference in the Cottonwood Stake, when Elder James E. Faust was stake president, I mentioned that experience in a stake priesthood meeting. A man came up after the meeting and said, "Do you remember me?"

I looked at him. It had probably been twenty-two years since I'd seen him. I said, "Lawrence Bryson!"

He said, "That's me. Thanks for the letters. That's why I'm here today."

Where is Lawrence Bryson now? He and his wife are currently serving full-time missions. Their lives demonstrate full activity in the Church. They are searching for sheep that are lost. I think they will know where to find them. I know they will save them.

I still have that wonderful letter written to me from Lawrence Bryson and dated "Christmas Day, December 25, 1953." It was one of the most treasured Christmas gifts ever received by me. Sure, you sometimes wonder after seventeen letters have been sent why no reply has come, but I remembered a line of truth: "The wisdom of God may appear as foolishness to men. But the greatest single lesson we can learn in mortality is that

when God speaks and a man obeys, that man will always be right." The leaders of the Church had spoken. We as bishops needed only to obey. The blessing was sure to follow.

Far-reaching effects of diligent service

Brethren, in our priesthood callings I am confident that we at times wonder if we are affecting the lives of others in a favorable manner. The instructor in the quorum who prepares so diligently, the home teachers who put aside their own convenience and carry a message to the families upon whom they call, and the quorum officers who reach out to rescue will perhaps never fully know the far-reaching influence of their service. This is particularly true of the faithful missionaries who day after day carry on in the service of the Master. Never complaining, ever serving, always sacrificing for the benefit of others, these noble servants deserve our undying gratitude and our fervent prayers.

The simple words from Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher, carry an assurance that brings comfort and inspires effort: "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."¹

Search and rescue: George H. Watson

Such was my experience as pertains to President George H. Watson, who today serves as first counselor in the Naperville Illinois Stake presidency.

Brother Watson wrote a letter to me, never mailed, dated 3 October 1978, which tells of his conversion to the Church and of his baptism, which took place in the summer of 1959 in eastern Canada, where I served as the mission president at that time. I did not receive this letter until this past year, when it was carried to me by Elder John E. Fowler, who discovered its existence while visiting with the Watson family following a stake conference in Naperville. Both

Brother Watson and I have some modest reluctance in sharing with you his private letter, but feeling the impression that the account would help encourage many of you brethren participating in this worldwide priesthood meeting this evening, we shall do so.

I will conclude by reading President Watson's own words. He wrote:

"Dear Elder Monson:

"This is a letter out of the blue. Its purpose is to thank you for the letters you wrote some twenty years ago—one to me and the other about me—and to let you know the effect they had on my life.

"My name is George Watson. In 1957, at the age of twenty-one, I emigrated from Ireland, where I had grown up, to Canada. The main purpose of going to Canada was to put together sufficient money to do postgraduate work at London University.

"The firm for which I worked was in Niagara Falls, and I found a room at the ridiculously inexpensive cost of \$6.00 per week. The only drawback was that I had to drive the landlady—age seventy-three—to church each Sunday in St. Catharines, Ontario.

"I soon found this chore to be very annoying, as she used the twenty-five-minute drive to try to get me to see the missionaries from her church. I resisted this very effectively for better than a year, until one day she told me that there were two young ladies coming to supper and asked if I would care to join them. It is very difficult to be rude to lady missionaries!

"I did a great deal of thinking over the next few months and decided that although what eleven sets of missionaries were telling me felt right, I would have to give up too much, besides which I was fed up running my landlady to church. In order to stop her asking for the ride, I decided to take her half an hour late on the next Sunday and to go in and sit with her in an open-neck shirt, sneakers, and sports slacks. I thought this would embarrass her and she would not ask me again.

"My plan worked perfectly, except that she was not annoyed at being late, and I made as much impact as a damp squid. We arrived just as the Sunday School was splitting for class. I would not go into class and spent my time talking to a very fine man who was crippled and who 'understood' me. As I was to return to Ireland eight days later (July 1959), he suggested that I should join the Church on the Saturday before I left. He was to call and confirm this during the week, but I effectively countered this by not answering the phone all week. On Sunday, after a sleepless night, I phoned him to apologize and was baptized in Hamilton virtually on the way to the airport—knowing that I would never meet any Mormons in Ireland and that the Church would lose track of me.

"I have no idea, President Monson, where you found my address in Ireland, but on the Friday after I returned, I had a letter from you welcoming me into the Church, and on Sunday at 9:00 A.M. there was a knock on the door. A President Lynn stood on the doorstep saying he had had a letter from President Monson in Toronto asking him to watch over me.

"The next few months or years were traumatic. Three meetings on a Sunday were entirely unreasonable; no way would I speak in front of that group; they can't expect more than 10 percent. Even more traumatic, my girlfriend set out to show me how ridiculous I was. She ended up being baptized.

"We now live in Illinois with three wonderful children. I often sit and ponder why the Lord has blessed us so greatly. We have all had reason to feel His sustaining hand in difficult times.

"Although it is unlikely that we will ever meet, I would like to very sincerely thank you for taking the trouble to write those two letters. They have completely changed the course of our lives. I am grateful for the knowledge of the Savior's purpose in coming to earth, my relationship to Him, and what He expects of me. The courage and steadfastness of Joseph

Smith, the Prophet, and the knowledge that he imparted to us will always be a source of inspiration to me. I am thrilled at the opportunity of serving in the Lord's Church.

"May the Lord continue to bless you in His work, and thank you for the effect you have had on my life."

"[signed] George Watson"

This past Christmas, when George Watson and his beloved Chloe came to Salt Lake City to visit two of their children and a son-in-law, they came to my office so that we might formally meet. They expressed their testimonies and again conveyed their thanks for all who had participated in this human drama, this miracle in our time. Tears flowed, prayers were offered, and gratitude was conveyed.

It was an appropriate season of the year for our visit together, when all Christendom pauses for a brief moment and remembers Him—even Jesus Christ—who died that we might have eternal life. He who notes the fall of the sparrow surely orchestrated the search-and-rescue mission that brought the Watson family to His fold. May we ever be found in His service and on His errand is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jeremiah 8:22.
2. D&C 18:10.
3. *History of the Church*, 5:366.

4. "Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd," *Hymns*, no. 221.
5. Mosiah 2:17.
6. Alma 1:30.
7. Luke 15:4–7.
8. Luke 15:16.
9. Luke 15:20–24.
10. Luke 15:32.
11. Ecclesiastes 11:1.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his remarks, we remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which follows must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M., daylight saving time.

Because daylight saving time begins at 2:00 A.M. tomorrow, we encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the priesthood choir from Ricks College for the beautiful music this evening. Following President Hinckley's address, the choir will conclude by singing "God Bless Our Prophet Dear." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Speaking boy to boy

It's always a challenge to follow President Monson.

All of the deacons, teachers, and priests, stand up, will you please. Just stand up and stretch for a minute. All of the former deacons, teachers, and priests—you can stand up for a minute. Thank you very much.

I think I would like to say a few things to the boys. You older men may listen or sleep. What a wonderful thing it is to be young in this time of the history of the Church and the history of the world. Surely this is the great age of enlightenment. This is a time like no other time. Never before has there been so much of scientific discovery. Never be-

fore have there been greater opportunities for education. Never before have there been such widespread opportunities for service in the Church. I almost feel jealous of you. And then I do not. I think of the many problems with which you live. You face difficult temptations that are all around you.

Some lessons I learned as a boy

It's easy for old men to lecture young men. Rather than do that, I think I would like to do something I've never done before. If you will permit me a personal indulgence, I wish to talk with you about some lessons I learned when I was a boy.

I grew up here in Salt Lake City a very ordinary kind of freckle-faced boy. I had a good father and mother. My father was a man of education and talent. He was respected in the community. He had a love for the Church and for its leaders. President Joseph F. Smith, who was President in my childhood, was one of his heroes. He loved President Heber J. Grant, who became President of the Church in 1918.

My mother was a gifted and wonderful woman. She was an educator; but when she married she left her employment to become a housewife and mother. In our minds she was a great success.

We lived in what I thought was a large home in the First Ward. It had four rooms on the main floor: a kitchen, a dining room, a parlor, and a library. There were four bedrooms upstairs. The house stood on the corner on a large lot. There was a big lawn with many trees that shed millions of leaves, and there was an immense amount of work to be done constantly.

The lessons of work

In my early childhood we had a stove in the kitchen and a stove in the dining room. A furnace was later installed,

and what a wonderful thing that was. But it had a voracious appetite for coal, and there was no automatic stoker. The coal had to be shoveled into the furnace and carefully banked each night.

I learned a great lesson from that monster of a furnace: if you wanted to keep warm, you had to work the shovel.

My father had an idea that his boys ought to learn to work in the summer as well as in the winter, and so he bought a five-acre farm which eventually grew to include more than thirty acres. We lived there in the summer and returned to the city when school started.

We had a large orchard, and the trees had to be pruned each spring. Father took us to pruning demonstrations put on by experts from the agriculture college. We learned a great truth—that you could pretty well determine the kind of fruit you would pick in September by the way you pruned in February. The idea was to space the branches so that the fruit would be exposed to sunlight and air. Further, we learned that new, young wood produces the best fruit. That has had many applications in life.

Signs of danger

We got sick then just as people get sick now. In fact, I think we did more so. In those early years the milk we drank was not pasteurized. We, of course, did not have an automatic dishwasher, except that it was our automatic duty to wash the dishes. When we were diagnosed as having chicken pox or measles, the doctor would advise the city health department, and a man would be sent to put a sign in the front window. This was a warning to any who might wish to come to our house that they did so at their own peril.

If the disease was smallpox or diphtheria, the sign was bright orange with black letters. It said, in effect, "Stay away from this place."

I learned something I have always remembered—to watch for signs of danger and evil and stay away.

Lessons learned as a schoolboy

I attended the Hamilton School, which was a big three-story building. The structure was old and poor by today's standards, but I learned that it was not the building that made a difference; it was the teachers. When the weather would permit, we assembled in front of the school in the morning, pledged allegiance to the flag, and marched in an orderly fashion to our rooms.

We dressed neatly for school, and no unkempt appearance was tolerated. The boys wore a shirt and a tie and short trousers. We wore long black stockings that reached from the foot to above the knee. They were made of cotton and wore out quickly, so they had to be darned frequently. We learned how to darn because it was unthinkable to go to school with a hole in your stocking.

We learned a lesson on the importance of personal neatness and tidiness, and that has blessed my life ever since.

Louie and Lynn

The bane of my first-grade teacher's life was my friend Louie. He had what psychologists today might call some kind of an obsessive fixation. He would sit in class and chew his tie until it became wet and stringy. The teacher would scold him.

Louie eventually became a man of substance, and I have learned never to underestimate the potential of a boy to make something of his life even if he chews his tie.

As the years passed, I finally reached the sixth grade in that school.

My friends were essentially the same through all of those years. People didn't move much in those days. One of my friends was Lynn. That wasn't his real name, but that's what I'll call him. He was always in trouble. Lynn seemed to

have a hard time concentrating on what was going on, particularly when spring came and things looked better outside than they did inside.

Miss Spooner, our teacher, seemed to have it in for Lynn. One day at about eleven o'clock, Lynn disturbed the class, and Miss Spooner told him to go shut himself in the closet until she let him out. Lynn obediently went to the closet and closed the door behind him. When the bell rang at twelve o'clock, Lynn came out chewing the last bite of Miss Spooner's lunch. We couldn't help laughing—all but Miss Spooner, and that made matters worse. Lynn went on clowning throughout his life. He never learned until it was too late that life is a serious thing in which serious choices are to be made with much of care and prayer.

The seventh-grade strike

The next year we enrolled in junior high school. But the building could not accommodate all the students, so our class of the seventh grade was sent back to the Hamilton School.

We were insulted. We were furious. We'd spent six unhappy years in that building, and we felt we deserved something better. The boys of the class all met after school. We decided we wouldn't tolerate this kind of treatment. We were determined we'd go on strike.

The next day we did not show up. But we had no place to go. We couldn't stay home because our mothers would ask questions. We didn't think of going downtown to a show. We had no money for that. We didn't think of going to the park. We were afraid we might be seen by Mr. Clayton, the truant officer. We didn't think of going out behind the school fence and telling shady stories because we didn't know any. We'd never heard of such things as drugs or anything of the kind. We just wandered about and wasted the day.

The next morning the principal, Mr. Stearns, was at the front door of the

school to greet us. His demeanor matched his name. He said some pretty straightforward things and then told us that we could not come back to school until we brought a note from our parents. That was my first experience with a lockout. Striking, he said, was not the way to settle a problem. We were expected to be responsible citizens, and if we had a complaint we could come to the principal's office and discuss it.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to go home and get the note.

I remember walking sheepishly into the house. My mother asked what was wrong. I told her. I said that I needed a note. She wrote a note. It was very brief. It was the most stinging rebuke she ever gave me. It read as follows:

"Dear Mr. Stearns,

"Please excuse Gordon's absence yesterday. His action was simply an impulse to follow the crowd."

She signed it and handed it to me.

I walked back over to school and got there about the same time a few other boys did. We all handed our notes to Mr. Stearns. I do not know whether he read them, but I have never forgotten my mother's note. Though I had been an active party to the action we had taken, I resolved then and there that I would never do anything on the basis of simply following the crowd. I determined then and there that I would make my own decisions on the basis of their merits and my standards and not be pushed in one direction or another by those around me.

That decision has blessed my life many times, sometimes in very uncomfortable circumstances. It has kept me from doing some things which, if indulged in, could at worst have resulted in serious injury and trouble, and at the best would have cost me my self-respect.

Father's Model T

My father had a horse and buggy when I was a boy. Then one summer day in 1916 a wonderful thing happened.

It was an unforgettable thing. When he came home that evening he arrived in a shining black, brand-new Model T Ford. It was a wonderful machine, but by today's standards it was a crude and temperamental sort of thing. For instance, it did not have a self-starter. It had to be cranked. You learned something very quickly about cranking that car. You retarded the spark, or the crank would kick back and break your hand. When it rained, the coils would get wet, and then it would not start at all. From that car I learned a few simple things about making preparation to save trouble. A little canvas over the cowl would keep the coils dry. A little care in retarding the spark would make it possible to crank without breaking your hand.

But the most interesting thing was the lights. The car had no storage battery. The only electricity came from what was called a magneto. The output of the magneto was determined by the speed of the engine. If the engine was running fast, the lights were bright. If the engine slowed, the lights became a sickly yellow. I learned that if you wanted to see ahead as you were going down the road, you had to keep the engine running at a fast clip.

So, just as I'd discovered, it is with our lives. Industry, enthusiasm, and hard work lead to enlightened progress. You have to stay on your feet and keep moving if you are going to have light in your life. I still have the radiator cap of that old 1916 Model T. Here it is. It is a reminder of lessons I learned seventy-seven years ago.

I've learned something else from that car. I now ride in a car of modern vintage. It is quiet and powerful. It has every convenience, including heating and air-conditioning. What has made the difference between that old black 1916 hard-riding and noisy Model T and today's automobiles? The difference has come because thousands of dedicated and able men and women over two generations of time have planned and studied, experimented and worked together to bring about improvement.

I have learned that when people of goodwill labor cooperatively in an honest and dedicated way, there is no end to what they can accomplish.

Our family home evenings

In 1915 President Joseph F. Smith asked the people of the Church to have family home evening. My father said we would do so, that we would warm up the parlor where Mother's grand piano stood and do what the President of the Church had asked.

We were miserable performers as children. We could do all kinds of things together while playing, but for one of us to try to sing a solo before the others was like asking ice cream to stay hard on the kitchen stove. In the beginning we would laugh and make cute remarks about one another's performance. But our parents persisted. We sang together. We prayed together. We listened quietly while Mother read Bible and Book of Mormon stories. Father told us stories out of his memory. I still remember one of those stories. I found it recently while going through a book he had published some years ago. Listen to it:

"An older boy and his young companion were walking along a road which led through a field. They saw an old coat and a badly worn pair of men's shoes by the roadside, and in the distance they saw the owner working in the field.

"The younger boy suggested that they hide the shoes, conceal themselves, and watch the perplexity on the owner's face when he returned.

"The older boy . . . thought that would not be so good. He said the owner must be a very poor man. So, after talking the matter over, at his suggestion, they concluded to try another experiment. Instead of hiding the shoes, they would put a silver dollar in each one and . . . see what the owner did when he discovered the money. So they did that.

"Pretty soon the man returned from the field, put on his coat, slipped one foot

into a shoe, felt something hard, took it out and found a silver dollar. Wonder and surprise [shone] upon his face. He looked at the dollar again and again, turned around and could see nobody, then proceeded to put on the other shoe; when to his great surprise he found another dollar. His feelings overcame him. . . . He knelt down and offered aloud a prayer of thanksgiving, in which he spoke of his wife being sick and helpless and his children without bread. . . . He fervently thanked the Lord for this bounty from unknown hands and evoked the blessing of heaven upon those who gave him this needed help.

"The boys remained [hidden] until he had gone." They had been touched by his prayer and felt something warm within their hearts. As they left to walk down the road, one said to the other, "Don't you have a good feeling?" (Bryant S. Hinckley, *Not by Bread Alone* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955], p. 95).

Out of those simple little meetings, held in the parlor of our old home, came something indescribable and wonderful. Our love for our parents was strengthened. Our love for brothers and sisters was enhanced. Our love for the Lord was increased. An appreciation for simple goodness grew in our hearts. These wonderful things came about because our parents followed the counsel of the President of the Church. I have learned something tremendously significant out of that.

Parents' love and mother's death

In that old home we knew that our father loved our mother. That was another of the great lessons of my boyhood. I have no recollection of ever hearing him speak unkindly to her or of her. He encouraged her in her individual Church activities and in neighborhood and civic responsibilities. She had much of native talent, and he encouraged her to use it. Her comfort was his constant concern.

We looked upon them as equals, companions who worked together and loved and appreciated one another as they loved us.

She likewise encouraged him and did everything in the world to make him happy. At the age of fifty she developed cancer. He was solicitous of her every need. I recall our family prayers, with his tearful pleadings and our tearful pleadings.

Of course there was no medical insurance then. He would have spent every dollar he owned to help her. He did, in fact, spend very much. He took her to Los Angeles in search of better medical care. But it was to no avail.

That was sixty-two years ago, but I remember with clarity my brokenhearted father as he stepped off the train and greeted his grief-stricken children. We walked solemnly down the station platform to the baggage car, where the casket was unloaded and taken by the mortician. We came to know even more about the tenderness of our father's heart. This has had an effect on me all of my life.

I also came to know something of death—the absolute devastation of children losing their mother—but also of peace without pain and the certainty that death cannot be the end of the soul.

Love at home

We didn't openly speak about love for one another very much in those days. We didn't have to. We felt that security, that peace, that quiet strength which comes to families who pray together, work together, and help one another.

"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12). As a boy I came to believe in that divine commandment. I think it is such a great commandment from the Lord. If it were only observed more widely, there would be far less misery in the homes of the people. Instead of

backbiting, accusation, and argument, there would be appreciation and respect and quiet love.

My father is long since gone. I have become a father, and a grandfather, and a great-grandfather. The Lord has been very kind. I have experienced my share of disappointments, of failures, of difficulties. But on balance, life has been very good. I have tried to live it with enthusiasm and appreciation. I have known much of happiness, oh, so very much. The root of it all, I believe, was planted in my childhood and nurtured in the home, the school, and the ward in which I grew, where I learned simple but important lessons in living. I cannot be grateful enough.

My heart aches and I grieve when I see the tragedy of so many broken homes, of homes where husbands do not seem to know how to treat their wives, of homes where children are abused and grow to become the abusers of another generation. None of this tragedy is necessary. I know it is not. The answer to our problems lies in following the simple gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who brought into the world His Father's love.

Brethren, will you forgive me for taking your time to talk in a personal way as I have done? I did not know how to say what I wanted to say without doing so.

Young men, "Do what is right; let the consequence follow" (*Hymns*, no. 237). "Choose the right when a choice is placed before you" (*Hymns*, no. 239).

Fathers, be good men, that your wives will speak of you with love and appreciation and your children will remember you with gratitude everlasting. I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God Bless Our Prophet Dear."

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 163rd Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 4, 1993. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session, with Jerold Ottley conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks."

President Hinckley then opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 163rd annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching conference in his apartment, has asked me, Brother Hinckley, to conduct this session.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders M. Russell Ballard, Ted E. Brewerton, and Jorge A. Rojas are seated on the stand.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, tele-

vision, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference. In addition to being assembled here on Temple Square, conference congregations are found in more than 3,500 church halls across the nation and over the seas.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and of members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with John Longhurst at the organ, will provide the music for this session. The choir opened these services by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour," following which Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder William R. Bradford offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson

Take time to meditate

President David O. McKay would frequently suggest the need for us to turn from the hectic day-to-day schedule filled with letters to answer, calls to be made, people to see, and meetings to attend and take time to meditate, to ponder, and to reflect on the eternal truths and the

sources of the joy and happiness which comprise each person's quest.

When we do, the mundane, the mechanical, the repetitious patterns of our lives yield to the spiritual qualities, and we acquire a much-needed dimension which inspires our daily living. When I follow this counsel, thoughts of family, experiences with friends, and treasured

memories of special days and quiet nights course through my mind and bring a sweet repose to my being.

The contrasts of Christmas

The Christmas season, with its special meaning, inevitably prompts a tear, inspires a renewed commitment to God, and provides, borrowing the words from the lovely song "Calvary," "rest to the weary and peace to the soul."

I reflect on the contrasts of Christmas. The extravagant gifts, expensively packaged and professionally wrapped, reach their zenith in the famed commercial catalogs carrying the headline "For the person who has everything." In one such reading I observed a 4,000-square-foot home wrapped with a gigantic ribbon and comparable greeting card which said, "Merry Christmas." Other items included diamond-studded clubs for the golfer, a Caribbean cruise for the traveler, and a luxury trip to the Swiss Alps for the adventurer. Such seemed to fit the theme of a Christmas cartoon which showed the Three Wise Men traveling to Bethlehem with gift boxes on their camels. One says, "Mark my words, Balthazar; we're starting something with these gifts that's going to get way out of hand!"

Then there is the remembered Christmas tale of O. Henry about a young husband and wife who lived in abject poverty yet who wanted to give one another a special gift. But they had nothing to give. Then the husband had a ray of inspiration: "I shall provide my dear wife a beautiful ornamental comb to adorn her magnificent long black hair." The wife also received an idea: "I shall obtain a lovely chain for my husband's prized watch, which he values so highly."

Christmas day came; the treasured gifts were exchanged. Then comes the surprise ending so typical of O. Henry's short stories: The wife had shorn her long hair and sold it to obtain funds to purchase the watch chain, only to discover that her husband had sold his watch that

he might purchase the comb to adorn her beautiful long hair, which now she did not have.¹

The Christmas cane

At home in a hidden-away corner, I have a small black walking stick with an imitation silver handle. It once belonged to a distant relative. Why do I keep it for a period now spanning sixty years? There is a special reason. You see, as a very small boy I participated in a Christmas pageant in our ward. I was privileged to be one of the Three Wise Men. With a bandanna about my head, Mother's Chickering piano bench cover draped over my shoulder, and the black cane in my hand, I spoke my assigned lines: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."² I don't recall all the words in that pageant, but I vividly remember the feelings of my heart as the three of us "wise men" looked upward and saw a star, journeyed across the stage, found Mary with the young child Jesus, then fell down and worshiped him and opened our treasures and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

I especially liked the fact that we did not return to the evil Herod to betray the baby Jesus, but obeyed God and departed another way.

The years have flown by, the events of a busy life taking their proper places in the hallowed halls of memory, but the Christmas cane continues to occupy a special place in my home; and in my heart is a commitment to Christ.

God-given gifts that endure

For a few moments, may we set aside the catalogs of Christmas with their gifts of exotic description. Let's even turn from the flowers for Mother, the special tie for Father, the cute doll, the train that whistles, the long-awaited bicycle—even the "Star Trek" books and videos—and direct our thoughts to those God-given

gifts that endure. I have chosen from a long list just four:

1. The gift of birth.
2. The gift of peace.
3. The gift of love.
4. The gift of life eternal.

The gift of birth

First, **the gift of birth.** It has been universally bestowed on each of us. Ours was the divine privilege to depart our heavenly home to tabernacles in the flesh and to demonstrate by our lives our worthiness and qualifications to one day return to Him, precious loved ones, and a kingdom called *celestial*. Our mothers and our fathers bestowed this marvelous gift on us. Ours is the responsibility to show our gratitude by the actions of our lives.

My own father, a printer, gave me a copy of a piece he had printed. It was entitled "A Letter from a Father" and concluded with this thought: "Perhaps my greatest hope as a parent is to have such a relationship with you that when the day comes that you look down into the face of your first child, you will feel deep within you the desire to be to your child the kind of parent your dad has tried to be to you. What greater compliment could any man ask? Love, Dad."

Our gratitude to Mother for the gift of birth is equal or beyond that owed to Father. She who looked upon us as "a sweet new blossom of humanity, fresh fallen from God's own home, to flower on earth"³ and cared for our every need, comforted our every cry, and later rejoiced in any of our accomplishments and wept over our failures and disappointments, occupies a singular place of honor in our hearts.

A passage from 3 John sets forth the formula whereby we might express to our parents our gratitude for the gift of birth: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."⁴ Let us so walk. Let us so honor the givers of this priceless gift of birth.

The gift of peace

Second, **the gift of peace.** In the raucous world in which we live, the din of traffic, the blaring commercials of the media, and the sheer demands placed on our time—to say nothing of the problems of the world—cause headache, inflict pain, and sap our strength to cope. The burden of sickness or the grief of mourning a loved one departed brings us to our knees seeking heavenly help. With the ancients we may wonder, "Is there no balm in Gilead?"⁵ There is a certain sadness, even hopelessness, in the verse:

There is never a life without sadness,
There is never a heart free from pain;
If one seeks in this world for true
solace,
He seeks it forever in vain.⁶

He who was burdened with sorrow and acquainted with grief speaks to every troubled heart and bestows the gift of peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."⁷

He sends forth His word through the missionaries serving far and wide, proclaiming His gospel of good tidings and His salutation of peace. Vexing questions such as "Whence did I come?" "What is the purpose of my being?" and "Whither go I after death?" are answered by His special servants. Frustration flees, doubt disappears, and wonder wanes when truth is taught in boldness, yet in a spirit of humility, by those who have been called to serve the Prince of Peace—even the Lord Jesus Christ. His gift is bestowed individually: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."⁸

The passport to peace is the practice of prayer. The feelings of the heart, humbly expressed rather than a mere recitation of words, provide the peace we seek.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the wicked King Claudius kneels and tries to pray,

but he rises and says: "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to heaven go."⁹

Joseph Millett and the gift of peace

One who received and welcomed the gift of peace was Joseph Millett, an early missionary to the Maritime Provinces of Canada, who learned, while there and in his later experiences in life, of the need to rely on heavenly help. An experience which he recalled in his journal is a beautiful illustration of simple yet profound faith:

"One of my children came in, said that Brother Newton Hall's folks were out of bread. Had none that day. I put . . . our flour in [a] sack to send up to Brother Hall's. Just then Brother Hall came in. Says I, 'Brother Hall, how are you [fixed] for flour.' 'Brother Millett, we have none.' 'Well, Brother Hall, there is some in that sack. I have divided [it] and was going to send it to you. Your children told mine that you were out.' Brother Hall began to cry. Said he had tried others. Could not get any. Went to the cedars and prayed to the Lord and the Lord told him to go to Joseph Millett. 'Well, Brother Hall, you needn't bring this back if the Lord sent you for it. You don't owe me for it.' You can't tell how good it made me feel to know that the Lord knew that there was such a person as Joseph Millett."¹⁰

Prayer brought the gift of peace to Nelson Hall and to Joseph Millett.

The gift of love

Third, **the gift of love.** "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" queried the lawyer who spoke to Jesus. Came the prompt reply:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."¹¹

On another occasion the Lord taught, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."¹² The scriptures are filled with the importance of love and its relevance in our lives. The Book of Mormon teaches that charity is the pure love of Christ.¹³ The Master Himself provided an ideal pattern for us to follow. Of Him it was said that He "went about doing good, . . . for God was with him."¹⁴

A few lines from the favorite musical *The Sound of Music* suggest a course of action all might well follow:

A bell is no bell till you ring it,
A song is no song till you sing it,
And love in your heart wasn't put
there to stay—
Love isn't love till you give it away.¹⁵

An awareness of the elderly

A segment of our society desperately yearning for an expression of true love is found among those growing older, and particularly when they suffer from pangs of loneliness. The chill wind of dying hopes and vanished dreams whistles through the ranks of the elderly and those who approach the declining side of the summit of life.

"What they need in the loneliness of their older years is, in part at least, what we needed in the uncertain years of our youth: a sense of belonging, an assurance of being wanted, and the kindly ministrations of loving hearts and hands; not merely dutiful formality, not merely a room in a building, but room in someone's heart and life. . . .

"We cannot bring them back the morning hours of youth. But we can help them live in the warm glow of a sunset made more beautiful by our thoughtfulness, by our provision, and by our active and unfeigned love."¹⁶ So wrote Elder Richard L. Evans some years ago.

At times an awareness of the elderly is brought into focus by a reminder from one ever so young. May I share with you

a Pakistani folktale which illustrates this truth:

An ancient grandmother lived with her daughter and grandson. As she grew frail and feeble, instead of being a help around the house, she became a constant trial. She broke plates and cups, lost knives, spilled water. One day, exasperated because the old woman had broken another precious plate, the daughter sent the grandson to buy his grandmother a wooden plate. The boy hesitated because he knew a wooden plate would humiliate his grandmother. But his mother insisted, so off he went. He returned bringing not one, but two wooden plates.

"I only asked you to buy one," his mother said. "Didn't you hear me?"

"Yes," said the boy. "But I bought the second one so there would be one for you when you get old."

Willie thanks his teacher

Frequently we are inclined to wait a lifetime to express love for the kindness or help given by another even long years before. Perhaps just such an experience prompted George Herbert to say, "Thou that hast given so much to [me], give one thing more . . . a grateful heart."¹⁷

The story is told of a group of men who were talking about people who had influenced their lives and to whom they were grateful. One man thought of a high-school teacher who had introduced him to Tennyson. He decided to write and thank her.

In time, written in a feeble scrawl, came this letter:

"My Dear Willie:

"I can't tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my eighties, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely, and like the last leaf lingering behind. You will be interested to know that I taught school for fifty years, and yours is the first note of appreciation I have ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered me as nothing has for years."

As I read this account, I thought of the treasured line, "The Lord has two homes: heaven and a grateful heart."

Much more could be said pertaining to the gift of love. However, a favorite verse sums up rather well this precious gift:

I have wept in the night
For the shortness of sight
That to somebody's need made me
blind;
But I never have yet
Felt a tinge of regret
For being a little too kind.¹⁸

The gift of life

Fourth, **the gift of life**—even immortality. Our Heavenly Father's plan contains the ultimate expressions of true love. All that we hold dear—even our families, our friends, our joy, our knowledge, our testimonies—would vanish were it not for our Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Among the most cherished thoughts and writings in this world is this divine statement of truth: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."¹⁹

This precious Son, our Lord and Savior, atoned for our sins and the sins of all. That memorable night in Gethsemane His suffering was so great, His anguish so consuming that He pleaded, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."²⁰ Later, on the cruel cross, He died that we might live—and live everlastingly. Resurrection morning was preceded by pain, by suffering in accordance with the divine plan of God. Before Easter there had to be a cross. The world has witnessed no greater gift, nor has it known more lasting love.

Nephi gives to us our charge:

"Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. . . . If ye shall press forward, feast-

ing upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

"And now, behold, . . . this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God."²¹

I close with the words of a revered prophet, even President Harold B. Lee: "Life is God's gift to man. What we do with our life is our gift to God."

May we give generously to Him, as He has so abundantly given to us, by living and loving as He and His Son have so patiently taught, is my earnest prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See "The Gift of the Magi."
2. Matthew 2:2.
3. Gerald Massey, in John P. Bradley, et al., comp., *The International Dictionary of Thoughts* (Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969), p. 66.
4. 3 John 1:4.
5. Jeremiah 8:22.
6. Author unknown.
7. John 14:27.
8. Revelation 3:20.
9. Act 3, scene 3, lines 97-98.
10. In Eugene England, "Without Purse or Scrip," *New Era*, July 1975, p. 28.

11. Matthew 22:36-39.
12. John 14:21.
13. See Moroni 7:47.
14. Acts 10:38.
15. "Sixteen, Going on Seventeen," from *The Sound of Music*.
16. *Thoughts . . . for One Hundred Days* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1966), p. 222.
17. In Richard L. Evans, *Richard Evans' Quote Book* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1971), p. 238.
18. In *Improvement Era*, May 1960, p. 340.
19. John 3:16.
20. Matthew 26:39.
21. 2 Nephi 31:20-21.

The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has spoken to us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

President Howard W. Hunter

The path of Palm Sunday

Today is the day the Christian world traditionally calls Palm Sunday. It is the anniversary of that momentous occasion nearly two thousand years ago when Jesus of Nazareth, the very Son of God himself, began the ultimate declaration of his divinity and entered the holy city of Jerusalem as the promised Messiah that he was.

Riding on a young donkey in fulfillment of Zechariah's ancient prophecy (see Zechariah 9:9), he approached the temple on a path that the jubilant crowd

lined for him with palm leaves, flowering branches, and some of their own garments, thus carpeting the way properly for the passing of a king. He was their king; these were his subjects. "Hosanna to the Son of David," they shouted. "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Matthew 21:9).

Of course, that path so lovingly lined was soon to lead to an upper room and then to Gethsemane. After stops at the home of Annas, the court of Caiaphas, and the Roman headquarters of Pilate, the path would, of course, lead on to Calvary. But it would not end there. The path

would lead to the garden tomb and the triumphant hour of resurrection that we celebrate each year on Easter Sunday, one week from today.

"Jesus, the very thought of thee"

In this lovely springtime season of the year, this annual awakening when in the northern hemisphere the world is renewed, blossoms, and turns green and fresh again, we instinctively turn our thoughts to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, the Redeemer of mankind, the source of light, and life, and love.

As a Palm Sunday and Easter season message, I have chosen for my brief text this morning the words of an ancient and sacred hymn, which are attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux and estimated to be nearly nine hundred years old. With the rest of the Christian world, the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sing reverently:

Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest.
["Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,"
Hymns, no. 141]

Think of Jesus more frequently

On Palm Sunday, and next week on Easter Sunday, our minds turn very naturally to wonderful thoughts of Jesus. Indeed, Easter, along with perhaps Christmas, may be the only time in the whole year that some of our brothers and sisters in Christ's flock find their way to church. That is admirable, but we wonder if thoughts of Jesus, which "with sweetness [fill our] breast," ought not to be far more frequent and much more constant in all times and seasons of our lives. How often do we think of the Savior? How deeply and how gratefully and how adoringly do we reflect on his life? How central to our lives do we know him to be?

For example, how much of a normal day, a working week, or a fleeting month

is devoted to "Jesus, the very thought of thee"? Perhaps for some of us, not enough.

Surely life would be more peaceful, surely marriages and families would be stronger, certainly neighborhoods and nations would be safer and kinder and more constructive if more of the gospel of Jesus Christ "with sweetness" could fill our breasts.

Unless we pay more attention to the thoughts of our hearts, I wonder what hope we have to claim that greater joy, that sweeter prize: someday his loving "face to see and in [his] presence rest."

Every day of our lives and in every season of the year, not just at Easter time, Jesus asks each of us, as he did following his triumphant entry into Jerusalem those many years ago, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42).

We declare that he is the Son of God, and the reality of that fact should stir our souls more frequently. I pray that it will, this Easter season and always.

A blessed name

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can
frame,
Nor can the mem'ry find
A sweeter sound than thy blest name,
O Savior of mankind!
[*Hymns*, no. 141]

We testify, as the ancient prophets and Apostles did, that the name of Christ is the only name given under heaven whereby a man, woman, or child can be saved. It is a blessed name, a gracious name, a sacred name. Truly no "voice can sing, nor heart can frame, . . . a sweeter sound than [that] blest name."

But even as we should think on the name of Christ more often and use it more wisely and well, how tragic it is, and how deeply we are pained, that the name of the Savior of mankind has become one of the most common and most ill-used of profanities.

In this Easter season of the year—when we are reminded yet again of all that Christ has done for us, how dependent we are upon his redeeming grace and personal resurrection, and how singular his name is in the power to dispel evil and death and save the human soul—may we all do more to respect and revere his holy name and gently, courteously encourage others to do the same. With this lovely hymn as a reminder, let us lift the use of the name of deity to the sacred, sweet elevation that it deserves and that has, indeed, been commanded.

In our own day as in ancient times, Christ has declared:

“Let all men beware how they take my name in their lips—

“Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit” (D&C 63:61, 64).

We love the name of our Redeemer. May we redeem it from misuse to its rightful lofty position.

Hope of the contrite, joy of the meek

O hope of ev’ry contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
To those who fall, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek!
[Hymns, no. 141]

What a lovely verse of music, and what a message of hope anchored in the gospel of Christ! Is there one among us, in any walk of life, who does not need hope and seek for greater joy? These are the universal needs and longings of the human soul, and they are the promises of Christ to his followers. Hope is extended to “ev’ry contrite heart,” and joy comes to “all the meek.”

Contrition is costly—it costs us our pride and our insensitivity, but it especially costs us our sins. For, as King Lamoni’s father knew twenty centuries ago, this is the price of true hope. “O God,” he cried, “wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to

know thee . . . that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day” (Alma 22:18). When we too are willing to give away all our sins to know him and follow him, we too will be filled with the joy of eternal life.

And what of the meek? In a world too preoccupied with winning through intimidation and seeking to be number one, no large crowd of folk is standing in line to buy books that call for mere meekness. But the meek shall inherit the earth—a pretty impressive corporate takeover, and done *without* intimidation! Sooner or later—and we pray sooner rather than later—everyone will acknowledge that Christ’s way is not only the *right* way, but ultimately the *only* way to hope and joy. Every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that gentleness is better than brutality, that kindness is greater than coercion, that the soft voice turneth away wrath. In the end, and sooner than that whenever possible, we must be more like him. “To those who fall, how kind thou art! How good to those who seek!”

Jesus, our only joy be thou

May I close my remarks as did the author of that ancient hymn:

Jesus, our only joy be thou,
As thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be thou our glory now,
And thru eternity.
[Hymns, no. 141]

That is my personal prayer and my wish for all the world this morning. I testify that Jesus is the only true source of lasting joy, that our only lasting peace is in him. I do wish him to be “our glory now,” the glory each of us yearns for individually and the only prize men and nations can permanently hold dear. He is our prize in time and in eternity. Every other prize is finally fruitless. Every other grandeur fades with time and dissolves with the elements. In the end, just as in this Passover week, we will know no true joy save it be in Christ.

At this sacred season of the year, filled with the promise of renewing life, may we be more devoted and disciplined followers of Christ. May we cherish him in our thoughts and speak his name with love. May we kneel before him with meekness and mercy. May we bless and serve others that they may do the same.

Jesus, our only joy be thou,
As thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be thou our glory now,
And thru eternity.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Hunter, for that beautiful testimony.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

On behalf of the Presidency of the Seventy, we welcome with joy Brother Todd Christofferson and Brother Neil Andersen to the ranks of the Seventy. We look forward to serving with you.

The miraculous power of prayer

There have been many inspiring messages given from this Tabernacle pulpit about prayer. Today I add my testimony of the blessing of peace that comes through the miraculous power of prayer.

Alexandre Dumas, in his classic tale *The Count of Monte Cristo*, wrote, "For the happy man prayer is only a jumble of words, until the day when sorrow comes to explain to him the sublime language by means of which he speaks to God" (trans. Lowell Bair [New York: Bantam Books, 1981], p. 34).

Prayers after a fireworks accident

It was a happy, carefree time in my young life until on such a day, sorrow and tragedy brought me closer to God in humble, sincere prayer. In the summer of my thirteenth year, on a July night, I eagerly joined some neighborhood friends to light fireworks. Five of us took turns igniting a colorful assortment of Roman

candles and rockets and firecrackers. Each was a new surprise with its burst of sights and sounds through the evening sky.

Not all of our fireworks worked as they should have. Most, in fact, were what we called duds. They sputtered momentarily and then died. We set the duds aside until we had tried to light all of the fireworks. We had so many defective ones remaining, we wondered what to do. We couldn't just throw them away. What if we emptied the powder from all of them into the cardboard box? We could toss in a match and have one gigantic blast!

Fortunately for us, our idea failed—at first. The match was tossed; we quickly ran away and waited. Nothing happened. Pressing our luck, we tried a second time, using a makeshift fuse of rolled-up newspaper. Again we anxiously waited at a distance. Again, to our good, nothing happened. That is when we should have quit. Foolishly we gave it one more try; this time my friend Mark and I huddled around the box to keep the flame from being extinguished by the evening breeze.

Then it happened! The gigantic blast we thought we wanted exploded with fury into our faces. The force of the explosion knocked us off our feet, and flames from the ignited powder burned us severely. It

was a tragic scene. Responding quickly to the screams and cries of the injured youth in her driveway, our friend's mother gathered us into her home. "First we will pray," she said, "and then we will call the doctor."

That was the first of many prayers I remember being offered for us. Soon after, I felt my face, hands, and arms being wrapped in bandages. I heard the voices of my father and my doctor administering a priesthood blessing to me. I heard my mother's voice many times, pleading with Heavenly Father to please let her son see again.

I had been taught very early in my life to pray. Mother and Father had made prayer an important part of our family life. Not until that day, however, did it become so meaningful to me. In those frightening moments I found peace and comfort through prayer.

Prayer brings peace

Recently in his own pain and suffering, my friend and associate Elder Clinton Cutler said of his experience, "The Lord's peace comes not without pain, but in the midst of pain."

Our Father in Heaven has promised us peace in times of trial and has provided a way for us to come to Him in our need. He has given us the privilege and power of prayer. He has told us to pray always and has promised that He will pour out His Spirit upon us (see D&C 19:38).

Thankfully we can call upon Him anytime, anywhere. We can speak to Him in the quiet thoughts of our minds and from the deepest feelings of our hearts. It has been said that "prayer is made up of heart throbs and the righteous yearnings of the soul" (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1916], p. 238). Our Heavenly Father has told us He knows our thoughts and the intents of our hearts (see D&C 6:16).

President Marion G. Romney taught: "Sometimes the Lord puts thoughts in our

minds in answer to prayers. . . . [He] gives us peace in our minds" (in Conference Report, Taiwan Area Conference 1975, p. 7).

For example, in response to Oliver Cowdery's prayer to know if the translation of the plates by Joseph Smith was true, the Lord answered: "Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" (D&C 6:23).

The peace God speaks to our minds will let us know when decisions we have made are right, when our course is true. It can come as personal inspiration and guidance to assist us in our daily life—in our homes, in our work. It can provide us with courage and hope to meet the challenges of life. The miracle of prayer, to me, is that in the private, quiet chambers of our minds and hearts, God both hears and answers prayers.

Perhaps the greatest test of our faith and the most difficult part of prayer may be to recognize the answer that comes to us in a thought or a feeling, and then to accept or act on the answer God chooses to give. Consistency in prayer, along with searching the scriptures and following the counsel of living prophets, keeps us in tune with the Lord and enables us to interpret the promptings of the Spirit more easily. The Lord has said, "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23).

Prayer brings strength to endure

A few days ago I attended the funeral of a lifelong friend, Ralph Poulsen. He was a righteous man of accomplishment and integrity, yet he had to endure the pain and sorrow inflicted upon him by the consequences of a cruel disease. His dear wife, Joyce, suffered also as she was by his side through his agony and pain. As the days and years of suffering went on, she arrived at a time when she felt she could not handle another day. She had done all she could for him. Now a

strength beyond her own was needed. In the depth of her sorrow she pleaded more fervently to God for His help. With the morning came a blessed peace that filled her whole soul—a peace that has continued with her to this day.

There is terrible suffering in our world today. Tragic things happen to good people. God does not cause them, nor does He always prevent them. He does, however, strengthen us and bless us with His peace through earnest prayer.

"It is not the usual purpose of prayer to serve us like Aladdin's lamp, to bring us ease without effort," Elder Richard L. Evans wrote. "Prayer is not a matter of asking only. It should not be always as the beggar's upturned hand. Often the purpose of prayer is to give us strength to do what needs to be done, wisdom to see the way to solve our own problems, and ability to do our best in our tasks.

"We need to pray . . . for strength to endure, for faith and fortitude to face what sometimes must be faced" (in Richard L. Evans, Jr., *Richard L. Evans: The Man and the Message* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973], p. 289).

Finding peace when we receive answers we don't want

It was the Lord Himself who taught us by His own example how to find peace when the answers we receive are not what we asked for. On the eve of His crucifixion, with "soul . . . exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," Jesus knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed to the Father, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible [and he acknowledged 'all things are possible unto thee'], let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:38–39; see also Mark 14:36).

We can only try to imagine the anguish the Savior felt when we read in the Gospels that He was "sore amazed [and] very heavy," that He "fell on his face" and prayed not once but a second time and then a third (Mark 14:33; Matthew

26:39, 42, 44): "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

We cannot imagine the anguish of a loving Father, who, knowing what had to be done, accepted His Beloved Son's willingness to suffer for all mankind. In this agony Christ was not left alone. As if the Father were saying, "I cannot take it from you, but I can and will send you strength and peace," "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:43).

If we, like the Savior, have the faith to put our trust in our Father in Heaven, to submit to His will, the true spirit of peace will come as a witness and strength that He *has* heard and answered our prayers.

If we resist the inspiration of God and turn from His promptings, we are left to our own confusion and lack of peace.

Sometimes, when our prayers are not answered as we desire, we may feel that the Lord has rejected us or that our prayer was in vain. We may begin to doubt our worthiness before God or even the reality and power of prayer. That is when we must continue to pray with patience and faith and to listen for that peace.

Don't forget to pray

Following the incident when I was badly burned, I had felt with a surety that I would be healed. From the moment that first prayer was offered in my friend's home, I felt a comforting peace. While the doctor treated my burns, I hummed a hymn, finding comfort in these words:

When sore trials came upon you,
Did you think to pray? . . .

Oh, how praying rests the weary!
Prayer will change the night to day.
So, when life gets dark and dreary,
Don't forget to pray.

["Did You Think to Pray?" *Hymns*, no. 140]

Each day when the doctor changed my bandages, my mother would ask,

"Can he see?" For many days the answer was the same: "No, not yet." Finally, when all the bandages were permanently removed, my eyesight began to return. I had anticipated that time with anxious expectation. The peace and comfort I had earlier felt gave me assurance that all would be well. However, when my vision cleared enough for me to see my hands and face, I was shocked, unprepared for what I saw. To my terrible disappointment, I found that all was *not* well. Seeing my scarred and disfigured skin brought great fear and doubt into my mind. I can remember thinking, Nothing can help this skin to be healed—not even the Lord.

Gratefully, as my prayers and the prayers of others continued, I felt the gifts of faith and of peace restored, and then, in time, my eyesight and my skin were healed. My friends who were injured were also blessed with complete recovery.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Building spiritually strong families

My dear brothers and sisters, my subject today is building homes and families that are spiritually secure.

During a Manitoba Canada stake conference a few years ago, Sister Karen Beaumont described her feelings about the raging winter storms that come to their area. She said:

"I love a winter storm. . . . When the wind starts to blow and the snow begins to fall, a feeling of excitement starts to build. . . . When I can't see the trees at the neighbor's farmyard, . . . I phone my husband! . . . He then picks up the children who are at school. . . . It is hard to describe the feelings I experience as our family is gathered home, and the storm rages outside. . . . And I love it! Everyone is safe; we are together. We have lots of food and water. The longer it lasts, the better. . . . We are shut off from the world.

May we always seek to obtain the Lord's miraculous gift of peace through prayer. May we not forget to pray.

I join with Alma in saying, "May the peace of God rest upon you, . . . from this time forth and forever" (Alma 7:27).

With this testimony of peace through prayer, I bear witness of the reality of Jesus Christ and of His Father and of the Holy Ghost, who will lead our lives in the same *miraculous* way through answers to our prayers of faith. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Pinegar. Brother Pinegar is a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

. . . We bask in the warmth of our home and in the warmth of our love. My heart is full, and I am at peace. Sometimes I wish I could just stay like that forever, with my family gathered around me, protected, shut off from the evil influences of the world. But alas, the storm blows itself out eventually, we dig ourselves out, and off we go to face the world again."

Perhaps all of us sometimes would like to withdraw and isolate ourselves from the storms of life and from the fiery darts of Satan. However, we must be in the world but not of the world, meaning to go forward in the midst of the sin, evil, and corruption that are in the world but resisting and rejecting them. Being in the world can be frightening because we live at a time when Satan is becoming more and more bold. The Lord said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

Evil in the world

A recent report titled "Children in Crisis" reflected an aspect of this evil. The editors of a national magazine considered at length what is happening to our children:

"Of the 65 million Americans under 18, [many] live in poverty, 22% live in single-parent homes, and almost 3% live with no parent at all. Violence among the young is . . . rampant. . . .

" . . . Playground fights that used to end in bloody noses now end in [some fatalities]. Schools that once considered talking in class a capital offense are routinely [checking children] for weapons, questioning them about drugs. . . . A good public education, safe streets, and family dinners—with both father and mother present—seem like quaint memories of a far distant past. . . .

"The parents of nearly 2,750 children separate or divorce each day. . . .

"Every day over 500 children ages 10 to 14 begin using illegal drugs, and over 1,000 start drinking alcohol. Nearly half of all middle-schoolers abuse drugs or alcohol or [become involved in immorality]."² Data from other nations are equally alarming.

These and many other ills of our society today have their source in the breakdown of the family. If Satan can weaken or destroy the loving relationships among members of families, he can cause more misery and more unhappiness for more people than he could in any other way.

Homes can provide security

The place to cure most of the ills of society is in the homes of the people. Building our homes as fortresses of righteousness for protection from the world takes constant labor and diligence. Membership in the Church is no guarantee of a strong, happy family. Often parents feel overwhelmed. Many must accomplish the whole job single-handedly while bearing all of the emotional pain of divorce. The

Lord has provided a plan that will help us be successful in meeting every challenge that may confront us.

In the plan of salvation, *all* families are precious instruments in the Lord's hands to help direct His children toward a celestial destination. The righteous molding of an immortal soul is the highest work we can do, and the home is the place to do it. To accomplish this eternal work, we should make our homes gospel centered. When peace and harmony abound, the Holy Spirit will ever be present. The storms of the evil one can be stopped at the very entrance of our homes.

Let us be sure the spiritual foundation of each home is the rock of our Redeemer, as Helaman taught his sons: "And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall" (Helaman 5:12).

The Lord's standards for building a temple apply also to building spiritual strength in our homes: "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God" (D&C 88:119). Do we heed this counsel from the Lord? Do we do what He asks? We would do well to build our homes according to this plan, or they are destined to fail.

A house of prayer and fasting

To make our homes become houses of prayer and fasting, we "pray always, that [we] may come off conqueror; yea,

that [we] may . . . escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work" (D&C 10:5).

Our families should gather for family prayer morning and night. In addition, we should offer our own individual prayers for our personal needs.

A house of faith

We can make each home a house of faith by believing in the goodness of God and believing that we *can* live gospel principles and live in peace and security. We need to have the faith to be obedient, to keep trying, and to keep a positive outlook. Sometimes we get discouraged and feel like giving up. But as an old cowboy once said, "If I get bucked off, I must get back up on the horse and ride on." We can never give up.

When I think of faith, I think of the two great Book of Mormon prophets Nephi and Alma as models. In faith, Nephi returned to Jerusalem for the plates of brass, "not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do" (1 Nephi 4:6). Alma prayed in faith for the repentance of his wayward son, who had become "a very wicked and an idolatrous man" and "was going about to destroy the church of God" (Mosiah 27:8, 10; see 27:8-37).

A house of learning and glory

Every home is a house of learning, either for good or otherwise. Family members may learn to be obedient, honest, industrious, self-reliant, and faithful in living gospel principles, or they may learn something else. Learning the gospel in the homes of Church members should be centered on the scriptures and on the words of latter-day prophets.

The Lord has commanded parents to teach their children. King Benjamin instructed parents:

"Ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of

God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil. . . .

"But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another" (Mosiah 4:14-15).

Emphasizing this duty, the Lord cautioned that if parents do not teach their children "to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, . . . the sin be upon the heads of the parents" (D&C 68:25).

A personal word of counsel to parents: teach your children to pray, to rely on the Lord for guidance, and to express appreciation for their blessings. Children learn from you to distinguish between right and wrong. They learn that lying, cheating, stealing, or coveting possessions of others is wrong. Help them learn to keep the Sabbath day holy and to pay their tithing. Teach them to learn and obey the commandments of God. Teach your young children to work, and teach them that honest labor develops dignity and self-respect. Help them find pleasure in work and feel the satisfaction that comes from a job well done.

In 1904, President Joseph F. Smith said to parents: "Do not let your children out to specialists . . . , but teach them by your own precept and example, by your own fireside. Be a specialist yourself in the truth. . . . Not one child in a hundred would go astray, if the home environment, example and training, were in harmony with the truth in the gospel of Christ, as revealed and taught to the Latter-day Saints."

Family home evening

The ideal way to transform your home into a house of learning is to hold family home evening faithfully. The Church has reserved Monday evening for that purpose. In 1915 the First Presidency instructed local leaders and parents to inaugurate a home evening, a time when

parents should teach their families the principles of the gospel. The Presidency wrote: "If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them."⁴

President David O. McKay gave the same promise in 1965 and added that the youth will gain power "to choose righteousness and peace, and be assured an eternal place in the family circle of our Father."⁵ In 1976 the Presidency reaffirmed that "regular participation in family home evening will develop increased personal worth, family unity, love for our fellowmen, and trust in our Father in heaven."⁶

Considering these glorious promises, we would expect every faithful member to be exceedingly diligent in following this prophetic counsel. But of course we are all human, and our best plans don't always materialize. Why not? Let it not be for lack of commitment. I know the Lord will keep his promises. I know also that we can keep this commandment if we will organize ourselves and prepare "every needful thing" (D&C 88:119).

I am grateful that my parents and grandparents provided such traditions of learning for our family. My father wrote this account of how his parents taught their children:

"[The] musical, cheerful voice [of my mother] called, 'Come, children, it is the singing and story hour.' . . . She seated herself in a well-used rocking chair, admonished us to listen carefully, to sing well, and to ask questions. . . .

" . . . We learned the words of the song by rote, and the meaning or story of each song was made clear to us. 'Joseph Smith's First Prayer' brought to us the story of the restoration of the gospel and the story of his life was made most impressive. 'Come, Come, Ye Saints' opened the door to the richness of pioneer achievement, faith, and loyalty. . . .

" . . . A testimony of Joseph Smith's divine calling, of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, and above all, the reality of our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, were the blessings derived from the family song and story hour."

My father further wrote: "My heart is filled with gratitude to my angel mother for . . . teaching me the doctrines of repentance, faith, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. She taught me the power and blessing of prayer, of the actual existence of the Father and the Son, and that Joseph Smith saw and talked to them when a boy fourteen years of age. We knew from her teaching that our Prophet saw other heavenly messengers . . . , and that through them the Church of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth."

When I was a boy, our family home evening took place at the dinner table. It was most pleasant and enjoyable. It was a time when our father would reminisce and tell us about his life. He often told us of his inspirational and exciting experiences while preaching the gospel as a missionary in Germany. Each story seemed to improve the more often it was related. I grew up never doubting that I would become a missionary, and I never lost the zeal that he instilled in my heart. Our mother taught us about the nobility of her pioneer parents and their great faith in the gospel.

Home can literally become a house of glory. Memories of early childhood can become significant in our daily lives.

A house of order

To instill order in our homes, parents should be in charge and exercise parental authority in righteous dominion to establish acceptable standards of behavior for their children, setting limits and adhering to them consistently. They are to teach and guide their children "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, . . . reproofing betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy

Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love" (D&C 121:41-43). Parents then will earn the respect of their children, and children will honor their parents, unifying families.

Other safeguards of order in our homes include assuring that children are blessed and baptized and that sons are ordained to the priesthood. In addition, they should be worthy to enter the holy temples, become missionaries, and receive the crowning blessing of an eternal marriage.

A house of God

My brothers and sisters, if you will make your home a house of prayer and fasting, faith, learning and glory, and order, it can become a house of God. If you build your homes on the foundation rock of our Redeemer and the gospel, they can be sanctuaries where your families can be sheltered from the raging storms of life.

I testify of the divinity of the Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We are the spiritual offspring of our Heavenly Father. He is mindful of each one of us and wants our homes and our families to be spiritually strong. Joseph Smith is a true prophet of God, as are all of his successors, including President Ezra Taft Benson. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Prices paid for temple blessings

I'm sure you recognize that it is an awesome responsibility to speak to this vast congregation. I seek your faith.

Last Thursday, as part of our preparation for this conference, all the General Authorities had an experience familiar to many of you in this congregation. In a spirit of fasting and prayer, we and our wives partook of the wonderful blessing

NOTES

1. Address delivered at the Winnipeg Manitoba Stake conference, 27 Oct. 1990.
2. Louis S. Richman, "Struggling to Save Our Kids," *Fortune*, 10 Aug. 1992, pp. 34-35.
3. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), p. 302.
4. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 4:339.
5. *Family Home Evening Manual* (1965), p. iii.
6. *Family Home Evening: Happiness through Faith in Jesus Christ* (manual, 1976), p. 3.
7. Joseph L. Wirthlin, *A Heritage of Faith*, comp. Richard B. Wirthlin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), pp. 41-43.

The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin has just addressed us, and the Tabernacle Choir has presented that beautiful setting of the Twenty-third Psalm.

Following my remarks, the benediction will be offered by Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

of an endowment session in the Salt Lake Temple.

We left that experience better men and better women because everything that occurred there was uplifting and refining.

I need not remind you that it is a precious privilege to enter a house of the Lord and participate in the ordinances therein administered. How remarkable is each of these sacred buildings which has been dedicated for purposes that are

divine and eternal in their nature. They are available to all of us because of a price paid by others.

The heaviest price of all was paid by the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. He gave his life on Calvary's cross for the sins of all mankind. Because of that gift, all are assured the blessings of the Resurrection. And further, because of that gift, there may be eternal life and exaltation in our Father's kingdom if we make the effort to gain it.

In comparison with the immensity of the Savior's sacrifice and the consequences of His atonement, the price to erect these sacred temples is small indeed.

It was so counted by those who constructed the magnificent Salt Lake Temple.

The placing of the capstone

Today is the first Sunday of April 1993. Go back with me an even century to this same Temple Square. No, make it an even 101 years. It is April conference of 1892. These grounds are crowded with people. The multitude is the largest ever assembled in this area of the West. There are thousands and thousands of them. All cannot get on the grounds, so large is the number. They are on surrounding streets. Some have climbed telephone poles; others, trees. The occasion is the placing of the capstone of the temple, the great round granite sphere which crowns the highest steeple on the east end. It is a day of celebration. Atop the ball is a bronze figure gilded with gold. The figure represents Moroni—prophet, writer, and compiler of the Book of Mormon. The figure represents the angel spoken of by John the Revelator when he declared with prophetic vision:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of

his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:6-7).

In the presence of that multitude, President Wilford Woodruff touched a switch. The capstone with the angel settled in place. President Woodruff led the multitude in a great and sacred shout: "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna to God and the Lamb!"

There had been nothing before it and there has been nothing just like it since.

Forty years of struggle and faith

The shout was an expression of worship. It was an expression of gratitude. This was an unequalled day of thanksgiving. This was a day of which these people had dreamed for almost forty years. You have heard and read and seen much recently concerning that forty-year struggle.

My six-year-old great-grandson, Peter, was in Salt Lake City on vacation with his family last summer. His parents brought him here to Temple Square. They pointed out the temple and explained that it had taken forty years to build. He asked, "Why did it take the pioneers forty years to build the temple when it took the Lord only six days to create the whole world?"

In July of 1847 Brigham Young had pointed out the location, only four days after the pioneers arrived in the valley. That spot had been marked by Wilford Woodruff. On April 6, 1853, the cornerstones were laid. All of you are familiar with the history of the years that followed—years of effort and heartbreaking disappointment; years of labor in sunshine and storm to bring great blocks of granite from these everlasting hills and to dress that stone, each piece according to a carefully designed pattern; years of unyielding faith in the pursuit of a goal.

These were years during which three other beautiful temples had been erected in this territory—in St. George, in Logan, and in Manti.

But the greatest dream of all centered here on Temple Square. And now by April of 1892 the exterior walls, steeples, and roof had been completed. Small wonder that the people shouted hosanna. A generation and more had passed since the work had commenced. Wilford Woodruff was now eighty-five and President of the Church. Before the vast crowd assembled on that day, Elder Francis M. Lyman made a motion that they now finish the interior and dedicate the temple one year from that day, April 6, 1893, forty years from the day of the laying of the cornerstones.

A mighty shout of approval filled the air.

Finishing the temple's interior

But it was one thing to say yes in the excitement of the occasion and another to actually accomplish the work. Some with practical minds and substantial experience said it could never be done.

The building was a shell. A mighty work of consecrated effort was commenced to finish the interior.

Floors were laid, partitions set in place, plumbing installed, and electrical lines run. And then came the tremendous finishing work.

Wooden lath by the mile was nailed to the framing. Lime by the ton was slaked to become plaster. Timber was cut, seasoned, sawed, and shaped into magnificently beautiful woodwork.

While preparing the ordinances for use in more modern temples, I have spent hours and days working in the magnificent fifth-floor Assembly Room of the Salt Lake Temple. I have marveled at the craftsmanship of those who built such strong and graceful structures as the four corner stairways of that room. I have appreciated architectural masterpieces across this world, but I have never seen more beautiful workmanship than is found in the house of the Lord. There are many fluted columns with delicately carved floral pieces at their crown. There

are numerous intricate and artistic design works made in stone and wood and plaster. Nothing was spared to make this house of God a place of beauty.

It must have appeared impossible to get all of this done in a year's time. But craftsmen who had learned their exacting trades in Europe and the British Isles, and who had come as converts to these valleys of western America, exerted themselves unsparingly. Somehow it happened. Somehow it all came together, and this within a period of twelve months.

Wonder of wonders and miracle of miracles, it was ready on the fifth of April. Leading newspapers of America had sent correspondents. Unstinting was their praise of what they saw. The day before the dedication, President Woodruff invited a substantial number of non-members of the Church to go through the building. They were moved. They recognized that here was beauty that had come not alone of skill but also of inspiration.

Latter-day temple building

May I now leave my narrative for a few moments to say that I stand in reverent appreciation and gratitude for this singular accomplishment. All of this was done in the days of the poverty of our people. We have since built and dedicated forty-one additional temples, every one a classic in its own right. We shall dedicate another beautiful temple in the San Diego area later this month. We have been blessed with the means to do all of this. These means have come of the dedicated consecrations of our people. Every one of these buildings is sacred. Every one contains the inscription found on the east wall of the Salt Lake Temple: "Holiness to the Lord—the House of the Lord." Every one has been dedicated for the same purpose: to assist in accomplishing the divine work of God our Eternal Father, who declared, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

The ordinances that are administered in each of these temples are identical to and as efficacious as the ordinances administered in the Salt Lake Temple.

We have been criticized for the cost of these structures, a cost which results from the exceptional quality of the workmanship and the materials that go into them. Those who criticize do not understand that these houses are dedicated as the abode of Deity and, as Brigham Young stated, are to stand through the Millennium.

To me it is significant that the Salt Lake Temple, built in pioneer times, is the largest we have ever built regardless of our circumstances. Our architects say that it contains 253,000 square feet. By comparison, the beautiful Los Angeles Temple contains 190,000. The Washington Temple, which is seen by hundreds of thousands who drive the Beltway, contains 160,000. I think that our people have never in all of our history undertaken or completed a building of such magnitude, complexity of design, and artistic excellence as the structure we today honor on the centennial of its dedication.

Purposes of temples

But why all of this effort centered in one building, and why all of this labor to build others to serve the same purposes?

It was then as it is now. Those purposes, for they are several in number, are set forth in words of revealed truth. Listen to a few lines from the dedicatory prayer offered at the Kirtland Temple in 1836, language which came to the Prophet Joseph Smith by revelation:

"And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them" (D&C 109:22).

And further:

"Put upon thy servants the testimony of the covenant, that when they go out and proclaim thy word they may seal up

the law, and prepare the hearts of thy saints for all those judgments thou art about to send, in thy wrath, upon the inhabitants of the earth, because of their transgressions, that thy people may not faint in the day of trouble" (D&C 109:38).

And from further revelation received in the days of Nauvoo:

"For there is not a place found on earth that he [the Lord] may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood.

"For a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead—

"For this ordinance belongeth to my house. . . .

" . . . I command you, all ye my saints, to build a house unto me. . . .

"And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people;

"For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times" (D&C 124:28–31, 40–41).

Temples express our testimony

Each temple built by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stands as an expression of the testimony of this people that God our Eternal Father lives, that He has a plan for the blessing of His sons and daughters of all generations, that His Beloved Son, Jesus the Christ, who was born in Bethlehem of Judea and crucified on the cross of Golgotha, is the Savior and Redeemer of the world, whose atoning sacrifice makes possible the fulfillment of that plan in the eternal life of each who accepts and lives the gospel. Every temple, be it large or small, old or new, is an expression of our testimony that life beyond the grave is as real and certain as is mortality. There would be no

need for temples if the human spirit and soul were not eternal. Every ordinance performed in these sacred houses is everlasting in its consequences. While upon the earth the Lord conferred upon His chosen disciples the eternal priesthood, saying:

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

This same authority was bestowed in this generation under the hands of Peter, James, and John, who had received it directly from the Lord. This power to seal in the heavens that which is sealed upon the earth is exercised in these holy houses. Every one of us is subject to mortal death. But through the eternal plan made possible by the sacrifice of the Redeemer, all may go on to glories infinitely greater than any of the wondrous things of this life.

This is why those of an earlier generation struggled so hard with such tremendous faith to build a house worthy to be dedicated to God our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And such was the purpose in building the temples that preceded the Salt Lake Temple and in building those which have followed, including the beautiful new San Diego Temple due soon for dedication.

Other temples planned

Parenthetically I take this opportunity to say that there will be others. A beautiful temple in Bountiful, Utah, is scheduled to be dedicated in 1995. A site in American Fork, Utah, which the Church has owned for many years, will become the location for another.

Construction is proceeding on another in Orlando, Florida. Hopefully sometime this year we shall break ground for the St. Louis Missouri Temple. A site has been secured in Connecticut, and yet another in northern England. Architec-

tural work is proceeding on projected temples in Bogotá, Colombia; Guayaquil, Ecuador; and in Hong Kong, and we are in the process of acquiring property in Spain and at least three other nations.

While doing all of this, we are doing as our forefathers did—we are enlarging and strengthening the stakes of Zion; we are carrying the gospel to the nations of the earth; we are carrying forward a mighty undertaking of family history research so that a work of redemption might go forward in behalf of millions who have passed beyond the veil of death. We are assisting the poor and the needy and contributing generously to the feeding and clothing of many thousands in foreign lands—people not of our faith but who are made hungry and destitute because of conflict and the ravages of nature.

Dedication of the Salt Lake Temple

Now let me return to April 6, 1893. A terrible storm arose that day. Rain fell in torrents, and the wind blew with savage fury. It was as if the forces of evil were lashing out in violent protest against this act of consecration.

But all was peace and quiet within the thick granite walls. The aged prophet, then eighty-six, led the way to the beautiful fifth-floor assembly room. The room was filled to capacity in this, the first of forty-one sessions. After appropriate preliminary expressions in music and speech, President Woodruff stepped to the pulpit at the east end of the room and offered the prayer of dedication.

It was a moving and powerful prayer. It was an expression of the hearts of those who love the Lord.

It was followed by a wondrous voicing of the Hosanna Shout by all assembled. The choir then burst forth with Evan Stephens's setting of those same words of praise to the Almighty: "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna to God and the Lamb!"

Then the congregation joined in singing "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning," which had first been sung at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple.

And now, as I leave with you my testimony of this sacred house, of the faith of those who built it, of the truth and validity of the ordinances which are performed therein, I have invited the Tabernacle Choir to sing again this same Hosanna Anthem, followed by the congregations, wherever we may be, singing, "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning! The latter-day glory begins to come forth" (*Hymns*, no. 2).

I hope that as we do so, there will be stirred within each of us a flaming testimony of the divinity of this work and a spirit of gratitude to the Almighty, whose kingdom this is. In the name of our Divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang the Hosanna Anthem and was joined by the congregation in singing the first verse of "The Spirit of God."

Elder Cree-L Kofford offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 163rd Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 4, 1993. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Donald Ripplinger conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 163rd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching this session in his apartment, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct.

To those in the Assembly Hall, we note that Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, Joc J. Christensen, and Julio E. Dávila are seated on the stand.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by way of

radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Donald Ripplinger and accompanied by Clay Christiansen, will provide the music for this session.

The choir will begin this service by singing "For the Strength of the Hills." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "For the Strength of the Hills."

Elder Carlos E. Asay offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Though Deepening Trials," and Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Though Deepening Trials."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

"The enemy is combined"

Years ago, I wondered over the scriptural imagery of angels waiting "day and night" for "the great command" to come down and reap the tares in a wicked and suffering world; it seemed rather eager to me (see D&C 38:12; 86:5). Given such massive, needless human suffering, I don't wonder anymore!

Even so, the final reaping will occur only when the Father determines that the world is "fully ripe." Meanwhile, brothers and sisters, the challenge is surviving spiritually in a deteriorating "wheat and tares" world (D&C 86:7).

Granted, occasionally a few defectors or dissidents may try to vex us as they hyperventilate over their particular concerns, but it is the engulfing effects of that deteriorating world on Church members which are the clear and present danger. "Evils and designs" really do operate through "conspiring [individuals] in the last days" (D&C 89:4). The Lord has even announced, "Behold, the enemy is combined" (D&C 38:12).

Evils need not intimidate

Yet we must not be intimidated or lose our composure even though the once morally unacceptable is becoming acceptable, as if frequency somehow conferred respectability!

One of the most subtle forms of intimidation is the gradual normalization of aberration. Alexander Pope so cautioned:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

[*An Essay on Man*, epistle II, lines 217–20]

Today, lust openly parades as love, license cleverly poses as liberty, and raucous sounds mockingly masquerade as music. Evil even calls itself good and often gets away with it!

While I would not shrink the circumference of freedom, the size of that circle is not the sole measure of social well-being.

Hence, to exult, as some do, over how much decadence is permissible at the edges ignores the erosive effects of such grossness upon all within that circle. Yeats's descriptive imagery fits:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
[William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming," stanza 1]

Attributed to historian Will Durant are these relevant words: "If the hunger for liberty destroys order, the hunger for order will destroy liberty." In this connection, how can there possibly be a disturbing loss of individual impulse control without a corresponding loss of collective freedom?

Violence and abortion

Violence abounds, often as people purchase drugs in order to "tune out" of the world instead of overcoming it. Just as foretold, our days actually are fast resembling the days of Noah, especially notable for their pattern of corruption and violence (see Matthew 24:37; Genesis 6:11). No wonder the adversary steadily promotes all the ancient sins—not because he is uninventive but because his harvest is so constant.

Abortion, which has increased enormously, causes one to ask, "Have we strayed so far from God's second great

commandment—love thy neighbor—that a baby in a womb no longer qualifies to be loved—at least as a mother's neighbor?" Even so, violence to an unborn child does not justify other violence!

Lack of neighboring

What of neighboring? Long ago, Tocqueville anticipated how individualism, unenriched by family and community, could produce the "lonely crowd," saying:

"Thus not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever upon himself alone and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart" (Alexis de Tocqueville, "Democracy in America," in Andrew M. Scott, *Political Thought in America* [New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1959], p. 225).

In their search for identity and belonging, too many supposedly savvy teens are now confined to the solitude of a lonely gang. What is the lasting advantage of becoming streetwise if one is on a street to nowhere? Gangs mark the failure of both families and communities as well as symbolizing the pervasive revolt against authority.

Talk shows and soap operas

Instead of being communicating neighbors, we are flooded with talk shows, some of which feature not real conversation but exhibitionism and verbal voyeurism among virtual strangers.

We are lathered with soap operas in need of nothing so much as soap—for the scrubbing of themselves! Some seriously maintain that media violence and sleaze leave consumers untouched. But revenue is received from commercials precisely because of their influence. Either we deserve reforms, or sponsors deserve refunds!

Sin makes us "past feeling"

Those who mock the traditional moral values should heed this lesson of history from the Durants:

"A youth boiling with hormones will wonder why he should not give full freedom to his sexual desires; and if he is unchecked by custom, morals, or laws, he may ruin his life before he matures sufficiently to understand that sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume both the individual and the group" (Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968], pp. 35–36).

Lasciviousness wrongly celebrates the capacity to feel, so that people lose their capacity to feel! Three different prophets in three different dispensations bemoaned those who became "past feeling" (see 1 Nephi 17:45; Ephesians 4:19; Moroni 9:20). Do we really expect those presently "past feeling" to fashion an acceptable future? Gross sin not only dulls the feelings, it also impairs the intellect. After murdering Abel, Cain ironically boasted, "I am free!" (Moses 5:33). Did the herd of Gadarene swine similarly console themselves, thinking that they were actually rugged individualists as they raced down the hill to their destruction?

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn lamented recently how those who hold that "there is no God, there is no truth, the universe is chaotic, all is relative" constitute a "relentless cult of novelty . . . [which] conceals an unyielding and long-sustained attempt to undermine, ridicule and uproot all moral precepts" ("The Relentless Cult of Novelty and How It Wrecked the Century," *The New York Times Book Review*, 7 Feb. 1993, p. 17).

Protecting pornography and resisting moral education

Today's anguishing mortal scene gives rise to still other questions.

Pornography especially victimizes women and children. Why then the inordinate preoccupation with its protection? Pornography is better protected than citizens on the streets!

Even with its flaws, the family is basic, and since no other institution can compensate fully for failure in the family, why then, instead of enhancing the family, the desperate search for substitutes? Why not require family impact studies before proceeding with this program or that remedy, since of all environmental concerns the family should be first? Hundreds of governmental departments and programs protect various interests, but which one protects the family?

Since democracy depends upon citizens' obedience to the unenforceable, why then the stiff resistance to moral education which could emphasize widely shared and time-tested principles?

A sin-resistant counterculture

Only reform and self-restraint, institutional and individual, can finally rescue society! Only a sufficient number of sin-resistant souls can change the marketplace. As Church members we should be part of that sin-resistant counterculture. Instead, too many members are sliding down the slope, though perhaps at a slower pace.

In a "wheat and tares" world, how unusually blessed faithful members are to have the precious and constant gift of the Holy Ghost with reminders of what is right and of the covenants we have made. "For behold, . . . the Holy Ghost . . . will show unto you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:5). Whatever the decibels of decadence, these need not overwhelm the still, small voice! Some of the best sermons we will ever hear will be thus prompted from the pulpit of memory—to an audience of one!

Follow the Brethren

While living amid the foreseen "distress of nations, with perplexity" (Luke

21:25; see also D&C 88:79), members also have prophetic leadership which provides direction. Several times a year we sustain fifteen Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. So we know to whom to look, even though there are a few members who "seek not the welfare of Zion" and "set themselves up for a light" (2 Nephi 26:29). Furthermore, the Prophet Joseph clearly taught that recipients of that Apostleship possess "all the keys that ever were, or that can be, conferred upon mortal man" (cited by Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:137).

Repetitive experience teaches Church members that we need not be prey to pretenders. Besides, "the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, . . . neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:14).

Additionally, the very process of Church government also ensures that we do not have secret leaders:

"It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11).

President Wilford Woodruff urged the Church flock to follow the Brethren because, he said, "the very moment that men in this kingdom attempt to run ahead or cross the path of their leaders, . . . they are in danger of being injured by the wolves. . . . I have never in my life known it to fail" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:83).

Further help comes to us through sermons, the sacrament, the holy temple, prayers, the scriptures, tithing settlements, and admonitions from loved ones. However, when members cut themselves off from all of these, then there is trouble. For instance, it is from estranged and self-justifying lips that some devastated spouses hear those terrible words, "I never loved you!"

Orthodoxy ensures balance

With the enemy combined, it is so vital to keep "in the right way" (Moroni 6:4). Orthodoxy in thought and behavior brings safety and felicity as the storms come, including "every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). Happily, amid such winds the Holy Ghost not only helps us recognize plain truth but also plain nonsense!

Orthodoxy ensures balance between the gospel's powerful and correct principles. In the body of gospel doctrine, not only are justice and mercy "fitly joined together [for] effectual working," but so is everything else! (Ephesians 4:16). But the gospel's principles do require synchronization. When pulled apart from each other or isolated, men's interpretations and implementations of these doctrines may be wild.

Love, if not checked by the seventh commandment, could become carnal. The fifth commandment's laudable emphasis upon honoring parents, unless checked by the first commandment, could result in unconditional loyalty to errant parents rather than to God.

Care is even needed in our renderings between God and Caesar (see Matthew 22:21). Even patience is balanced by "reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost," *betimes* meaning early or soon (D&C 121:43). Spiritual poise also includes both taking time to smell the flowers and noticing the leaves on the fig tree to see if "summer is nigh" (Matthew 24:32).

Thus, the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ is greater than any of its parts and larger than any of its programs or principles!

"Armed with righteousness"

Even during these difficult times, members "armed with righteousness" can

do so many things (1 Nephi 14:14). We can have love at home, even though the love of many waxes cold in the world (see Matthew 24:12). We can have inner peace even though peace has been taken from the earth (see D&C 1:35).

We can keep the seventh commandment even though others break it and mock it. We can render individualized, humanitarian service even though the mass of human suffering seems so overwhelming.

We can use our tongues to speak the truth in love, while refusing to use them to bear false witness (see Ephesians 4:15; Exodus 20:16). We can stand fast "in holy places" even though in the world "all things shall be in commotion" (D&C 45:32; 88:91).

We can reach for "hands which hang down" even if some refuse our proffered hands of friendship (D&C 81:5). We can hold to the iron rod even if others slip away and a few end up mocking us from the "great and spacious building" (1 Nephi 8:26; see also 8:27-28).

Like Nephi, we may not always know the meaning of things happening to us or around us. Nevertheless, like Nephi, we can still know that God loves us! (see 1 Nephi 11:17).

Yes, "the enemy is combined," but when we are combined with the Lord's "chariots of fire," then "they that be with us are more than they that be with them!" (2 Kings 6:16-17). Furthermore, the divine promise is that no weapon formed against the Lord's work shall finally prosper; "this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17; see also D&C 71:9). I so assure; I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

President Monson

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us. We shall now hear from Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy.

Elder Gene R. Cook

My dear brothers and sisters, I bear witness this afternoon of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and specifically of the doctrine of grace that He extends to all mankind (see Jacob 4:6–7). In so doing, I humbly recognize the great gift the Father has bestowed upon us because He “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16).

Seeking the gift of grace

Perhaps some of us have not received or known how to use the great gift of grace the Father has given to us through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift?” (D&C 88:33). The prophet Zenock even said, “Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son” (Alma 33:16).

How many of us, at times, try to resolve life’s challenges ourselves without seeking the intervention of the Lord in our lives? We try to carry the burden alone.

As some are faced with trials and afflictions, they ask, “Why won’t God help me?” Some have even struggled with doubts about their prayers and their personal worthiness and say, “Perhaps prayer doesn’t work.”

Others who have suffered with sickness, discouragement, financial crisis, rejection, disappointment, and even loss of loved ones may ask, “Why won’t the Lord heal me or help me with my son? Why didn’t He prevent my daughter’s death? Does life have to be this unhappy?”

Yes, one might even cry out: “O God, where art thou? . . . How long shall thy hand be stayed?” (D&C 121:1–2).

Jesus taught that we pass through all these trials to refine us “in the furnace of affliction” (1 Nephi 20:10) and that we should not bear them unaided but “in [the] Redeemer’s name” (D&C 138:13).

In spite of our feeling, at times, that He has forgotten us, He testifies: “Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. . . . Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands” (1 Nephi 21:15–16).

I testify that the Lord, through His grace, can continually assist us in our daily lives and in our physical and mental sicknesses, pains, transgressions, and even in all of our infirmities (see Mosiah 14:5; Alma 7:11–13; 34:31).

Centering our eyes and hearts on Christ

However, to pass successfully through the trials we encounter, we must keep our eyes and our hearts centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. “Since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself” (Alma 22:14); therefore, we needed an advocate, an intercessor, a mediator to assist us. “And it is *because of thy Son* that thou hast been thus merciful unto [us]” (Alma 33:11; italics added).

We should have great hope in knowing, however unworthy we may feel or weak we may be, *that if we will do all we can*, He will come to our aid and provide for us whatever we may lack (see 2 Corinthians 12:9). That statement, to some degree, defines grace.

Understanding grace

Grace is a “divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.” It is “an enabling power” (Bible Dictionary, p. 697). The doctrine of the grace of the Father and the Son and how it affects us is so significant that it is mentioned more than two hundred times in the standard works.

If we can obtain the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that divine enabling power to assist us, we will triumph in this life and be exalted in the life to come.

Let me share with you five principles that may help us obtain that divine intervention in our own lives or perhaps vicar-

iously assist in the life of another. These principles are simple to understand but most challenging to apply. You already know all of them. However, you may not have considered how directly related they are to obtaining grace.

Faith: our access to grace

The first principle is *faith*. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace" (Romans 5:1-2).

It is evident that this grace, or enabling power, is accessed by faith. No wonder faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel.

How clear Christ's question was to a sinking Peter, after he had walked on the water: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). The moment Peter doubted and took his eyes off the Savior, he severed himself from the power of Jesus Christ that had sustained him on the water.

How many times, likewise, as we have prayed for assistance or help with our problems, have we severed ourselves from the power of God because of doubt or fear, and thus could not obtain this enabling power of God? (see D&C 6:36; 67:3).

Repentance: being restored unto grace

Repentance is the second principle. The grace of the Lord through the Atonement can both cleanse us of sin and assist us in perfecting ourselves through our trials, sicknesses, and even character defects. We are both sanctified and justified through the grace of the Lord (see D&C 20:30-31). Truly, "as a man his sins confesses, Christ, in mercy, manifests" (Gene R. Cook and Holly Cook, "I Am a Healthy Man" [unpublished hymn]; see also Alma 24:10). Remember, Christ can repair our flaws and failings that otherwise are not repairable (see Genesis 18:14; Mark 9:23-24).

That great truth ought to fill us all with hope, as long as we are quick to remember that the effect of grace in our lives is conditioned upon repenting of our sins.

"Therefore, blessed are they who will repent. . . . And may God grant . . . that men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto grace for grace, according to their works" (Helaman 12:23-24).

A repentant heart and good works are the very conditions required to have grace restored to us. When someone pleads fervently in prayer for an answer, the answer may be more conditioned on repentance of personal sins than on any other factor (see D&C 101:7-8; Mosiah 11:23-24).

Humility: an essential condition

The third principle is *humility*. "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

"And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me" (Ether 12:27).

Humility is an essential condition of obtaining this divine assistance.

Works: doing all we can do

Doing all in your own power is the fourth principle. Truly did Paul teach, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Yes, works alone cannot bring that divine gift, but they are a key condition upon which the gift is received (see 2 Nephi 10:23-25). "For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23).

Thus, unless one has done all in his own power, he cannot expect the grace of

God to be manifest. What a glorious principle to understand: the Lord's assistance to us—whether we have strong faith or weak faith; whether a man, a woman, or a child—is not based just on what we know, how strong we are, or who we are, but more upon our *giving all that we can give and doing all that we can do* in our present circumstance. Once one has given all he can, then the Lord, through His grace, will assist him (see D&C 123:17).

Clearly, the Lord's role and our role in our receiving divine help come into clear perspective in these inspired words: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Obedience: then is his grace sufficient

The fifth principle, *keeping the commandments*, surely is a condition for receiving the grace of the Lord: "If you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness . . . ; therefore, . . . you shall receive grace for grace" (D&C 93:20; see also 93:28).

To obtain grace, one does not have to be perfect, but he does have to be trying to keep the commandments the best that he can. Then the Lord will allow him to receive that power.

Moroni sums up the doctrine of grace succinctly:

"If ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; . . .

" . . . Then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ" (Moroni 10:32–33).

Hope through Jesus Christ

What glorious gospel news is an understanding of this doctrine of grace, which persuades us to more fully center our faith and hope upon Jesus Christ. Through the grace of the Father, we will better know how to come unto the Son. (See 1 Nephi 15:14–15.)

Let us be submissive to the Father's will, recognizing that it is preeminent. How thankful we ought to be to submit to His will because He and His Son will never do anything "save it be for the benefit of the world" (2 Nephi 26:24).

By seeking the intercession of the Lord more fully in our lives—

- We will "grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth" (D&C 50:40).

- We will "teach . . . diligently and [His] grace shall attend [us]" (D&C 88:78).

- We will, for our labor, "receive the grace of God, that [we] might wax strong in the Spirit, . . . that [we] might teach with power and authority from God" (Mosiah 18:26).

- We will not "fall from grace" (D&C 20:32).

- We will "receive grace for grace" (D&C 93:20).

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

I bear witness that if we will seek the grace of God, He will come to our aid and the aid of our loved ones in times of need. Let us obey the Lord in all things and offer to Him the ultimate sacrifice of "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20; see also 3 Nephi 12:19).

"Seek this Jesus"

Now, as one of the Lord's Seventy and as an especial witness of Christ to bear witness of His name in all the world and "to prepare a way before [His] face" (D&C 124:139), I bear witness of the majesty of the Father and of the Son.

I testify that Jesus Christ lives, that He is as capable of intervening in the lives of men today as He was in the days of old when He walked among men.

I bear personal witness before the Church of the touch of the Master's hand in my own life in healing me from an incurable illness. I bear testimony also of His personal direction in my life, through

a loving and yet chastening hand of correction, to refine my soul, deepen my feelings, grant a remission of my sins, and fill my soul with the love of God.

Let no trial or affliction, my brothers and sisters, ever separate us from the love of God and the true love of Christ (see Romans 8:31, 35–39).

May we “seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in [us] forever” (Ether 12:41). May the grace of God always be with you (see Romans 16:20), I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy. Thank you, Elder Cook, for that message.

Elder Neil L. Andersen

A prayer for support

My dear brothers and sisters, words are so inadequate to express how humble and overwhelmed I feel at receiving this special calling. Throughout my life, as I have heard the General Authorities speak and felt the power of their messages, I have gained a great reverence for the sacred role they perform in the Church. Now to be invited to sit with them and assist them in building the kingdom of God is a privilege I feel faint in accepting. I pray for your support, for your faith and prayers that I might measure up. I ask for your patience and for the patience of my Brethren who will be my tutors. More than anything, I pray for the help of our Heavenly Father and his Son, for without their help and direction I will surely fail.

Thanks for family and Saints

I am grateful for my wonderful companion, Kathy. She makes goodness look

On Saturday, March 13, 1993, following a four-state regional conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Elder Marvin J. Ashton experienced a nasal hemorrhage requiring medical attention. It has been deemed wise at this time not to burden him with delivery of his conference message. Our prayers are with you, Brother Ashton, and our suggestion is that you keep the message you prepared in a handy place for October conference.

We shall therefore be pleased to hear testimonies from our new General Authorities—Elder Neil Linden Andersen, who will first speak to us, followed by Elder David Todd Christofferson—who were sustained yesterday as members of the Seventy. Elder Andersen and Elder Christofferson, if you will take that first long walk now.

easy, and the purity of her spirit keeps our family focused on the simple yet saving truths of the gospel. I’m so thankful for the valiant and precious children that have been entrusted to us. I love them dearly and appreciate so much their willingness to support me in this new calling. I have been blessed with goodly parents. My parents are now serving as proselyting missionaries in the Georgia Macon Mission. Even before I knew the Church was true, I knew that they knew. I am so appreciative of Kathy’s parents and their example of unselfish giving and for our brothers and sisters who live the gospel in quiet yet dedicated ways.

Our family returned nine months ago from a mission in southern France. I want to express my great love for the members in France. It was in France twenty years ago that I began to glimpse what seeking first the kingdom of God really meant. And living among these French Saints during the last three years has motivated

our family to a much greater consecration. I am so grateful for the tremendous missionaries who served there with us and taught us that uncompromising faith will always prevail in a doubting and cynical world.

Finally, I am thankful for the good Saints and members in our home state of Florida, who have strengthened us through our many years there together.

Pledge and testimony

I have heard President Monson say, "Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies." I know this is true, and it gives me hope looking beyond my own inadequacies. I know that when we are on the Lord's errand, he will be with us, he will strengthen us, he will build our capacities. I have experienced it. I have felt his lifting Spirit. In the months and years ahead, I will need him so very much.

I pledge all that I am to this sacred calling. I promise to be teachable, and I pray that I can be sufficiently meek that the Lord can mold and strengthen my spirit to accomplish his purposes. I commit to you and to the Lord that I will consecrate myself to advancing the cause of the Restoration and to loyally following his chosen leaders.

I know that our Heavenly Father lives and that he loves each one of us. I know that Jesus is the Christ and that he lovingly offers the way to our forgiveness. I know that through the Prophet Joseph Smith the Church of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth and that the true priesthood authority of God is in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I pray that I may always be valiant in that testimony and to these eternal truths, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Knowing that I might be invited to speak today, my daughter left me a kind note this morning, and at the end she added, "P.S. Don't trip." So far so good.

Serving the Lord sanctifies us

Not long after I was ordained a deacon, my bishop, Leon Walker, asked me into his office to give me an assignment. He handed me a bright key, the key to the chapel, and charged me with responsibility to help look after the building. I considered myself one of the most fortunate boys in the world to have an assignment from my priesthood president. I thought this would not be a difficult task. My home was just a one-minute bicycle ride away from the building. But I soon learned what I suppose all bishops know, and that is that everybody in the ward seems to have a key to the building. As

soon as I had the building locked up on an evening, someone came along behind me and opened a door. As soon as I had opened a Primary classroom, some diligent soul was there behind me to lock it up again. I could hardly stay on top of that job.

But I began to learn then, as I have come to understand since, that any call, any service in our Lord's cause sanctifies us. Whether it is performed in the glare of the public eye or in a quiet corner known only to God is of no consequence. What matters is that we do serve, for by serving we keep our covenants with Deity, and in those covenants is the promise of salvation.

Thanks to family and mentors

Today I honor and express my love to those who taught me the covenants and

in so many other ways blessed my life: a noble father, a blessed mother, grandparents, great-grandparents, extended family, and mentors and friends both in and out of the Church. My children cannot yet fully understand how deeply they bless my life by their loyalty to the Savior and his gospel. I honor them for that. Those who know my Kathy have observed that I married much above myself, a conclusion I heartily agree with. Our marriage is a gratifying thing, and I have not adequate words to express my love.

"I know in whom I have trusted"

As I have agonized in recent hours over the acceptability and adequacy of my offering upon the altar of him who gave his all, it has come to me that I must focus outwardly, that as I seek the interest of his flock and lose myself in their service, his grace shall be sufficient for me. I so commit myself unreservedly.

I readily attest to the reality and greatness of our God, to his goodness and grace, to his justice and mercy, to the truth of his gospel and the power of his priesthood and the authenticity of the calling of his latter-day seers. At the outset of this ministry, I acknowledge that anything I may achieve will be by virtue of the power and the grace and the gift of God. I am not, in Isaiah's words, "the axe [that

shall] boast itself against him that heweth therewith"; I am not the saw that shall "magnify itself against him that shaketh it" (Isaiah 10:15). With Nephi, "I know in whom I have trusted" (2 Nephi 4:19).

I am particularly gratified, and it is of great significance to me, that I may at any moment and in any circumstance approach through prayer the throne of grace, that my Heavenly Father will hear my petition, and that my Advocate, he who did no sin, whose blood was shed, will plead my cause (see D&C 45:3-5). I rely heavily on that access to God, which he gives to all his children, for he is indeed no respecter of persons, and he that asks shall receive. I so witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have heard from Elders Neil L. Andersen and D. Todd Christofferson, new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. It's wonderful to hear the testimonies of these two Brethren.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Sister Chieko N. Okazaki, first counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Sister Chieko N. Okazaki

Cat's cradle—a network of kindness

My dear brothers and sisters, aloha! Today I want to share some thoughts with you about how Christian service connects all of us in a network of kindness that is strong and beautiful. As the Apostle Paul promised the Colossian Saints, our hearts can be "knit together in love" (Colossians 2:2).

Do you see this piece of string? It's just an ordinary piece of string—not very

interesting. When I was growing up on the big island of Hawaii, all of us kids used to keep a piece of string like this handy to play with. Now a string doesn't look like much, but look what you can do with it!

This particular cat's cradle pattern is called four-eyes. Do you see how complex and beautiful it is? Do you see how each part supports the other parts and is connected to them? You cannot pick one

part out without destroying the whole pattern. It is the same with our lives. We meet many people. With some, the association lasts for years. With others, the association is very brief. But in either case we can make the pattern a beautiful one by making our encounter a kindly one, filled with the desire to serve.

Our small thread in a great tapestry

President Hinckley said something that I just love about our patterns of interconnectedness in the Church. He said: "To those of the Church, all within the sound of my voice, I give the challenge [to] . . . never lose sight of the whole majestic and wonderful picture of the purpose of this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. Weave beautifully your small thread in the grand tapestry, the pattern for which was laid out for us by the God of heaven" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1989, p. 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, p. 54).

We may not know what contribution our small thread makes to the great tapestry. We may not understand the pattern that our lives make as they intersect, connect, separate, and intersect again—but God does. Of course it was no accident that the angel who rebuked the erring Alma the Younger in a "voice of thunder" was the same angel who returned to Alma, now twenty years a missionary, to say, "Blessed art thou, Alma; . . . for thou hast been faithful" (Mosiah 27:11; Alma 8:15). Their lives made a shining pattern.

Sister Rosetta Colclough Stark

Let me tell you about a woman who has woven her strand of kindness and compassion into my life. Sister Rosetta Colclough, a missionary in Hawaii, came to my junior high when I was eleven and invited all the students to a special religion class taught at the little Mormon chapel near the school. Three other Japanese girls and I, all Buddhists, accepted the invitation. That was the

beginning of my Christian instruction, and four years later I joined the Church.

Last March I received a letter from Rosetta Colclough Stark, now living in Arizona. She enclosed in her letter a little article she had written for her ward newsletter in 1978, fifteen years ago, describing those religion classes:

"One day on the eleven o'clock period, only four [Japanese girls] came to class. I was very disappointed there were so few. . . . [But] near the close of the period, we stood in the little chapel with bowed heads and closed eyes, repeating in unison the Lord's Prayer. The soft Hawaiian sun filtered through the windows. As we prayed, I suddenly felt a bright light envelop us, coming from above like an inverted cone. A wonderful feeling of peace and joy filled my heart. I led the prayer very slowly as the bright light enfolded us. I was sure the girls felt it also, as their faces shone with an expression of deep reverence. We almost whispered 'good-bye' so as not to break the spell, and they tiptoed out. I thought, 'One or more of those girls will join the Church and become a great influence for good.'"

She continued: "[After] I returned home, often the sweet faces of those four girls passed before my inward eyes, and I wondered about them. There was one, Chieko Nishimura, that lingered in my mind, and I often looked at the picture I had taken of them.

"Ten years later, my husband and I were attending our sacrament meeting in the Imperial Ward, Salt Lake City, when it was announced that a young Japanese couple from Hawaii would be the speakers. . . . My heart nearly jumped up into my throat. Yes, it was my little Chieko. . . . Chieko and I had a joyous reunion after the meeting. We marveled that out of all the many wards in that big city, they should have come to speak at my ward. We were sure the Lord had a hand in it."

Rosetta lost track of me after my husband and I moved to Colorado but was

surprised and delighted, when she was watching the Relief Society sesquicentennial broadcast on March 14, 1992, to hear my name announced. That afternoon she sat down at her typewriter in Arizona and began her letter to me. She said:

"[When] I heard your name announced by Sister Jack . . . I sat up straight and watched the TV screen eagerly and saw your name appear on the screen. Then you started to speak. The dark hair has turned to silver, but that sweet face was easily recognized. Yes, this is my little Chieko whom I taught at the Honomakau chapel in Kohala so many years ago. As I listened to your voice, tears of joy ran down my cheeks. . . .

"I thank my Heavenly Father that I had the privilege of teaching you about Jesus Christ our Savior in that little chapel. . . . I have been blessed three times because of it; first, that I was there to experience that light from heaven with you; second, that you came to my ward in Salt Lake City to speak; and today, when I heard you speak to the women of the world via satellite."

Rosetta says she was blessed, but Rosetta did not know how she was blessing me with her kindness. Even while she was writing that letter, my husband, Ed, was being taken to the hospital, stricken down by a cardiac arrest on the afternoon of the sesquicentennial broadcast. Her letter reached me with a special compassion and love when my sons and I were struggling to accept the fact that Ed would not recover. I did not see the light she felt while we four little Buddhist girls repeated the Lord's Prayer with her, phrase by phrase. But I know the Spirit whispered to me during that experience, reminding me of my true identity as a daughter of God and prompting me to let those teachings sink deep into my heart so I could also become a daughter of Christ in the waters of baptism.

Rosetta's life has touched mine only three times, but the Savior's love was in

each encounter. Rosetta brought me the gospel, she rejoiced with Ed and me after our baptisms, and she brought me great comfort by reminding me of Heavenly Father's profound love for me when I was suffering such pain while Ed lay dying. I needed that reassurance and love. I needed to remember that Heavenly Father, fifty years earlier, had reached down and laid his hand on a skinny little Buddhist girl and said, "You are my beloved child."

"Knit together in love"

I've shared this story with you because it illustrates so beautifully how our lives weave together in ways we cannot guess or plan. Because Rosetta acted with faith, with kindness, and with love, the pattern created by her life encountering mine is a beautiful one. I know that she has woven shining strands into the lives of many others.

Brothers and sisters, we never know how far the effects of our service will reach. We can never afford to be cruel or indifferent or ungenerous because we are all connected, even if it is in a pattern that only God sees. I am part of the pattern. Rosetta is part of the pattern. You are part of the pattern. And the Savior is part of the pattern. In fact, I like to think that the Savior is the spaces in the pattern, for there would be no pattern at all without them.

May we all deal kindly with one another, seeking in our lives the blessing of the Apostle Paul, that our "hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love" (Colossians 2:2). I pray humbly and sincerely in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Sister Chieko N. Okazaki, first counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, has spoken to us. And in your behalf I'd like to extend a gift to her. All through the years, Sister Okazaki, I have heard our beloved prophet and president,

Ezra Taft Benson, sing praises to your name and to the name of your late husband, Eddie. I'm sure he would wish me to express that again today.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders Kwok Yuen Tai and Lowell D. Wood, who were called as members of the Seventy since last April conference.

Elder Kwok Yuen Tai

The view from Victoria Peak

There is a popular tourist spot in Hong Kong known as Victoria Peak. On a clear day one can stand on the peak and enjoy a panoramic view of the bustling harbor together with the beautiful waterfront lined with skyscrapers and ferry piers. From that peak, if one looks carefully, it is possible to see the distant airport with its busy air traffic and its runway extending to the sea. At night the view from the peak is even more breathtaking. The harbor is ablaze with countless lights glittering like diamonds. It is a glorious scene!

The picture, however, is not always the same. On a foggy day the scene can be dark, gloomy, and quite a disappointment. Life is so much like that for many of us. At times it can be glorious but other times gloomy.

Growing up with Aunt Gu Ma

In my early childhood I lost both my parents. Aunt Gu Ma, a spinster sister of my father, kept my brother and me together. She brought us up in a little farming village where she grew vegetables for a living. Every morning she would carry the produce to the market in two big baskets, one on each end of a long pole resting on her shoulders. Then she would bring home rice and meat purchased with the proceeds of her vegetable sales.

I can remember cooking rice in a huge wok on top of a reed-burning stove. I was then six years old. The wok was so big that my brother and I had to lift it together, each standing on a stool while grasping a handle on opposite sides. Our

occasional dinner special was either half-cooked or burnt rice, or both.

Aunt Gu Ma was a wonderful person. Although she had no formal education, she had a noble philosophy of life. She instilled in us correct principles, stern self-reliance, and the value of hard work. We are forever grateful for her love and sacrifice in our behalf.

Seek divine guidance

I remember especially one occasion. My brother and I were returning from school during the aftermath of a severe tropical storm. The trail that we usually followed had been covered by a mud slide. Being the resourceful young boys that we were, we decided that nothing could keep us from going home. On a nearby steep hillside was a drainage pipe situated quite high above the rocky ground. If we were to get to our village, we would need to walk along that pipe. The pipe was suspended over a stream which, although normally small, had turned into a rushing torrent of mud and water. Carrying our school bags, we went up the hill and continued our expedition.

We both began cautiously treading along the narrow, slippery drainage pipe. As I approached the other side, I looked back to see how my brother was doing. I was startled to see that he had made his way only halfway and had come to a complete stop. He, being older and wiser, had realized what a precarious perch we were on and had instinctively frozen in his tracks, unable to continue. It was a terrifying moment for us as we realized the danger he was in, paralyzed by fear and perched there on a slippery, narrow

drainage pipe suspended above a torrential river.

Then I got a big surprise. I heard the loudest scream for help I have ever heard in my life. His incredible bellow echoed through the hills and valleys. Luckily, Aunt Gu Ma was working in the fields below and heard us. She came quickly to his rescue. She lovingly guided him along and led us both home to safety.

Oftimes we become anxious and fearful as we confront the complexities of life. If we seek divine guidance and follow the gospel path, we will be led to our final destination. Sometimes adversity may seem so overwhelming that we feel powerless to continue. If we appeal for help with humility and faith, our Heavenly Father will provide a way to lovingly help us through.

Conversion and marriage

One day when I was seventeen years of age, I came across a former neighbor of mine. He invited me to attend his church the next Sunday because he was to be a speaker in the meeting. It was there that he gave his two-and-one-half-minute talk and I met the missionaries for the first time. One year later I was baptized in the swimming pool of the Hong Kong Mission Home and became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Conditions in China during the 1940s were very difficult. One family with a three-month-old child left mainland China and returned to their home in Taiwan. Twenty years later, in 1963, that small child, now a young woman, arrived in Hong Kong for her studies. She responded to the invitation of the missionaries during their tracting and became a member of the Church in 1964.

A year later I returned from my university studies in Sydney, Australia, and became acquainted with that beautiful young woman, Hui Hua, in the Kowloon City branch in Hong Kong. We were married one year later at the Kom Tong Hall

in Hong Kong. The chance of our meeting instills in our minds the idea of a miracle in our lives.

President of the Hong Kong Mission

Little did we know what the Lord had in store for us. Exactly thirty years to the month after my baptism (and also on my birthday), I returned with my wife to the very location of my baptism to preside as mission president of the Hong Kong Mission.

During that three-year term we experienced inexpressible joy in watching people's lives change as they embraced the gospel. The gospel brightened up their lives. Through the gospel, hatred can turn into love, pride into humility, wickedness into righteousness, sorrow into happiness, and fear into peace. The gospel promises us hope of returning to the presence of our Heavenly Father.

The gospel has also given me, an orphan boy, unshakable hope that someday I can be together with my family forever. I may even have a father-and-son outing with my dad to make up for my lost childhood!

"The Lord is my shepherd"

As a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I share the feelings of the Apostle Paul: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8).

I express my gratitude for all the opportunities that have come to me in serving our Heavenly Father. He has blessed me with a loving wife and three wonderful children, all of whom are returned missionaries. I am grateful to them for their unflinching support.

The Twenty-third Psalm says in part: "The Lord is my shepherd. . . . He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters" (Psalm 23:1-2). I know God lives. The

Lord is my Shepherd. He has, indeed, made me lie down in green pastures and has led me beside the still waters. Jesus

is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I so testify in His holy name, amen.

Elder Lowell D. Wood

Coming unto Christ is a process

"The Lord declared that it is his work and his glory 'to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man' (Moses 1:39). He has established his Church to help in this great work. Accordingly, the Church's mission is to 'invite all to come unto Christ' (D&C 20:59) and 'be perfected in him' (Moroni 10:32)" (*Melchizedek Priesthood Leadership Handbook* [1990], p. 3).

I would like to discuss at least in part what The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints asks people to do when inviting them "to come unto Christ" (D&C 20:59).

It should be understood that this invitation is not a request to participate in a single event, but to participate in a process. This process leads individuals to eternal life, which "is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation" (D&C 6:13).

"Hear ye him"

How do we begin this most exciting and important process? The Book of Mormon records the events that occurred when Christ, following his resurrection, visited the people of Nephi in the land Bountiful. So important was this event that his Father introduced him, saying, "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—*hear ye him*" (3 Nephi 11:7; italics added).

From this introduction we learn the first required action: "*hear ye him*." If we are to come unto Christ, we must first listen to him. We must learn who he is.

Following his Father's introduction, he told the people:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

"And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:10–11).

He then invited them to come forth one by one and "see with their eyes and . . . feel with their hands" (3 Nephi 11:15). These people experienced personal knowledge of who he was. However, Jesus reminded them that coming to him through faith is even more desirable.

"And again, *more blessed* are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words" (3 Nephi 12:2; italics added).

We are fortunate to have the scriptures, which contain the words of ancient Apostles and prophets, and to have the privilege of listening to modern-day Apostles and prophets testify of Christ.

Repent and be baptized

What were the next words Jesus gave to the people in Bountiful? Think of all he could have said. He is the creator of this earth and countless others; he had just wrought the infinite atonement; he had just broken the bonds of death; he had just visited with his Father in Heaven. He could have discussed many, many

wonderful and important subjects, but he chose to teach his doctrine, which is:

"And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them" (3 Nephi 11:38-39).

Not only did the Lord teach the need for baptism, but he called special disciples and gave them power to baptize. He also taught them the correct manner of baptism.

Receive the Holy Ghost

Clearly it is vital on the journey to eternal life to exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of our sins, and be baptized in the proper manner by those holding the proper authority and using the proper prayer. After this kind of baptism we can "be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and . . . receive a remission of . . . sins" (3 Nephi 12:2). However, in order to progress we must yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and [put] off the natural man and [become] a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord" (Mosiah 3:19).

As we come unto Christ, we must surrender our worldly ways, our pride, and our selfishness. As we yield to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, we should experience a "mighty change in [our] hearts" and become willing to submit to or accept "all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us]" (Alma 5:14; Mosiah 3:19).

Turn life over to God

Life is often difficult. There are trials, disappointments, challenges, sickness, and unemployment even for the Saints. These must be borne with submissive patience, for often these trials are evidence of the Lord's hand preparing us

to be worthy of living with him. To yield to Christ means to put him and his teachings first. The total submission of our will to his is one of the most difficult obstacles we face on our journey toward eternal life. The rewards of this submission are beautifully described by President Ezra Taft Benson:

"Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 361).

"Son, remember who you are"

Self-control and self-discipline are important virtues that need to be developed in the process of coming unto Christ. In my teenage years, when I was going out to an activity my parents would say, "Son, remember who you are." Is this phrase familiar to you? This short statement effectively reminded me of the trust my parents had in me and of the expectations of loving grandparents and concerned uncles, aunts, and priesthood leaders. It reminded me of my responsibility to be a good example to younger brothers and sisters.

Heavenly Father provides us with a similar request. He asks us to "always remember him" (D&C 20:77, 79) and "to stand as witnesses of [him] at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in" (Mosiah 18:9).

These reminders provide a simple but effective decision-making tool that can help us develop needed self-control and self-discipline.

Any thought, activity, or action that is compatible with the name, the life, or the teachings of Jesus Christ is acceptable. Any behavior that is not compatible

with his name, his life, or his teachings is not acceptable and should be avoided.

Come to the temple

The process of being perfected requires that we receive special instruction, make sacred covenants, and receive the highest ordinances of the priesthood. These blessings are available only in the temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Individuals who come unto Christ must come to his temple.

Invitation to all

It is my prayer that all of us will examine our lives and evaluate where we are in the process of coming unto Christ and being perfected in him. The Book of Mormon promises that if we "come unto him, and offer [our] whole souls as an offering unto him, and *continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end . . . [we] will be saved*" (Omni 1:26; italics added).

If you have not yet accepted the invitation to come unto him, please do so now. Missionaries of The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints are prepared and eager to teach you the doctrine of Christ. They hold the proper authority, baptize in the proper manner, and use the proper prayer.

If you previously began the process of coming unto Christ but lost your way or took a detour, do not despair; begin again. Come back; come back now! Come unto Christ and enjoy the "fruit of the Spirit," namely "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance," and begin to "walk in the Spirit" and "lay hold upon every good gift" (Galatians 5:22-23, 25; Moroni 10:30).

I testify that he lives, that he is the light and life of the world, that he is our Savior and our Redeemer, and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Kwok Yuen Tai and Lowell D. Wood of the Seventy.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

President Hinckley and President Monson, Tabernacle Choir, thank you for that inspiring session this morning. I only hope that the spirit of that session will hover over us as we continue this afternoon.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, "That they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and know more perfectly concerning their duty, and the things which I require at their hands" (D&C 105:10).

How grateful we are for the scriptures, which contain the Lord's instructions to His children. They help us to better understand the course He has designed as a sure guide to lead us through this period of our mortal probation.

Gospel basics bring change in Peru

Until recently, part of my assignment has included the country of Peru, an area of the world that is experiencing great turmoil. Inflation and internal strife have been robbing the Peruvian people of almost any hope of stability in their lives.

It has been difficult for my Brethren and me to visit Peru regularly because of the dangers of traveling there. It has been necessary for the Peruvian members to assume much more responsibility for priesthood and auxiliary leadership and for full-time missionary service.

The Area Presidency recognized the need to fortify the members of the Church in this country and, after much prayer and fasting, decided to emphasize

just two basic teachings of the gospel. They prepared a letter to be delivered to each family unit in Peru. The theme was "Being Converted to the Lord," and the letter stressed family prayer and family scripture study.

The Area Presidency taught these principles first to the stake presidencies. They in turn instructed their high councils, and from there the teaching was done to bishops. The bishops then instructed their ward members, and a follow-up letter was delivered by the home teachers to each family unit. The fathers were encouraged specifically to lead their families in daily prayer and scripture study.

The blessings that have come to the Peruvian Saints from practicing these two basic gospel principles, daily prayer and scripture study, have been most remarkable. It soon became evident that faith and testimony were increasing among members of the Church there. There has been a significant increase in sacrament meeting attendance, which has resulted in a greater sense of community and increased interest among the Saints in loving and caring for each other. Though travel to the temple has become increasingly difficult and dangerous, temple attendance is up significantly.

The number of full-time missionaries immediately began to increase. Now the five missions in Peru fill their missionary needs with native Peruvians. The full-time missionaries are arriving in the field better prepared to serve, which of course has resulted in increased convert baptisms.

A renewed emphasis on two basic gospel practices—daily prayer and scripture study—created a dramatic change and offered increased spirituality and works among the Saints there.

The success of the Peruvian Saints should teach all of us the importance of adhering to the basics of a gospel-centered life. Let us consider again the blessings promised us if we faithfully practice daily family prayer and daily family scripture study.

Importance of daily prayer

The scriptures are filled with admonitions to stay close to the Lord and call upon His holy name in prayer. In the latter days of Alma's ministry, he instructed his sons on how they should live. After Alma's remarkable conversion, he spent his life proclaiming the gospel and perfecting the Saints. Before he died, he wanted to instill in his sons a desire to be obedient to God's will. To Helaman he said:

"O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.

"Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.

"Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 37:35-37).

Prayer is the primary means of communication between God and man. Prayer is an important part of practically every religion, whether it be Christian or otherwise. The Prophet Joseph Smith, speaking on the subject of prayer, stated:

"We would say to the brethren, seek to know God in your closets, call upon him in the fields. Follow the directions of the Book of Mormon, and pray over, and for your families, your cattle, your flocks, your herds, your corn, and all things that you possess; ask the blessing of God upon all your labors, and everything that you engage in" (*History of the Church*, 5:31).

When we pray to the Lord, we should remember whom we are addressing and be prepared to give Him our undivided attention as we humbly supplicate

Him. President John Taylor counseled us this way:

"Do you have prayers in your family? . . . And when you do, do you go through the operation like the [grinding] of a piece of machinery, or do you bow in meekness and with a sincere desire to seek the blessing of God upon you and your household? That is the way that we ought to do, and cultivate a spirit of devotion and trust in God, dedicating ourselves to him, and seeking his blessings" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:118).

As parents it is clearly our duty to teach our children to pray. Regular family prayers establish patterns that literally bless future generations. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks admonished us to do in his great talk in the morning session, it is good to use the sacred pronouns of the scriptures—*thee*, *thou*, *thy*, and *thine*—when addressing Deity in prayer, instead of the more common pronouns *you*, *your*, and *yours*. By doing so we show greater respect to our Heavenly Father.

It is so satisfying to know that God is mindful of us and ready to respond when we place our trust in Him. There is no place for fear among men and women who place their trust in the Almighty, who do not hesitate to humble themselves in seeking divine guidance through prayer. Though difficulties may arise and reverses may come, in our prayers we can find reassurance as the Lord speaks peace to our souls.

On several occasions President Benson has shared the poem "Prayer," by Eliza M. Hickok, with members of the Church. It is a poem he learned while he was in the Aaronic Priesthood:

I know not by what methods rare,
But this I know, God answers prayer.
I know that He has given His Word,
Which tells me prayer is always
heard,
And will be answered, soon or late.
And so I pray and calmly wait.
I know not if the blessing sought
Will come in just the way I thought;

But leave my prayers with Him
alone,

Whose will is wiser than my own,
Assured that He will grant my quest,
Or send some answer far more blest.
[In James Gilchrist Lawson, ed., *The Best Loved Religious Poems* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1933), p. 160]

Among the Peruvian Saints, who live in this nation racked with heartache and despair, there has emerged a stronger faith and devotion to our Father in Heaven because they heeded the counsel of His servants to hold daily family prayer.

Importance of daily scripture study

A special maturing in the gospel has developed among the members of the Church in Peru because they added to their daily family prayers the practice of having daily family scripture study. When the revealed words of the prophets found their way into the hearts of the Saints, they brought about a mighty change in the way they lived and believed. Questions, personal problems, and important concerns were answered by the inspired counsel of the scriptures.

All the standard works of the Church instruct us to read and ponder their sayings. From the Old Testament we read, "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read" (Isaiah 34:16). From the New Testament, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). Nephi, in the Book of Mormon, observes, "My soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children" (2 Nephi 4:15). Counsel from the Pearl of Great Price promises, "And whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37). And finally, in the Doctrine and Covenants we read: "First seek to obtain my word. . . . Study

my word which hath gone forth among the children of men" (D&C 11:21-22).

The scriptures are one of our greatest treasures. They contain God's instructions to His people from the beginning of time. In a world so full of the doctrines of men, how grateful we are to have a sure anchor on which to build our faith! Of the Book of Mormon, Elder Marion G. Romney said:

"If our young folks are traditioned in the teachings of the Book of Mormon, they will not only be inspired with righteous courage to choose the right by . . . example, . . . they will also be so schooled in the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ that they will know what is right.

"From almost every page of the book, there will come to them a moving testimony that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God, our Redeemer and Savior. This witness alone will be a sustaining anchor in every storm" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1960, p. 112).

In the Lord's instructions to His children we find sublime consistency. What the Lord has declared to be right will always be right. What He has declared to be true will always be true. What He has declared to be sinful will always be sinful. Rest assured that when the so-called enlightened doctrines of men contradict the holy scriptures, they will only bring heartache, disappointment, and destruction to the souls of mankind.

President Benson has counseled us concerning searching the scriptures:

"Let us not treat lightly the great things we have received from the . . . Lord! His word is one of the most valuable gifts He has given us. . . . Recommit yourselves to a study of the scriptures. Immerse yourselves in them daily. . . . Read them in your families and teach your children to love and treasure them. Then prayerfully and in counsel with others, seek every way possible to encourage the members of the Church to follow your example" ("The Power of the Word," *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82).

Recommit to gospel basics

My sincere counsel to you today is to recommit yourselves to these two basic practices that have been the source of so many blessings for the Saints in Peru. Never let a day go by without holding family prayer and family scripture study. Put this, the Lord's program, to the test and see if it does not bless your home with greater peace, hope, love, and faith.

I promise you that daily family prayer and scripture study will build within the walls of your home a security and bonding that will enrich your lives and prepare your families to meet the challenges of today and the eternities to come.

God grant unto us the desire to seek Him reverently and humbly in prayer, and the sincere desire to study His word as contained in His holy scriptures.

God lives! Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. This is my solemn witness to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Before hearing the closing remarks of President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus; the single-adult choir from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake institutes; the priesthood choir from Ricks College; and the Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and particularly the interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference.

We are grateful for the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of the conference in many countries.

We also express gratitude to very special people who have attended throughout all of the sessions yesterday and today: to government representatives, civic representatives, and educational representatives. And particularly do we

express our gratitude to members of the royal family of the kingdom of Tonga, who have been present at every session of this conference. We are grateful and happy to acknowledge to the world that last Sunday the first Tongan stake in Salt Lake City, Utah, was created. We are very grateful for that blessing and every blessing which has come to us.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Abide with Me." The benediction will be offered by Elder Joseph C. Muren of the Seventy, and this conference will then stand adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Appreciation for conference

My beloved brethren and sisters, we have had two wonderful days. The Spirit of the Lord has been with us. We have listened to inspired addresses, beautiful prayers, and uplifting music.

These general conferences each six months are occasions to grow in faith and in love for the Lord and His eternal work.

I am confident that each of us has had stirred within himself or herself a resolution to live a little better, to be a little kinder, to serve with less selfishness, to be more worthy of the wonderful blessings the Lord has generously poured out upon us.

President Benson's testimony

It has been customary for the President of the Church to leave a message for us to ponder at the close of each conference. We all regret—how much we regret—that President Benson has been unable to speak to us or attend any of the sessions. However, he has seen and heard all of the sessions and would have me convey his love and a prophet's blessing.

He also would have me repeat his testimony of our Divine Redeemer, who stands as the head of this Church, which

bears His name. I quote now from President Benson's words:

"As witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ we proclaim that He truly is the Savior of all [and is] indeed the Son of God, the Redeemer, the Promised Messiah. No message is more significant than the one He brought. No event is of greater importance than His atoning sacrifice and subsequent resurrection. And no mortal tongue can express sufficient thanks for all that Jesus has done for us.

"We need to know that Christ invites us to come unto Him. 'Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them. . . . Yea he saith: Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life' (Alma 5:33-34).

"Come, for he stands 'with open arms to receive you' (Mormon 6:17).

"Come, for 'he will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause' (Jacob 3:1).

"'Come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him' (Omni 1:26).

"As Moroni closed the record of the Jaredite civilization, he wrote, 'I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written'

(Ether 12:41)" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 10).

"The question is sometimes asked, 'Are Mormons Christians?' We declare," says President Benson, "the divinity of Jesus Christ. We look to Him as the only source of our salvation. We strive to live His teachings, and we look forward to the time that He shall come again on this earth to rule and reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In the words of a Book of Mormon prophet, we say to men today, 'There [is] no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent' (Mosiah 3:17)" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 10).

I urge you to accept and ponder that testimony from him whom we sustain as prophet, seer, and revelator.

President Benson, we know that you can see us. All of us participating in this conference—many, many thousands in the aggregate—express our love for you and invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you. We sustain you as our prophet. We embrace you as our leader. We thank you for the mighty work you have done in leading this people in truth and righteousness. May God bless you, our beloved friend, our prophet, and our President.

Appreciation for Church members

And now, brothers and sisters, there are two or three minutes left, and I wish to express in behalf of my Brethren my very deep appreciation to the members of the Church everywhere for your great kindness to us, for your sustaining vote concerning our responsibilities. The adversary is abroad in the earth. He would seek to destroy this work, but if we are united, all of us, his efforts will be of no avail. The work of the Lord will go on and grow in majesty and power and strength across the world. We have seen today and during these past few days the

majesty and the wonder and the power of this, the work of God.

A work of miracles

As we heard Sister Okazaki speak to us this afternoon, we were touched by the power of the Spirit to reach into the heart of a little girl in Hawaii, a girl of non-Christian upbringing, and touch that heart until she came to believe, and believing came to know. As we have listened to the testimony of Brother Kwok Yuen Tai, we have again sensed the miracle and the wonder of this work. This little Chinese boy in Hong Kong came to a meeting at the invitation of a friend, and his heart was touched over a period of time. I remember those days when he was a boy in Hong Kong when he joined the Church. I next saw him in Sydney, Australia, where he was getting a degree in chemistry. Then he was in London working for a great chemical organization, and then handling the work of that organization in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The Lord has led him, guided him. He has since served as a mission president and now serves as a General Authority of the Church.

Those miracles—and miracles they are—are occurring all across this world. This is a work of miracles, and the power of the Spirit is resting upon the heads of men and women and boys and girls all across the globe. Someone has said that the Holy Ghost can teach us things that we cannot teach one another. How true that is. How wonderfully true that is! Said the prophet Jeremiah:

"And I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart" (Jeremiah 3:14–15).

That is the miracle that is taking place.

Beloved friends and associates, we wish for each of you a safe return to your homes. We invoke the blessings of heaven upon you that there may be peace

and love in your homes and in your hearts. Please accept our love. We pray for you. We want you to know that. We know that you pray for us, and we thank you. Accept our testimony, which is the same testimony that each of you can bear, that God our Eternal Father lives, our Father, the ruler and the governor of the universe, to whom we may look and with whom we may speak in prayer. Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, the Son of the living God, who gave his life to atone for the

sins of all mankind. These two visited the earth to usher in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, and conferred upon him who became Prophet great and grand keys which are the bedrock of this work. Such is our faith; such is our witness; such is our testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Abide with Me."

Elder Joseph C. Muren offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, sang at the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie L. Goodliffe and Linda S. Margetts were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a single-adult choir from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake institutes, directed by Richard L. Openshaw. Richard L. Elliott was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, a priesthood choir from Ricks College provided the music. Clyde Luke and Kevin Brower conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard L. Elliott, Bonnie L. Goodliffe, and Linda S. Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the conference

A

Andersen, Elder Neil L.	101
A prayer for support; Thanks for family and Saints; Pledge and testimony	
Authorities and Officers, The Sustaining of Church	26
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell	4
Youth, live morally clean lives; Baptismal covenants; Priesthood covenants; Keeping covenants helps resist Satan; The trap of sinning a "little"; Study <i>For the Strength of Youth</i> ; Repentance is the way back; Honestly assess obedience to covenants	
Burton, Bishop H. David	59
Hero: Nolan Ryan; Satan's false heroes; Hero: Spencer W. Kimball; Heroes: Alma and Amulek; Heroes: bishops; Hero: my dad; Bond with righteous heroes	

C

Carmack, Elder John K.	53
Using full priesthood power; Faith is the priesthood's power source; Temptation to rely on tangible tools; Nephi relied on faith; Walking by faith in Vietnam; The power of faith; Overcoming obstacles to faith; Faith not exclusive to priesthood; Use gifts of the Spirit more fully; Two candlepower or 400 watts?	
Christofferson, Elder D. Todd	102
Serving the Lord sanctifies us; Thanks to family and mentors; "I know in whom I have trusted"	
Church Audit Committee Report for 1992, The	27
Church Statistical Report for 1992, The	28
Clarke, Elder J. Richard	8
The Lord of Life; Being born again through Christ; What must we do to be born again? Rebirth of John and Shirley Withers; Spiritual rebirth in a prison; The role of the Atonement in spiritual rebirth	

Cook, Elder Gene R.98

Seeking the gift of grace; Centering our eyes and hearts on Christ; Understanding grace; Faith: our access to grace; Repentance: being restored unto grace; Humility: an essential condition; Works: doing all we can do; Obedience: then is his grace sufficient; Hope through Jesus Christ; "Seek this Jesus"

E**Edgley, Bishop Richard C.11**

"Keep the faith"; Trials can increase our faith; Successes can test our faith; Warnings about worldly achievements; Look to the Lord in humility

F**Faust, Elder James E.44**

Strengthening the family; Importance of caring fathers; Both parents are important; The status of women; The priesthood: guiding authority; Marriage is the first priority; Covenants between men and women; "Just cause" for breaking covenants; Cure for decaying family life; The sealing power in our daily lives; "Fathers, come home"

G**General Authorities Present1****General Priesthood Session48****H****Haight, Elder David B.28**

San Diego temple open house; The purpose of temples; Temples in all ages; Redeeming the dead; Three principles to guide your search; Luella Boyd's temple attendance; Saviors on Mount Zion; Needed information will come; A vast and grand work

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session)67

Speaking boy to boy; Some lessons I learned as a boy; The lessons of work; Signs of danger; Lessons learned as a schoolboy; Louie and Lynn; The seventh-grade strike; Father's Model T; Our family home evenings; Parents' love and mother's death; Love at home

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session)114

Appreciation for conference; President Benson's testimony; Appreciation for Church members; A work of miracles

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) 88

Prices paid for temple blessings; The placing of the capstone; Forty years of struggle and faith; Finishing the temple's interior; Latter-day temple building; Purposes of temples; Temples express our testimony; Other temples planned; Dedication of the Salt Lake Temple

Hunter, President Howard W. 78

The path of Palm Sunday; "Jesus, the very thought of thee"; Think of Jesus more frequently; A blessed name; Hope of the contrite, joy of the meek; Jesus, our only joy be thou

K**Kendrick, Elder L. Lionel 13**

Scriptures are a divine road map; What constitutes scripture? Love and appreciate the scriptures; Purpose of the scriptures; Scriptures are necessary for spiritual survival; Search the scriptures; Suggestions for scripture study; We will return home safely

M**Madsen, Elder John M. 32**

"I the Lord am with you"; A sacred charge: "Bear record of me"; All nations will know the Lord's identity; God's instrument to gather his elect; The Book of Mormon's witness of Jesus

Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 94

"The enemy is combined"; Evils need not intimidate; Violence and abortion; Lack of neighborly; Talk shows and soap operas; Sin makes us "past feeling"; Protecting pornography and resisting moral education; A sin-resistant counterculture; Follow the Brethren; Orthodoxy ensures balance; "Armed with righteousness"

Merrell, Elder V. Dallas 35

Dr. Bloom extols Joseph Smith; Sources of the Church's real power; The only organization that will not fail; Heber C. Kimball's optimism; Joseph Smith's optimism; The divine character of the Church

Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 62

Search and destroy; Search and rescue; Worldwide humanitarian service; Scriptural searches and rescues; Search and rescue: Lawrence Bryson; Far-reaching effects of diligent service; Search and rescue: George H. Watson

Monson, President Thomas S. (Saturday morning session) 3

"The Mountain of the Lord's House"; President Benson's love for temples; Temples are gateways to heaven

Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session)	73
Take time to meditate; The contrasts of Christmas; The Christmas cane; God-given gifts that endure; The gift of birth; The gift of peace; Joseph Millett and the gift of peace; The gift of love; An awareness of the elderly; Willie thanks his teacher; The gift of life	
Music, Summary of Conference	116
N	
Nelson, Elder Russell M.	49
Honoring the priesthood; Types of organizations; Leaders and titles; General counsel; Specific counsel; Rebuke and repentance	
O	
Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	16
Titles of respect; The language of prayer; Prayer language of prophets; The Savior's prayer language; Special language shows respect; Become mature in prayer language; Take time to learn prayer language; Teach prayer language to children	
Okazaki, Sister Chieko N.	103
Cat's cradle—a network of kindness; Our small thread in a great tapestry; Sister Rosetta Colclough Stark; “Knit together in love”	
P	
Packer, Elder Boyd K.	21
Dedication of the Salt Lake Temple; Beginnings of the Salt Lake Temple; The foundation; Building the temple; A place to restore the fulness of the priesthood; Priesthood conferred by ordination; Rededicating ourselves to the Lord	
Perry, Elder L. Tom	110
Gospel basics bring change in Peru; Importance of daily prayer; Importance of daily scripture study; Recommit to gospel basics	
Pinegar, Elder Rex D.	81
The miraculous power of prayer; Prayers after a fireworks accident; Prayer brings peace; Prayer brings strength to endure; Finding peace when we receive answers we don't want; Don't forget to pray	
Priesthood Session, General	48

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	25
Saturday Morning Session	2
Scott, Elder Richard G.	40
Our great missionary program; The power of correct principles; Mothers' nurturing influence; Honor to mothers who remain home; Dealing with disobedience; Focus on the family; Find and follow correct principles; Anchor your life in Christ	
Sorensen, Elder David E.	37
The Savior's teachings about prayer; The key to salvation; Prayers during son's illness; Prayer changes our souls	
Stanley, Elder F. David	57
The principle of work; Work comes before blessings; "It's too hard"; The secret of missionary work; Say less and do more; Teaching youth to work	
Summary of Conference Music	116
Sunday Morning Session	73
Sunday Afternoon Session	93
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers, The	26

T

Tai, Elder Kwok Yuen	106
The view from Victoria Peak; Growing up with Aunt Gu Ma; Seek divine guidance; Conversion and marriage; President of the Hong Kong Mission; "The Lord is my shepherd"	

W

Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	84
Building spiritually strong families; Evil in the world; Homes can provide security; A house of prayer and fasting; A house of faith; A house of learning and glory; Family home evening; A house of order; A house of God	
Wood, Elder Lowell D.	108
Coming unto Christ is a process; "Hear ye him"; Repent and be baptized; Receive the Holy Ghost; Turn life over to God; "Son, remember who you are"; Come to the temple; Invitation to all	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS



02931 48000

93141

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-third
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 2 and 3, 1993

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-third
Semiannual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
October 2 and 3, 1993

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Copyright © 1993 by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THIRD SEMIANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 163rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 2, 1993, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 2 and 3, 1993. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 2, 1993, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

*The First Presidency:*¹ Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson

*The Council of the Twelve:*² Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

The Presidency of the Seventy: Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*³ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Jacob de Jager, Robert K. Dellenbach, Loren C. Dunn, Henry B. Eyring, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goaslind, John H. Groberg, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Kenneth Johnson, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, James M. Paramore, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:*⁴ Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, Merrill J. Bateman, C. Max Caldwell, Albert Choules, Jr., Gary J. Coleman, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Julio E. Dávila, John B. Dickson, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, Lloyd P. George, Han In Sang, Jay E. Jensen, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Cree-L Kofford, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, Richard P.

¹ President Ezra Taft Benson was excused.

² President Howard W. Hunter and Elder Marvin J. Ashton were excused.

³ Elders Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, and Glenn L. Pace were excused.

⁴ Elders Clinton L. Cutler and Gerald E. Melchin were excused.

Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, John M. Madsen, Helvécio Martins, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 163rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 2, 1993, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for the session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Our Savior's Love." President Hinckley then made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brothers and sisters, it's a beautiful autumn morning here in the valleys of the mountains. We welcome each of you from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 163rd semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our love to President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference in his apartment. We miss his presence.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in

the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders L. Tom Perry, Angel Abrea, and Albert Choules, Jr., are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Charles Didier and Lynn A. Mickelsen are in attendance.

We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, television, and the LDS Radio Network.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except President Ezra Taft Benson, President Howard W. Hunter, Elders Marvin J. Ashton and Clinton L. Cutler, who are excused because of illness; Elders Marlin K. Jensen and Glenn L. Pace, who are serving as mission presidents; and Elders L. Lionel Kendrick and Gerald E. Melchin, who are serving as temple presidents.

We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sisters Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ, is

providing the music for this session. The chorus opened the session by singing "Our Savior's Love" and will now favor us with "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Dallas N. Archibald of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

Elder Dallas N. Archibald offered the invocation.

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brothers and sisters, I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that Council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor may indicate it. Any who may be opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

Elders Dean L. Larsen, James M. Paramore, and J. Richard Clarke have been released as Presidents of the Quorums of the Seventy. Those who wish to extend a vote of appreciation to these Brethren for their faithful service may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain as Presidents of the Quorums of the Seventy Elders Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any who may be opposed.

Elders Adney Y. Komatsu, Jacob de Jager, and H. Burke Peterson have been given emeritus status. Those wishing to extend a vote of thanks for their long and faithful service, please manifest it.

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick, who is serving as president of the Dallas Temple, has been released as second counselor in the Young Men General Presidency, and all who wish to express their appreciation to him may do so.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone as second counselor in the Young Men General Presidency. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any who may be opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any who may be opposed.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining support.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

I pray for the Spirit of the Lord while I speak to you on this sacred occasion.

President Benson's mighty influence

President Ezra Taft Benson is the only one who exercises all the keys of the kingdom. In addition, we sustain fourteen others as prophets, seers, and revelators. President Benson's mighty influence is felt in many ways. His timely and inspired counsel to read the precious Book of Mormon brought an added appreciation of this sacred scripture to all who followed his direction.

A few weeks ago I witnessed President Benson's radiating power in a sacred room in the Salt Lake Temple when a granddaughter of his was married. As he came into the room, I observed his infirmities of age because he is ninety-four years old. All stood to honor him as the prophet and President of the Church. He brought with him a great spirit of warmth, love, and peace.

In this day of confusion and anxiety about the well-being of our nation and the entire world, we should pay attention to the exemplary and noble life of President Benson and to his writings and sermons as President of the Church.

The gospel is the only way to find peace

I would like today to emphasize the divinity of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We live in a day when Lucifer's influence is greater than we ever have known in our lifetimes. In terms of the sin, evil, and wickedness upon the earth, we could liken our time to the days of Noah before the flood. No one is immune to affliction and difficulty, whether it be economical, emotional, or spiritual. Immorality, violence, and divorce, with their accompanying sorrows, plague society worldwide.

The only way to find peace, happiness, and security and to overcome the

evils of the world and temptations of this generation is in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The head of the Church

Jesus is the head of his church, the Creator of the universe, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind, and the Judge of the souls of men. Who he is and what he does affected each of us before we were born and will affect us each day of our mortal lives and throughout the eternities. Much of what he is and does is beyond finite human ability to comprehend, but the Holy Ghost has borne witness to my soul of their reality.

I am grateful to know that our Lord and Savior stands at the head of this church and directs it through his servants. This is the Lord's church; it is not a church of men. The Brethren of its presiding councils are called of God; their only motive is to serve according to his will in humility "with all [their] heart, might, mind and strength" (D&C 4:2).

The Church bears the Lord's name because it is his church. He commanded the Nephites to "call the church in my name. . . . For if a church be called . . . in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel" (3 Nephi 27:7-8).

To the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed that in the last days His restored church should be called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see D&C 115:4).

The Creator of the universe

The Lord told Moses when they spoke together face to face on a high mountain:

"Worlds without number have I created; . . . by the Son I created them. . . .

"But only an account of this earth . . . give I unto you. . . . There are many worlds . . . that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them" (Moses 1:33, 35).

This brief passage of scripture gives a slight glimpse of the immensity and grandeur of our Lord as Creator. A modern astronomer gives further insight: "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be. . . . The size and age of the Cosmos are beyond ordinary human understanding. . . . The dimensions of the Cosmos are so large that . . . familiar units of distance . . . make little sense. Instead, we measure distance with the speed of light. In one second a beam of light travels 186,000 miles. . . . In a year, it crosses . . . about six trillion miles. . . . That unit of length, the distance light goes in a year, is called a light-year. It measures not time but distances—enormous distances. . . .

" . . . The Cosmos is mostly empty. . . . Worlds are precious. . . .

"A galaxy is composed of gas and dust and stars—billions upon billions of stars. Every star may be a sun to someone. . . . There are some hundred billion . . . galaxies, each with, on the average, a hundred billion stars. . . . We are hard pressed to find even the cluster in which our Milky Way Galaxy is embedded, much less the Sun or the Earth. . . .

" . . . The Milky Way contains some 400 billion stars of all sorts moving with a complex and orderly grace. Of all the stars, the inhabitants of Earth know close-up, so far, but one."¹

The Savior's atoning sacrifice

In a conversation between God and Moses, God said, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). God said also, "Mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior" (Moses 1:6).

The immortality and eternal life of man are brought to pass by the atonement of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. It is "the most transcendent act that ever has occurred or ever will occur among the children of the Father."² It is an act of love for which we should be more grateful than for any other blessing or gift of God. The Atonement provides immortality to every person; immortality is infinite and universal. It provides the opportunity for eternal life, the kind of life that God lives, to those who have faith in Christ, repent of their sins, and obey the laws of the gospel. In a miraculous way, the Atonement saves and redeems us from the effects of the fall of Adam, both temporal death at the end of mortality and spiritual death, the separation from our Father.

Only Jesus, because he is the Only Begotten Son, could make the infinite and eternal atonement so we can be at one with our Heavenly Father. When Jesus was born into mortality, his parents were God the Eternal Father (see 1 Nephi 11:21) and Mary, whom Nephi saw in a heavenly vision as "a virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins" (v. 15). He is God's Only Begotten Son, the only one who ever has or ever will be born on earth of such parentage. Because of his mortal nature, inherited from his mother, he had "the power of mortality, which is the power to die, . . . to separate body and spirit."³ Because of his divine nature, inherited from his Father, he had "the power of immortality, which is the power to live forever; or, having chosen to die, . . . to rise again in immortality."⁴ The Savior said:

"I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17–18).

"It was because of . . . this intermixture of the divine and the mortal in one person, that our Lord was able to

work out the infinite and eternal atonement. . . . He had power to live or to die, as he chose, and having laid down his life, he had power to take it again, and then, in a way incomprehensible to us, to pass on the effects of that resurrection to all men so that all shall rise from the tomb.”

Our judge at the Second Coming

At the time of the Second Coming, Jesus will judge the souls of all mankind in an inevitable judgment. In the gospel of John we read:

“The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: . . .

“ . . . The Father hath . . . given to the Son . . . authority to execute judgment. . . .

“ . . . For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:22, 26–29).

The prophet Mormon wrote: “Ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil” (Mormon 3:20).

We read in Matthew:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

“And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: . . .

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:31–34, 41).

Show gratitude by coming to know Jesus

Considering all that Jesus is and all he does for us, what should we be doing to show our appreciation? We should go far beyond knowing *about* Jesus and *about* his attributes and mission. We should come to “know . . . the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). “It is one thing to know about God and another to know him. We know about him when we learn that he is a personal being in whose image man is created; when we learn that the Son is in the express image of his Father’s person; when we learn that both the Father and the Son possess certain specified attributes and powers. But we know them, in the sense of gaining eternal life, when we enjoy and experience the same things they do. To know God is to think what he thinks, to feel what he feels, to have the power he possesses, to comprehend the truths he understands, and to do what he does. Those who know God become like him, and have his kind of life, which is eternal life.”

In other words, to possess a knowledge of Christ, we must become as he is. We become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). He instructed his Nephite disciples: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27).

Love one another

One underlying principle runs throughout the Savior’s life, mission, and teachings: We are to love one another. He said to his disciples:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

He said also, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Imagine for a moment the result if everyone were to love one another as Jesus loves his disciples. We would have no bickering, quarreling, strife, or contention in our homes. We would not offend or insult one another either verbally or in any other way. We would not have unnecessary litigation over small matters. War would be impossible, especially war waged in the name of religion.

Testimonies of Jesus Christ

We have numerous testimonies of the reality and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. From the time of Adam, the ancient prophets, including the brother of Jared, knew the Savior in his spirit form as Jehovah. During his life on earth, his disciples in Palestine walked and talked with him. They were with him as he taught, when he performed miracles, when he was crucified, and after his resurrection. Peter wrote:

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).

When the resurrected Lord visited and taught the Nephites, "he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying, 'Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world'" (3 Nephi 11:9-10).

In our day, the Father and the Son visited the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove. Of this visit Joseph wrote: "I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

When the Savior accepted the Kirtland Temple as his house, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery "saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit. . . . His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying: I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father" (D&C 110:2-4).

In a heavenly vision, the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon saw and conversed with Jesus Christ and gave this account:

"After the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:22-23).

Bear testimony to strengthen others

I was fortunate as a young boy attending ward testimony meetings to hear the fervent testimonies of older ward members. Now I counsel you who are more mature spiritually to bear your witness of the truth of the gospel; of the reality of the Savior and his love for each of us; and of the divine calling of his prophets, seers, and revelators. Your witness will develop testimonies in younger people as the members of my ward did in me. Parents should bear testimony frequently to strengthen conviction in the hearts of their children.

I am humbly grateful to be one of the "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23). I know that he lives. He is with us, and we can feel his influence in our lives if we are obedient, conform to his teachings, and are prayerful. He wants each of us and the Church to succeed and wants members of the Church to carry

his teachings to the world. The Church is the structure through which he can give to the world his message of hope, the hope of salvation, the right to live with our Heavenly Father and his Beloved Son forever. Our Heavenly Father lives and loves each of his children. I testify that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, as are each of his successors through President Ezra Taft Benson, our present prophet. I bear this witness in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* [New York: Random House, 1980], pp. 4-5, 7, 10.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982], p. 15.
3. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978], p. 471.

4. *The Promised Messiah*, p. 471.

5. *The Promised Messiah*, p. 471.

6. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-73], 1:762.

The chorus sang "Sweet Is the Work."

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "Sweet Is the Work."

Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church, will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Bishop Robert D. Hales

My message today is one of love. I love my dear companion, Mary, my two sons, and their families. May I express appreciation for all the joy they have brought into my life.

As I think about these relationships with my own family, I cannot help but return to the example I received from my own parents. Our children will remember us by our example. From my earliest childhood, I remember experiences which taught me about the priesthood which I hold and to respect and love the relationship my father and mother had with one another.

Learning respect for the priesthood

My father taught me respect for the priesthood. While serving in the Aaronic Priesthood, we passed the sacrament using stainless steel sacra-

ment trays which, as a result of spilled water, were often dulled with hard water spots. As a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood, I was responsible for helping prepare the sacrament. Father asked me to bring home the trays, and together we cleaned them with steel wool until every tray sparkled. When I passed the sacrament, I knew we had participated in making the sacrament ordinance a little more sacred.

On vacations, Father would take us to historical sites that were prominent in Church history to build our knowledge and testimonies.

On one occasion, when I was a twelve-year-old deacon, Father asked if I would like to go to the baseball hall of fame in Cooperstown, New York, and to the Hill Cumorah Pageant near Palmyra, New York. This is where Joseph Smith was led to the golden plates which were

later translated into the Book of Mormon. Father also took me to the Sacred Grove, where Joseph Smith had prayed to Heavenly Father and was visited in a vision by God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We prayed together in the grove and expressed our desire to be true and faithful to the priesthood which we held. Father later painted a picture of the place where we had prayed and gave it to me as a reminder of our promises made that day together. It hangs in my office today and serves as a reminder each day of my sacred experience and promises made with my earthly father as well as my Heavenly Father.

On another occasion, Father took me to the Susquehanna River, where, in 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic Priesthood from a visitation of John the Baptist. Father explained that the restoration of the priesthood was one of the most significant events in this dispensation.

Learning respect for womanhood

I learned respect for womanhood from my father's tender caring for my mother, my sister, and his sisters. Father was the first to arise from dinner to clear the table. My sister and I would wash and dry the dishes each night at Father's request. If we were not there, Father and Mother would clean the kitchen together.

In later years, after Mother had a stroke, Father faithfully cared for her every need. The last two years of her life required twenty-four-hour care, he being called by Mother every few minutes, day or night. I shall never forget his example of loving care for his cherished companion. He told me it was small payment for over fifty years of my mother's loving devotion to him.

Father's teaching the creative process

Father was a commercial artist for a large advertising agency in New York

City. On one occasion he was under tremendous stress to produce an advertising campaign. He had come home on a Friday evening and worked most of the night. Saturday morning, after a few hours working in the yard, he retired to his studio to create an advertising campaign for a new product. My sister and I found great delight in chasing each other round and round the dining room table, which was situated in a room directly over his head. He had told us to please stop at least twice, but to no avail. This time he came bounding up the steps and collared me. He sat me down and taught a great lesson. He did not yell or strike me even though he was very annoyed.

He explained the creative process, the spiritual process, if you will, and the need for quiet pondering and getting close to the Spirit for his creativity to function. Because he took time to explain and help me understand, I learned a lesson that has been put to use almost daily in my life.

How will our children remember us?

My point in telling these stories is that we, as parents, have the privilege and the responsibility of teaching gospel principles by our example and testimony to our loved ones.

My father has been gone for seven years, but I remember him with love and respect. Examples become memories that guide our lives:

- Memories of Mother and her tiny, slippered feet on top of Father's feet as they danced around the kitchen and their expressions of love for each other.

- Memories as a young boy sitting on the floor by Mother and Father's bedside while they took turns reading aloud from the scriptures.

- Memories in later years of going to the Salt Lake Temple and watching Mother and Father participate in the presentation of the endowment ceremony.

May the memories our children have guide their lives.

Now I find myself asking the question, "How will my children remember me?" How will your children remember you?

Parents represent Heavenly Father

The calling of father or mother is sacred and carries with it great significance. One of the greatest privileges and responsibilities given to us is that of being a parent—helping bring to earth a child of God and having the sacred responsibility to love, care, and guide children back to our Heavenly Father. In many ways earthly parents represent their Heavenly Father in the process of nurturing, loving, caring, and teaching children. Children naturally look to their parents to learn of the characteristics of their Heavenly Father. After they come to love, respect, and have confidence in their earthly parents, they often unknowingly develop the same feelings toward their Heavenly Father.

No parent on earth is perfect. In fact, children are very understanding when they sense and feel that parents truly care and are attempting to be the best they can be.

Teach by precept and example

It helps children to see that good parents can have differing opinions and that these differences can be worked out without striking, yelling, or throwing things. They need to see and feel calm communication with respect for each other's viewpoints so they themselves will know how to work through differences in their own lives.

Parents are counseled to teach their children by precept and example. The Lord has said:

"Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance,

faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. . . .

"And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:25, 28).

Children who are taught to pray and who pray with their parents when young are more likely to pray when they are older. Those who are taught when they are young to love God and believe He lives will more often continue their spiritual development and increase their feelings of love as they mature.

When a child strays

However, a child, even one raised with great love and care and carefully taught, may choose, when an adult, not to follow those teachings for a variety of reasons. How should we react? We understand and respect the principle of agency. We pray that life's experiences will help them regain their desire and ability to live the gospel. They are still our children, and we will love and care about them always. We do not lock the doors of our house nor the doors to our heart.

Some people feel they cannot accept or fulfill a Church calling if one of their children is straying. As we accept the calling and do our best, we may have a profound spiritual effect on those we love the most. If we think other families don't have any difficulties or any problems, we just don't know them well enough.

The Lord will help parents

If the example we have received from our parents was not good, it is our responsibility to break the cycle.

Certainly parents will make mistakes in their parenting process, but through humility, faith, prayer, and study, each person can learn a better

way and in so doing bless the lives of family members now and teach correct traditions for the generations that follow.

The Lord's promises are sure: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go" (Psalm 32:8). And "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you" (3 Nephi 18:20).

Parents must be Christlike

Selfishness is so frequently at the core of family relationship problems. When individuals focus on their own selfish interests, they miss opportunities to listen, to understand, or to consider the other person's feelings or needs.

President Benson has cautioned us: "We must be more Christlike in our attitude and behavior than what we see in the world. We should be as charitable and considerate with our loved ones as Christ is with us. He is kind, loving, and patient with each of us. Should we not reciprocate the same love to our [companions] and children?"

"... 'What manner of men ought we to be?' You remember the Lord's answer is this: 'Verily I say unto you, *even as I am*' (3 Nephi 27:27; italics added)" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, p. 64; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 44).

President Benson continues:

"As I have listened to . . . reports [of unrighteous actions], I have asked myself, 'How can any member of the Church—any man who holds the priesthood of God—be guilty of cruelty to his own wife and children?'"

"Such actions, if practiced by a priesthood holder, are almost inconceivable. They are totally out of character with the teachings of the Church and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"As priesthood holders, we are to emulate the character of the Savior" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, p. 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 42).

Section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants teaches us, "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (v. 41).

These qualities of kindness and pure knowledge are reflective of our Heavenly Father.

Jesus' love for his Father

We get an insight into the love Jesus had for His Father, our Father in Heaven, in Jesus' intercessory prayer, recorded in the Bible, seventeenth chapter of John. The suffering and the atoning sacrifice were nigh at hand.

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. . . .

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent" (John 17:1, 3).

Jesus acknowledged He was with His Father before coming to earth and the love they had for each other. He said:

"O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was . . . , that [the world] may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me . . . : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:5, 23-24).

It is touching to me that Jesus closes His prayer with a desire that we might know and love our Father as He does, even though we can't remember Him in our mortal estate.

Jesus prayed, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these [disciples] have known that thou hast sent me" (John 17:25).

Jesus was able to complete his mission of the Atonement on earth because

of the knowledge, example, and love of His Father. Likewise, may each of us, as parents and especially as brethren in the priesthood, through our example, love, and care, be remembered by our children to have the qualities that our

Heavenly Father and our Savior have, that we may endure to the end and someday return with our families to their celestial presence, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Joe J. Christensen

Rearing children amid moral pollution

Not long ago I had an impromptu conversation with a group of young parents who exhibited a great deal of anxiety about rearing their children in our morally polluted environment. They asked for assistance in helping their children find their way in a world that seems to be unraveling.

We all hear and read a great deal these days about our polluted physical environment—acid rain, smog, toxic wastes. But these parents recognize that there is another kind of pollution that is much more dangerous—the moral and spiritual.

In a recent conference, Elder Boyd K. Packer said, “As we test the *moral* environment, we find the *pollution* index is spiraling upward” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, p. 91; or *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 66). The Apostle Paul foresaw “that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Timothy 3:1). And speaking of the last days, the prophet Moroni declared, “Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth” (Mormon 8:31).

Pollution in the mass media

Sadly, the effects of this great pollution are perhaps most evident in the mass media, films, television, and popular music. Of this, Senator Robert D. Byrd said, “If we in this nation continue to sow the images of murder, violence, drug abuse, . . . perversion, [and] pornography . . . before the eyes of millions

of children, year after year and day after day, we should not be surprised if the foundations of our society rot away as if from leprosy” (in Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs. America* [New York: Harper Perennial, 1992], p. 194).

Although there are some uplifting exceptions, in most areas of the mass media there seems to be a declaration of war against almost everything the majority treasures most: the family, religion, and patriotism. Marriage is degraded, while premarital and extra-marital relations are encouraged and glamorized. Profanity and the foulest of vulgar gutter language bombard the ears of all who listen. Reportedly, in one R-rated movie, the most common, vulgar four-letter word was spoken 256 times! Human life itself is trivialized by the constant barrage of violence and killings. Remember that anything that is not good for children is rarely good for adults.

In an unsuccessful effort to ward off teen pregnancy and social disease, birth control devices are freely distributed. I am convinced that this practice strongly communicates the basic message to many youth that “anything goes; just protect yourself in the process.”

It is no wonder that young parents become very anxious as they attempt to fulfill their sacred trust in the face of such an onslaught of despicable influences. Unfortunately, these challenges confront members of the Church as well as nonmembers.

Parents who really want to receive assistance must return to the basics—

the fundamentals of the gospel. Among all that could be said, here are four specific suggestions that, if applied, can make a positive difference:

Set clear moral standards

First, *do not be afraid to set clear moral standards and guidelines*. Be sure to say no when it is needed. As Dr. John Rosemond counseled:

"[Give] your children regular, daily doses of Vitamin N. This vital nutrient consists simply of the most character-building two-letter word in the English language: [No]. . . Unfortunately, many, if not most, of today's children suffer from Vitamin N deficiency. They've been overindulged by well-meaning parents who've given them far too much of what they want and far too little of what they truly need" (*John Rosemond's Six-Point Plan for Raising Happy, Healthy Children* [Kansas City, Mo.: Andrews and McMeel, 1989], p. 114).

Even though your children say, "Well, everyone else is going to stay out until one or two in the morning, and their parents don't care. Why can't I? Don't you trust me?" let them know that there are some things that, as members of your family, you simply do not do. Some parents seem to be almost pathologically concerned about their children's popularity and social acceptance and go along with many things that are really against their better judgment, such as expensive fads, immodest clothes, late hours, dating before age sixteen, R-rated movies, and so on. For children and parents, standing up for what is right may be lonely at times. There may be evenings alone, parties missed, and movies which go unseen. It may not always be fun. But parenting is not a popularity contest.

You may need to get together with the parents of your children's friends and mutually agree on more acceptable high standards of entertainment, hours,

and activities. Your children may be frustrated at first, but in the end they will grow to appreciate you even more because you cared enough about them to set some wholesome guidelines and standards.

Teach children to work

Second, *teach your children to work and to take responsibility*. Especially in urban settings, too many children are growing up in an environment where they do not have enough to do. They are like the young thirteen-year-old boy who was asked what he did all day in the summer.

He said, "Well, I get up in the morning about ten or eleven. Then my mom gets me something to eat. Then maybe I'll go with some of the guys and play a little basketball, maybe watch TV, and then go down to the mall and 'hang out' for a while—sorta watch the girls and stuff."

When asked what time he got to bed, he said, "Oh, usually about one or two o'clock. I go over to a friend's house and watch some videos. It's really neat, because my friend's mom told the guy at the video shop that it was all right for her son to check out any video he wanted—including R-rated."

I feel great concern for the future of that young Latter-day Saint boy as well as for that of his friends.

I like what President Spencer W. Kimball has said on this topic:

"We want you parents to create work for your children. . . .

"The idle generation! Hours each day and nothing to do. . . .

"What can we do?" they ask.

"Do the shopping, work in the hospital, help the neighbors and the church custodian, wash dishes, vacuum the floors, make the beds, get the meals, learn to sew.

"Read good books, . . . clean the house, press your clothes, rake the leaves, shovel the snow, peddle papers."

Then he concludes:

"Lawmakers in their overeagerness to protect the child have legislated until the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. But no law prohibits most work [here] suggested . . . , and parents can make work" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], pp. 360-61).

In addition, help your children learn self-discipline by such activities as learning to play a musical instrument or learning another demanding skill. I am reminded of the story of the salesman who came to a house one hot summer day. Through the screen door he could see a young boy practicing his scales on the piano. His baseball glove and hat were by the side of the piano bench. He said, "Say, boy, is your mother home?" To which the boy replied, "What do you think?" Thank heavens for conscientious parents!

Every child should be helped to develop some skill or talent by which he or she can experience success and thus build self-esteem.

Missionaries who have learned to work hard and have developed self-discipline are much more successful.

Create a spiritual environment

Third, *create an environment in your family in which spiritual experiences can occur*. For example:

- Remember family prayer every day. With schedules as they are, you may need to have more than one prayer. Sending children out of your home without the spiritual protection of prayer is like sending them out into a blizzard without sufficient clothing.

- Hold family home evenings *every week* without fail. This is a wonderful time to share your testimony with your children. Give them an opportunity to share their feelings about the gospel. Help them learn to recognize when they feel the presence of the Spirit. Family

home evenings will help create an island of refuge and security within your own home.

- Read the scriptures together daily as a family. There is real power in the scriptures.

President Benson has said: "May I admonish you to participate in a program of daily reading and pondering of the scriptures. . . . The Book of Mormon will change your life. It will fortify you against the evils of our day. It will bring a spirituality into your life that no other book will" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 56; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 43).

Is the Book of Mormon a significant part of your reading? Count the number of rich promises President Marion G. Romney made to parents when he said:

"I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes. . . . The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. . . . The pure love of Christ . . . will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, p. 90; or *Ensign*, May 1980, p. 67).

We should not take these ten promises lightly.

Follow the prophets' counsel

Fourth, *follow the counsel of the prophets*. Listen to their messages at this conference and reread their counsel to us from prior occasions. If your personal and family practices do not conform to the counsel received, then, for your own family's sake, make some changes.

President Harold B. Lee said, "We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet . . . [and quoting from the Doctrine and Covenants] 'as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.' (D&C 21:4-5)." He continued:

"There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. . . .

" . . . Your safety and ours depends upon whether or not we follow the ones whom the Lord has placed to preside over his church" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, pp. 152-53; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970; pp. 126-27).

From a personal standpoint, of what value is it to have living prophets if we do not heed their counsel?

Fathers and mothers, it is not too late to change. There is still hope. You can begin today to apply these suggestions and others you may add. We can help our children and grandchildren to

survive spiritually and morally in a world where the pollution index continues to spiral upward. The intent is not to take our children out of the world but, as the Lord prayed, to keep them from evil (see John 17:15).

I know that our Heavenly Father lives. We are his spirit children, and He loves his family.

Jesus is the Christ, and this is his church, which is led by living prophets.

Of this I sincerely testify in the name of Jesus the Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church, and Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning," following which we shall hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Seventy.

The chorus and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

This morning I would like to greet and speak not only to the members of the Church but also to those not of our faith who may be participating in the radio or television audience. Thank you for joining with us on this beautiful fall morning.

Our contemporary "Black Plague"

Life in every era has had its troubles. Surely the Dark Ages were appropriately named, and not one of us is anxious to be transported back even to those later years of, say, the Hundred Years' War or the Black Plague. No,

we're quite happy to have been born in a century of unprecedented material blessings and abundant living; yet in community after community, in small nations and large, we see individuals and families facing heightened anxiety and fear. It would seem that discouragement, depression, and despair are our contemporary "Black Plague." Ours is, as Jesus said it would be, a time of distress with perplexity (see Luke 21:25).

We know that some of the world's most painful suffering is done in silence, in the sorrow of a lonely life. But some of it has more violent expression. Millions around the world are, as one observer

put it, "angry, armed and dangerous." In too many cities, drive-by shootings are becoming as common as drive-through laundries, and too many youngsters are packing a gun to school the way they used to pack a lunch.

There is an increasing feeling that time is out of joint, that no one seems wise enough or strong enough to set it right. In many cases, governments are in office but not in power, community values and neighborhood pride are often superficial or nonexistent, and too frequently the home is an alarming failure.

Furthermore, many of the social and political medicines of our day regularly miss the mark, so those would-be physicians stand by the bedside of "feverish and delirious humanity, outwitted, discredited, dumbfounded . . . , not knowing in which direction deliverance must be sought" (Charles Edward Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus* [Salt Lake City: Parliament Publishers, 1968], p. 17).

Turn to God for deliverance

If I may be so bold this morning, may I suggest "direction for deliverance"? In words of one syllable, we need to turn to God. We need to reaffirm our faith, and we need to reassert our hope. Where necessary we need to repent, and certainly we need to pray. It is the absence of spiritual fidelity that has led us to moral disarray in the twilight of the twentieth century. We have sown the wind of religious skepticism, and we are reaping the whirlwind of existential despair.

Without our religious faith, without recognizing the reality and necessity of spiritual life, the world makes no sense, and a nonsense world is a place of horror. Only if the world has meaning at a spiritual level is it possible for human beings to keep going, to keep trying. As Hamlet so wisely implored, so should we: "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" (act 1, scene 4, line 39).

My testimony today is of the angels and ministers of grace who will always defend us if, as the prophet Alma commanded us, we "take care of . . . sacred things," we "look to God and live" (Alma 37:47). More prayer and humility, more faith and forgiveness, more repentance and revelation and reinforcement from heaven—these are where we seek remedy and deliverance for "feverish and delirious humanity."

God's limitless love

I testify this morning of God's limitless love for his children, of his unquenchable desire to help us heal our wounds, individually and collectively. He is our Father, and Wordsworth wrote more than he knew when he said we came to earth "trailing clouds of glory . . . from God, who is our home" ("Ode: Intimations of Immortality," lines 64–65). But in far too many cases we find no modern belief in a Heavenly Father, and when there is a belief, it is too often an erroneous one. God is not dead, and he is not an absentee landlord. God is not uncaring, or capricious, or cantankerous. Above all, he is not some sort of divine umpire trying to call us out at third base.

The first and great commandment on earth is for us to love God with all our heart, might, mind, and strength (see D&C 59:5; Matthew 22:37) because surely the first and great promise in heaven is that he will always love us that way.

God's sorrow for those who suffer

So much of what so many think about God (if they think about him at all) must make him weep. In fact, we know it makes him weep. Could there be a more tender scene than this exchange recorded by Moses?

"And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; . . .

"And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity? [How is it thou canst weep?]

"The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, . . . and . . . gave I unto man his agency; . . .

"And unto [them] have I . . . given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; . . .

" . . . The whole heavens . . . weep over them . . . ; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these [who] suffer?" (Moses 7:28, 29, 32–33, 37).

God is anxious to bless us

Angels and ministers of grace to defend us? They are all about us, and their holy sovereign, the Father of us all, is divinely anxious to bless us this very moment. Mercy is his mission, and love is his only labor. John Donne said once:

"We ask . . . our daily bread, and God never says, 'You should have come yesterday.' [No, he says,] 'Today if you will hear [my] voice, today [I] will hear [yours].' [If] thou hast been benighted till now, wintered and frozen, clouded and eclipsed, damp and benumbed, smothered and stupefied till now, . . . God [yet] comes to thee, not as in the dawning of the day, . . . but as the sun at [full] noon, to [banish] all shadows" (in *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, 10 vols. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953], 6:172; spelling and punctuation modernized).

Alma taught that truth to his son Helaman, entreating him to put his trust in God. He said that God was "quick to hear the cries of his people, and [quick] to answer their prayers." Out of very personal experience, Alma testified, "I have been supported [in] trials and troubles [and afflictions] of

every kind . . . ; God has delivered me. . . . I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me" (Alma 9:26; 36:27).

My witness this morning is that he will deliver all the rest of us too, that he will deliver the entire human family if we will but "take care of sacred things," if we will "look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

The greatest affirmation of that promise ever given in this world was the gift of God's perfect and precious First-born Son, a gift given not in condemnation of the world, but to soothe and save and make the world secure: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should *not* perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16; italics added).

Katie Lewis trusts Jesus

Katie Lewis is my neighbor. Her father, Randy, is my bishop; her mother, Melanie, is a saint. And her older brother, Jimmie, is battling leukemia.

Sister Lewis recently recounted for me the unspeakable fear and grief that came to their family when Jimmie's illness was diagnosed. She spoke of the tears and the waves of sorrow that any mother would experience with a prognosis as grim as Jimmie's was. But like the faithful Latter-day Saints they are, the Lewises turned to God with urgency and with faith and with hope. They fasted and prayed, prayed and fasted. And they went again and again to the temple.

One day Sister Lewis came home from a temple session weary and worried, feeling the impact of so many days—and nights—of fear being held at bay only by *monumental* faith.

As she entered her home, four-year-old Katie ran up to her with love in her eyes and a crumpled sheaf of papers in her hand. Holding the papers out to her mother, she said enthusiastically, "Mommy, do you know what these are?"

Sister Lewis said frankly her first impulse was to deflect Katie's zeal and say she didn't feel like playing just then.

But she thought of her children—all her children—and the possible regret of missed opportunities and little lives that pass too swiftly. So she smiled through her sorrow and said, “No, Katie. I don’t know what they are. Please tell me.”

“They are the scriptures,” Katie beamed back, “and do you know what they say?”

Sister Lewis stopped smiling, gazed deeply at this little child, knelt down to her level, and said, “Tell me, Katie. What do the scriptures say?”

“They say, ‘Trust Jesus.’” And then she was gone.

Sister Lewis said that as she stood back up, holding a fistful of her four-year-old’s scribbling, she felt near-tangible arms of peace encircle her weary soul and a divine stillness calm her troubled heart.

Katie Lewis, “angel and minister of grace,” I’m with you. In a world of some discouragement, sorrow, and overmuch sin, in times when fear and despair seem to prevail, when humanity is feverish

with no worldly physicians in sight, I too say, “Trust Jesus.” Let him still the tempest and ride upon the storm. Believe that he can lift mankind from its bed of affliction, in time and in eternity.

Oh, dearly, dearly has he loved!
And we must love him too,
And trust in his redeeming blood,
And try his works to do.
[“There Is a Green Hill Far Away,”
Hymns, no. 194]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang “The Morning Breaks.”

President Hinckley

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Seventy has spoken to us, following which the chorus sang “The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee.”

Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy will now speak to us.

Elder Spencer J. Condie

A few years ago, as Sister Condie and I exited the Tabernacle, a lovely sister approached us and said with a very cheerful voice, “Good morning, President Hinckley.” I replied, “I’m sorry to disappoint you, my dear, but I’m Elder Condie of the Seventy.” Her cheerful countenance was crestfallen. Not more than a minute later, we met another sister who greeted us with the same salutation: “Good morning, President Hinckley.” Not wishing to cause her the same disappointment I caused the previous sister, I shook her hand and said, “Bless you, my dear. Have a nice day.”

Several months later I confessed my sin to President Gordon B. Hinckley during a regional conference in Portugal, and in his typically loving way he

said, “Well, Spencer, if you’re going to impersonate me, I hope you behave yourself.”

Be ye perfect

The Savior has given each of us the soul-stretching commandment not only to behave ourselves but to become perfect, even as He and His Father are perfect (see Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48). Sometimes this quest for perfection tries our patience and our faith as we continue to wrestle with the weaknesses of the flesh. But a loving Heavenly Father has not left us alone in our battle with the adversary. A recurrent doctrine of the Book of Mormon is that the Holy Ghost is an active participant in our lives, influencing us for good.

Both Nephi and Mormon teach us that the Holy Ghost *strives* with us to help us resist evil (see 2 Nephi 26:11; Mormon 5:16). King Benjamin exhorts us to yield to the *enticings* of the Spirit in order to overcome the natural man, who is an enemy to God (see Mosiah 3:19). Amulek admonishes us to “*contend* no more against the Holy Ghost” (Alma 34:38; italics added), and Moroni assures us that the Holy Ghost *persuades* us to do good (Ether 4:11).

The words *strive*, *entice*, *contend*, and *persuade* are all very strong action verbs indicating a positive influence which the Holy Ghost can have in our lives by actively helping us in our quest for perfection. But Lucifer, whose mischief always leads to misery, persistently tries to distract us from reaching our eternal goal. The devil uses thousands of different tactical temptations, but I would submit that all of these temptations could be subsumed within two major satanic strategies.

Pride and discouragement

The first of these is pride, described by our beloved President Ezra Taft Benson as “the . . . stumbling block to Zion” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, p. 7; or *Ensign*, May 1989, p. 7). Satan’s second major strategy is discouragement, which leads to a loss of faith and hope and patience. Both of these nefarious strategies of the adversary are resistant to change. To the proud, change is threatening because it will require a broken heart and a contrite spirit, a meek and a lowly heart.

To those who are discouraged, there is the feeling that “there is nothing I can do to change myself or my circumstances.” Whether Satan afflicts us with pride or discouragement, the outcome is largely the same—we begin to accept ourselves as we are, declaring, “That’s just the way I am.”

One of the powerful doctrines of the Book of Mormon is that we *can*,

indeed we *must*, undergo a mighty change of heart (see Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:14). The Book of Mormon also teaches us that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10) and that “men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). The journey from wickedness to joy requires a mighty change of heart.

Overcoming evil habits

I have a longtime friend who owned a very successful business. Occasionally, to find relief from the stress of his responsibilities, he would partake of substances forbidden by the Word of Wisdom. As the stress in his life increased, so did his consumption of alcohol. Indeed, he was becoming a prisoner to alcohol.

One afternoon he felt the enticings of the Spirit prompting him to overcome this addiction, which had begun to impair his moral agency. He left his office for several hours and drove to a very secluded spot far removed from the city. There he knelt in humble prayer and pled with the Lord with all the energy of his heart for added strength to overcome this addiction, which robbed his spirituality and threatened to destroy his very soul. He remained on his knees for a very long time, and eventually a sweet, purifying spirit began to distill upon his soul, cleansing him from any desire to drink and fortifying him with a firm resolve to keep the commandments.

A spiritually sensitive bishop noticed a change in my friend and extended a call for him to work with the young Aaronic Priesthood brethren of the ward. He was a natural, enthusiastic leader of youth, and about a year later he was called to be the new bishop, dearly loved by all for his ability to counsel those who were prisoners of sin.

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught us: “Habits are easily formed. It is just as easy to form good habits as it is to form evil ones” (in Conference Re-

port, Apr. 1968, p. 11; or *Improvement Era*, June 1968, p. 40).

A mighty change of heart

I know another good man who was reared in a family without the blessings of the gospel. Through a series of unfortunate events in his early youth, he was introduced to homosexuality, and gradually he became a prisoner of this addictive behavior.

One day two young missionaries knocked on his door and asked if he would be interested in learning of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. In his heart of hearts he wanted to be freed from his prison of uncleanness, but feeling unable to change the direction his life had taken, he terminated the missionary discussions. Before leaving his apartment, the two elders left a copy of the Book of Mormon with him, and testified of its truthfulness.

My friend placed the book on his bookshelf and forgot about it for several years. He continued acting out his homosexual tendencies, assuming that such relationships would bring him happiness. But alas, with each passing year, his misery increased.

One day in the depths of despair, he scanned his bookshelf for something to read which might edify and uplift him and restore his self-worth. His eye caught hold of the book with a dark blue cover, which the missionaries had given him several years before. He began to read. On the second page of this book, he read of Father Lehi's vision in which he was given a book to read, and "as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord" (1 Nephi 1:12). And as my good friend continued reading, he too was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

He read King Benjamin's benedictory challenge to undergo a mighty change of heart—not a little change, but a mighty change. He was given hope by the comforting conversion stories of

Enos, Alma, Ammon, and Aaron. He was also inspired by the account of the Savior's visit to the ancient Nephites. By the time he reached the final page of the Book of Mormon, he was prepared to accept Moroni's loving invitation to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness" (Moroni 10:32).

My friend contacted the Church and was taught the gospel and was baptized. Within a relatively short time, he married a lovely young woman, and they are the parents of several beautiful children. He and his wife are very dynamic and committed servants of the Lord, influencing many others for good.

Strengthening marriages

Sometimes people not only become prisoners to addictive behaviors, but they may also begin to feel like prisoners within a marriage relationship.

A few years ago my wife, Dorothea, and I were walking across the grounds of a temple in a foreign land when we met a very radiant, cheerful, silver-haired sister. Her cheerful, Christlike countenance seemed to set her apart from those around her, and I felt inclined to ask her to explain why she looked so happy and content with life.

"Well," she said with a smile, "several years ago I was in a hurry to get married, and quite frankly, after a few months I realized I had married the wrong man." She continued, "He had no interest in the Church as he had initially led me to believe, and he began to treat me very unkindly for several years. One day I reached the point where I felt I could go on no longer in this situation, and so in desperation I knelt down to pray, to ask Heavenly Father if He would approve of my divorcing my husband.

"I had a very remarkable experience," she said. "After I prayed fervently, the Spirit revealed a number of insights to me of which I had been

previously unaware. For the first time in my life, I realized that, just like my husband, I am not perfect either. I began to work on my intolerance and my impatience with his lack of spirituality.

"I began to strive to become more compassionate and loving and understanding. And do you know what happened? As I started to change, my husband started to change. Instead of my nagging him about going to church, he gradually decided to come with me on his own initiative.

"Recently we were sealed in the temple, and now we spend one day each week in the temple together. Oh, he's still not perfect, but I am so happy that the Lord loves us enough to help us resolve our problems."

President Benson has said pride is concerned with *who* is right. Humility is concerned with *what* is right (see Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 6; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 6). When we humble ourselves, the Spirit will always tell us what is right.

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord promised us, "The power of my Spirit quickeneth all things" (D&C 33:16). Through the instrumentality of the Holy Ghost, His Spirit comforts those who mourn, teaches and testifies to those who thirst for the truth, purifies the brokenhearted who would be clean, and warns of dangers which lie ahead.

Heed warning voices

In January of 1975, on a dark, rainy night in Tasmania, a 7,300-ton barge smashed into two piers of the Tasman Bridge, which connects Hobart, Tasmania, with its eastern suburbs across the bay. Three spans of the bridge collapsed. An Australian family by the name of Ling were driving across the bridge when suddenly the bridge lights went out. Just then a speeding car passed them and disappeared before their very eyes. Murray Ling "slammed on his brakes and skidded to a stop, one

yard from the edge of a black void" (Stephen Johnson, "Over the Edge!" *Reader's Digest*, Nov. 1977, p. 128).

Murray got his family out of the car and then began warning oncoming traffic of the disaster ahead. As he frantically waved his arms, to his horror, a car "swerved around him and plummeted into the abyss" (p. 128). A second car barely stopped in time, but a third car showed no sign of slowing down and crashed into the Lings' car at the edge of the bridge.

Suddenly a loaded bus headed toward Murray, ignoring his waving arms. In desperation, risking his very life, he "ran alongside the driver's window. 'There's a span missing,' he yelled" (p. 129). The bus swerved just in time and came to a halt against the railing. Dozens of lives had been saved.

I am grateful for these Brethren whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators who forewarn us of bridges not to be crossed. These great men whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators preach "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4). Their motives are pure as they strive to build the kingdom of God and to uplift and edify the Saints of God. In the words of the Apostle Paul, they have become "prisoners of Christ" (see Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; Philemon 1:1, 9; 2 Timothy 1:8), whose only desire is to do the Lord's will. Nothing more. Nothing less. And nothing else. *These are men of God!* May we heed their warning voices, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold."

President Hinckley

I must get a new pair of glasses so that Brother Condie will no longer be embarrassed. We appreciate very much

what he has said and also the singing of the chorus—"What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Teaching about history's major apostasies has long been one of the restored gospel's "givens," but it is not always given much attention. My aim, therefore, is internal instruction, not external persuasion, since we fully understand that certain of our beliefs are not shared by others and vice versa. But goodwill can still prevail. In fact, with you, brothers and sisters, I rejoice in the good works and the voices of faith of many in other religions. For instance, recent papal pronouncements on chastity are both appropriate and courageous, and I applaud them. So many honorable individuals in the world do so much without what we, as members, call gospel fulness, while some of us, unfortunately, do so little with so much!

Gospel preached from the beginning

We believe Adam and Eve were this planet's first humans and first Christians.

"And thus the Gospel began to be preached, *from the beginning*, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

"And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance" (Moses 5:58–59; *italics added*).

Hence, brothers and sisters, a particular pattern of divine instruction followed, early on, just as occurred in the later Restoration.

"Therefore [God] sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory.

"And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men, and made known

unto them the plan of redemption" (Alma 12:29–30; see also Moses 5:58–59).

Loss of the initial fulness

However, this initial fulness was soon lost. Resulting fragmentation, diffusion, and distortion contributed to a wide variety of world religions—Christian and non-Christian.

President Joseph F. Smith observed that amid this diffusion certain laws and rites were "carried by the posterity of Adam into all lands, and continued with them, more or less pure, to the flood, and through Noah, . . . to those who succeeded him, spreading out into all nations and countries. . . . What wonder, then, that we should find relics of Christianity, so to speak, among . . . nations who know not Christ, and whose histories date back . . . beyond the flood, independent of and apart from the records of the Bible" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:325; see also Alma 29:8).

Earlier fulness was followed by periodic "famine[s]" of "hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). Ancient Israel's fallings away were cited by Jehovah, including their changing ordinances, breaking covenants, and rebellion (see Isaiah 24:5; Ezekiel 2:3).

Apostasy during New Testament times

A major falling away occurred after the deaths of the Apostles, "the sowers of the seed" (D&C 86:2; see also Jude 1:17).

New Testament epistles clearly indicate that serious and widespread apostasy—not just sporadic dissent—began soon. James decried "wars and

fightings among" the Church (James 4:1). Paul lamented "divisions" in the Church and how "grievous wolves" would not spare "the flock" (1 Corinthians 11:18; Acts 20:29-31). He knew an apostasy was coming and wrote to the Thessalonians that Jesus' second coming would not occur "except there come a falling away first," further advising that "iniquity doth already work" (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 7).

Near the end, Paul acknowledged how very extensive the falling away was: "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Timothy 1:15).

Paul was even wrongly accused of teaching "Let us do evil, that good may come" (Romans 3:8). Slandering Paul may have reflected some Nicolaitan nonsense by suggesting that since God provides a way for us to be saved from our sins, we should sin in order to allow Him to do that great good! No wonder the Lord in the book of Revelation denounced the pernicious doctrines and deeds of the Nicolaitans (see Revelation 2:6, 15; LDS Bible Dictionary, "Nicolaitans").

Widespread fornication and idolatry brought apostolic alarm (see 1 Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 5:3; Jude 1:7). John and Paul both bemoaned the rise of false apostles (see 2 Corinthians 11:13; Revelation 2:2). The Church was clearly under siege. Some not only fell away but then openly opposed. In one circumstance, Paul stood alone and lamented that "all men forsook me" (2 Timothy 4:16). He also decried those who "subvert[ed] whole houses" (see Titus 1:10-11).

Some local leaders rebelled, as when one, who loved his preeminence, refused to receive the brethren (see 3 John 1:9-10).

No wonder President Brigham Young observed, "It is said the Priesthood was taken from the Church, but it is not so, the Church went from the Priesthood" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:69).

The concerns expressed by Peter, John, Paul, and James over the falling away were not paranoia but prophetic warnings about "Apostasia."

The hellenizing of Christianity

Another force was at work too: the cultural hellenizing of Christianity. Wrote Will Durant in *The Story of Civilization*, "The Greek language, having reigned for centuries over philosophy, became the vehicle of Christian literature and ritual" (part 3, *Caesar and Christ* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944], p. 595). The errant grooves earlier used in defining Deity were already there and were so easy to slide into (see Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986], pp. 75-81, 152-58).

Another scholar concluded, "It was impossible for Greeks, . . . with an education which penetrated their whole nature, to receive or to retain Christianity in its primitive simplicity" (Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* [Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, reprinted 1970], p. 49).

Paul's experience in Athens showed the mind-set of Greek philosophy (see Acts 17). His intellectually curious audience asked about "this new doctrine, . . . for thou bringest . . . strange things to our ears" (Acts 17:19-20). Then when Paul spoke of the living God and the Resurrection, he was "mocked" (Acts 17:32) for seeming to set "forth . . . strange gods" (v. 18; see also v. 29).

Some defined matter as intrinsically evil, an idea representing both Greek and Oriental thought (see E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* [New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1965], p. 14). Hence, if the body constitutes a "dark jail" from which we should seek to escape, why desire a resurrection? (see Dodds, p. 30, note 1). This view contrasts so sharply with modern revelation, which declares that only when the resurrected body and

the individual spirit are inseparably connected can there be a "fulness of joy" (D&C 93:33; see also 88:15-16; 138:17). Besides, God used matter to create this earth so it could "be inhabited," after which He "saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good"—not evil! (Isaiah 45:18; Genesis 1:31).

Furthermore, some questioned worshipping a God who suffers. One modern scholar observed that the "human sufferings of Jesus . . . were felt as an embarrassment in the face of pagan criticism" (Dodds, p. 119). Thus many Greeks considered Christ and what He stood for as "foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Many fell away from the gospel and its "plain and precious" truths (1 Nephi 13:40). It was too simple. They preferred "looking beyond the mark" and searching for things "they could not understand" (Jacob 4:14).

The Apostle John denounced anti-Christ's who taught that Jesus hadn't really come "in the flesh" (1 John 4:3), implying that Jesus' bodily appearance was an illusion designed to accommodate mortal incapacities (see John 1:1-3, 14).

Another hellenistic form of "looking beyond the mark" was interpreting clear, historical events as allegorical. These early denials of Jesus' historicity are replicated in our day.

Reason, the Greek philosophical tradition, dominated then supplanted reliance on revelation, an outcome probably hastened by well-intentioned Christians wishing to bring their beliefs into the mainstream of contemporary culture.

Historian Will Durant also wrote: "Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it. The Greek mind, dying, came to a transmigrated life" (*Caesar and Christ*, p. 595).

Unfortunately, too many Church members, in Paul's phrase, wearied and fainted "in [their] minds" (Hebrews 12:3).

By the middle of the second century, things had changed dramatically. Another scholar wrote of how the theological furniture had been significantly rearranged in ways which reflected a hellenized Christianity (see Stephen Robinson, "Warring against the Saints of God," *Ensign*, Jan. 1988, p. 39).

Prophecies of the Restoration

Peter, who witnessed firsthand what was happening, spoke hopefully of a distant day, the long-awaited "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). *Restitution* means *restoration*.

Paul, too, wrote of the "dispensation of the fulness of times" (Romans 11:25; Ephesians 1:10), a particular time of times, which would "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (Ephesians 1:10; see also Romans 11:25). Everything would be restored, including the fulness which was with Adam in the beginning (see D&C 128:21; Abraham 1:3). However, there would never again be a collective falling away, only individual apostasy (see Daniel 2:44; D&C 65:2).

Restoration of the gospel fulness

The glorious things restored in the nineteenth century included the calling of a prophet, Joseph Smith, who heard God's own voice and received angelic revelations and also the holy apostleship and priesthood keys. He also received additional scripture, which commenced a continuing canon and included a restored fulness concerning the nature of God, the Father, and Christ, the Son, and the Atonement. After all, first things first! The Savior Himself declared, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Instructed by further revelation, Joseph Smith taught, "If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 343). Likewise, brothers and sisters, if we do not comprehend God's purposes, we will not comprehend the purposes of life! In God's plan of salvation, He does nothing save it be for the benefit of His children in the world; man is at the center of His purposes (see Mosiah 8:18; D&C 46:26; see also Moses 1:39).

Likewise restored were doctrines, ordinances, and covenants associated with the holy temple. Revelation thus replaced the long and inordinate reliance on reason. Yet, regarding reason, the invitation of the Lord of the Restoration is "Wherefore, hearken and I will reason with you" (D&C 45:15). Such hearkening enhances and stretches the mind, admitting one to the sun-drenched uplands of revealed understanding. "Come now, and let us reason together" is an invitation to divine tutoring, but only the meek are wise enough to accept it (Isaiah 1:18; see also 2 Nephi 32:7).

Even more fulness is to come, which will "reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof" (2 Nephi 27:10; see also D&C 121:28-32).

The "glad tidings" of the Restoration came that faith "might increase in the earth" (D&C 1:21), a refreshing remedy for what Matthew Arnold described:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, . . .
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing
roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast
edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
["Dover Beach," lines 21-28]

Beware of individual apostasy

While we rightly rejoice over the Restoration, we should also learn from the lessons of the past by honoring God's patterns of revelation, including the gift of the Holy Ghost by which needed anchoring and personal verification can come.

Let us also honor today's "sowers of the seed," the Apostles. Let us be wary about accommodating revealed theology to conventional wisdom. Let us lovingly nourish ourselves, our families, and Church flocks spiritually so that we are not "wearied and faint in [our] minds" (Hebrews 12:3).

Self-siftings do occur. President George Q. Cannon observed in 1875:

"I am thankful that God allows those who do not keep his commandments to fall away, so that his Church may be cleansed, and, in this respect, this Church is different from any other that is upon the earth. . . . The sifting or weeding process has been going on from the commencement of this Church until the present time" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:84).

The Savior will be in our midst

In the days ahead, "all things shall be in commotion" (D&C 88:91). We may even have nostalgia for past days of obscurity (see D&C 1:30). Amid a drumroll of developments, complex and converging world conditions will bring both trials and opportunities. Faithful Church members, however, will sense the crescendo in it all, even while being carried forward on the crest of breath-taking circumstances.

He whose name this church bears has promised that He will be in our midst (see D&C 6:32), lead us along (see D&C 78:18), go before us (see D&C 49:27; 84:88), and even fight our battles (see D&C 98:37). He has further counseled, "Be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart

... that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy" (D&C 98:14). So let us have patience and faith as did Lehi, who saw pointing fingers of scorn directed at those who grasped the iron rod, which rod, ironically, some of those same fingers once grasped (see 1 Nephi 8:27, 33). But, said Lehi, "we heeded them not." So it should be with us! Brothers and sisters, being pointed in the right direction, we do not need to worry about being pointed at!

Become more like Jesus

As Latter-day Saints, far from having a doctrinal famine, we do not yet fully sense the soaring comprehensiveness of the Restoration. Provincially, we focus on our own little sectors and their little pieces of gospel tile—without seeing the breathtaking mosaic of the Restoration! For instance, revealed truths tell of the stunning vastness of God's work with its plurality of "worlds without number"! (Moses 1:33; see also D&C 76:24). Yet there is also incredible individualization as in the ordinances and promises of the holy temple.

We can best express our gratitude for this glorious fulness by developing a more full love for all of humankind. And why not, for the Restoration tells us who our neighbors really are! Let our gratitude likewise be expressed by striving to become, attribute by attribute,

more and more as Jesus is (see 3 Nephi 27:27). By so living, ours will not then be a mere appreciation of Jesus, nor a modest admiration of Him. Rather, ours will be an adoration of Jesus expressed by our emulation of Him!

I so testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has concluded this session of the conference.

We express appreciation to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations, cable systems, and the LDS Radio Network for offering facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour." To them we express our appreciation for their great contribution to this session. The benediction will be given by Elder Lino Alvarez of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder Lino Alvarez offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 163rd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 2, 1993, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Brigham Young University combined choirs, conducted by Ronald J. Staheli and Mack J. Wilberg. Clay Christiansen was the organist.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Monson made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to the second general session of the 163rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference on television.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance and who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world, where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We express our gratitude to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and cable systems for their cooperation in making these proceedings available to members of the Church in many countries.

We note that Elders James E. Faust, Loren C. Dunn, and Henry B. Eyring are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; and Elders LeGrand R. Curtis and Merrill J. Bateman are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by the Brigham Young University combined choirs, under the direction of Brothers Ronald J. Staheli

and Mack J. Wilberg, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

Other General Authorities excused from the conference, as mentioned by President Hinckley this morning, are President Howard W. Hunter and Elders Marvin J. Ashton and Clinton L. Cutler, due to illness; and others who are serving as temple presidents and mission presidents.

The choir will begin this session by singing "The Lord Is My Shepherd," and the invocation will be offered by Elder John B. Dickson of the Seventy.

The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder John B. Dickson offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," following which Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

Elder Boyd K. Packer

The great plan of happiness

Dear brethren and sisters, the scriptures and the teachings of the Apostles and prophets speak of us in premortal life as sons and daughters, spirit children of God.¹ Gender existed before, and did not begin at mortal birth.²

In the great council in heaven,³ God's plan was presented:⁴ the plan of salvation,⁵ the plan of redemption,⁶ the great plan of happiness.⁷ The plan

provides for a proving; all must choose between good and evil.⁸ His plan provides for a Redeemer, an atonement, the Resurrection, and, if we obey, our return to the presence of God.

The adversary rebelled and adopted a plan of his own.⁹ Those who followed him were denied the right to a mortal body.¹⁰ Our presence here confirms that we sanctioned our Father's plan.¹¹

The single purpose of Lucifer is to oppose the great plan of happiness, to

corrupt the purest, most beautiful and appealing experiences of life: romance, love, marriage, and parenthood.¹² The specters of heartbreak and guilt¹³ follow him about. Only repentance can heal what he hurts.

God's plan requires marriage and family

The plan of happiness requires the righteous union of male and female, man and woman, husband and wife.¹⁴ Doctrines teach us how to respond to the compelling natural impulses which too often dominate how we behave.

A body patterned after the image of God was created for Adam,¹⁵ and he was introduced into the Garden.¹⁶ At first, Adam was alone. He held the priesthood,¹⁷ but, alone, he could not fulfill the purposes of his creation.¹⁸

No other man would do. Neither alone nor with other men could Adam progress. Nor could Eve with another woman. It was so then. It is so today.

Eve, an helpmeet, was created. Marriage was instituted,¹⁹ for Adam was commanded to cleave unto his *wife* (not just to a *woman*) and "to none else."²⁰

A choice, it might be said, was imposed upon Eve.²¹ She should be praised for her decision. Then "Adam fell that men might be."²²

Elder Orson F. Whitney described the Fall as having "a twofold direction—downward, yet forward. It brought man into the world and set his feet upon progression's highway."²³

God blessed Adam and Eve "and said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply."²⁴ And so the family was established.

God values men and women equally

There is nothing in the revelations which suggests that to be a man rather than to be a woman is preferred in the sight of God, or that He places a higher value on sons than on daughters.

All virtues listed in the scriptures—love, joy, peace, faith, godliness,

charity—are shared by both men and women,²⁵ and the highest priesthood ordinance in mortality is given only to man and woman together.²⁶

After the Fall, natural law had far-reaching sovereignty over mortal birth. There are what President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., called "pranks" of nature,²⁷ which cause a variety of abnormalities, deficiencies, and deformities. However unfair they seem to man's way of reasoning, they somehow suit the purposes of the Lord in the proving of mankind.

The following of every worthy instinct, the responding to every righteous urge, the consummating of every exalting human relationship are provided for and approved in the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ and are protected by commandments revealed to His church.

The roles of men and women

Except Adam and Eve by nature be different from one another, they could not multiply and fill the earth.²⁸ The complementing differences are the very key to the plan of happiness.

Some roles are best suited to the masculine nature and others to the feminine nature. Both the scriptures and the patterns of nature place man as the protector, the provider.²⁹

Those responsibilities of the priesthood which have to do with the administration of the Church of necessity function outside the home. By divine decree, they have been entrusted to men. It has been that way since the beginning, for the Lord revealed that "the order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son. . . . This order was instituted in the days of Adam."³⁰

A man who holds the priesthood does not have an advantage over a woman in qualifying for exaltation. The woman, by her very nature, is also co-creator with God and the primary nurturer of the children. Virtues and

attributes upon which perfection and exaltation depend come naturally to a woman and are refined through marriage and motherhood.

The priesthood is conferred only upon worthy men in order to conform to our Father's plan of happiness. With the laws of nature and the revealed word of God working in harmony, it simply works best that way.

The priesthood carries with it awesome responsibility. "No power or influence *can* or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge."³¹

Should a man "exercise control or dominion or compulsion . . . in any degree of unrighteousness,"³² he violates "the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood."³³ Then "the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved."³⁴ Unless he repents, he will lose his blessings.

While the different roles of man and woman are set forth in exalted celestial declarations, they are best demonstrated in the most practical, ordinary, down-to-earth experiences of family life.

Recently I heard a speaker in sacrament meeting complain that he could not understand why his grandchildren always spoke of going to *Grandma's* house, never to *Grandpa's* house. I solved that great mystery for him: Grandpas don't bake pies!

Natural and spiritual laws are eternal

Natural and spiritual laws which govern life were instituted from before the foundation of the world.³⁵ They are eternal, as are the consequences for either obeying or disobeying them. They are not based on social or political considerations. They cannot be changed. No pressure, no protest, no legislation can alter them.

Years ago I supervised the Indian seminaries. When I visited a school at Albuquerque, the principal told me of an incident that happened in a first-grade class.

During a lesson, a kitten wandered into the room and distracted the youngsters. It was brought to the front of the room so all could see it.

One youngster asked, "Is it a boy kitty or a girl kitty?"

The teacher, unprepared for that discussion, said, "It doesn't matter; it's just a kitten."

But the children persisted, and one little boy said, "I know how we can tell if it is a boy kitty or a girl kitty."

The teacher, cornered, said, "All right, you tell us how we can tell if it is a boy kitty or a girl kitty."

The boy answered, "We can vote on it!"

Some things cannot be changed. Doctrine cannot be changed.

"Principles which have been revealed," President Wilford Woodruff said, "for the salvation and exaltation of the children of men . . . are principles you cannot annihilate. *They are principles that no combination of men [or women] can destroy.* They are principles that can never die. . . . They are beyond the reach of man to handle or to destroy. . . . It is not in the power of the whole world put together to destroy those principles. . . . Not one jot or tittle of these principles will ever be destroyed."³⁶

During World War II, men were called away to fight. In the emergency, wives and mothers worldwide were drawn into the workforce as never before. The most devastating effect of the war was on the family. It lingers to this generation.

Multiply and replenish the earth

In the October 1942 general conference, the First Presidency delivered a message to "the Saints in every land and clime," in which they said, "By virtue of

the authority in us vested as the First Presidency of the Church, we warn our people."

And they said: "Amongst His earliest commands to Adam and Eve, the Lord said: 'Multiply and replenish the earth.' He has repeated that command in our day. He has again revealed in this, the last dispensation, the principle of the eternity of the marriage covenant. . . .

"The Lord has told us that it is the duty of every husband and wife to obey the command given to Adam to multiply and replenish the earth, so that the legions of choice spirits waiting for their tabernacles of flesh may come here and move forward under God's great design to become perfect souls, for without these fleshly tabernacles they cannot progress to their God-planned destiny. Thus, every husband and wife should become a father and mother in Israel to children born under the holy, eternal covenant.

"By bringing these choice spirits to earth, each father and each mother assume towards the tabernacled spirit and towards the Lord Himself by having taken advantage of the opportunity He offered, an obligation of the most sacred kind, because the fate of that spirit in the eternities to come, the blessings or punishments which shall await it in the hereafter, depend, in great part, upon the care, the teachings, the training which the parents shall give to that spirit.

"No parent can escape that obligation and that responsibility, and for the proper meeting thereof, the Lord will hold us to a strict accountability. No loftier duty than this can be assumed by mortals."

Motherhood is a holy calling

Speaking of mothers, the First Presidency said: "Motherhood thus becomes a holy calling, a sacred dedication for carrying out the Lord's plans, a consecration of devotion to the up-rearing and fostering, the nurturing in

body, mind, and spirit, of those who kept their first estate and who come to this earth for their second estate 'to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.' (Abraham 3:25) To lead them to keep their second estate is the work of motherhood, and 'they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.' (op. cit.) [Abraham 3:26]

"This divine service of motherhood can be rendered only by mothers. It may not be passed to others. Nurses cannot do it; public nurseries cannot do it; hired help cannot do it—only mother, aided as much as may be by the loving hands of father, brothers, and sisters, can give the full needed measure of watchful care."

The First Presidency counseled that "the mother who entrusts her child to the care of others, that she may do non-motherly work, whether for gold, for fame, or for civic service, should remember that 'a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.' (Prov. 29:15) In our day the Lord has said that unless parents teach their children the doctrines of the Church 'the sin be upon the heads of the parents.' (D&C 68:25)

"Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels."³⁷

That message and warning from the First Presidency is needed more, not less, today than when it was given. And no voice from any organization of the Church on any level of administration equals that of the First Presidency.³⁸

Any souls who by nature or circumstance are not afforded the blessing of marriage and parenthood, or who innocently must act alone in rearing children and working to support them, will not be denied in the eternities any blessing—provided they keep the commandments.³⁹ As President Lorenzo Snow promised, "That is sure and positive."⁴⁰

Parable of the treasure and keys

I close with a parable.

Once a man received as his inheritance two keys. The first key, he was told, would open a vault which he must protect at all cost. The second key was to a safe within the vault which contained a priceless treasure. He was to open this safe and freely use the precious things which were stored therein. He was warned that many would seek to rob him of his inheritance. He was promised that if he used the treasure worthily, it would be replenished and never be diminished, not in all eternity. He would be tested. If he used it to benefit others, his own blessings and joy would increase.

The man went alone to the vault. His first key opened the door. He tried to unlock the treasure with the other key, but he could not, for there were two locks on the safe. His key alone would not open it. No matter how he tried, he could not open it. He was puzzled. He had been given the keys. He knew the treasure was rightfully his. He had obeyed instructions, but he could not open the safe.

In due time there came a woman into the vault. She too held a key. It was noticeably different from the key he held. Her key fit the other lock. It humbled him to learn that he could not obtain his rightful inheritance without her.

They made a covenant that together they would open the treasure and, as instructed, he would watch over the vault and protect it; she would watch over the treasure. She was not concerned that, as guardian of the vault, he held two keys, for his full purpose was to see that she was safe as she watched over that which was most precious to them both. Together they opened the safe and partook of their inheritance. They rejoiced, for, as promised, it replenished itself.

With great joy they found that they could pass the treasure on to their children; each could receive a full measure, undiminished to the last generation.

Perhaps some few of their posterity would not find a companion who possessed the complementary key, or one worthy and willing to keep the covenants relating to the treasure. Nevertheless, if they kept the commandments, they would not be denied even the smallest blessing.

Because some tempted them to misuse their treasure, they were careful to teach their children about keys and covenants.

There came, in due time, among their posterity some few who were deceived or jealous or selfish because one was given two keys and another only one. "Why," the selfish ones reasoned, "cannot the treasure be mine alone to use as I desire?"

Some tried to reshape the key they had been given to resemble the other key. Perhaps, they thought, it would then fit both locks. And so it was that the safe was closed to them. Their reshaped keys were useless, and their inheritance was lost.

Those who received the treasure with gratitude and obeyed the laws concerning it knew joy without bounds through time and all eternity.

I bear witness of our Father's plan for happiness, and bear testimony in the name of Him who wrought the Atonement, that it might be, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See D&C 76:24; see also Numbers 16:22; Hebrews 12:9.
2. See D&C 132:63; First Presidency, "The Origin of Man" (Nov. 1909), in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 4:203; see also Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, p. 71; Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, p. 115; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 83.

3. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), pp. 348–49, 357, 365.
4. See Abraham 3:24–27.
5. See Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; Moses 6:62.
6. See Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25–36; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13–14; 39:18; 42:11, 13.
7. Alma 42:8.
8. See Alma 42:2–5.
9. See 2 Nephi 9:28; Alma 12:4–5; Helaman 2:8; 3 Nephi 1:16; D&C 10:12, 23; Moses 4:3.
10. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 181, 297.
11. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 181.
12. See 2 Nephi 2:18; 28:20.
13. See Alma 39:5; Moroni 9:9.
14. See D&C 130:2; 131:2; 1 Corinthians 11:11; Ephesians 5:31.
15. See Moses 6:8–9.
16. See Moses 3:8.
17. See Moses 6:67.
18. See Moses 3:18.
19. See Moses 3:23–24.
20. D&C 42:22.
21. See Moses 4:7–12.
22. 2 Nephi 2:25.
23. *Cowley and Whitney on Doctrine*, comp. Forace Green (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963), p. 287.
24. Moses 2:28; see also Genesis 1:28; 9:1.
25. See Galatians 5:22–23; D&C 4:5–6; Alma 7:23–24.
26. See D&C 131:2.
27. See “Our Wives and Our Mothers in the Eternal Plan” (address given in general Relief Society conference, 3 Oct. 1946), in *J. Reuben Clark: Selected Papers on Religion, Education, and Youth*, ed. David H. Yarn, Jr. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1984), p. 62.
28. See Genesis 1:28, note 28c.
29. See D&C 75:28; 1 Timothy 5:8.
30. D&C 107:40–41; see also D&C 84:14–16.
31. D&C 121:41–42; italics added.
32. D&C 121:37.
33. D&C 84:39.
34. D&C 121:37.
35. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 308, 367.
36. In *Journal of Discourses*, 22:342; italics added.
37. In Conference Report, Oct. 1942, pp. 7, 11–12.
38. See D&C 107:8–9, 22, 91.
39. See D&C 137:7–9.
40. “Discourse by President Lorenzo Snow,” *Millennial Star*, 31 Aug. 1899, p. 547.

President Monson

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve has just addressed us.

Elder F. Enzo Busche of the Seventy will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder John H. Groberg, also of the Seventy.

Elder F. Enzo Busche

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 1, verse 4, we read, “And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.”

This message of warning reminds us that we human beings are spiritual children of a Father in Heaven, who is the author and finisher of all truth, and

that we are lost in this earthly, fallen state unless we allow the Light of Christ, or the Spirit of truth, to become our constant and infinite guide.

The spiritual and the natural man

In the message of the Restoration, we learn that during our mortal life

our agency is tested through the inseparable connection of our spirit with the elements of this earth—"the flesh," or the "natural man" (see D&C 88:15). By this revelation we not only understand the cause of mankind's misery, but we also receive the keys and power that enable us to end this misery once and for all. As our minds are opened through our study of the plan of salvation, each of us comes to see that our life means that the "real me," or the "spiritual child of God," created in innocence and beauty, is engaged in a fight for life or death with the elements of the earth, the "flesh," which in its present unredeemed state is enticed and influenced by the enemy of God.

From the revelations of the Book of Mormon, we know that this enemy fights with all fury and cunningness to make all men miserable like unto himself (see 2 Nephi 2:27). But Jesus Christ, through His light, is searching and finding each individual child of God who is yearning and fighting for righteousness and truth and who is crying for help. Without Christ, this war within us is lost. Without Christ's plan of redemption and His atoning sacrifice, we all would have been lost. We knew that before we came to this earth, and we can sense it again, when through the Light of Christ our minds are quickened with understanding (see D&C 88:11).

Self-honesty is necessary to find truth

The issue is *truth*, my dear brothers and sisters, and the only way to find *truth* is through uncompromising self-education toward self-honesty to see the original "real me," the child of God in its innocence and potential, in contrast to the influence from the other part of me, the "flesh," with its selfish desires and foolishness. Only in that state of pure honesty are we able to see truth in its complete dimension. Honesty may not be everything, but everything is *nothing* without honesty. In its final

state, honesty is a gift of the Spirit through which the true disciples of Christ feel the force to bear testimony of the truth in such a powerful way that it penetrates the very core of our existence.

Honesty that brings us to Christ

One great example of the effect of the preaching of the prophets is recorded in the Book of Mormon. King Benjamin, out of love and concern for the welfare of his people, preaches the truth of the plan of salvation. He does this in such an uncompromising, pure way that the people come to a complete awareness of their "nothingness, and [their] worthless and fallen state" (Mosiah 4:5). This last step of awareness of honesty, where we see ourselves in our sinful, mortal existence, causes the people of King Benjamin to cry aloud with one voice, "O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins" (Mosiah 4:2).

Initiated by the hearing of the word of truth, a disciple of Christ is therefore constantly, even in the midst of all regular activities, striving all day long through silent prayer and contemplation to be in the depth of self-awareness to keep him in the state of meekness and lowliness of heart. It is the prophet Moroni who points out that "because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love" (Moroni 8:26).

With this enlightened understanding of the deadly battlefield inside of us, we are painfully aware that we can ask for and receive the help of the Lord, the God of truth, only under the condition of complete and relentless self-honesty.

This war is a war that has to be fought by all of Heavenly Father's children, whether they know about it or not. But without a keen knowledge of the plan of salvation, and without

the influence of the divine Light of Christ to bring us awareness, we are fighting this war subconsciously, and therefore its battlefronts are not even known to us, and we have no chance to win. Wars in the inner self that are fought subconsciously, with unknown battlefronts, lead to defeats which also hurt us subconsciously. These defeats are reflected in our conscious life as expressions of misery, such as a lack of self-confidence, lack of happiness and joy, lack of faith and testimony, or as overreactions of our subconscious self, which we see then as pride, arrogance, or in other forms of misbehavior—even as acts of cruelty and indecency.

No! There is no salvation without Christ, and Christ cannot be with us unless we pay the price of the constant fight for self-honesty.

Tragedies caused by lack of honesty

One of the great tragedies we see in our lives is that the adversary, through the influences of our “flesh,” can cheat us into establishing images of truth or perceptions of truth. Our brain, the great computer where all the facts of life’s memories are held together, can also be programmed by the “flesh,” with its self-centered ideas, to deceive the spiritual self. Without the constant striving through prayer and contemplation to reach the ends of self-awareness and honesty, our so-called intellect can, therefore, based on look-alike truths, play many games of reason to impress, to get gain, to intimidate, or even to manipulate truth with the vain results of deceit.

Of such, the Apostle Paul wrote:

“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . proud, blasphemers, . . . unholy, . . .

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: . . .

“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:2, 5, 7).

Great blessings of self-honesty

All learning leads to nothing unless it is centered on finding the roots of truth, which cannot be received without first becoming honest. In such striving, we suddenly know how to pray. Paul says, “For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:26).

Enlightened by the Spirit of truth, we will then be able to pray for the increased ability to endure truth and not to be made angry by it (see 2 Nephi 28:28). In the depth of such a prayer, we may finally be led to that lonesome place where we suddenly see ourselves naked in all soberness. Gone are all the little lies of self-defense. We see ourselves in our vanities and false hopes for carnal security. We are shocked to see our many deficiencies, our lack of gratitude for the smallest things. We are now at that sacred place that seemingly only a few have courage to enter, because this is that horrible place of unquenchable pain in fire and burning.

This is that place where true repentance is born. This is that place where the conversion and the rebirth of the soul are happening. This is the place where the prophets were before they were called to serve. This is the place where converts find themselves before they can have the desire to be baptized for the remission of their sins. This is the place where sanctifications and rededications and renewal of covenants are happening. This is the place where suddenly the atonement of Christ is understood and embraced. This is the place where suddenly, when commitments have solemnly been established, the soul begins to “sing the song of redeeming love” and indestructible faith in Christ is born (Alma 5:26). This is the place where we suddenly see the heavens open as we feel the full impact of the love of our Heavenly Father, which fills us with indescribable joy.

With this fulfillment of love in our hearts, we will never be happy anymore just by being ourselves or living our own lives. We will not be satisfied until we have surrendered our lives into the arms of the loving Christ, and until He has become the doer of all our deeds and He has become the speaker of all our words. As He has said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abid-

eth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Let us therefore listen, my dear brothers and sisters, to the voice of warning. And let us embrace the Spirit of truth that we may stand blameless through the atonement of our Lord. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder John H. Groberg

Faith in Christ underlies all else

The fourth article of faith states, "We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."

If we think deeply, we realize that the first principle—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—underlies all else; that is, it takes faith in Christ to repent or be baptized or perform any other ordinances of the gospel. Jesus made saving repentance possible and He made baptism meaningful. If we have faith in Him, we will repent and be baptized. If we do not repent, or refuse to be baptized, or are unwilling to keep His commandments, it is because we do not have sufficient faith in Him. Thus, repentance, baptism, and all other principles and ordinances are not entirely separate but are actually extensions of our faith in Christ. Without faith in Him, we do little of eternal value. With faith in Him, our lives become focused on doing things of eternal value.

It takes deep and abiding faith in Christ to endure faithfully to the end of our mortal lives. Sometimes we pray for the strength to endure yet resist the very things that would give us that strength. Too often we seek the easy

way, forgetting that strength comes from overcoming things that require us to put forth more effort than we normally would be inclined to do. The Apostle Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Let me give an example.

A missionary in the South Pacific

Years ago as a young missionary, I was assigned to a group of seventeen small islands in the South Pacific. At that time the only means of travel between islands was by sailboat. Because of misunderstandings and traditions, it was difficult to find people willing to listen to us. However, one day a member told us that if we would be at a certain harbor on a particular island when the sun set the next day, a family would meet us there and listen to the discussions.

What joy that news brought! It was like finding a piece of gold. I was working alone at the time but quickly found four other members who were experienced sailors who agreed to take me to this island the next day.

Early the next morning the five of us started out. There was a nice breeze that moved us swiftly along the coast, through the opening in the reef, and out into the wide expanse of the vast Pacific Ocean.

We made good progress for a few hours, but as the sun climbed higher

and the boat got farther from land, the wind began to play out and soon quit altogether, leaving us bobbing aimlessly on a smooth ocean.

Those familiar with sailing know that to get anywhere, you need wind. Sometimes there are good breezes without storms and heavy seas, but often they go together. Sailors do not fear storms, for they contain the lifeblood of sailing—wind. What sailors fear is *no* wind, or being becalmed.

Praying for wind

Time passed. The sun got higher, the sea calmer. Nothing moved. We soon realized that unless something changed, we would not arrive by sundown. I suggested that we pray and plead with the Lord to send some wind. What more righteous desire could a group of men have? I offered a prayer. When I finished, things seemed calmer than ever. We continued drifting.

Then one of the older men suggested that everyone kneel and all unite their faith and prayers together, which we did. There was great struggling of spirit, but when the last person opened his eyes, nothing! No movement at all. The sails hung limp and listless. Even the slight ripple of the ocean against the side of the boat had ceased. The ocean seemed like a sea of glass.

Time was moving, and we were getting desperate. This same man now suggested that everyone kneel again in prayer and each person in turn offer a vocal prayer for the whole group. Many beautiful, pleading, faithful prayers ascended to heaven. But when the last one finished and everyone opened their eyes, the sun was still burning down with greater intensity than before. The ocean was like a giant mirror. It was almost as though Satan were laughing, saying, "See, you can't go anywhere. There is no wind. You are in my power."

I thought, "There is a family at the harbor that wants to hear the gospel.

We are here in the middle of the ocean and want to teach them. The Lord controls the elements. All that stands between us and the family is a little wind. Why won't He send it? It's a righteous desire."

The Lord's wind

As I was so wondering, I noticed this faithful older brother move to the rear of the boat. I watched as he unlashed the tiny lifeboat, placed two oars with pins in their places, and carefully lowered it over the side.

He looked at me and softly said, "Get in."

I answered, "What are you doing? There is hardly room for two people in that tiny thing!"

"Don't waste any time or effort. Just get in. I am going to row you to shore, and we need to leave now to make it by sundown."

I looked at him incredulously, "Row me *where*?"

"To the family that wants to hear the gospel. We have an assignment from the Lord. Get in."

I was dumbfounded. It was miles to shore. The sun was hot, and this man was old. But as I looked into the face of that faithful brother, I sensed an intensity in his gaze, an iron will in his very being, and a fixed determination in his voice as he said, "Before the sun sets this day, you will be teaching the gospel and bearing testimony to a family who wants to listen."

I again objected, "Look, you're over three times my age. If this is to be, let me row."

With that same look of determination and faith-induced will, the old man replied, "No. Leave it to me. Get in the boat. Don't waste more time talking. Let's go!" At his direction we got into the boat, with me in the front and the old man in the middle, his feet stretching to the end of the boat, his back to me.

The glazed surface of the ocean was disturbed by the intrusion of this small boat and seemed to complain, "This is my territory. Stay out." Not a wisp of air stirred, not a sound was heard except the creaking of oars and the rattling of pins as the small craft began to move away from the sailboat.

The old man bent his back and began to row. Dip. Pull. Lift. Dip. Pull. Lift. Each dip of the oar seemed to break the resolve of the mirrorlike ocean. Each pull of the oar moved the tiny skiff forward, separating the glassy seas to make way for the Lord's messenger. Dip. Pull. Lift. The old man did not look up, rest, or talk, but hour after hour he rowed and rowed and rowed. The muscles of his back and arms, strengthened by faith and moved by unalterable determination, flexed in a marvelous cadence like a fine-tuned watch. It was beautiful. We moved quietly, relentlessly toward an inevitable destiny. The old man concentrated his efforts and energy on fulfilling the calling he had from the Lord—to get a missionary to a family that wanted to hear the gospel. He was the Lord's wind that day.

"Go teach them the truth"

Just as the sun dipped into the ocean, the skiff touched the shore of the harbor. A family *was* waiting. The old man spoke for the first time in hours and said, "Go. Teach them the truth. I'll wait here."

I waded ashore, met the family, went to their home, and taught them the gospel. As I bore testimony of the power of God in this church, my mind saw an old Tongan man rowing to a distant harbor and waiting patiently there. I testified with a fervor as great as any I have ever felt that God does give power to men and women to do His will if they will have faith in Him. I told the family, "When we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we can do things we could not otherwise do. When our hearts are

determined to do right, the Lord gives us the power to do so."

The family believed and eventually was baptized.

"What more can I do?"

In the annals of history, few will be aware of this small incident. Hardly anyone will know about this insignificant island, the family who waited, or the obscure, old man who never once complained of fatigue, aching arms, painful back, or a hurting body. He never talked about thirst, the scorching sun, or the heat of the day as he relentlessly rowed uncomplainingly hour after hour. He referred only to the privilege of being God's agent in bringing a missionary to teach the truth to those who desired to hear. But God knows! He gave him the strength to be His wind that day, and He will give us the strength to be His wind when necessary.

How often do we not do more because we pray for wind and none comes? We pray for good things and they don't seem to happen, so we sit and wait and do no more. We should always pray for help, but we should always listen for inspiration and impressions to proceed in ways different from those we may have thought of. On the boat, five men prayed, but only one heard and acted. God does hear our prayers. God knows more than we do. He has infinitely greater experience than we have. We should never stop moving because we think our way is barred or the only door we can go through is closed.

No matter what our trials, we should never say, "It is enough." Only God is entitled to say that. Our responsibility is to ask, "What more can I do?" then listen for the answer, and do it!

I'll never forget that old man.

I pray that we may always have increasing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and demonstrate that faith by our actions. I know He lives and loves. I know

He strengthens and encourages. I know He helps and heals. I know He forgives and saves.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders F. Enzo Busche and John H. Groberg of the Seventy, two men with whom

I've had the opportunity to serve and men of great faith and devotion.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel." Elder Ben B. Banks of the Seventy will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Ben B. Banks

The prayers of a lost child

Speaking to the inhabitants of Zion, the Lord said, "They shall . . . teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:28).

Early one Saturday morning while serving as stake president, I received a phone call from Bishop Nelson asking for help. He said the Janzen family from his ward, while on a family outing in the mountains, had lost their seven-year-old son, Mathew. Darkness had brought the search to a halt Friday evening. But within a short period of time Saturday morning, over a hundred brothers and sisters from the stake drove to the rescue site to join the search. After several hours of combing the trails, roads, and backwoods, they finally found little Mathew. Can you imagine the joy as he was swept into the arms of his mother and father? I listened through tears of grateful parents as they asked, "What happened?" Then this reply: "I took the wrong turn and got lost. When it got dark I tried to build a shelter and sleep, but it was so cold I couldn't. I knelt down on a rock and prayed five times last night and again this morning. You taught me if I was ever lost, if I would pray to Heavenly Father and stay on the trail, I would find you. Heavenly Father did answer my prayers."

Take time for your children

Elder Richard L. Evans stated: "We 'shall not pass again this way'—and in these swift-passing scenes and seasons there seems to come—insistently, almost above all else—this compelling cry: Take time for your children. More and more, professional people are telling us that children are shaped and molded at a very early age" ("Take Time for Your Children," *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1970, p. 125).

In the fast-paced life that most of us lead, the simple concern of parents finding sufficient time to do the things they want to do is often a big problem. As a general rule, all parents have a desire to be good parents and are aware that within the home environment children are provided the best opportunity to be taught gospel principles and gospel understanding. The risen Lord, while visiting the Nephites, referred to the words of Isaiah, "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (3 Nephi 22:13).

A few weeks ago, while attending a stake conference in the Philippines, where I currently live, I listened to eleven-year-old Joseph stand at the pulpit with childlike faith and express the following: "My sister got a toothache. I told her, 'Get Dad to give you a

blessing.' He did, and it went away. My parents taught me to pray when I was a child. I said things that were funny, but I know Heavenly Father heard me. We always read the scriptures when I was young. I didn't understand then, but I do now."

The importance of parenthood

We cannot overemphasize the importance of parenthood and the family. Some Latter-day Saint families are what we refer to as the "traditional family," consisting of parents and children all together in a permanent relationship, with both mother and father sharing in the responsibility of caring for children. Others have witnessed the loss of one of the parents and become one of the many single-parent families. I am one who grew up in a single-parent home. My father lost his life as a result of a construction accident when I was two years old, leaving my mother with seven children to raise. Even in single-parent families, the family continues on, for families are forever.

Perhaps few human challenges are greater than that of being good parents. Yes, even with the best intentions, conscientious, good parents sometimes experience feelings of despair, failure, and hurt when children do not make right choices and turn out the way we would like. Even in those circumstances it is so important for parents to love, pray for, and never give up hope for a son or daughter who may have strayed or brought disappointment. Elder Howard W. Hunter stated:

"The responsibilities of parenthood are of the greatest importance. The results of our efforts will have eternal consequences for us and the boys and girls we raise. Anyone who becomes a parent is under strict obligation to protect and love his children and assist them to return to their Heavenly Father" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, p. 93; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 65).

Parents should be the master teachers of their children. The Church will assist parents in their teaching and training—but only assist. The Church cannot be a substitute for parental responsibility. Elder Richard L. Evans said the home "is also the source of our personal lives, and in a sense the determiner of our everlasting lives. And so our plea is for parents to take the time it takes to draw near to the children God has given them. Let there be love at home. Let there be tenderness and teaching and caring for and not a shifting of responsibility onto others. God grant that we may never be too busy to do the things that matter most, for 'Home makes the man' " (in *Richard Evans' Quote Book* [Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1971], p. 21).

Suggestions for strengthening families

As we bear this great responsibility of parenthood, may I share with you, in the spirit of trying to be helpful, a few thoughts that parents might use to strengthen their families against worldly temptations and to bring the love, unity, and success that all desire.

1. *Start early.* "Columnist Sydney Harris was once asked by an anxious parent, 'How can I get my 16-year-old son to mind me?' He answered simply, 'Shrink him down to six months and start over, differently.'"

"This may not be encouraging advice to those with problem teenagers, but to those just starting on the adventure of parenthood, it may serve as a reminder that love and training cannot be postponed" (Jon M. Taylor, "Fortify Your Children against Temptation," *Ensign*, Oct. 1972, p. 9). In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord explained that all children are innocent before God because of the redemption of Christ (see D&C 93:38). He further said, "But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (v. 40).

2. *Communicate effectively.* Parents should spend a great deal of time listening, not just telling. This listening should be done with an open mind and heart. When children feel they can talk freely about their feelings, problems, and successes, wonderful relationships develop between parents and children.

3. *Enthroned love and unity.* It is important to make your children aware of your love and feelings. This can be done by a hundred little acts and gestures, such as tucking children into bed at night after listening to their prayers, offering a comforting arm or ear even though he or she may not be hurt very badly. Encourage children to support each other through attendance at ball games and concerts where a family member is participating.

4. *Do things together.* Vacations, recreational activities, and family work projects give parents good opportunities to teach the importance of developing a good work ethic. Doing things together gives a child and parent an opportunity to share their attention in a common objective.

5. *Provide opportunities to learn how to be independent and responsible.* Teach children how to make their own decisions, even if it involves their failing once in a while. We need to help children come to an understanding such as Lehi taught, "knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon" (2 Nephi 2:26).

6. *Discipline with love.* "Discipline" and "punishment" are not synonymous. Punishment suggests hurting, paying someone back for a wrong committed. Discipline implies an action directed toward a goal . . . of helping the recipient to improve himself" (William E. Homan, "How to Be a Better Parent," *Reader's Digest*, Oct. 1969, p. 188). Discipline should always be with love.

7. *Service.* In his great farewell address, King Benjamin taught, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your

God" (Mosiah 2:17). There are few rewards in life that bring greater feelings of satisfaction, joy, and peace than when one gives meaningful service to a fellow being standing in need.

8. *The last and most important is to establish a "house of God."* The instruction the Lord gave the Prophet Joseph Smith in the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants referred to building a temple. Yet this verse of scripture also beautifully describes the type of home we ought to have:

"Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God" (v. 119).

Teach children gospel principles

It is not easy for children to stay clean and pure in today's world. There are times when it becomes hard for them to tell right from wrong. We need to teach our children, as Alma taught his son Corianton, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). Teach them to stay on the Lord's side of the line. Hold family home evening regularly. Hold family prayer twice a day, if possible. Teach them to love the scriptures and how to experience the sweet answer to individual prayer. Teach them to understand and recognize how the Holy Ghost communicates with us through promptings, thoughts, impressions, and feelings. Teach the sacred significance of the atoning sacrifice of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Elder Boyd K. Packer has said, "Teach our young people to bear testimony—to bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, that the Book of Mormon is true, that we lived before we came here, that Christ died to redeem us, and that he is the Son of God" (*Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991], p. 154).

Yes, “the best thing to spend on children is your time” (Arnold Glasow, in *Richard Evans’ Quote Book*, p. 18).

That all who are parents might be successful in convincing their children that true joy and happiness come from living the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that parents might find joy and fulfillment in their efforts and sacred role, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Adney Y. Komatsu

Gratitude and appreciation

My dear brothers, sisters, and friends, as I approach this final assignment as a General Authority and as this phase of my service draws to a close, I am filled with gratitude and appreciation for the many blessings my family and I have received during this time. I would like to express my sincere love and appreciation to my wife and companion for sustaining me through these many years. With her support and sustaining influence, all the assignments have been a great pleasure and joy. No matter what the call or assignment, she was always there to support and assist, to be concerned about and interested in the new responsibilities.

I would also like to thank our children for their love and support during the many years while our assignments have required that we live away from them. Without their support, it would have been very difficult to find peace and joy in the work. It has been a great experience to participate in the various callings, and every assignment has been accomplished with their full support.

I also would like to thank the many General Authorities and friends who have helped us over the years in so many ways. We are grateful for their kindnesses and their concerns for us and our welfare.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Ben B. Banks of the Seventy.

Two Brethren who were given emeritus status this morning, after serving long and well in the Seventy, will now speak to us. We will first hear from Elder Adney Y. Komatsu, and he will be followed by Elder Jacob de Jager.

“Trifle not with sacred things”

As I review our experiences and try to express my feelings this day, you can imagine that many thoughts are crossing my mind. As I attempt to sort through them, I would like to continue the theme of appreciation for my family and friends by sharing with you an admonition that was given by the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in April 1829. It applies as much—and perhaps even more—to us today than it did to those people in 1829. It is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 6, verse 12, “Trifle not with sacred things.” There are many sacred things within the gospel, but some of the most sacred are the covenants we make in the holy temple. The words *trifle* and *sacred* are an important part of the admonition that cautions us not to take for granted or make light of the sacred, holy, and honorable blessings received.

Sacredness of family relationships

The relationships between husbands and wives are sacred, and we should never trifle with that great blessing. Many couples enter into marriage without understanding the importance of the admonition not to trifle with sacred things, and divorce often follows.

Likewise, we should follow this admonition in relationships between parents and children. We must never take our children for granted and always keep our relationships sacred, honorable, and holy.

In 1986 while speaking to the men of the Church in a priesthood session of conference, President Ezra Taft Benson, our prophet, gave them the following directives. Even though he was speaking specifically to the young priesthood brethren, the same directives apply to young women as well. He said:

"My young brethren [and sisters], I counsel each of you to draw close to your own mother. Respect her. Honor her. Receive your mother's counsel as she loves and instructs you in righteousness. And honor and obey your father as he stands as the head of the home, emulating his manly qualities.

"Young men [and young women], the family unit is forever, and you should do everything in your power to strengthen that unit. In your own family, encourage family home evenings and be an active participant. Encourage family prayer and be on your knees with your family in that sacred circle. Do your part to develop real family unity and solidarity. In such homes, there is no generation gap" (in Conference Re-

port, Apr. 1986, pp. 55-56; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 43).

Testimony of truth

I am grateful for many opportunities I've had to bear my testimony of the truth of the gospel to many people in many parts of the world during my years of service in the Church. We have made many friends and acquaintances in different parts of the world, and their friendship is very sacred and dear to us. Friendship is something you cannot buy for money. You work for it, honor it, and it becomes important and sacred in our lives. Once more I bear you my witness that I know the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness. Our loving Heavenly Father sent his Only Begotten Son into the world to bring about an understanding of sacrifice and blessings. Through the Resurrection, the sting of death was conquered, and Jesus Christ became the firstfruits of the Resurrection to show us there is life hereafter.

Let us all be diligent and obedient in keeping the commandments of the Lord, that we may be worthy to receive the blessings he has in store for the faithful, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jacob de Jager

The Happy Dutchman

My dear brothers and sisters and friends all over the world, as you heard from a very reliable source in the first session of this general conference, and again it was confirmed this afternoon, I was given emeritus status as a Seventy. As far as I was able to determine this morning, the vote of thanks was unanimous in the affirmative. For this I express my gratitude to all of you who were present here.

When I was called to the Quorum of the Seventy in April 1976, Elder LeGrand Richards, who, as many of you will recall, was a Dutchman by adoption, used to call me the "Happy Dutchman." After seventeen and one-half years, I want you to know that I am still the Happy Dutchman, and I will tell you why: because these years of service in the Quorum have brought great joy and countless blessings to my life and the life of Bea, my eternal companion.

Blessings of Church service

I had the privilege to be assigned to stakes from Punta Arenas in South America to Anchorage, Alaska; and from Hobart, Australia, to Japan. I worked closely with faithful Regional Representatives and dedicated stake presidencies—always teaching them correct principles so that they would learn to govern themselves.

What a blessing it was to visit missions of the Church in many parts of the world and teach the missionaries what missionary work is really all about: transferring sacred knowledge by the Spirit to people who live in ignorance but who all are entitled to hear the message of the restored gospel. This message enables them to learn that the most important part of their lives is making sacred covenants that will bring them back to their Father in Heaven.

I am still as happy as when I was called to the Quorum, and, in good western American tradition, I will now ride off into the sunset. But I know there is a loving priesthood leader waiting at the roadside to call me, under inspiration, to another meaningful calling.

My first calling in the Church, three days after my baptism in Toronto, Canada, was to be in charge of the hymnbooks in the ward. I really would not mind at all to quickly go back to the hymnbooks again because I can truly testify that this is a church of workers and *not* a museum of Saints. Those who think differently have not fully understood the real purpose of the divine organization to which we all belong.

Maintaining a cheerful disposition

Yes, I have maintained a cheerful disposition, and I will gladly share with you some positive ideas:

- Learn to *love* the calling that you have in the Church. You can learn to love it so much it becomes invigorating.

- Learn to be satisfied. It is just as easy as being dissatisfied—and much more pleasant.

- Learn to accept adversity. No matter who you are or where you serve, you are going to have some. But do not fear the winds of adversity. Remember, a kite rises against the wind rather than with it!

- Get in the habit of saying *pleasant* things rather than making negative remarks.

- Live the present moment to the hilt, and do not live in the past or in the future. Success is a journey, *not* a destination.

- Live and honor the covenants that you made at the time of your baptism and in the temple.

- And when you have reached the age of seventy, you must resist the urge to straighten out everybody's affairs and admit occasionally that you might be mistaken.

Staying young through service

Not long ago I had the privilege of attending a mission presidents' seminar in San Francisco with Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve. He shared with us some thoughts from an author about growing old.

"Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years. People grow old only by deserting their ideals. . . . There is [always] the love of wonder, [a] child-like appetite for what [is] next, and the joy . . . of life. You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear [or] despair. In the [center] of every heart there is a recording chamber; so long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, and courage, so long are you young" (Douglas MacArthur, *A Soldier Speaks*, ed. Vorin E. Whan, Jr. [New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965], p. 313).

How blessed are we to be part of a rapidly expanding church that teaches

beauty, hope, cheer, courage, faith, and happiness that enable us to stay young at heart through faithful service in whatever calling we may have.

Happiness: the object of our existence

President Thomas S. Monson's First Presidency message entitled "Happiness, the Universal Quest" in the October 1993 issue of the *Ensign* magazine, shares five important ways to obtain lasting happiness in this life and the life to come, based on the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it" (p. 2).

Therefore, let us all walk in these clearly defined paths to increase our happiness.

In closing, I bear solemn witness that God, our Eternal Father, lives; that Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Father born in the flesh, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind; that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God; and that every man who has succeeded him as President of

the Church has been a living prophet, including President Ezra Taft Benson in our day and time. This is my personal, eternal testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elders Adney Y. Komatsu and Jacob de Jager, emeritus members of the Seventy.

I must take a moment and say how happy I am that the de Jager family became members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the time I had the opportunity to preside over the Canadian Mission, headquartered in Toronto, and that my beloved Frances was the person in Toronto who took the telephone call from a nonmember at that time, Jacob de Jager, who then became our beloved Jack, now an emeritus member of the Quorums of the Seventy. God speed the blessings and the lives of Adney Komatsu, Jacob de Jager, and, of course, Burke Peterson, who are now emeritus.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

I echo President Monson's compliments to Brother Peterson, Brother Komatsu, and Brother de Jager. They have earned our greatest commendation. And I too join with others who feel a debt of gratitude to this wonderful chorus of youth from Brigham Young University.

Constancy amid change

Our youth are wonderful and especially able to ask thoughtful questions. Recently I had a conversation with "Ruth" and "John." Ruth opened the discussion. With a sigh, she lamented,

"Our world is constantly changing, isn't it?"

"Yes," I replied, "ever since its creation—geologically and geographically. And its populations are changing—politically and spiritually. You might ask your grandparents about life when they were your age and discover their thoughts."

"Oh, I already have," Ruth continued. "My grandpa summarized his opinion with a clever quip: 'Give me the good old days—plus penicillin.'"

Then John expressed deep concern. "Continually changing conditions make the future shaky for us," he said.

"It's kind of scary. We seem to be standing on shifting sand."

Together they asked, "What can we trust? Is anything constant that will *not* change as we grow older?"

To that question I responded with an emphatic, "Yes! Many things!" Because Ruth and John are typical of many today who seek for unchanging constants in a changing world, I would like to address that subject, titling my remarks "Constancy amid Change." Through the years, prophets and Apostles have spoken of many unchanging constants.¹ To facilitate this discussion, I will group some of these constants into three categories: heavenly personages, plans, and principles.

I. Personages

Our Heavenly Father has a glorified body of flesh and bone, inseparably connected with His spirit.² Scriptures state that He is "infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God" (D&C 20:17).³

His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and the chief cornerstone of our religion.⁴ "He is the life and the light of the world" (Alma 38:9).⁵ "There shall be no other name . . . nor any other way . . . whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (Mosiah 3:17).⁶

Another personage is the Holy Ghost, whose enduring influence transcends time. Scripture assures that "the Holy Ghost shall be thy *constant* companion, and thy scepter an *unchanging* scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an *everlasting* dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee *forever* and ever" (D&C 121:46; italics added).

Brothers and sisters, these Heavenly Beings love you. Their love is as constant as is the greatest love of earthly parents.

But there is another personage about whom you should be reminded.

Satan also exists and seeks "that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27).⁷

II. Plans

I speak now of category two—unchanging plans. A great council in heaven was once convened, in which it seems that all of us participated.⁸ There our Heavenly Father announced His plan. Scriptures refer to this plan of God⁹ by many names. Perhaps out of deference to the sacred name of Deity, or to depict its broad scope, it is also called the plan of happiness,¹⁰ the plan of salvation,¹¹ the plan of redemption,¹² the plan of restoration,¹³ the plan of mercy,¹⁴ the plan of deliverance,¹⁵ and the everlasting gospel.¹⁶ Prophets have used these terms interchangeably.

Regardless of designation, the enabling essence of the plan is the atonement of Jesus Christ. As it is central to the plan,¹⁷ we should try to comprehend the meaning of the Atonement. Before we can comprehend it, though, we must understand the fall of Adam. And before we can fully appreciate the Fall, we must first comprehend the Creation. These three events—the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement—are three preeminent pillars of God's plan, and they are doctrinally interrelated.

The Creation. The creation of the earth was a preparatory part of our Father's plan. Then "the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, . . . male and female to form they them.

"And the Gods said: We will bless them" (Abraham 4:27–28). And bless us they did, with a plan that would give us physical bodies of our very own.

Adam and Eve were the first people to live upon the earth.¹⁸ They were different from the plant and animal life that had been created previously. Adam and Eve were children of God. Their bodies of flesh and bone

were made in the express image of God's. In that state of innocence, they were not yet mortal. They could have had no children,¹⁹ were not subject to death, and could have lived in Eden's garden forever.²⁰ Thus, we might speak of the Creation in terms of a *paradisial* creation.

If that state had persisted, you and I would still be stranded among the heavenly host as unborn sons and daughters of God.²¹ "The great plan of [happiness] would have been frustrated" (Alma 42:5).²²

The Fall. That leads us to the fall of Adam. To bring the plan of happiness to fruition, God issued to Adam and Eve the first commandment ever given to mankind. It was a commandment to beget children.²³ A law was explained to them. Should they eat from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17), their bodies would change; mortality and eventual death would come upon them.²⁴ But partaking of that fruit was prerequisite to their parenthood.²⁵

While I do not fully understand all the biochemistry involved, I do know that their physical bodies did change; blood began to circulate in their bodies. Adam and Eve thereby became mortal. Happily for us, they could also beget children and fulfill the purposes for which the world was created. Happily for them, "the Lord said unto Adam [and Eve²⁶]: Behold I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden" (Moses 6:53). We and all mankind are forever blessed because of Eve's great courage and wisdom. By partaking of the fruit first, she did what needed to be done. Adam was wise enough to do likewise. Accordingly, we could speak of the fall of Adam in terms of a *mortal* creation, because "Adam fell that men might be" (2 Nephi 2:25).²⁷

Other blessings came to us through the Fall. It activated two closely coupled additional gifts from God, nearly as precious as life itself—agency and account-

ability. We became "free to choose liberty and eternal life . . . or to choose captivity and death" (2 Nephi 2:27). Freedom of choice cannot be exercised without accountability for choices made.²⁸

The Atonement. Now we come to the third pillar of God's plan—the Atonement. Just as Adam and Eve were not to live forever in the Garden of Eden, so our final destination was not to be planet earth. We were to return to our heavenly home.

Given that reality, still another change was necessary. An infinite atonement was required to redeem Adam, Eve, and all of their posterity. That atonement must enable our physical bodies to be resurrected and changed²⁹ to a bloodless form, no longer liable to disease, deterioration, or death.

According to eternal law, that atonement required a personal sacrifice by an immortal being not subject to death. Yet He must die and take up His own body again. The Savior was the only one who could accomplish this. From His mother He inherited power to die. From His Father He obtained power over death. The Redeemer so explained:

"I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17–18).

The Lord declared that "this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). He who had created the earth came into mortality to fulfill the will of His Father³⁰ and all prophecies of His atonement.³¹ And His atonement redeems every soul from penalties of personal transgression, on the condition of repentance.³²

Thus, we might speak of the Atonement in terms of the *immortal* creation. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

I have recounted the importance of the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement, knowing that parents are accountable to teach these precepts of God's plan to their children.³³

Before leaving our discussion of unchanging plans, however, we need to remember that the adversary sponsors a cunning plan of his own.³⁴ It invariably attacks God's first commandment for husband and wife to beget children. It tempts with tactics that include infidelity, unchastity, and other abuses of procreative power. Satan's band would trumpet choice but mute accountability. Nevertheless, his capacity has long been limited, "for he knew not the mind of God" (Moses 4:6).

III. Principles

I speak now of category three—unchanging principles.

Unchanging principles are so because they come from our unchanging Heavenly Father. Try as they might, no parliament or congress could ever repeal the law of earth's gravity or amend the Ten Commandments. Those laws are constant. All laws of nature and of God are part of the everlasting gospel. Thus, there are many unchanging principles. Time will permit consideration of only a few.

Priesthood. One of them is that of the priesthood. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "the Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 157).³⁵

We know that "the Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency, and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 157).

Scriptures certify that the priesthood has continued and will continue "through the lineage of [the] fathers" (D&C 86:8).³⁶ Ordination to its offices has timeless implication as well. Tenure in priesthood office may extend into postmortal realms. For example, scriptures declare that one ordained as a high priest may be a high priest forever.³⁷ Promised *blessings* of the priesthood extend to men, women, and children throughout the world and may endure forever.³⁸

The use of the priesthood is carefully controlled according to conditions established by the Lord, who said:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (D&C 121:41).

"That [the rights of the priesthood] may be conferred upon [men], it is true; but when [they] undertake to cover [their] sins, or to gratify [their] pride, [their] vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, . . . the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (D&C 121:37).

While the priesthood is an everlasting principle, those privileged to exercise its authority must maintain themselves daily as worthy vessels.

Moral law. Another unchanging principle is that of divine or moral law. Transgression of moral law brings retribution; obedience to it brings blessings "immutable and unchangeable" (D&C 104:2). Blessings are always predicated on obedience to law.³⁹ So the Church teaches us to embrace the right and to renounce the wrong—that we might have joy.⁴⁰

The Savior and His servants⁴¹ do not speak words of complacency but teach what people need to know. Through the ages, history attests that

contemporary critics have pressed Church leaders to modify a decree of the Lord.⁴² But such is eternal law, and it cannot be altered. Not even for His Beloved Son could God change the law that required the Atonement. Divine doctrines cannot be squeezed into compact molds to make them fit fashionable patterns of the day. Nor can they be fully expressed on a bumper sticker.

Judgment. Another unchanging principle, brothers and sisters, is that of your eventual judgment. Each of you will be judged according to your individual works and the desires of your hearts.⁴³ You will not be required to pay the debt of any other. Your eventual placement in the celestial, terrestrial, or telestial kingdom will not be determined by chance. The Lord has prescribed unchanging requirements for each. You can know what the scriptures teach and pattern your lives accordingly.⁴⁴

Divine commandments. Other unchanging principles include divine commandments—even those that seem to be temporal. Tithing, for example, is not temporal (or temporary); it is an everlasting principle. The Lord said:

"Those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them *forever*" (D&C 119:4; italics added).

We know that tithe payers shall not be burned at the Second Coming.⁴⁵

Truth. Another unchanging principle is that of truth. Scripture reminds us that "the truth abideth forever and ever" (D&C 1:39).⁴⁶ Even though one's understanding of the truth may be fragmentary, truth itself does not change. Everlasting truth and wisdom come from the Lord. The first truth ever taught to man came directly from Deity. From generation to generation, God has given additional light. Whether truth comes from a laboratory of science or directly by revelation, truth is embraced by the gospel.

Family. May I mention one more everlasting principle—the family. A family can be together forever. Though each of us will pass through the doors of death, the timing of that departure is less important than is the preparation for eternal life. Part of that preparation includes service in the Church. It is not to be a burden but a blessing to a family. The Lord said, "Thy duty is unto the church forever, and this because of thy family" (D&C 23:3).⁴⁷

Ruth, John, and each of you will more fully understand that concept in light of this scriptural promise:

"If a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them . . . [they] shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, . . . exaltation and glory in all things, . . . which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever" (D&C 132:19).

A promise like that is worth your personal effort and endurance.

Constancy amid change is assured by heavenly personages, plans, and principles. Our trust can be safely anchored to them. They provide peace, eternal progression, hope, freedom, love, and joy to all who will be guided by them. They are true—now and forever—I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. For example, see Albert E. Bowen, *Constancy amid Change* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1944); N. Eldon Tanner, in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, pp. 117–21; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, pp. 80–82.
2. See D&C 93:33; 130:22.
3. See also Psalm 100:5; Mormon 9:19; Moroni 8:18; D&C 84:102.
4. See Ephesians 2:20.
5. See also Mosiah 16:9; 3 Nephi 9:18; 11:11; Ether 4:12; D&C 10:70; 11:28; 12:9; 34:2; 39:2; 45:7.
6. See also Acts 4:12; 2 Nephi 25:20; Mosiah 5:8; Alma 38:9; Helaman 5:9; D&C 18:23.

7. See also 2 Nephi 2:18; Alma 41:4.
8. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), pp. 348–49, 365.
9. See 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 34:9.
10. See Alma 42:8, 16.
11. See Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; Moses 6:62.
12. See Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25–33; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13; 29:2; 34:16, 31; 39:18; 42:11–13.
13. See Alma 41:2.
14. See Alma 42:15, 31; 2 Nephi 9:6.
15. See 2 Nephi 11:5.
16. See Revelation 14:6; D&C 27:5; 36:5; 68:1; 77:8, 9, 11; 79:1; 84:103; 88:103; 99:1; 101:22, 39; 106:2; 109:29, 65; 124:88; 128:17; 133:36; 135:3, 7; 138:19, 25; Joseph Smith—History 1:34.
17. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 121.
18. See Genesis 3:20; 1 Nephi 5:11; Moses 4:26.
19. See 2 Nephi 2:23; Moses 5:11.
20. See 2 Nephi 2:22.
21. See D&C 38:1; Abraham 3:22–23.
22. See also D&C 138:56.
23. See Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28; Abraham 4:28.
24. See Moses 3:17; Abraham 5:13.
25. See Moses 5:11.
26. The Lord “called *their* name Adam” (Genesis 5:2; Moses 6:9; italics added).
27. See also Moses 6:48.
28. See D&C 101:78; 134:1.
29. See 1 Corinthians 15:51–53; 3 Nephi 28:8.
30. See 3 Nephi 27:13.
31. See Romans 5:11; 2 Nephi 25:16; Jacob 4:11, 12; Mosiah 3:5–11, 16, 18–19; 4:2; Alma 21:9; 22:14; 34:8; 36:17; Helaman 5:9; Moroni 7:41; Moses 7:45.
32. See D&C 138:19.
33. See Moses 6:57–62.
34. See 2 Nephi 9:28.
35. See also Exodus 40:15; Numbers 25:13; Alma 13:7.
36. See also D&C 84:6–17; 107:40; Abraham 1:2–4.
37. See Alma 13:9, 14.
38. See Genesis 17:1–7; 22:16–18; 26:3–4; 28:13–14; Isaiah 2:2–3; 1 Nephi 15:18; Alma 29:8; D&C 124:58; 132:47; Abraham 2:11.
39. See D&C 130:20–21.
40. See 2 Nephi 2:25.
41. See D&C 1:38.
42. For examples, see 1 Samuel 8:4–7; Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; 3 Nephi 14:21.
43. See D&C 137:9.
44. See John 14:2; 1 Corinthians 15:40–41; D&C 76:50–119; 98:18.
45. See D&C 64:23; 85:3.
46. See also Psalm 100:5; 117:2.
47. See also D&C 126:3.

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which immediately follows, must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to this wonderful choir—the Brigham Young University combined choirs—for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon. The choir will now sing in closing “Awake, Ye Saints of God, Awake!” I think that’s appropriate for an afternoon session.

Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy.

The chorus sang “Awake, Ye Saints of God, Awake!”

Elder Hans B. Ringger offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 163rd Semi-annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 2, 1993. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden directed the choir, and John Longhurst was at the organ.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood session.

We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching these proceedings in his apartment. We also excuse President Howard W. Hunter and Elder Marvin J. Ashton and Elder Clinton L. Cutler, each of whom is ill.

The services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, and in more than three thousand other locations in many countries of the world.

We note that Elders Richard G. Scott, Vaughn J. Featherstone, and Malcolm S. Jeppsen are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Dean L. Larsen and C. Max Caldwell are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Elders Earl C. Tingey and Helvécio Martins are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this morning, Elders Adney Y. Komatsu, Jacob de Jager, and H. Burke Peterson of the Seventy were given emeritus status; Elders Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen were sustained as Presidents of the Seventy, succeeding Elders Dean L. Larsen, James M. Paramore, and J. Richard Clarke; and Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone was called to succeed L. Lionel Kendrick as a counselor in the Young Men General Presidency.

The singing this evening will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this service with the choir singing "High on the Mountain Top," following which Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder F. Melvin Hammond offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now favor us with "Go, Ye Messengers of Heaven." Following their number, Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Go, Ye Messengers of Heaven."

Elder James E. Faust

Brethren, I have never come before this great body of the priesthood with greater humility than I do this evening. I fervently pray, not only for understanding, but also that I might not be misunderstood. I earnestly seek the support of the Holy Spirit and the understanding of my brethren. I affirm my love and profound respect for the brethren of the priesthood of this church. Soon you younger men and boys will be placed in the responsibility of spiritually guiding your homes and the Church. It is essential that you young men understand the importance of keeping the covenants and honoring the priesthood you bear.

Unity in the priesthood

As a prelude to the specific items I wish to discuss, I believe it is important to set forth a few fundamental principles as I understand them. The object of God's work is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). God has given the priesthood to man at various times since Adam's day to bring about the great plan of salvation for all mankind. Through our faithfulness, the transcendent blessings of eternal life flow from this priesthood authority.

For these priesthood blessings to flower, there is a constant need for unity within the priesthood. We must be loyal to the leadership who have been called to preside over us and hold the keys of the priesthood. The words of President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., still ring loudly in our ears: "*Brethren, let us be united.*" He explained:

"An essential part of unity is loyalty. . . . Loyalty is a pretty difficult quality to possess. It requires the ability to put away selfishness, greed, ambition and all of the baser qualities of the human mind. You cannot be loyal un-

less you are willing to surrender. . . . [A person's] own preferences and desires must be put away, and he must see only the great purpose which lies out ahead" (*Immortality and Eternal Life* [Melchizedek Priesthood course of study, 1968-69], p. 163).

The nature of the priesthood

What is the nature of the priesthood? The Prophet Joseph Smith said of the priesthood, "It is the eternal authority of God by which the universe was created and governed, and the stars in heaven came into existence, by which the great authority of exaltation operates throughout the universe."

The Prophet Joseph further taught, "Its institution was prior to 'the foundation of this earth, or the morning stars sang together, or the Sons of God shouted for joy,' and is the highest and holiest Priesthood, and is after the order of the Son of God" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 167). There is no question that the power of the priesthood exceeds our understanding. Through the Prophet Joseph, the Lord taught of this great power "that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course;

"To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; . . . and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world" (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:30-31).

Order within the priesthood

The priesthood operates in a system of sublime order. The priesthood

is not, however, a floating essence. It must be conferred by ordination with specific offices. It is held by men under sacred duty to use its authority to accomplish God's work for the blessing of men, women, and children alike. No one can claim priesthood authority except it is conferred openly by those possessing the authority "and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11). The exercise of priesthood authority is directed by the keys of the priesthood. These keys rest with the presiding local and General Authorities of the Church. Those who have the keys are responsible for the guiding momentum and direction of the work of the Lord on the earth. Clearly, as Alma states, the shepherds of the Church are responsible for protecting the flock:

"For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his flock doth he not drive him out?" (Alma 5:59).

Keeping the Church cleansed

Those who have keys, which include the judicial or disciplinary authority, have the responsibility for keeping the Church cleansed from all iniquity (see D&C 20:54; 43:11). Bishops, stake presidents, mission presidents, and others who have the responsibility of keeping the Church pure must perform this labor in a spirit of love and kindness. It should not be done in a spirit of punishment, but rather of helping. However, it is of no kindness to a brother or sister in transgression for their presiding officers to look the other way. Some words on this subject come from President John Taylor:

"Furthermore, I have heard of some Bishops who have been seeking to cover up the iniquities of men; I

tell them, in the name of God, they will have to bear . . . that iniquity, and if any of you want to partake of the sins of men, or uphold them, you will have to bear them. Do you hear it, you Bishops and you Presidents? God will require it at your hands. You are not placed in [a] position to tamper with the principles of righteousness, nor to cover up the infamies and corruptions of men" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1880, p. 78).

On this matter we urge you presiding brethren to seek the Spirit of God, to study and be guided by the scriptures and the *General Handbook of Instructions*. Church discipline is not limited to sexual sins but includes other acts such as murder, abortions, burglary, theft, fraud and other dishonesty, deliberate disobedience to the rules and regulations of the Church, advocating or practicing polygamy, apostasy, or any other unchristian conduct, including defiance or ridicule of the Lord's anointed, contrary to the law of the Lord and the order of the Church.

Unity in quorum decisions

How does the priesthood function? The decisions of the leaders and quorums of the priesthood should follow the pattern of the presiding quorums. "The decisions of these quorums . . . are to be made in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity" (D&C 107:30).

In some legislative assemblies of the world, there are some groups termed the "loyal opposition." I find no such principle in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Savior gave us this solemn warning: "Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). The Lord made it clear that in the presiding quorums every decision "must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member

in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions" (D&C 107:27). This means that after frank and open discussion, decisions are reached in council under the direction of the presiding officer, who has the ultimate authority to decide. That decision is then sustained, because our unity comes from full agreement with righteous principles and general response to the operation of the Spirit of God.

Limits of individual expression

Free discussion and expression are encouraged in the Church. Certainly the open expressions in most fast and testimony meetings or Sunday School, Relief Society, and priesthood meetings attest to that principle. However, the privilege of free expression should operate within limits. In 1869, George Q. Cannon explained the limits of individual expression:

"A friend . . . wished to know whether we . . . considered an honest difference of opinion between a member of the Church and the Authorities of the Church was apostasy. . . . We replied that . . . we could conceive of a man honestly differing in opinion from the Authorities of the Church and yet not be an apostate; but we could not conceive of a man publishing these differences of opinion and seeking by arguments, sophistry and special pleading to enforce them upon the people to produce division and strife and to place the acts and counsels of the Authorities of the Church, if possible, in a wrong light, and not be an apostate, for such conduct was apostasy as we understood the term" (*Gospel Truth*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist, 2 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], 2:276-77).

Definition of apostate activities

Among the activities considered apostate to the Church include when

members "(1) repeatedly act in clear, open, and deliberate public opposition to the Church or its leaders; (2) persist in teaching as Church doctrine information that is not Church doctrine after being corrected by their bishops or higher authority; or (3) continue to follow the teachings of apostate cults (such as those that advocate plural marriage) after being corrected by their bishops or higher authority" (*General Handbook of Instructions* [1989], p. 10-3).

Those men and women who persist in publicly challenging basic doctrines, practices, and establishment of the Church sever themselves from the Spirit of the Lord and forfeit their right to place and influence in the Church. Members are encouraged to study the principles and the doctrines of the Church so that they understand them. Then, if questions arise and there are honest differences of opinion, members are encouraged to discuss these matters privately with priesthood leaders.

Priesthood councils are in tune

There is a certain arrogance in thinking that any of us may be more spiritually intelligent, more learned, or more righteous than the councils called to preside over us. Those councils are more in tune with the Lord than any individual persons they preside over, and the individual members of the councils are generally guided by those councils.

In this church, where we have lay leadership, it is inevitable that some will be placed in authority over us who have a different background from our own. This does not mean that those with other honorable vocational or professional qualifications are any less entitled to the spirit of their office than any other. Some of the great bishops of my lifetime include a brickmason, a grocer, a farmer, a dairyman, and one who ran an ice cream business. What any may have

lacked in formal education was insignificant. They were humble men, and because they were humble they were taught and magnified by the Holy Spirit. Without exception they were greatly strengthened as they learned to labor diligently to fulfill their callings and to minister to the Saints they were called to preside over. So it is with all of the callings in the Church. President Monson teaches us, "Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 52; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 43).

Valuing women in the Church

How should holders of the priesthood treat the women of the Church? The sisters of this church since the beginning have always made a great and marvelous contribution to the work of the Lord. They have added so very much of intelligence, work, culture, and refinement to the Church and our families. The contributions of the sisters as we move into the future are needed more than ever to help establish the values, the faith, and the future of our families and the well-being of our society. They need to know they are valued, honored, and appreciated. The sisters who serve as leaders need to be invited to participate and to be listened to and included in our stake and ward council meetings, particularly concerning matters involving sisters, youth, and children.

How should those who bear the priesthood treat their wives and the other women in their family? Our wives need to be cherished. They need to hear their husbands call them blessed, and the children need to hear their fathers generously praise their mothers (see Proverbs 31:28). The Lord values his daughters just as much as he does his sons. In marriage, neither is superior; each has a different primary and divine responsibility. Chief among these different responsibilities for wives is the calling of motherhood. I firmly believe that our dear faithful sisters enjoy a special

spiritual enrichment which is inherent in their natures.

President Spencer W. Kimball stated: "To be a righteous woman during the winding up scenes on this earth, before the second coming of our Savior, is an especially noble calling. . . . Other institutions in society may falter and even fail, but the righteous woman can help to save the home, which may be the last and only sanctuary some mortals know in the midst of storm and strife" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1978, p. 103).

Using priesthood power righteously

Priesthood is a righteous authority only. Any attempt to use it in the home as a club to abuse or enforce unrighteous dominion is a complete contradiction of that authority and results in its loss. As a holder of the priesthood, the father holds a primary responsibility to claim spiritual and temporal blessings from the Lord for himself, his wife, his family, but these blessings can be claimed only in righteousness as he honors his priesthood. We are taught by the Lord that "no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (D&C 121:41). In my opinion, there are few words in the holy scriptures of greater significance than the beautiful language contained in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants as to how the priesthood is to be exercised:

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

"Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

"That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

"The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever" (D&C 121:42-46).

President Spencer W. Kimball stated, with respect to priesthood covenants: "There is no limit to the power of the priesthood which you hold. The limit comes in you if you do not live in harmony with the Spirit of the Lord and you limit yourselves in the power you exert" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 498). President Kimball further stated: "One breaks the priesthood covenant by transgressing commandments—but also by leaving undone his duties. Accordingly, to break this covenant one needs only to do nothing" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 497).

Oath and covenant of the priesthood

Another great reminder of our obligations and blessings is the oath and covenant of the priesthood as contained in the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. We are told that the transcendent obligations of priesthood holders are "to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life," and to bear "testimony to all the world," and to teach the

world of the "judgment which is to come" (vs. 43, 61, 87). Then there is this marvelous promise if we are faithful in our priesthood responsibilities: we shall be "sanctified by the Spirit" and become "the elect of God," and all that the "Father hath shall be given unto him" (vs. 33-34, 38). How much more important it is to receive "all that [the] Father hath" than to seek or receive anything else which this life offers.

The crowning blessings of life come through obeying the covenants and honoring the ordinances received in the holy temples, including the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, which is the capstone of the holy endowment.

In our desire to be broad-minded, to be accepted, to be liked and admired, let us not trifle with the doctrines and the covenants which have been revealed to us, nor with the pronouncements of those who have been given the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. For all of us, the words of Joshua ring with increasing relevance: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

May the Spirit of the Lord be with us to help us magnify this great priesthood authority, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Hugh W. Pinnock of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Elder H. Burke Peterson, who was accorded emeritus status today.

Elder Hugh W. Pinnock

This night I direct my comments to the young men who are here with your fathers, quorum advisers, bishops, and friends.

A pilot's checklist

Flying holds a special fascination for many of us. Pilots have a procedure they follow for leaving the ground confidently, traveling about the earth or exploring it from outer space securely, and then landing safely. Whether flying a single-engine airplane or commanding a spacecraft circling the world every ninety-two minutes, each seasoned pilot carefully goes over a *checklist* to ensure that every system of the aircraft is working properly. Whether we speak of a jet fighter (F-14 or F-18 Hornet) screaming into the sky from an aircraft carrier deck, a crop duster skimming over farms in Washington or Kansas, or the space shuttle *Discovery* rocketing into space, launching satellites and doing scientific and medical experiments, it is the same. Each pilot and crew member go through a detailed checklist before taking off to make sure that everything is in proper order.

Your personal checklist

Because each of you is more important than any aircraft, you would be wise to contemplate and go through your own personal checklist before you take off into the balance of your lives. I suggest five areas that you would check often as you fly toward a happy forever. Many of you young men have eighty and more years to live! Think of it! What a promising future you have if you prepare properly and keep focused.

Honor and use the priesthood

First checklist item: The priesthood. Really understand and use the

priesthood you bear. Honor it; realize its power. Remember, the Aaronic Priesthood that you bear is the preparatory priesthood leading to the Melchizedek Priesthood. By the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Only Begotten Son created worlds without number (see Hebrews 1:2; D&C 76:24; Moses 1:33) as the premortal Jehovah and then performed many miracles on earth as our Savior, Jesus Christ. A wise priesthood leader taught that now is the time in your life for *doing*, so later you *become* the man you are to be. Heavenly Father trusts you. You have the very priesthood that Aaron bore honorably and that John the Baptist used when he baptized Jesus "to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Eighteen hundred years later, on the banks of the Susquehanna River, he ordained Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to that same Aaronic Priesthood (see Joseph Smith—History 1:68–73).

Remember:

- Joseph Smith was the age of you deacons when he was thinking deeply about God (see Joseph Smith—History 1:5–13).

- Joseph Smith was the age of you teachers when he went into the woods to pray and was blessed to talk with God the Father and Jesus, our Elder Brother (see Joseph Smith—History 1:14–20).

- Joseph Smith was the age of you priests when Moroni first visited him and told him about the record on gold plates (see Joseph Smith—History 1:27–54).

The priesthood you bear enables you to prepare, bless, and pass the bread and water, the holy emblems of the sacrament. You place the members of the Church under solemn covenant to "take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them" (D&C 20:77). You gather fast offerings to help the poor and the needy.

Many of you serve as ushers, arrange chairs and tables for meetings, and perform other important duties. You priests have the authority to baptize (see D&C 20:46), just as the young men serving as missionaries and as your fathers and other older men do. And you also ordain others in appropriate circumstances (see D&C 20:48).

Heavenly Father loves you! Your priesthood leaders will call many, many of you and set you apart as members of quorum presidencies or as quorum secretaries. What great leadership lessons you learn as you lead others while you are young. And bishops, what a vital task you have because of the training and practical experiences you provide our young men in positions of quorum leadership.

Love family and friends

Second checklist item: Family and friends. Always remember the importance of your home, your parents, other family members, and your friends. Do not expect your parents to do things for you that you now can do for yourselves. It is your turn to begin taking more responsibility. "Hey, but my dad should do this," or "I want my mother to continue to do this for me," you might still wish. A successful home is based on the love and helpfulness of children just as it is based on loving parents handling their responsibilities.

One day when I was seventeen years old, I was washing the family car in anticipation of going on a date that evening. My father came out of the house to observe what I was doing. He criticized me to the extent that I felt as if I was doing nothing right. Finally I said something like, "Dad, get off my case. Don't you understand this is the first time I have ever been a teenager?" He looked at me and said, "Pal, don't you know this is the first time I have ever been a father?" I grew wiser that day because I realized we all are learn-

ing together within a family. We cannot expect our parents to be perfect any more than we can expect ourselves to be all that we hoped to be.

Be eager to forgive when problems arise at home. Help with your younger brothers and sisters when needed. You are their hero. As you assume more responsibility at home, you will find additional opportunities popping up in other areas in your life.

Choose your friends carefully. Associate with young men and young women who are straight and who will assist you to be responsible. Help your friends decide to go on missions, to attend Church meetings, and to enjoy righteous activities. You who are sixteen and older and are dating, make sure the girls you date are just as good when you return them to their homes as when you picked them up.

Don't feed the foxes

Third checklist item: Live the commandments. Never feed the foxes! What does that mean? *Breaking commandments is like feeding foxes.* In England where we live, my wife and I had heard that foxes were right in town. We wanted to see a fox. A neighbor told us that if we left food for the foxes we probably would see one. Our butcher gave us some bones. Each night we would place some bones out in the backyard. Soon a fox came to eat. Then a few more. Now we have at least five foxes racing through our flower garden, digging up the lawn, and leaving a shambles every night, sort of like a furry Jurassic Park.

What started out as a curiosity is now a problem, and sin is much the same. An indiscretion can begin a process that can make a mess of a whole life. Remember, if you don't start feeding the foxes, they will never tear up your yard. If you avoid making the seemingly small and harmless mistakes, your life will be free of many larger

problems later on. Be a courageous young man by living straight. Create happy memories for yourselves and those around you.

Get an education

Fourth checklist item: Education. Make good use of your schooling. The scriptures tell us that there is a time for every purpose under heaven (see Ecclesiastes 3:1–8). Now is the time of your preparation. The direction you are flying as a young man will determine where you will land as an adult. Are you headed in the direction that you want to be flying?

Those of us who are older remember that not all that goes on in school and work is pleasant, nor does it all seem useful and necessary. Yet most of what you learn is helpful. Be excited about your schooling and develop the habit of going the extra mile (see Matthew 5:41; 3 Nephi 12:41). This habit will assist you in crossing continents successfully when you are older. Through study and hard work, you prepare for a life of spiritual, emotional, and economic self-reliance. Build a foundation now that will support your future (see Matthew 7:24–25). Feel the excitement of accomplishing difficult tasks.

Hardworking young men of a few years ago are the productive and respected leaders of today. Many of them worked several jobs when they were young and saved part of their income for a mission and for their education. They have been blessing others ever since. Your parents are not obligated to

provide everything you want. The Lord instructed us not to be idle! (see D&C 42:42; 60:13; 75:3; 88:124).

Serve a mission

Fifth checklist item: A mission. While serving as an aide-de-camp to a major general in an army reserve unit, I found myself in many conversations with that remarkable military leader. He was not of our faith. "Pinnock," he once said, "do you know how fortunate you Mormons are?" I replied by saying something like, "Yes, sir, but what are you thinking about?" He said, "A mission, Pinnock; that's what it's all about. Your young men are encouraged to go to serve others. They become stronger, more wise, and more dependable because of a mission."

The prophet has asked you young men to serve, the world desperately needs you to serve, and you need to feel the power and growth from serving and teaching others. And if for some unusual reason you are not called to serve a mission, there will be other opportunities to serve the Lord.

So there you have it: a checklist that can keep you flying in the right direction. A pilot must have the support of a skilled ground crew to succeed, and your parents, bishops, quorum leaders, and solid friends all will help support your flight through these key years of your life. A wonderful future is yours if you stick to your personal checklist. We pray for you, care about you, and stand by to help you. To these truths I testify in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder H. Burke Peterson

"Touch not . . . the unclean thing"

My brethren, with tender feelings I greet you in the spirit of love and respect. My thanks for all the good you do

in behalf of our Father's children all over the world. This evening I hope you can understand the concern this assignment has given me. Expecting that this will be my last opportunity to stand at

this pulpit and speak to you brethren of the priesthood, my thoughts have been led to address a subject that some may find discomforting. As King Benjamin of old said, so plead I for each one of us. I quote:

“Open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view” (Mosiah 2:9).

It is my hope that we will be taught by the Spirit tonight.

In Moroni 10:30 we read, “And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and *touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing*” (italics added).

My thoughts will center on our sometimes innocent involvement in one of the terrible, unclean things referred to by this ancient prophet. Satan, the very devil and the father of all lies, has slyly and slowly lowered the social norms of morality to a tragic and destructive level. In magazines and books, on CDs and tapes, on our television and theater screens is portrayed more and more often a lifestyle that might even rival the excesses of those who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah. The screens, music, and printed materials are filled with a profusion of sex, nudity, and vulgarity.

Consequences of evil entertainment

One of the great tragedies is that too many men and boys who hold the priesthood of God are watching and listening to this type of so-called entertainment. Some do it only casually at first. They think they are spiritually strong and will be immune to its influence. This trash is nothing more nor less than pornography dressed in one of its many imitation robes of splendor—one of the master counterfeiter’s best products.

Part of the tragedy I speak of is that many men and boys do not recognize they are trapped or soon will be. Unfor-

tunately, I fear even some within the sound of my voice have an addiction and do not realize it. They see this as a form of entertainment that serves as a relief from the troubles of the day. In point of fact and in reality, *it is only relieving them of their spirituality* and their capacity to draw on the powers of heaven in times of need.

We must come to understand fully the consequences of having an appetite for such entertainment. Fathers and mothers must warn their children and make them aware of the eternal penalty. No man or boy of us here tonight can look at, read about, or listen to such explicit vulgarity, even in its mildest form, without bringing sorrow to a loving God and a terrible injury to one’s own spirit. We cannot look at or listen to these unholy depictions in our own living rooms or wherever they are shown without suffering the consequences—and those consequences are very real.

We must remember, our rewards for righteous living are only partially enjoyed in this mortal life. Likewise, our miseries for breaking the commandments of God will not all be realized fully as we live here on the earth. Eternity is a long, long time.

Stay away from evil media

Brethren, I plead with you to leave it alone. Stay away from any movie, video, publication, or music—*regardless of its rating*—where illicit behavior and expressions are a part of the action. Have the courage to turn it off in your living room. Throw the tapes and the publications in the garbage can, for that is where we keep garbage.

The Doctrine and Covenants gives a warning and a promise. The promise says that “if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things” (D&C 88:67).

In an application of this scripture today, it is my understanding that anytime we look at or listen to the kind of material we have been speaking of—even in its mildest form—the light inside of us grows dimmer because the darkness inside increases. The effect of this is that we cannot think as clearly on life's challenges—be they business, church, school, family, or personal—because the channel to the source of all light for the solving of problems is cluttered with various unclean images. Our entitlement to personal revelation on any subject is severely restricted. We don't do as well in school or at work. We are left more on our own, and as a result we make more mistakes and we are not as happy.

Remember, our mind is a wonderful instrument. It will record and keep whatever we put into it, both trash and beauty. When we see or hear anything filthy or vulgar, whatever the source, our mind records it, and as it makes the filthy record, beauty and clean thoughts are pushed into the background. Hope and faith in Christ begin to fade, and, more and more, turmoil and discontent become our companions.

Brothers, sisters, and parents are not as happy together as they used to be. We find less peace and contentedness in our hearts and homes. We do things that later we wish we had not done. Contention looms its vicious head, and when contention is present, the Spirit of Christ departs from us.

Again I say, leave it alone. Turn it off, walk away from it, burn it, erase it, or destroy it. I know it is hard counsel we give when we say movies that are R-rated, and many with PG-13 ratings, are produced by satanic influences. Our standards should not be dictated by the rating system. I repeat, because of what they *really* represent, these types of movies, music, and tapes serve the purposes of the author of all darkness.

We are men and boys of the covenant

Brethren, let's consider again why we cannot be involved in Satan's program of entertainment and be held guiltless. Why? Because *we are men and boys of the covenant*, and that makes us different from all others. When we've made a covenant with the Lord, we are special—not ordinary, but special. He loves all of his sons, *but those of the covenant have a special responsibility*.

The Lord has told us in holy writ that before we ever came to this earth we were all called to hold his priesthood and bear up his work here. It isn't a small, insignificant task we have. He *will* hold us responsible for our portion of the labor.

A plan for cleansing the spirit

Now, if you have this problem we speak of, let me give you hope and a plan of attack. If you are young, go to your parents or your bishop for help. Both young and older must go to the Lord. Stopping the activity and cleansing the spirit of the impurities of which we've been speaking will not be easy, and it will not be quick, but it can be sure. I quote from a talk given at this pulpit several years ago:

"The secret to cleansing our spirit of whatever the impurity is not very complicated. It begins with [sincere, heartfelt] prayer every morning and ends with prayer every night. This is the most important step I know in the cleansing process. It may simply be a prayer for strength to turn from bad habits" or a prayer that sin will be distasteful to you (H. Burke Peterson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, p. 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, p. 39).

Meanwhile, remember that not all prayers are answered the same day or even the next day. Sometimes it takes a long time. But "with this step in place, I have seen hundreds of miracles take place. Without it, there is continued frustration, unhappiness, ineffectiveness,

and despair" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, p. 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, p. 39).

If you have tried and have given up, I plead with you to try again and again and again. Our Heavenly Father will not forsake your efforts if you persist.

The second step in this plan of attack is to gain an added measure of spiritual strength through a daily study of the scriptures. Your study need not be long, but it should be every day. If I were you, I would read the scriptures tonight and never let a day pass without reading in them, even if only for a few minutes. There is an added measure of inspiration promised to those who read the scriptures regularly (see Conference Report, Oct. 1980, p. 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, p. 39).

The scriptures will assist us to overpower darkness with light.

The third step that I would counsel is, when necessary, to receive the blessing that comes in the confession process. Too many are harboring the inner feeling of guilt resulting from unrepented mistakes. Part of the repentance process is confession. If you happen to be one of those who has this need, I plead with you to go see your bishop before the sun sets tomorrow.

Come unto Christ

I testify that the Savior is at the head of this work. May I echo the words that the great prophet Moroni offered in his farewell address:

"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God" (Moroni 10:32).

Of him I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We've heard from Elders Hugh W. Pinnock and H. Burke Peterson.

We'll now all stand and sing "Ye Elders of Israel," following which we shall hear from Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Ye Elders of Israel."

Elder Carlos H. Amado

Called to serve

Servant and *service* are common words in the restored church.

Someone said, "The one who doesn't live to serve doesn't serve to live"—wise words which are applied to each priesthood holder. Another word to describe the priesthood is *service*; literally, every man who receives the priesthood is "called to serve." The Apostle Peter said about you, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9). I will illustrate with one story.

María Coj gives the gift of sight

María Coj was a seventeen-year-old member of the Church, the oldest of eight children. She was sick with cysticercosis, a parasitic infection that comes from eating contaminated food, that with time spread to her brain, causing terrible headaches and then blindness. To give her relief from the pain, it was necessary to move her from her home in Sololá to Guatemala City. Because of convulsions caused by the advances of the illness, her condition worsened, and it was only with life-

support systems that she was kept alive. It was evident that she could not live long under those conditions.

At this same time, Erika Alonzo, a twelve-year-old and partially blind member of the Church, traveled twenty-two hours by bus from Honduras to Guatemala City to receive an eye operation. For two weeks she waited for an acceptable cornea from the United States to be transplanted to her eye, but none was available.

At this same time María died. Because her blindness was caused by pressure to her brain, her corneas were healthy. María's father and mother authorized the cornea donation. The operation was a success.

On the twelfth of July 1993, Erika traveled to Sololá to meet the Coj family for the first time. The surprised family asked her, "Can you see?" She answered, "I see everything clearly." It was a spiritual meeting. Sister Coj, who did not understand much Spanish because her native language is Cakchiquel, felt the love and the spirit of the conversation.

Because of the donation of María's eyes, Erika can now see and enjoy everything around her. The death of one person and the love of her parents blessed the life of another. The medical miracle of one person being able to look through eyes of another is a surprising reality.

Expand your vision

Spiritually speaking, as you Aaronic Priesthood youth contemplate the blessings of this life and of eternity through the eyes of your faithful parents, teachers, bishops, Apostles, and prophets, you will discover that, through the small donations of daily time to ponder, pray, and study the scriptures, you will learn of the divine that is in you.

Expand your vision and recognize that you have ties with God; lift your sight and live worthy of the priesthood

that you hold. Learn in your youth to control your passions, desires, and appetites. Seriously prepare yourselves to fulfill your glorious responsibility to preach the truths of the Restoration, which are that Jesus is the Christ and that salvation comes only through Him, that Joseph Smith was a prophet who was instructed by divine messengers to restore with power and authority all covenants and ordinances that are found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Learn about Christ's mission

In each priesthood holder should burn the personal conviction that the mission of Jesus Christ was unique. The Son of the Eternal Heavenly Father and of a mortal mother, especially chosen, He became the Only Begotten Son of God, which qualified Him to be the Mediator, Savior, and Redeemer of mankind. Even though He was slandered, spit upon, slapped, whipped, and humiliated, "yet he opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

He died at an early age; He was strong and young, of unlimited wisdom. When you are thirty-three, you will understand better. His sacrifice was painful but indispensable. He was the first to be resurrected, clothed in glory and eternal life.

The atonement of the Son of God opened the possibility that all mankind could return to the presence of the Father. Now He teaches us, "Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do" (2 Nephi 31:12).

Serve as a missionary

It will be your privilege to serve two years as a missionary with an eye single to glorify God and build His kingdom (see D&C 4:5). During that time, Christ will refine your spirit. He will mold your character and plant in your heart the principles that will permit you to live in

righteousness and joy in this life and for eternity.

You might think that you will sacrifice much to leave your family, your education, and your comfortable life. Others might complain that missionary life is rigorous. The thousands who have served will testify to you that when you count your blessings, sacrifice does not exist.

Elder Hermelindo Coy's faith

I would like to share an experience of faith. Being the only child, Elder Hermelindo Coy said good-bye to his mother and left for the first time in his life his small village in the mountains of Senahú, Guatemala. He entered the Missionary Training Center the fourteenth of March, 1991. Although he had been a member of the Church for only two years and also very timid about talking to people, his determination to serve was great. His formal education was less than five years of elementary school in his native language of Kekchi. Spanish, the official language of Guatemala, was foreign to him.

During his mission he learned to live with pain in his leg. He rarely complained. In August 1992 he noticed that in addition to the increase in the pain, something was abnormal about his knee. He had a medical exam—the diagnosis: *bone cancer*. A more careful exam revealed cancer in the liver, lungs, and lymphatic system; in other words, his illness was terminal. He did not understand the nature of the illness nor its seriousness. With the help of a translator and using examples from the farm life with which he was familiar, he understood that he had little time to live.

He never asked, Why is this happening to me? He did not lament or express negative feelings. He was obedient to all that was required of him. He was asked if he would like to return home, but he asked to remain in the mission and serve as long as possible, even until his death.

By October of the same year, he walked with difficulty, requiring the use of a cane. He could work only a few hours each day. By December he was unable to walk. For the first time he was discouraged because he could not proselyte. His worry was always who would take care of his mother after he died.

In one of his visits, the mission president asked him to teach more of the basic doctrine to his mother, who, along with mission nurses, was providing twenty-four-hour care. When he taught the plan of salvation to his mother in his native tongue, his face radiated assurance and light. Elder Coy was understanding with power and conviction what he was teaching.

As his strength declined, he placed his complete trust in the Lord. On one occasion when the pain was very strong, he expressed in prayer, "Heavenly Father, I do not know the day or the hour that I will die, but I want to know soon from thee about my new assignment." He died in February 1993. His death blessed all the missionaries, leaders, members, and even nonmembers who learned of his courage to serve and endure to the end. His faith was so simple that it was contagious. He never feared death. He strengthened all who knew him.

My beloved youth, I promise you that as you serve with faith as did Elder Coy, and as you look through the eyes of your parents and leaders, who love you also, your testimony will be strengthened, your vision will expand, which will illuminate all who are spiritually blind and will help them return to Christ. Arise and shine; be like the over forty-nine thousand missionaries who today are taking the light, hope, and knowledge to those who need it. I add my own testimony of the divinity of this work in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We are honored to have with us this evening Mr. Jere B. Ratcliffe, chief Scout executive; Mr. Eugene F. "Bud" Reid, member of the National Executive Board and International Committee of the Boy Scouts of America and immediate past president of the World Scout Committee; and Mr. C. Michael Hoover,

assistant chief Scout executive. It is my privilege to call on Mr. Ratcliffe and then Mr. Reid, who will make a special presentation to President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. President Monson will then address us.

Presentation of Scouting Award to President Thomas S. Monson

Mr. Jere B. Ratcliffe

It is indeed an honor for me to be at the general priesthood conference on this occasion of recognizing President Thomas Monson with International Scouting's Bronze Wolf Award. President Monson is one of the Boy Scouts of America's most distinguished friends and the longest-tenured member of our national executive board, having begun his service with election in 1969.

During that period of time, the Boy Scouts of America and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have enjoyed an unprecedented partnership in the development of young men. The partnership between the LDS Church and the BSA is, to me, a precious one. It is precious because of our organizations and what they embrace in terms of similar basic beliefs—beliefs that include a commitment to religious principles and to strong, traditional family values.

The leadership of the Boy Scouts of America recognizes that religious principles are the important part of life. When a young man begins to grow in his faith, he will begin to grow from within and thereby be better prepared to make a positive difference in our society.

Scouting also continues to emphasize the traditional family values. President David O. McKay, a great and supportive Scouter, often stated, and I quote, "No success can compensate for failure in the home." Together Scouting and the Church continue to encourage

the growth of family value and of family values.

President Monson has helped the Boy Scouts of America remain very much focused on our mutual basic beliefs. He is an exceptional Scouter. He has very much dedicated his life to upholding and to placing into practice the teachings of the Church and the mission of the Boy Scouts of America, a mission of teaching values to last a lifetime.

On behalf of all your Scouting colleagues, President Monson, I wish to congratulate you and to wish to you and your lovely wife, Frances, much continued happiness and success.

Mr. Eugene F. "Bud" Reid

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the World Scout Committee, I have the honor and the privilege to present the Bronze Wolf Award to Thomas S. Monson. This is the only award given by the World Organization of the Scout Movement. I would like to ask President Monson to please arise.

I shall now read the citation for the award of the Bronze Wolf:

"President Thomas S. Monson, USA, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

"Member, National Executive Board, Boy Scouts of America

"President Monson has been active in Scouting throughout his life. As a Scout in his youth, he achieved the rank

of Life Scout and later served as Explorer and Institutional Representative.

"Within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he has directed the activities of Scouting at many levels. He has served as a merit badge counselor and also as a member of the Canadian LDS Scouting Committee and chaplain at a Canadian jamboree. He was a member of the General Scouting Committee of the Church for ten years. For the past several years, he has been involved in a Scouting for Food drive to aid the poor of the community.

"In 1969, Thomas S. Monson became a member of the National Executive Board of Boy Scouts of America, where he also serves as a member of the International Committee. He is a recipi-

ent of the Silver Buffalo Award and has represented Boy Scouts of America as a delegate to the World Conferences in Tokyo, Nairobi, and Copenhagen.

"In his assignments throughout the world as a leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, President Monson has worked tirelessly to bring about the advancement of Scouting in many countries. He has worked closely with the World Organization of the Scout Movement to find ways to strengthen the links between the Church and national Scout associations. He is a committed, solid, hard-working volunteer in the Scout Movement. His Scouting leadership has been exemplary."

I will now place around the neck of Thomas S. Monson the Bronze Wolf.

President Thomas S. Monson

The Church's support of Scouting

My dear friends and fellow Scouters, Jere Ratcliffe, Bud Reid, and Mike Hoover, you honor me tonight by your attendance and with your remarks. I am humbled by the presentation of the Bronze Wolf Award. I know that as you bestow this honor, you are also expressing gratitude to the Church and to leaders past and present who have permitted me to serve on the National Executive Board these past twenty-four years and to follow in the footsteps of President Ezra Taft Benson and President George Albert Smith, who preceded me in this appointment. As a member of the International Committee of the board, I have had the privilege to travel to many lands and to witness the favorable influence of Scouting in the lives of young men of many languages, races, and cultures.

As a church we do rather well in carrying the Scouting program in the United States and Canada. With the help of Jacques Moreillon, secretary general of the World Organization of

the Scout Movement, we are taking steps to expand the influence of Scouting to our young men worldwide.

I love the inspired words of President Spencer W. Kimball as he spoke to Church members throughout the world:

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affirms the continued support of Scouting and will seek to provide leadership which will help boys keep close to their families and close to the Church as they develop the qualities of citizenship and character and fitness which Scouting represents."¹

"We have remained strong and firm in our support of this great movement for boys and of the Oath and the Law which are at its center."² Tonight we renew that endorsement.

Scouting experiences and reflections

Would you permit me to relate just one personal experience. When I was fourteen years old, our troop went to Big Cottonwood Canyon on a Scout outing. After setting up camp, our leader

said to me, "Monson, you like to fish. I'm giving you two fishing flies—a black gnat and a white miller. Now you catch enough fish to feed this troop for the next three days, and I'll pick all of you up on Saturday." He departed. I never questioned his charge. I knew if I did my part I'd catch the fish and feed the troop. And I did. I was a man before I realized it just isn't proper for the Scoutmaster to bail out on the boys. But what a learning experience it was for us.

The paintings of Norman Rockwell on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* magazine or in *Boy's Life* always brought tender feelings to me. Of the two paintings I most admire, one is of a Scoutmaster sitting by the dying embers of the bonfire and observing his boys—fast asleep in their small tents. The sky is filled with stars, the tousled heads of the boys illumined by the fire's glow. The Scoutmaster's countenance reflects his love, his faith, his devotion. The scene recalls the thought, "The greatest gift a man can give a boy is his willingness to share a part of his life with him."

The other painting is of a small lad, clad in the oversized Scout uniform of his older brother. He is looking at himself in a mirror which adorns the wall, his tiny arm raised in the Scout salute. It could well be entitled "Following in the Footsteps of Scouting."

In this world where some misguided men and women strive to tear down and destroy great movements such as Scouting, I am pleased to stand firm for an organization that teaches duty to God and country, that embraces the Scout Law; yes, an organization whose motto is "Be prepared" and whose slogan is "Do a good turn daily."

The Aaronic Priesthood prepares boys for manhood and the weightier duties of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Scouting helps our boys to walk uprightly the priesthood path to exaltation. Along that path there will be turns and detours, requiring decisions of utmost importance. Heavenly inspiration will

provide a road map that will ensure the accuracy of our choices. There comes a time in the life of every young man for serious contemplation and wise evaluation concerning his future—for decisions determine destiny.

Men of faith needed as leaders

Tonight in this vast priesthood audience are those who have successfully navigated the pathways of their youth. Such men of experience and faith are needed as examples for those who look to them for guidance and safety. Brethren, are we prepared for our leadership opportunity—even our life-saving privilege? The need for our help is here and now.

In cities across the land and in nations throughout the world, there has occurred a deterioration of the home and family. Abandoned in many instances is the safety net of personal and family prayer. A macho-inspired attitude of "I can go it alone" or "I don't need the help of anyone" dominates the daily philosophy of many. Frequently there is a rebellion against long-established traditions of decency and order, and the temptation to run with the crowd is overwhelming. Such a destructive philosophy, this formula for failure, can lead to ruin unless men of faith, filled with love, step forward to show a faltering boy the right way to go. Remember the verse:

He stood at the crossroads all alone,
The sunlight in his face.

He had no thought for the world
unknown—

He was set for a manly race.
But the roads stretched east, and
the roads stretched west,
And the lad knew not which road
was best;

So he chose the road that led him
down,
And he lost the race and victor's
crown.

He was caught at last in an angry
snare

Because no one stood at the cross-
roads there
To show him the better road.

Another day, at the self-same place,
A boy with high hopes stood.
He, too, was set for a manly race;
He, too, was seeking the things that
were good;
But one was there who the roads
did know,
And that one showed him which
way to go.
So he turned from the road that
would lead him down,
And he won the race and the victor's
crown.
He walks today the highway fair
Because one stood at the crossroads
there
To show him the better way.³

Young men also can lead

Those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood are not the only resource with the strength to lift, the wisdom to guide, and the ability to save. Many of you young men comprise the presidencies of quorums of deacons, quorums of teachers, and hold leadership positions assisting the bishops in guiding quorums of priests. As you magnify your callings with respect to aiding those over whom you preside, heavenly help will be forthcoming. Remember that throughout the ages of time, our Heavenly Father has shown His confidence in those of tender years.

The boy Samuel must have appeared like any boy his age as he ministered unto the Lord before Eli. As Samuel lay down to sleep and heard the voice of the Lord calling him, Samuel mistakenly thought it was aged Eli and responded, "Here am I." However, after Eli listened to the boy's account and told him it was of the Lord, Samuel followed Eli's counsel and subsequently responded to the Lord's call with the memorable reply, "Speak; for thy ser-

vant heareth." The record then reveals that "Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him."⁴

Contemplate for a moment the far-reaching effect of the prayer of a boy, born in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and five in Sharon, Windsor County, state of Vermont—even Joseph Smith, the first prophet of this dispensation. The Father and the Son appeared to him, and divine guidance was provided—all for the purpose of exalting the children of God.

We remember with gratitude that night of nights which marked the fulfillment of prophecy when a lowly manger cradled a newborn child. With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment, a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child, born in such primitive circumstances, was to be the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the promised Messiah—even Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As a boy, Jesus was found "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

"And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

"And when [Joseph and His mother] saw him, they were amazed. . .

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."⁵

He "went about doing good, . . . for God was with him."⁶

Suggestions for reaching our potential

I mention these powerful examples so that every young man within the sound of my voice may know for himself his own strength when God is with him.

As each realizes his own potential and what our Heavenly Father expects of him—a determination to live proper standards, to be true to one's best self, and to act always in accordance with a high

sense of true values—there will follow incomparable joy and lasting peace.

A four-point guide will help focus our attention on such a goal:

First, be where we ought to be. A wise father counseled his son, "If you ever find yourself where you shouldn't be, then get out!" Choose your friends carefully, for you will tend to be like them and be found where they choose to go.

Second, say what we ought to say. What we say and how we say it tend to reflect what we are. In the life of the Apostle Peter, when he attempted to distance himself from Jesus and pretended to be other than what he was, his tormenters detected his true identity with the penetrating statement, "Thy speech bewrayeth thee."⁷ The words we utter will reflect the feelings of our hearts, the strength of our character, and the depth of our testimonies.

Third, do what we ought to do. Pierre, one of the central characters in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, torn by spiritual agonies, cries out to God, "Why is it that I know what is right and I do what is wrong?" Pierre needed a mind-set, a resolve—even a stiffening of his backbone. One clever with words put it this way as he paraphrased the familiar counsel "Never put off 'til tomorrow what you should do today" by adding, "Why do we not put off 'til tomorrow what we shouldn't do today!"

Then there is the excuse of the weak: "The devil made me do it." It is only when we take charge of our own actions that we direct them in the proper course.

Fourth, be what we ought to be. The Apostle Paul counseled his beloved young friend Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."⁸ Peter asked the question, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Then Peter's life answered convincingly his own question. The Master's own

voice queried: "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."¹⁰

The upward reach

On occasion, when I have met with young men, I have been asked the question, "Brother Monson, is there one thing I can do to help me pattern my life and live up to my full potential?" As I have searched memory's corridors for an answer to such a question, I have recalled an experience of a few years ago. A group of friends were trail riding on strong Morgan horses when we came to a clearing which opened on a lush grass meadow with a small, clear stream meandering through it. No mule deer could wish for a better home. However, there was a danger lurking. The wily deer can detect the slightest movement in the surrounding bush; he can hear the crack of a twig and discern the scent of man. He is vulnerable from but one direction—overhead. In a mature tree, hunters had erected a platform high above the enticing spot. Though in many places this is illegal, the hunter can take his prey as it comes to eat and to drink. No twig would break, no movement disturb, no scent reveal the hunter's whereabouts. Why? The magnificent buck deer, with its highly developed senses to warn of impending danger, does not have the capacity to look directly upward and thus detect his enemy. Man is not so restricted. His greatest safety is found in his ability and his desire to "look to God and live."¹¹

Wrote the poet:

But chief of all thy wondrous works,
Supreme of all thy plan,
Thou hast put an upward reach
Into the heart of man.¹²

Jared Barney, a courageous Cub Scout

May I conclude with a heart-tugging account of one small boy, a Cub Scout whose love of Scouting brought

him and those who knew him and loved him closer to God as he reached upward and stepped over the limits of mortality and entered the broad expanse of eternity, clad in the uniform he loved and wearing the honor he had won—in Scouting.

In October 1992, nine-year-old Jared Barney passed away as a result of brain cancer. He had, in his short life, endured multiple surgeries, along with radiation and chemotherapy treatments. His last surgery was August 9, 1992. A month after that, an MRI picked up six new tumors, two of which were already quite large.

The radiation and chemotherapy made Jared very ill. The surgeries were difficult, but he always bounced back very quickly. Although he suffered much pain, the Lord blessed and sustained him.

Jared had a special spirit that drew others to him. He never complained about how he felt or about having to be sick or about the treatments he had to have. When asked how he was doing, he always said, “Good,” no matter how he felt. He was ever known for his contagious smile. The Light of Christ was in his eyes.

May I quote from Jared’s mother, Olivia, who wrote concerning his last days:

“Our many prayers were answered in behalf of our little son. We prayed that he would be able to walk, talk, and see until the end, and then that the Lord would take him quickly. He was able to do all of these things, and we are so thankful to the Lord for answering our prayers. Jared loved life so much, and we wanted him to be able to enjoy it fully until the end.

“Jared had earned some Cub Scout awards three weeks prior to his passing. He had earned his Bear badge, his Faith in God, a Gold Arrow Point, and two Silver Arrow Points. We know that he loved to get those awards. He was failing quickly, and he wouldn’t even let him-

self sleep until he could attend the pack meeting held on October 14, 1992, to achieve his awards. At the pack meeting, he raised his hand three times and told everyone how long he had waited for these awards and how happy he was to get them. When we returned home, he asked me to sew his badges on that very night. I did. Then he prayed that Heavenly Father would let him sleep because he was so tired. He said that three times. He went to sleep and never moved all night. From then on he slept most of the time until his passing.

“We buried him in his Cub Scout shirt with those long-awaited emblems sewn and pinned on the front. He had a beautiful service. Many were present, for he had made so many friends in the community through his example of courage and faith.”

Such was the influence of an inspired program in the life of a tiny boy and his family.

To all the Aaronic Priesthood assembled tonight with your fathers and your leaders, the priesthood program of the Church, with its accompanying activities, including Scouting, will help and not hinder you as you journey through life. May each one of us resolve to follow the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, keep His commandments, and live His teachings, that we may inherit the greatest of all gifts: eternal life with God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1977, p. 51; or *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 36.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1977, p. 50; or *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 36.
3. *Central Christian Monitor*.
4. 1 Samuel 3:4, 10, 19.
5. Luke 2:46–48, 52.
6. Acts 10:38.
7. Matthew 26:73.
8. 1 Timothy 4:12.
9. 2 Peter 3:11.
10. 3 Nephi 27:27.

11. Alma 37:47.
12. Harry Kemp, "God the Architect," in Caroline Miles Hill, ed., *The World's Great Religious Poetry* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), p. 211.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson. We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to

10:00 in the morning. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session must be in their seats by 9:15 A.M.

Following my remarks, the choir, whom we thank for their great service tonight, will conclude by singing "Thy Servants Are Prepared." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Stephen D. Nadauld of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

I congratulate most warmly President Monson on the honor given him. The ecologists would say that it is good to have a wolf among us. This is a well-deserved recognition for years of faithful service to Scouting, a program which the Church has now sponsored for eighty years, to the blessing of hundreds of thousands of boys and young men.

Brethren, this has been a wonderful meeting. All of us have been strengthened. I pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit as I conclude with words of personal testimony.

When I was a young man, I sat in a general conference in this Tabernacle and heard President Heber J. Grant declare that he was grateful above all else for the testimony which he had of this, the work of God.

I am now older than President Grant was when I heard him say those words. I now know how he felt. I too feel that of all things, the most precious is the conviction I have in my heart of the truth and divinity of this sacred work.

Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith

I thank the Lord for the knowledge He has given me that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God. I have spoken before of the experience I had as a twelve-year-old boy, a newly ordained deacon. With my father I went to our

stake priesthood meeting. He sat on the stand as a member of the stake presidency, and I sat on the back row of the chapel. The men of that large congregation stood and sang:

Praise to the man who communed
with Jehovah!

Jesus anointed that Prophet and
Seer.

Blessed to open the last dispensa-
tion,

Kings shall extol him, and nations
revere.

["Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27]

As I heard them sing that hymn with power and conviction, there came into my heart a witness of the divine calling of the boy Joseph, and I am grateful that the Lord has sustained that witness through more than seventy years since then. I am happy that my faith has not been shaken by the writings of critics who never seem to recognize that knowledge of things divine comes by the power of the Spirit and not of the wisdom of men.

I commend to all these words of George Santayana, distinguished long-time professor at Harvard:

O world, thou chooseth not the
better part!

It is not wisdom to be only wise,

And on the inward vision close the eyes;
 But it is wisdom to believe the heart.
 [In Charles L. Wallis, ed., *The Treasure Chest* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 93]

Testimony of the First Vision

I thank my Father in Heaven for the testimony I have of the reality of the First Vision. I have stood among the trees where Joseph knelt as a boy, and heard the whisperings of the Spirit that it happened as he said it happened. I have read the words of critics, who from 1820 until now have tried to destroy the validity of that account. They have made much of the fact that there were several versions and that the account as we now have it was not written until 1838. So what? I find security for my faith in the simplicity of his narrative, in its lack of argument, in its straightforward reasonableness, and in the fact that he sealed his testimony with his life's blood. Could there have been a stronger endorsement?

Is it strange that James, writing anciently, would invite all who lacked wisdom to ask of God in faith? (see James 1:5). Is it strange that such prayer would receive an answer? I thank the Lord for the faith to believe that the answer to that prayer came with a glorious manifestation of the Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, to part the curtain after centuries of darkness and open a new and promised and final dispensation of the gospel. Did it happen? I have no doubt of it. Was it not time, as a great age of enlightenment began to dawn upon the world, that these, the Father and the Son, should reveal themselves to show their form and power and living reality, and thus declare, once and for all, the true nature of Deity?

Testimony of the Book of Mormon

I thank the Almighty for my testimony of the Book of Mormon, this

wonderful companion to the Holy Bible. It is strange to me that unbelieving critics must still go back to the old allegations that Joseph Smith wrote the book out of ideas gained from Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* and Solomon Spaulding's manuscript. To compare the Book of Mormon with these is like comparing a man to a horse. It is true they both walk, but beyond this there is little similarity. The test of the book is in its reading. I speak as one who has read it again and again and tasted of its beauty and depth and power. Could Joseph Smith, I ask you, the young man reared in rural New York largely without schooling, have dictated in so short a time a volume so complex in its nature and yet so harmonious in its whole, with so large a cast of characters and so extensive in its scope? Could he of his own abilities have created the language, the thought, the moving inspiration that has caused millions over the earth to read and say, "It is true"?

I have read much of English literature. In my university days I tasted the beauty and richness of the whole field from ancient to modern times. I have been lifted by writings that have come of the genius of gifted men and women. But withal, I have not received from any of these the inspiration, the knowledge of things sublime and eternal that have come to me from the writings of the prophets found in this volume, which was translated in the rural communities of Harmony, Pennsylvania, and Fayette, New York, and printed on the Grandin Press in Palmyra. I have read again and again the closing testimony of Moroni, including these challenging words:

"And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust? . . .

"And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true" (Moroni 10:27, 29).

I thank the Lord, my brethren, that I will not have to wait to meet Moroni before I know the truth of his words. I know this now and have known it for a long time by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Testimony of the priesthood

I thank my Eternal Father for the restoration of the holy priesthood, that "every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world" (D&C 1:20). I have seen the beauty and wonder of that priesthood in the governance of this remarkable church. I have felt its power flow through me to the blessing and the healing of the sick. I have seen the ennoblement it has given to humble men who have been called to great and serious responsibility. I have seen it as they have spoken with power and authority from on high as if the voice of God were speaking through them.

Testimony of the gospel

I thank the Lord for the testimony he has given me of the wholeness of the gospel, of its breadth and reach and depth. It is designed to bless the sons and daughters of all generations of time—both the living and the dead. I cannot be grateful enough for the Atonement wrought by my Savior and my Redeemer. Through His sacrifice at the culmination of a life of perfection—that sacrifice offered in pain unspeakable—the bonds of death were broken, and the resurrection of all became assured. Beyond this, the doors of celestial glory have been opened to all who will accept divine truth and obey its precepts. Is there to be found anywhere in literature words more reassuring than these words which have come of revelation concerning those who walk in

obedience to the commandments of God?

"And again we bear record—for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just—

"They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial. . . .

"They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

"They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory; . . .

"These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical" (D&C 76:50–51, 55–56, 70).

These are not, I submit, the words of Joseph Smith the man. They are words of divine revelation that speak of the glorious opportunity, the promised blessings made possible by the Son of God through His divine atonement in behalf of all who will listen and obey. These words are the promise of the Redeemer of the world, who rules and reigns in that celestial kingdom and who invites us to qualify ourselves to come into His presence.

Testimony of temple and missionary work

I thank my Redeemer for the testimony of these eternal truths. And I thank Him for a testimony of the validity of the great vicarious work that goes on in our temples. Without this work, God would not be just. With it the beneficent effects of the redemption may be made available to all of our Father's children. I thank my Lord for the wonder and majesty of His divine plan.

I am grateful for the testimony I have of the missionary program of this church. As of this date we have

more than 49,000 missionaries. They are blessing the lives of people wherever they go over the earth. They carry good tidings of peace and salvation to all who will listen.

I thank the Lord for the spirit of this missionary work, which dwells in the hearts and homes of our people throughout the world. No sacrifice is too great for families to send a son or daughter into the field.

Letter from Greg's mother

Permit me to read a letter which came the other day in response to a call to a young man to serve a mission. It reads:

"Dear Brethren:

"Gregory was killed in an accident two days before his call arrived. We feel Greg's talents, abilities, and testimony are now being used on life's other side.

"He died Saturday, June 19.

"We are enclosing a check representing his mission savings and are donating it to the International Missionary Fund with a request it be used in the Dominican Republic, if possible. We feel we would like to see it used by those Saints less fortunate and unable to normally serve a mission. We leave it to your discretion.

"Greg saved all this money himself.

From the time he earned his first money he saved 50 percent for his mission, 10 percent for tithing, and the rest was . . . to supply his needs. This money [the mission portion] was dedicated to the Lord's work, so we are sure he wants it to be used for this purpose.

"We love you and know the work is true—we know without a shadow of a doubt that Greg is about his Father's business. We are grateful for our blessings.

"May the Lord's work continue to spread in the world.

"Signed,

"Greg's mother"

With the letter was a check for nearly nine thousand dollars.

Testimony of tithing

I thank my Father for a testimony of what I might call some of the lesser laws of the gospel. I speak first of tithing. I marvel at the simplicity of this great divine principle under which the building of the kingdom of God on the earth is made possible. Those who pay tithing do not do so under the duress of legal compulsion. No one is disfellowshipped or excommunicated because he fails to pay. But hundreds of thousands, even millions of our people do so faithfully, honestly, and willingly. They do so because of the conviction that each carries in his or her heart that the work is true and the law is divine.

I am in a position to see what happens. I marvel and thank the Lord for the faith of His dedicated Saints. I know that which they pay is sacred, and I pledge my best efforts to see that these sacred funds are not wasted but are used with honesty and integrity in building His holy work on the earth.

And I see yet another side to this great principle. It is the fulfilled promise of the Lord to those who walk in obedience to Him in this matter. I see the windows of heaven open upon our people, and the blessings of the Almighty are showered down upon them. I see the happiness, the wholesomeness, the gratitude, and the optimism of those who live honestly with the Lord in the payment of their tithes and offerings. I see His prospering hand upon them and add my testimony of this.

Testimony of the Word of Wisdom

I thank the Lord for a testimony of the Word of Wisdom. I wish we lived it more fully. But even though we do not, the Lord pours out His blessings upon those who try. The promise is before us that if we will do so, we shall receive health in the navel and marrow in the bones and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden

treasures, and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint; and the destroying angel shall pass by us as the children of Israel and not slay us (see D&C 89:18-21). To me it is marvelous that beyond the promises of a physical nature is the promise of hidden treasures of knowledge concerning things divine and eternal.

Testimony of Church leaders

I am grateful, my brethren, for the testimony I have of the divine calling of the leadership of this church. Even though President Benson is seriously restricted in his capacities, I know that he was called of God to his high and sacred office. I sustain him and uphold him as prophet, seer, and revelator. My earnest desire is to serve him faithfully and well as his Counselor through service to the Church and its people.

I have now served as a General Authority longer than any living man other than the President of the Church. I think I have worked in the administrative offices of the Church longer than anyone now living. I have seen and known for nearly sixty years in a personal way all who have served in the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, the First Council of the Seventy, and more recently those of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy, as well as the Presiding Bishopric. They have been and are mortal men, not entirely without human weaknesses. Two or three out of very many during that long time have stumbled. But I believe that no better men are to be found in any cause anywhere on earth. They have not taken this honor unto themselves, but

they have been "called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4). They serve in a spirit of consecration and love. They are men of prayer and faith, men who hold the priesthood and in humility exercise divine authority. Their only objective is to build and enhance the kingdom.

Expressions of gratitude

I love them and I thank them, and I love and thank you, my brethren, wherever you serve in regions, stakes and wards, missions and temples, whatever. I love you and thank you for your fidelity, for your devotion, for your loyalty, for your prayers, for your faith.

You too are of the substance of my testimony, as are the many faithful and able women at both the general and local levels of the Church—women of great capacity and faith without whom this work would be woefully incomplete. They too have been called of God.

To my Eternal Father I give thanks for that essence of divinity which is within each of us and for the gift of life which comes from Him. I thank my Redeemer for His supreme gift to all, the gift of eternal life. These are they whom I worship and reverence and love. These are they to whom and through whom I pray. They are my Father and my God, my Redeemer and my Lord. And of them I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Thy Servants Are Prepared."

Elder Stephen D. Nadauld offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 163rd Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 3, 1993. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and Richard L. Elliott at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "In Hymns of Praise."

President Monson then opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 163rd semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our love to President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching conference in his apartment. We also excuse President Howard W. Hunter and Elders Marvin J. Ashton and Clinton L. Cutler because of illness.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the Assembly Hall, where Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, Hartman Rector, Jr., and Durrel A. Woolsey are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Build-

ing, where Elders Lloyd P. George and Robert K. Dellenbach are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations which are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, with Brother Richard Elliott at the organ, will provide the music for this session. The choir opened these services by singing "In Hymns of Praise" and will now sing "Joseph Smith's First Prayer," following which Elder Robert E. Wells of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

Elder Robert E. Wells offered the invocation.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren and sisters, near and far:

I extend to each of you my love and gratitude. I am deeply grateful for your sustaining faith and prayers. We need your prayers. We desire always to be worthy of them. Many of you write letters of encouragement and confi-

dence. These are deeply appreciated. We likewise pray for you.

A painting of butterflies and flowers

A few days ago there came to my office a man from Las Vegas, Nevada. His wife and married daughter were

with him. When we had accomplished the purpose of his visit, the younger woman asked if I would accept something from her thirteen-year-old daughter. She unwrapped a painting of two butterflies around a flowering shrub.

The mother explained that her daughter had been struck by a car in a terrible accident when she was four years of age. Her body was badly broken. She was left paralyzed from the shoulders down, a quadriplegic—without the use of arms or legs. She had painted this picture holding a brush between her teeth and moving her head.

As I listened to that story, the painting grew in beauty and value before my eyes. It became more than a portrayal of butterflies. It represented remarkable courage in the face of blinding adversity; tenacious practice in holding and moving the brush; pleading prayers for help; faith—the faith of a child, nurtured by loving parents, that she could create beauty notwithstanding her handicap.

Some might say that this is not a masterpiece. Without knowledge of its origin, that could be the judgment. But what is the test of art? Is it not the inspiration which comes from looking at it?

I will hang this small painting in my study so that during occasional hours of struggle there will come into my mind the picture of a beautiful little girl, robbed of the use of her feet and hands, gripping the handle of a paintbrush in her teeth to create a thing of beauty. Thank you, Krystal, for what you have done for me. I hope the telling of your story will bring a new measure of strength to others who, facing discouragement, have felt they could not go on. I hope that your example will be as a polar star to lead them in the darkness through which they stumble.

President Benson, our beloved prophet

When I think of those who carry heavy burdens, my mind goes to our beloved prophet. President Benson is

now in his ninety-fifth year. He still wears the mantle of his sacred office. But his activities are seriously limited. He is unable to be with us this morning or to speak to us. We love him. We honor him. We pray for him. We sustain him. And we go forward.

This church is established on principles that are divine. From the day of its organization, it has been led by prophets, and I solemnly testify that the Lord Jesus Christ, whose church it is and whose name it bears, will never let any man or group of men lead it astray. His is the power to remove them if they should ever be found taking the wrong turn.

Moral deficit and decay

We have critics both within and without. Although they are vocal and have access to the media, they are relatively few in number. If we were entirely without criticism, we would be concerned. Our responsibility is not to please the world but, rather, to do the will of the Lord, and from the beginning the divine will so often has been contrary to the ways of the world.

These worldly ways appear to be on a course that should be of concern to every thoughtful man and woman.

We in America are saddled with a huge financial deficit in our national budget. This has led to astronomical debt.

But there is another deficit which, in its long-term implications, is more serious. It is a moral deficit, a decline in values in the lives of the people, which is sapping the very foundation of our society. It is serious in this land. And it is serious in every other nation of which I know.

Some few months ago there appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* what was spoken of as an index of what is happening to our culture. I read from this statement:

"Since 1960, the U.S. population has increased 41%; the gross domestic

product has nearly tripled; and total social spending by all levels of government [has experienced] more than a fivefold increase. . . .

"But during the same . . . period there has been a 560% increase in violent crime; a 419% increase in illegitimate births; a quadrupling in divorce rates; a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes; more than a 200% increase in the teenage suicide rate" (William J. Bennett, "Quantifying America's Decline," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 Mar. 1993, p. A12).

The article concludes with a statement from Alexander Solzhenitsyn:

"The West . . . has been undergoing an erosion and [an] obscuring of high moral and ethical ideals. The spiritual axis of life has grown dim."

One need not, of course, read statistics to recognize a moral decay that seems to be going on all about us. It is evident in the easy breakup of marriages, in widespread infidelity, in the growth of youth gangs, in the increased use of drugs and the epidemic spread of AIDS, and in a growing disregard for the lives and property of others. It is seen in the defacement of private and public property with graffiti, which destroys beauty and is an insult to art. It is expressed in the language of the gutter, which is brought into our homes.

The endless sex and violence on network TV, the trash of so many motion pictures, the magnified sensuality found in much of modern literature, the emphasis on sex education, a widespread breakdown of law and order—all are manifestations of this decay.

The answer: teach values at home

What is the answer? Is there any way to change the course of the ethical and moral slide we are experiencing? I believe there is.

What is happening is simply an ugly expression of the declining values of our society. Those who are concerned with

the problem advocate more legal regulation, large appropriations for increased police forces, tax increases to build additional jails and prisons. These may be needed to deal with the present problems. They may help in the near term. But they will be only as a bandage too small for the sore. They may help in taking care of the fruits, but they will not get at the roots. In searching for remedies, we speak of a greater work that must be done in our schools. But educators have largely abdicated their responsibility for teaching values. The Church is looked to—this and all other churches. I am grateful for what the Pope recently said in Denver in warning against moral pitfalls. I am pleased to note that the Baptists have begun a campaign for chastity. We as a church are doing much, very much, and I think we are accomplishing much. But it is not enough.

When all is said and done, the primary place in building a value system is in the homes of the people.

Shaping the honey locust tree

I read the other day of a father who pleaded with a judge to lock up his son because he could not control him. I do not doubt that he has tried. But it is now too late. Attitudes have been fixed. Habits have become rigid. If we are to turn this tide, the effort must begin with children when they are young and pliable, when they will listen and learn.

Not long after we were married, we built our first home. We had very little money. I did much of the work myself. It would be called "sweat equity" today. The landscaping was entirely my responsibility. The first of many trees that I planted was a thornless honey locust. Envisioning the day when its filtered shade would assist in cooling the house in the summertime, I put it in a place at the corner where the wind from the canyon to the east blew the hardest. I dug a hole, put in the bare root, put soil around it, poured on water, and

largely forgot it. It was only a wisp of a tree, perhaps three-quarters of an inch in diameter. It was so supple that I could bend it with ease in any direction. I paid little attention to it as the years passed.

Then one winter day, when the tree was barren of leaves, I chanced to look out the window at it. I noticed that it was leaning to the west, misshapen and out of balance. I could scarcely believe it. I went out and braced myself against it as if to push it upright. But the trunk was now nearly a foot in diameter. My strength was as nothing against it. I took from my toolshed a block and tackle. Attaching one end to the tree and another to a well-set post, I pulled the rope. The pulleys moved a little, and the trunk of the tree trembled slightly. But that was all. It seemed to say, "You can't straighten me. It's too late. I've grown this way because of your neglect, and I will not bend."

Finally in desperation I took my saw and cut off the great heavy branch on the west side. The saw left an ugly scar, more than eight inches across. I stepped back and surveyed what I had done. I had cut off the major part of the tree, leaving only one branch growing skyward.

More than half a century has passed since I planted that tree. My daughter and her family live there now. The other day I looked again at the tree. It is large. Its shape is better. It is a great asset to the home. But how serious was the trauma of its youth and how brutal the treatment I used to straighten it.

When it was first planted, a piece of string would have held it in place against the forces of the wind. I could have and should have supplied that string with ever so little effort. But I did not, and it bent to the forces that came against it.

I have seen a similar thing, many times, in children whose lives I have observed. The parents who brought them into the world seem almost to have abdicated their responsibility. The results

have been tragic. A few simple anchors would have given them the strength to withstand the forces that have shaped their lives. Now it appears it is too late.

Parents' responsibility to teach children

Every individual in the world is a child of a mother and a father. Neither can ever escape the consequences of their parenthood. Inherent in the very act of creation is responsibility for the child who is created. None can with impunity run from that responsibility.

It is not enough simply to provide food and shelter for the physical being. There is an equal responsibility to provide nourishment and direction to the spirit and the mind and the heart. Wrote Paul to Timothy, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8).

I am satisfied that Paul was speaking of more than physical nourishment.

Roles of father and mother

Many years ago, President Stephen L. Richards, then a Counselor in the First Presidency, speaking from this pulpit made an eloquent plea to put father back at the head of the family (see Conference Report, Apr. 1958, p. 94). I repeat that plea to all fathers. Yours is the basic and inescapable responsibility to stand as the head of the family. That does not carry with it any implication of dictatorship or unrighteous dominion. It carries with it a mandate that fathers provide for the needs of their families. Those needs are more than food, clothing, and shelter. Those needs include righteous direction and the teaching, by example as well as precept, of basic principles of honesty, integrity, service, respect for the rights of others, and an understanding that we are accountable for that which we do in this life, not only to one another but

also to the God of heaven, who is our Eternal Father.

Let every mother realize that she has no greater blessing than the children who have come to her as a gift from the Almighty; that she has no greater mission than to rear them in light and truth, in understanding and love; that she will have no greater happiness than to see them grow into young men and women who respect principles of virtue, who walk free from the stain of immorality and from the shame of delinquency.

Bring up children in light and truth

Said the writer of Proverbs, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

The health of any society, the happiness of its people, their prosperity, and their peace all find their roots in the teaching of children by fathers and mothers.

The very structure of our society is now threatened by broken homes and the tragic consequences of those homes.

I believe that with effort we can change this course. We must begin with parents. We must provide understanding on the part of every man and woman of the eternal purposes of life, of the obligations of marriage, and of the responsibilities of parenthood. To men who beget children and then abandon them, I say that God will hold you accountable, for these are also His children, whose cries over what you have done reach up to Him. With the obligation to beget goes the responsibility to nurture, to protect, to teach, to guide in righteousness and truth. Yours is the power and the responsibility to preside in a home where there is peace and security, love and harmony.

I remind mothers everywhere of the sanctity of your calling. No other can adequately take your place. No responsibility is greater, no obligation more

binding than that you rear in love and peace and integrity those whom you have brought into the world.

To both of you, let no bickering cloud the spirit of your home. Set aside your selfishness in the interest of a far greater and eternal cause. Bring up your children in light and truth as the Lord has commanded.

Could you wish for anything more than peace for your children? Could you benefit society in any better way? I make you a solemn and sacred promise that if you will do this, the time will come when, looking upon those you have created, nurtured, and loved, you will see the fruits of your nurturing and get on your knees and thank the Lord for His blessing to you.

Give love, patience, and encouragement

Now, with all of this, I know there are very many of you who are wonderful parents and whose children are growing in righteousness. Happy and productive will be their lives, and the world will be the better for them. I thank you and most warmly congratulate you. Surely you are fortunate.

But there are others—too many among our own—whose children, to quote the revelation, are "growing up in wickedness" and who "seek not . . . the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness" (D&C 68:31). To these I make my appeal.

It may not be easy. It may be fraught with disappointment and challenge. It will require courage and patience. I remind you of the faith and determination of the thirteen-year-old girl who, holding a paintbrush in her teeth, created the painting I showed you earlier. Love can make the difference—love generously given in childhood and reaching through the awkward years of youth. It will do what money lavished on children will never do.

—And patience, with a bridling of the tongue and self-mastery over anger.

The writer of Proverbs declared, "A soft answer turneth away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1).

—And encouragement that is quick to compliment and slow to criticize.

These, with prayers, will accomplish wonders. You cannot expect to do it alone. You need heaven's help in rearing heaven's child—your child, who is also the child of his or her Heavenly Father.

O God, our Eternal Father, bless the parents to teach with love and patience and encouragement those who are most precious, the children who have come from Thee, that together they might be safeguarded and directed for good and, in the process of growth,

bring blessings to the world of which they will be a part, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise."

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise."

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder David B. Haight

Faithfulness of convert ancestors

I have prayed that the blessings of heaven will direct my expressions this morning that I might convey to you the desires of my soul.

A few weeks ago, joy and nostalgia dominated our conversation as Sister Haight and I drove to the airport to see our eleventh grandchild leave for his mission. During our brief visit—with warm greetings and emotional embraces—we recalled some of the historical accounts of how the message of the restoration of the gospel had influenced our family, of how our missionary grandson's great-great-grandfather, Joseph Toronto, heard and believed the message of the gospel from missionaries in Boston in 1843, 150 years ago.

Joseph Toronto assisted with the building of the Nauvoo Temple. Brigham Young had made a strong appeal on Sunday, July 6, 1845, for the Saints to "remember [and pray for] the temple" and to "pay your tithing." The Saints were anxious that the temple be finished sufficiently that ordinance work might

begin before the exodus westward. More workers and tithing were desperately needed. Joseph Toronto, the new convert, visited Brigham Young after the meeting and declared that "he wanted to give himself and all he had to the kingdom of God." He handed Brigham Young \$2,600 in gold coins (see "Italian Pioneer," *Church News*, 20 June 1981, p. 16). Brigham Young blessed the Italian convert, proclaiming that "he should stand at the head of his race and that neither he nor his family should ever want for bread" (*Joseph Toronto: Italian Pioneer and Patriarch*, comp. Toronto Family Organization [1983], p. 10). Later, in 1849, he was called to accompany the new Apostle Lorenzo Snow to his native Italy to open that land for the preaching of the gospel (see *Church News*, 20 June 1981, p. 16).

We also spoke of Hector C. Haight, another ancestor, called from his home in Farmington, Utah, to preside over the Scandinavian Mission in 1856 with little or no ability to speak Danish, Swedish, or Norwegian. But trusting in the Lord and with the assistance of the Scandina-

vian Saints, he accomplished his assignment. He reported in 1858 that "2,610 souls had been baptized . . . and [that] 990 members had emigrated to Zion" (Andrew Jenson, *History of the Scandinavian Mission* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927], p. 128).

These ancestors, along with many others, gave inspiration and set the precedent of love for the gospel and its divine truth and for missionary service, which our children and grandchildren inherit but must personally acquire for themselves.

Faithfulness of modern missionaries

Our hearts were filled that morning as we again witnessed the miracle that had already begun and which we knew would continue—not only for the next two years but for the rest of his life—the transformation of a fine young man into a powerful proclaimer and believer of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our gratitude for and trust in the missionary program of the Church—in all of its spiritual dimensions—and for its continuing influence on our family were deepened and strengthened.

While watching family expressions of love and joy and tears at the airport, I thought of the hundreds of young men and women and couples who, week after week, leave our missionary training centers around the world to embark on the grandest experience of their lives—going forth to serve our Heavenly Father with all of their heart, might, mind, and strength. That is indeed one of the great miracles of our time.

The *Church News* recently told of Aaron Thatcher, a young man with a love for baseball. Aaron has had many baseball scouts observe his unique talents, but he has told them repeatedly that he would not sign a professional contract until after he had fulfilled his obligations to the Lord by serving a two-year mission.

"How could a young man turn down such an offer?" people ask. But he

did! His desire to serve the Lord was greater than his desire for instant fame. Aaron explained, "I'm going on this mission not because . . . my Dad went. I'm going because I have a testimony of the gospel and the prophets have told us that every worthy and healthy young man should serve a full-time mission. I want to with all of my heart" (in Quig Nielsen, "Baseball 'On Hold' While He Serves Mission," *Church News*, 4 Sept. 1993, p. 5).

The Lord is hastening his work

Brothers and sisters, the Lord is opening the way and making it possible to expand His work throughout the world, and what a blessing it is for all of us—each in his own way—to take part. During the past five years, the number of missionaries serving out in the world has grown from 36,000 to some 49,700 as of right now. The number of missions has grown from 220 to 294. Nearly one and one-half million new converts have joined the Church during that same period of time. And our missionaries or representatives are now teaching in over forty additional countries where we were *not* serving five years ago.

Who but the prophets of God could have foreseen the miracle of the rapid expansion of the work of the Lord? Truly, as the Lord foretold in section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants, He is hastening His work in its time (see D&C 88:73).

I am inspired as I continue to understand more and more the depth and significance of the vision and inspiration the Prophet Joseph Smith received from heavenly messengers as he carefully laid in place the foundation stones of the restored church. After what he had experienced and knew, the Prophet Joseph Smith could boldly write in March of 1842:

"Our missionaries are going forth to different nations, . . . the Standard of Truth has been erected; . . . the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and in-

dependent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

There is a spirit moving upon our people to want to live their lives in harmony with truth, that they may someday respond to an opportunity to serve. This is the same spirit and heavenly influence that directed John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and others to take leave of the Saints from the city of Far West early on the morning of April 26, 1839, before departing for their missions to Great Britain (see D&C 118:4-5). On that occasion each prayed in turn at the temple site and bore testimony. Then, after a song, they took leave, directed by revelation, filled with the blessings of heaven and the confirming influence of the Holy Ghost. These early Apostles departed for their missions having been spiritually fed and blessed in a manner that would sustain them and their families throughout their many hardships and inspire their powerful testimonies of the truthfulness of the message of the restored church upon the earth.

Our responsibility for missionary work

What a privilege and a blessing to be a small part of this great work! With that heritage, however, comes a great responsibility. The Lord needs messengers to match His message. He needs those who are able to wield the mighty and eternal influence that He has placed in their hands. In section 88, where the Lord speaks of hastening His work, He gives to the laborers of His kingdom a commandment to "prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean" (D&C 88:74).

The calling to serve the Lord places a tremendous but ennobling responsibility

upon each of us. In 1839 an epistle of inspiration and direction was sent by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to those who had been called to spread the gospel. In addition to their blessings and testimonies and prayers, they declared:

"God has called you to . . . an holy calling, even to be . . . messengers to the nations of the earth; and upon your diligence [and] the soundness of the doctrines which you preach . . . hang the destinies of the human family. You are the men that God has called to spread forth His kingdom; He has committed the care of souls to your charge, . . . and the Great God demands it of you, that you should be faithful" (*History of the Church*, 3:395).

President Spencer W. Kimball ushered in a new era of missionary work when he proclaimed:

"When I ask for more missionaries, I am not asking for more testimony-barren or unworthy missionaries. I am asking that we . . . train our missionaries better in every branch and every ward . . . that [our] young people will understand that it is a great privilege to go on a mission and that they must be physically well, mentally well, spiritually well, and that 'the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.'

"[We are] asking for missionaries who have been carefully . . . trained through the family and the organizations of the Church, and who come . . . with a great desire" ("When the World Will Be Converted," *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, p. 7).

"[But] we must prepare our [young] missionaries better, not only with language but with scripture and above all with a testimony and a burning fire that puts power to their words" (address delivered at Regional Representatives' seminar, 5 Apr. 1976, p. 14).

Train and prepare missionaries

The First Presidency recently re-emphasized this important challenge. To serve the Lord as a full-time mission-

ary is a privilege; the primary purpose of full-time missionary service is the building up of the kingdom of God. And the Lord needs His best. Young men and young women who respond to the call must be prepared for the most rigorous challenge of their young lives—prepared spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and physically.

Although our missionaries are strengthened, elevated, and magnified by their service, that is not their primary purpose, and neither they nor their families nor their leaders should regard a mission as the solution to unresolved problems. The Lord needs our best; He needs those who can run, not just walk—but to run physically and spiritually—those who can wield eternal influence with purity and strength and conviction.

Does this mean that those who are not yet ready should be turned away or rejected? Of course not! It means that our young people, their families, and their leaders should each accept the personal responsibility for preparing worthy, able, and committed volunteers for the Lord's royal army.

The Lord will perform miracles

As we shoulder this great responsibility, the Lord will magnify our efforts and He will magnify our missionaries. They will become the instruments through which the Lord will perform His miracles.

I received a letter recently from a young friend in California who served a mission in Chile. He wrote of a never-to-be-forgotten baptism in which he had participated of a man and a wife and their two children. He recalled the incredible faith of the father, who had worked as a humble horse-racing stable hand, with very limited education but with great faith in gospel principles. This man accepted the gospel and lived it and taught his family by example.

"As missionaries, we considered this family perhaps our best conver-

sion," he wrote. "The father had an unusual attitude about work—hard work—so as to provide for his family and to be able to serve the Lord."

My friend had just learned that this good man has now, thirteen years later, been called to serve in the stake presidency in his stake.

Over fifteen years ago President Kimball urged that "every family, every night and every morning, . . . pray to the Lord to open the doors of other nations so that their people, too, may have the gospel of Jesus Christ" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 586). During the last few years we have seen the fruition of the prophet's vision. Doors have been opened; walls of nations have collapsed. We must be prepared to march in, legally and appropriately, as the Lord opens those doors.

Gratitude for missionaries

We are grateful for the thousands who have answered the call to serve, and we are grateful for the valiant missionaries who are going out each week to join in the great harvest that the Lord is hastening. We recognize and appreciate the sacrifice and service of your sons and daughters and the marvelous work being accomplished by them. We appreciate the mature, seasoned couples who leave the comforts of their homes and their beloved children and grandchildren. Your efforts and sacrifices will be a blessing to you, of course.

I conclude with these inspired words from the Council of the Twelve epistle of encouragement to the Saints on July 3, 1839. The closing words of the epistle read:

"Amid the . . . din of war, the rage of pestilence, the commotion of nations, . . . and the dissolution of empires, Truth shall walk forth with mighty power, guided by the arm of Omnipotence, and lay hold of the honest in heart among

all nations; Zion shall blossom as a rose, and the nations flock to her standard, and the kingdoms of this world shall soon become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever" (*History of the Church*, 3:397).

When that glorious day comes, may each of us have some part in it, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Praise to the Man."

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the choir singing "Praise to the Man."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "I Stand All Amazed," following which we shall hear from Elder Monte J. Brough, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "I Stand All Amazed."

Elder Monte J. Brough

David's mighty men

As a young man in one of my first Primary classes, I was fortunate enough to have a leader introduce me to the Old Testament story of David's mighty men. This is a detailed account of the actions of the finest soldiers under David's command. At one time, only thirty-seven men of the huge armies of Israel were considered good enough to receive the coveted title of "mighty man" (see 2 Samuel 23:39).

Let us learn more about the qualities of this outstanding group of soldiers. In 1 Chronicles we read, "They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow" (1 Chronicles 12:2).

They were men "fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains" (1 Chronicles 12:8).

These mighty men had developed the skills of a warrior to a very high degree. They were determined and, as with the faces of lions, completely without fear. They were prepared for any battle.

The impression upon me, as the achievements and exploits of these

mighty men were explained by my teacher, was profound. In fact, while my friends played their fantasy games as cowboys or spacemen or athletic stars, I imagined that I had been selected by King David as one of his mighty men. I even fashioned wood swords out of plaster laths and spears out of long willow sticks and pretended to go to war against the enemies of the king. Funny—as I think about it, the enemy was just about always my two little brothers. The story of the preparation and devotion of these mighty men has been a source of inspiration to me since my early years.

Men of loyalty and initiative

One inspiring account tells of three of these mighty men who overheard King David long for a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem. Apparently, in Bethlehem at that time was a well of particularly refreshing water of which the king wished for a drink. The king did not place a demand or order for the water; he simply expressed a desire for a taste of the cool, refreshing liquid from the Bethlehem well.

Without command or assignment or even duty, three of the mighty men

broke through enemy lines, at great personal risk, to travel to Bethlehem. They drew water out of the well and returned, again at great risk through the enemy lines, to bring the wonderful refreshment of Bethlehem water to David. David was so overcome by this demonstrated act of personal, unsolicited service that he refused to drink the water. He considered the act so brave and wonderful that he poured the water upon the ground. The scripture says, "He . . . poured it out unto the Lord" (2 Samuel 23:14-17; see also 1 Chronicles 11:17-19).

Isn't that an inspiring story of dedication and volunteer service? Such an act of loyalty and initiative without command was common among these men. Is it any wonder that these mighty men would become heroes to a young boy? Let us examine other qualities and contributions of these mighty men.

Men who understood the times

They were "men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32).

This special understanding of the times and the resultant ability to know what Israel ought to do are most significant. In other words, these mighty men were informed and educated in matters relating to the conditions of their times. How did they gain this understanding? Many of the tribes or states of Israel were numbered among the thirty-seven. They brought additional strength through their cultural diversity to the armies of Israel. Tempered by difficult personal experiences, several of which are accounted in the stories of the thirty-seven, they had come to understand their times. This allowed them to better know the needs of their people and the solutions to many of the challenges of the times. So with this understanding, they came to know what Israel ought to do.

Men of single heart and pure motives

They were men "which could keep rank: they were not of double heart" (1 Chronicles 12:33).

These mighty men understood the need for an organization which would stay in place during difficult and challenging times. These men did not have a "double heart" which compelled them to seek their own personal interest ahead of that of Israel. Because of their single heart, manifest by pure motives, they did not aspire to a different position or rank within the armies of David. Each of the thirty-seven could absolutely depend upon the others to fulfill the assignment which came to them, whatever their rank. They understood their responsibilities and kept that place.

Men of perfect hearts

The final quality to which I wish to refer is one which we might assert as the most important quality of these mighty men. Again we read:

"All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king" (1 Chronicles 12:38).

This quality was the condition of their "perfect heart," which was demonstrated by complete devotion to building the ancient kingdom of Israel. They had no agenda, personal or otherwise, which was separate from their commitment to the king and the building of Israel. They understood the divine nature of David's station and offered their complete loyalty and devotion to him. Theirs was a perfect heart. So were the mighty men of Israel!

Other mighty men and women

Later I learned the stories of others whose character would make them mighty men. Consider the story of the

development and growth of mighty Peter. He was carefully nurtured by the Lord to gain the skills and commitment which would allow him to become a mighty man. His ultimate achievement of a perfect heart is made manifest by his response to the third question:

"Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17).

And there is mighty Apostle Paul, whose courage and initiative are summarized in these words of more sure prophecy:

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:6-7). What mighty men!

Lest anyone misunderstand, let us also include one of the most beautiful examples of the qualities of the mighty men. This statement was offered by a woman with mighty qualities, Ruth:

"Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

"Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried" (Ruth 1:16-17). What a mighty woman!

David himself, as a youth, provided an example of the qualities of the mighty men he would later lead. As he faced the giant warrior, he affirmed:

"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Samuel 17:45). What a mighty youth!

Of mortal men, Joseph Smith may best exemplify the qualities of the mighty men. His story of sacrifice and commitment can also be summarized in one of his final statements:

"I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all

men" (D&C 135:4). What a mighty, mighty man!

Modern mighty warriors

Even now I am searching for additional examples of mighty men and mighty women. Let me tell you what I know about the General Authorities and general auxiliary leaders of the Church—men and women. I'm not sure they can throw a spear with either hand, as did the mighty men, but they bring to their assignments a lifetime of excellent preparation. The families of these modern mighty warriors have not been spared the challenges of life and living. Through life's experiences, which include tragedy, sickness, accident, poverty, and, in some cases, even infirmities of age, these mighty servants have come to an understanding of the times.

These men and women, including their valiant and supportive spouses, have achieved high levels of experience in law, medicine, homemaking, education, business, and agriculture. While certainly not without challenges, they have been remarkably successful in their roles as parents and heads of households. They have contributed collectively many years of full-time service in the Church. They have served as members of state legislatures, city governments, school boards, and national and international professional organizations. Their years of community service include service with humanitarian and educational organizations and raising voluntary funds for a great variety of community causes.

As with the mighty of ancient days, these modern mighty come from many states or nations and bring a great diversity of experience and culture. This collective experience includes hundreds of years of service living in countries other than the one of their birth. Some, as they sit before you, are suffering the ravages of jet lag and fatigue from the enormous travel requirements which are

part of their assignments. Many have gathered from all over the world and, in a few days, will again disperse to most of the nations of the earth. In most cases they will leave their children and grandchildren behind as they pursue the demands placed upon them by their single heart. I assure you that these mighty have come to an understanding of these modern times and of what the Church and the membership of the Church ought to do. This understanding and knowledge are not achieved through their substantial intellect alone but through the development of their "perfect hearts."

I suggest that all who listen to my voice would benefit by an examination of the lives of those we sustain as general officers of the Church. You will find some important examples among them and come to know those who have a "perfect heart." What mighty men and women!

He who is mightiest of all

Please know that I stand as a witness of Him who is mightiest of all and

whom we most want to emulate. Review again the Book of Mormon record of His mighty declaration of devotion and obedience to His Father:

"I am Jesus Christ. . . I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:10-11).

Brothers and sisters, during this conference please listen to the voices of the modern mighty. They speak with a single, perfect heart which, I promise you, gives them an understanding of our times and of what the Church ought to do.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

A mighty man, Elder Monte J. Brough, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

We'll now have the privilege to hear from another mighty man. Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

The chorus of Joseph L. Townsend's stirring hymn text provides timeless advice about what to do when we come to a fork in the road of life. We should always

Choose the right! Choose the right!
Let wisdom mark the way before.
In its light, choose the right!
And God will bless you evermore.
["Choose the Right," *Hymns*, no. 239]

An inspiring CTR tie tack

On a recent trip to New Zealand, I met with a mission president who wore a beautiful tie tack with the inspiring

CTR, or "Choose the Right," emblem. I had the impression that there must be a story behind this unique CTR pin. When I returned home, I wrote him a thank-you letter and asked him about his tie tack. I received this answer:

"You are very perceptive. Yes, there is a story behind the tie tack I'm wearing. I have a number of tie tacks I really prize. They have been gifts from my children, my wife, and friends. However, I choose to wear this beautiful silver shield inlaid with lovely blue turquoise, with the inspiring CTR emblem of our Primary.

"Why? I suppose it started back when I was a bishop and had an inter-

view with a good-looking young man who was to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. He told me a special story. He related to me how one day after school, he and some of his friends found a package of cigarettes. They decided to go down on the cliff alongside some large boulders and smoke. They lit up, and the young man said that as he was looking down at the smoldering cigarette that he held between his fingers, he saw his CTR ring. He quickly put the cigarette out and made a very wise choice, never ever to do such a thing again. He chose to choose the right, as he remembered what the emblem stood for. From this story I gained a special love for the CTR emblem.

"Now for the story of how I came to be a recipient of the CTR tie tack. A few weeks ago before coming to New Zealand as a mission president, I was in the Kayenta Ward in Kayenta, Arizona. As I was saying some tender farewells to many of my Navajo friends, a remarkable young Navajo bishop gave me a big hug, then removed his tie tack and pinned it on my tie. As he did so, he asked me not to forget him.

"Now here in New Zealand, the last thing I do every morning as I dress for this great calling is to pin my tie tack with this beautiful silver and turquoise CTR emblem on my tie. I love it! It helps this old boilermaker make the right choices throughout the day. I know that it also helps fulfill the prophetic promise made to my wife and me from President Gordon B. Hinckley as he laid his hands on our heads and set us apart.

"He said words to this effect: 'You will have an instant bonding of love for every missionary in your mission.' I can't tell you how many times that a missionary, during a visit, has said something like this: 'President Gardner, I love your tie tack.' And then he or she will show me his or her CTR ring.

"I believe that Navajo bishop was inspired to give me the tie tack and that I make the right decision every day

when I choose to wear it. And the beautiful blue and silver CTR pin is helping bond me to a royal army of missionaries in the New Zealand Wellington Mission.

"I appreciate the opportunity of relating to you my special experience associated with this great Primary children's motto, 'Choose the Right.'"

That special letter from this mission president in New Zealand has prompted me to speak to you great young people of the Church, who have had, or are currently having, the opportunity of being taught by loving Primary teachers who teach the gospel principles that will help you choose the right.

The wrong choices of Nehor

The Book of Mormon is filled with accounts of what happens to people who make both the right and wrong choices.

Let me refer to two examples. During Alma's first year in the judgment seat, a large and strong man by the name of Nehor was brought before him to be judged. According to the scriptures, Nehor was going about among the people causing much dissension:

"And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people.

"And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life" (Alma 1:3-4).

Nehor's words appealed to the people, but his doctrine, while popular to many, was incorrect. As we face the many decisions in life, the easy and popular messages of the world will not

usually be the right ones to choose, and it will take much courage to choose the right.

Alma teaches Zeezrom

Now for the second example. In the land of Ammonihah, Amulek and Alma also found a people following false teachings. Amulek attempted to convert them to the true and living gospel. Zeezrom, a man who was expert in the devices of the devil, challenged the teachings of Amulek. Zeezrom asked Amulek, "Shall he [Christ] save his people in their sins?" Amulek answered and said, "I say unto you he shall not, for it is impossible for him to deny his word" (Alma 11:34).

Then Zeezrom taunted Amulek, but Amulek's response was marvelous as he explained the plan of redemption:

"And I say unto you again that he cannot save them in their sins; for I cannot deny his word, and he hath said that no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore, how can ye be saved, except ye inherit the kingdom of heaven? Therefore, ye cannot be saved in your sins. . . .

"And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else.

"Therefore the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works" (Alma 11:37, 40-41).

Later, after considerable tribulation and a blessing of healing, Zeezrom joined the Church.

Decide now to choose righteousness

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught us, "Happiness is the object and design

of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (*History of the Church*, 5:134-35).

We live today in a world so full of choices. Television offers both the good and the bad. Bookstores are full of publications offering the right and the wrong. Very few movies are worthy of seeing because of the profanity, violence, and immorality that fill them. Advertising is full of enticements to lead us to violate the Word of Wisdom. Some music, with its monotonous rhythms, beats illicit thoughts into our heads.

Consider the counsel given by President Spencer W. Kimball:

"Now may I make a recommendation? Develop discipline of self so that, more and more, you do not have to decide and redecide what you will do when you are confronted with the same temptation time and time again. You need only to decide some things once. How great a blessing it is to be free of agonizing over and over again regarding a temptation. To do such is time-consuming and very risky.

"Likewise, my dear young friends, the positive things you will want to accomplish need be decided upon only once—like going on a mission and living worthily in order to get married in the temple—and then all other decisions related to these goals can fall into line. Otherwise, each consideration is risky, and each equivocation may result in error. There are some things Latter-day Saints do and other things we just don't do. The sooner you take a stand, the taller you will be!" (*President Kimball Speaks Out* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981], p. 94).

Three white dresses

To offset the worldly messages that entice us to choose the wrong, the Lord has blessed us with symbols of purity to keep us on the right course to

choose the right. I was reminded of one of these at a baptism of one of my granddaughters a few months ago. In the little program that preceded the ordinance of baptism, my granddaughter read a poem, which had been written by her mother for this special occasion.

"My Three White Dresses"

My mom bought me a white dress,
Not red or pink or blue.
She said it was a special dress
Like very other few.

There has been just one before,
A dress now put away,
That I wore some time ago
Upon my blessing day.

As a little baby clothed
In my first white dress,
My dad held me in his arms,
There to name and bless.

So pure and clean was I just then,
With time to grow and learn
About the Father's plan for me.
My glory I must earn.

Now I've reached the age to judge
The wrong road from the right,
And I am here to be baptized
In this dress of white.

So once again I'm free from sin.
The path is clear to me.
I'll grasp the rod and hold on tight,
I vow with certainty.

Just as mud would stain my dress,
Sin would stain my soul.
The key is to repent or bleach,
For whiteness is my goal.

And if I try my very best,
Then richly blessed I'll be,
Wearing inside God's holy house
White dress number three.

So today I make this pledge:
I'll strive to choose the right,
Through this sacred baptism
ordinance

In my second dress of white.
[Linda Gay Perry Nelson (1993)]

Choose the right

We are at a time in the world's history when Satan is marshaling all his forces to lead the people off the strait and narrow path. Fortunately, most members of the Church are clear about who it is that they will serve. Like Joshua of old, they proclaim, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

I hope and pray that you great young people of the Church will have the courage to consistently choose the right! Moreover, I suggest that each of you find or create reminders to help you and your loved ones choose the right when a choice is placed before you. There is power in a tie tack, a CTR ring, or a white dress hanging in the closet if we associate them with our desires for purity and righteousness. Even more important than physical reminders is to have the conviction deep down in our hearts to live the kind of life that will cause us to make the right choices, not only for peace and happiness in the world right now, but also for peace and happiness eternally.

I promise you that you will receive everlasting happiness if you consistently choose to do what is right.

God lives! Jesus is the Christ! Obedience to His laws will lead us to life eternal is my solemn witness to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Know My Father Lives."

President Monson

Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us, and the Tabernacle Choir has sung "I Know My Father Lives."

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will conclude this session

by singing "We Love Thy House, O God." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Han In Sang of the

Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

Thirty years ago this conference, I was called and sustained as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. On that occasion I asked earnestly for your faith and your prayers. And today as my opportunity to speak to you has come, I renew that request, that I may have your faith and prayers.

Suffering and sorrow brought by illness

Just a month ago, while celebrating a national holiday, Elder Russell M. Nelson and I found ourselves with our children and grandchildren in a swimming pool filled with warm water and with a breathtaking view of an azure blue sky overhead. Mostly we were keeping a watchful eye on the little ones, much like a mother hen tracks the movement of her chicks. I said to Elder Nelson, "Isn't it interesting that even though parents are watching their children, we assume the need to give overall supervision of our respective flock of grandchildren." We had a wonderful time watching children at play and listening to their expressions of delight.

Then I noticed among those in the pool a father holding his severely handicapped son, moving the boy's shrunken, tiny body back and forth in the pool. Other family members helped, and the lad obviously enjoyed the fun. He, however, was totally dependent. No sound of exuberant joy came forth from his lips, no splash of playful movement emanated from his almost lifeless limbs. Stricken as an infant with severe illness, he was left speechless, brain-damaged, and potentially a burden to loved ones. The boy's grand-

father said to me, "He is my grandson. All in our family love him. We enjoy his company; we respond to his needs. He is a blessing in our lives."

Soon the crowd began to leave the pool. Laughter and play ceased. A silence shrouded the scene as the afternoon sun began its descent and the chill air reminded me it was time to go. But this tender view of love and devotion remained with me.

My thoughts turned to a place far distant and to a time long ago—even to another pool called Bethesda. The book of John describes what occurred there:

"Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

"In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

"For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

"And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

"The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

"Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

"And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked."⁷¹

Another scene of suffering and sorrow is found in the famous Tate Gallery in London, England. There adorns the wall of a much-traveled corridor a masterpiece entitled *Sickness and Health*. The painting portrays an organ-grinder with his monkey and a group of happy, healthy children frolicking and showing their amusement at the monkey's antics. In the background is a small, pale-faced boy confined to a wheelchair, unable to play, unable to join in the fun of the other children. Feelings of empathy and silent tears of sadness overcome those who gaze upon the scene and sense the unspoken feelings of the sick boy's heart.

Who can count the boys and girls, the men and women, where sickness has left its mark, rendering strong limbs lifeless and causing loved ones to shed tears of sorrow and offer prayers of faith for them?

Miraculous recovery from an accident

Illness is not the only culprit that intrudes and alters our lives. In our hectic and fast-moving world, accidents can in an instant inflict pain, destroy happiness, and curtail our future. Such was the experience of young Robert Hendricks. Healthy and carefree three years ago, a sudden, three-car accident left him with brain damage, limited use of his limbs, and impaired speech. Summoned to his side by his mother, who pleaded her despair, I gazed at his almost-lifeless form as he lay on the white hospital bed in the critical care unit. Life supports functioning, his head swathed in bandages, his future was not only in doubt, but death appeared certain.

The hoped-for miracle, however, did occur. Heavenly help was forthcoming. Robert lived. His recovery has been labored and slow—but steady. A devoted friend, who was bishop at

the time of the accident, has cared for Robert each week, getting him ready and driving him to his Sunday Church meetings—always patient, ever faithful.

One day Robert's former bishop brought him to my office, since Robert wanted to meet with me, not having remembered that I saw him that night of crisis in the hospital. He and the dedicated bishop sat down, and Robert "talked" with me through a small electronic machine on which he spelled out his thoughts and they were then printed on strips of paper. He spelled out on the machine the love he has for his mother, his thanks for helping hands and willing hearts which have aided him, and his gratitude to a kind and caring Heavenly Father, who has sustained him through his prayers. Here are some of his less private and personal messages: "I'm coming along pretty good, considering what I've been through." Another: "I know that I will be able to help people and make some difference in people's lives, and that's great." Another: "I don't really know just how fortunate I am, but in my prayers I am told to just keep pushing on."

At the conclusion of our visit, the bishop said, "Robert would like to surprise you." Robert stood and, with considerable effort, said aloud, "Thank you." A broad smile crossed his face. He was on the way back. "Thanks be to God" were the only words I could utter. Later I prayed aloud, "Thanks be also for loving bishops, kind teachers, and skilled specialists."

Today, Robert, through the help of his former bishop, his current bishop, and others, has been to the temple. He has learned the computer. He is enrolled in computer study at college. He was also aided along the way by Deseret Industries helpers who provided encouragement and taught him essential skills. Now, with the support of a cane, Robert walks. He has learned to talk, though in halting phrases and with great effort. His progress has been phenomenal.

When illness or accident takes a life

At times illness and accident take the lives of those whom they strike. Place and station, age and whereabouts make no difference. Death comes to the aged as they walk on faltering feet. Its summons is heard by those who have scarcely reached midway in life's journey, and often it hushes the laughter of little children.

Throughout the world there is enacted daily the sorrowful scene of loved ones mourning as they bid farewell to a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister, a mother, a father, or a cherished friend.

Let us look in on one such scene which took place just last month in the Sunset Gardens Cemetery. Gathered were friends and family of Roger S. Olson, whose casket, bedecked with flowers, contained his earthly body. Claudia, his wife, six precious children, and family, friends, and associates stood in silence.

Just a few days earlier, Roger had left for his work, where he was a talented and recognized authority in his field of specialized photography. An accident resulted in the helicopter crash which took his life—all in the twinkling of an eye and without warning. Filled with grief but comforted by faith, those who had loved and lived together had bid but a temporary farewell to husband and father. They are sustained by the knowledge the skeptic rejects. They treasure the account recorded in Luke which describes that most significant event following the crucifixion and burial of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ:

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, [Mary Magdalene and the other Mary] came unto the sepulchre." To their astonishment, the body of their Lord was gone. Luke records that two men in shining garments stood by them and said: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."²

Against the philosophy rampant in today's world—a doubting of the authenticity of the Sermon on the Mount, an abandonment of Christ's teaching, a denial of God, and a rejection of His laws—the Olsons and true believers everywhere treasure the testimonies of eyewitnesses to His resurrection. Stephen, doomed to the cruel death of a martyr, looked up to heaven and cried, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."³

Saul, on the road to Damascus, had a vision of the risen, exalted Christ. Peter and John also testified of the risen Christ. And in our dispensation the Prophet Joseph Smith bore eloquent testimony of the Son of God, for he saw Him and heard the Father introduce him: "*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"⁴

"Joy cometh in the morning"

As we ponder the events that can befall all of us—even sickness, accident, death, and a host of lesser challenges—we can say, with Job of old, "Man is born unto trouble."⁵ Needless to add, that reference to man in the King James Version of the book of Job encompasses women as well. It may be safely assumed that no person has ever lived entirely free of suffering and tribulation. Nor has there ever been a period in human history that did not have its full share of turmoil, ruin, and misery.

When the pathway of life takes a cruel turn, there is the temptation to think or speak the phrase, "Why me?" Self-incrimination is a common practice, even when we may have had no control over our difficulty. Socrates is quoted as saying, "If we were all to bring our misfortunes into a common store, so that each person should receive an equal share in the distribution, the majority would be glad to take up their own and depart."

However, at times there appears to be no light at the tunnel's end—no dawn to break the night's darkness. We feel surrounded by the pain of broken hearts, the disappointment of shattered dreams, and the despair of vanished hopes. We join in uttering the biblical plea, "Is there no balm in Gilead?"⁶ We are inclined to view our own personal misfortunes through the distorted prism of pessimism. We feel abandoned, heartbroken, alone.

To all who so despair, may I offer the assurance of the Psalmist's words: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."⁷

Whenever we are inclined to feel burdened down with the blows of life's fight, let us remember that others have passed the same way, have endured, and then have overcome.

Job was a perfect and an upright man who "feared God, and eschewed evil."⁸ Pious in his conduct, prosperous in his fortune, Job was to face a test which would tempt any man. Shorn of his possessions, scorned by his friends, afflicted by his suffering, even tempted by his wife, Job was to declare from the depths of his noble soul, "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high."⁹ "I know that my redeemer liveth."¹⁰

Faith of cancer-stricken teenagers

Turning to our own time, let me share with you an example of faith, of courage, of compassion, of victory. It illustrates how it is possible to meet life's challenges—head-on. It exemplifies the ability to suffer physical impairment, endure pain and suffering, and yet never complain. Such are Wendy Benion of Sandy, Utah, and Jami Palmer of Park Valley, Utah. Both are teenagers; both have borne similar afflictions. Their situations run almost parallel. Since Wendy's battle has been of a longer duration, I shall speak today of her.

Stricken with cancer at a tender age, subjected to long periods of chemo-

therapy, Wendy persevered valiantly. Teachers cooperated, parents and family helped—but the mainstay in her affliction has been her indomitable spirit. Wendy has brought cheer to others similarly afflicted. She has prayed for them; she has sustained them with her own example and faith.

After Wendy completed eighteen months of chemotherapy, a balloon-launching party was held in her honor. The public media covered the event. One of the many balloons launched that day was found miles away by Jayne Johnson. It had landed in her backyard, and she discovered it just as she was starting her own chemotherapy treatments. She wrote to Wendy, indicating she had been feeling sad and frightened but that finding the balloon and the note inside—which told about Wendy, her cancer, and the completion of her treatments—had given her the strength and that Wendy was a real inspiration to her. Wendy said, "I think she was supposed to find that balloon so that she would know that it's not the end of the world and that people do get better."

The smile that shines through tears

Though Wendy's cancer recurred and a second round of therapy was needed, this choice young lady has not wavered, nor has she shrunk from her course. Rarely have I witnessed one with such courage, such determination, such faith. The same can be said of Jami Palmer. They personify the words of the poetess Ella Wheeler Wilcox, who wrote:

It is easy enough to be pleasant,
When life flows by like a song,
But the man worth while is one
who will smile,
When everything goes dead wrong.
For the test of the heart is trouble,
And it always comes with the years,
And the smile that is worth the
praises of earth
Is the smile that shines through
tears.¹¹

The Savior's comfort and compassion

There is one life that sustains those who are troubled or beset with sorrow and grief—even the Lord Jesus Christ. Foretelling His coming, the prophet Isaiah records:

"He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."¹¹

Yes, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is our Exemplar and our strength. He is the light that shineth in darkness. He is the Good Shepherd. Though engaged in His majestic ministry, He embraced the opportunity to lift burdens, provide hope, mend bodies, and restore life.

Few accounts of the Master's ministry touch me more than His example of compassion shown to the grieving widow at Nain:

"And it came to pass . . . that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

"Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

"And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

"And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

"And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother."¹²

What power, what tenderness, what compassion did our Master thus demonstrate! We too can bless if we will but follow His noble example. Opportunities are everywhere. Needed are eyes to see the pitiable plight and ears to hear the silent pleadings of a broken heart—yes, and a soul filled with compassion, that we might communicate not only eye to eye or voice to ear but, in the majestic style of the Savior, even heart to heart.

His words become our guide: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."¹³

He lives. He will sustain each of us. May we keep His commandments. May we ever follow Him and merit His companionship, that we may successfully meet and overcome life's challenges, I pray humbly in His holy name, the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 5:2–9.
2. Luke 24:1–6.
3. Acts 7:56.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
5. Job 5:7.
6. Jeremiah 8:22.
7. Psalm 30:5.
8. Job 1:1.
9. Job 16:19.
10. Job 19:25.
11. "Worth While," in Hazel Felleman, sel., *The Best Loved Poems of the American People* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1936), p. 144.
12. Isaiah 53:2–5.
13. Luke 7:11–15.
14. John 16:33.

The choir sang "We Love Thy House, O God."

Elder Han In Sang offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 163rd Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 3, 1993. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks as the meeting began:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 163rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Ezra Taft Benson is watching this session in his apartment. During the conference, President Howard W. Hunter and Elders Marvin J. Ashton and Clinton L. Cutler have been excused because of illness.

Elders Russell M. Nelson, F. Burton Howard, and J. Ballard Washburn are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders James M. Paramore and Gary J. Coleman are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, and satellite transmission and the LDS Radio Network.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger and accompanied by John Longhurst, will provide the music for this session. They will begin by singing "Come, Rejoice." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Jack H. Goaslind, a member of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Come, Rejoice."

Elder Jack H. Goaslind offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise." Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Plan of salvation a road map of eternity

Questions like, Where did we come from? Why are we here? and Where are we going? are answered in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Prophets have called it the plan of salvation and "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8). Through inspiration we can understand this road map of eternity and use it to guide our path in mortality.

The gospel teaches us that we are the spirit children of heavenly parents. Before our mortal birth we had "a pre-existent, spiritual personality, as the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father" (statement of the First Presidency, *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1912, p. 417; see also Jeremiah 1:5). We were placed here on earth to progress toward our destiny of eternal life. These truths give us a unique perspective and different values

to guide our decisions from those who doubt the existence of God and believe that life is the result of random processes.

The Council in Heaven

Our understanding of life begins with a council in heaven. There the spirit children of God were taught his eternal plan for their destiny. We had progressed as far as we could without a physical body and an experience in mortality. To realize a fulness of joy, we had to prove our willingness to keep the commandments of God in a circumstance where we had no memory of what preceded our mortal birth.

In the course of mortality, we would become subject to death, and we would be soiled by sin. To reclaim us from death and sin, our Heavenly Father's plan provided us a Savior, whose atonement would redeem all from death and pay the price necessary for all to be cleansed from sin on the conditions he prescribed (see 2 Nephi 9:19-24).

Satan had his own plan. He proposed to save *all* the spirit children of God, assuring that result by removing their power to choose and thus eliminating the possibility of sin. When Satan's plan was rejected, he and the spirits who followed him opposed the Father's plan and were cast out.

All of the myriads of mortals who have been born on this earth chose the Father's plan and fought for it. Many of us also made covenants with the Father concerning what we would do in mortality. In ways that have not been revealed, our actions in the spirit world influence us in mortality.

Satan seeks to destroy God's plan

Although Satan and his followers have lost their opportunity to have a physical body, they are permitted to use their spirit powers to try to frustrate God's plan. This provides the opposition necessary to test how mortals will use their freedom to choose. Satan's

most strenuous opposition is directed at whatever is most important to the Father's plan. Satan seeks to discredit the Savior and divine authority, to nullify the effects of the Atonement, to counterfeit revelation, to lead people away from the truth, to contradict individual accountability, to confuse gender, to undermine marriage, and to discourage childbearing (especially by parents who will raise children in righteousness).

Gender, marriage, and childbearing are essential to the plan

Maleness and femaleness, marriage, and the bearing and nurturing of children are all essential to the great plan of happiness. Modern revelation makes clear that what we call gender was part of our existence prior to our birth. God declares that he created "male and female" (D&C 20:18; Moses 2:27; Genesis 1:27). Elder James E. Talmage explained: "The distinction between male and female is no condition peculiar to the relatively brief period of mortal life; it was an essential characteristic of our pre-existent condition" (*Millennial Star*, 24 Aug. 1922, p. 539).

To the first man and woman on earth, the Lord said, "Be fruitful, and multiply" (Moses 2:28; Genesis 1:28; see also Abraham 4:28). This commandment was first in sequence and first in importance. It was essential that God's spirit children have mortal birth and an opportunity to progress toward eternal life. Consequently, all things related to procreation are prime targets for the adversary's efforts to thwart the plan of God.

Necessity of the Fall

When Adam and Eve received the first commandment, they were in a transitional state, no longer in the spirit world but with physical bodies not yet subject to death and not yet capable of

procreation. They could not fulfill the Father's first commandment without transgressing the barrier between the bliss of the Garden of Eden and the terrible trials and wonderful opportunities of mortal life.

For reasons that have not been revealed, this transition, or "fall," could not happen without a transgression—an exercise of moral agency amounting to a willful breaking of a law (see Moses 6:59). This would be a planned offense, a formality to serve an eternal purpose. The Prophet Lehi explained that "if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen" but would have remained in the same state in which he was created (2 Nephi 2:22).

"And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin" (v. 23).

But the Fall was planned, Lehi concludes, because "all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things" (v. 24).

Eve's wisdom and courage

It was Eve who first transgressed the limits of Eden in order to initiate the conditions of mortality. Her act, whatever its nature, was formally a transgression but eternally a glorious necessity to open the doorway toward eternal life. Adam showed his wisdom by doing the same. And thus Eve and "Adam fell that men might be" (v. 25).

Some Christians condemn Eve for her act, concluding that she and her daughters are somehow flawed by it. Not the Latter-day Saints! Informed by revelation, we celebrate Eve's act and honor her wisdom and courage in the great episode called the Fall (see Bruce R. McConkie, "Eve and the Fall," in *Woman* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], pp. 67–68). Joseph Smith taught that it was not a "sin" because God had decreed it (see *The Words of*

Joseph Smith, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], p. 63). Brigham Young declared, "We should never blame Mother Eve, not the least" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:145). Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said: "I never speak of the part Eve took in this fall as a sin, nor do I accuse Adam of a sin. . . . This was a transgression of the law, but not a sin . . . for it was something that Adam and Eve had to do!" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 1:114–15).

Contrast between *sin* and *transgression*

This suggested contrast between a *sin* and a *transgression* reminds us of the careful wording in the second article of faith: "We believe that men will be punished for their own *sins*, and not for Adam's *transgression*" (italics added). It also echoes a familiar distinction in the law. Some acts, like murder, are crimes because they are inherently wrong. Other acts, like operating without a license, are crimes only because they are legally prohibited. Under these distinctions, the act that produced the Fall was not a sin—inherently wrong—but a transgression—wrong because it was formally prohibited. These words are not always used to denote something different, but this distinction seems meaningful in the circumstances of the Fall.

First parents knew the Fall's necessity

Modern revelation shows that our first parents understood the necessity of the Fall. Adam declared, "Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God" (Moses 5:10).

Note the different perspective and the special wisdom of Eve, who focused

on the purpose and effect of the great plan of happiness: "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient" (Moses 5:11). In his vision of the redemption of the dead, President Joseph F. Smith saw "the great and mighty ones" assembled to meet the Son of God, and among them was "our glorious Mother Eve" (D&C 138:38-39).

When we understand the plan of salvation, we also understand the purpose and effect of the commandments God has given his children. He teaches us correct principles and invites us to govern ourselves. We do this by the choices we make in mortality.

We live in a day when there are many political, legal, and social pressures for changes that confuse gender and homogenize the differences between men and women. Our eternal perspective sets us against changes that alter those separate duties and privileges of men and women that are essential to accomplish the great plan of happiness. We do not oppose all changes in the treatment of men and women, since some changes in laws or customs simply correct old wrongs that were never grounded in eternal principles.

Use and misuse of creative power

The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given his children. Its use was mandated in the first commandment, but another important commandment was given to forbid its misuse. The emphasis we place on the law of chastity is explained by our understanding of the purpose of our procreative powers in the accomplishment of God's plan.

The expression of our procreative powers is pleasing to God, but he has commanded that this be confined within the relationship of marriage. President

Spencer W. Kimball taught that "in the context of lawful marriage, the intimacy of sexual relations is right and divinely approved. There is nothing unholy or degrading about sexuality in itself, for by that means men and women join in a process of creation and in an expression of love" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 311).

Outside the bonds of marriage, all uses of the procreative power are to one degree or another a sinful degrading and perversion of the most divine attribute of men and women. The Book of Mormon teaches that unchastity is "most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost" (Alma 39:5). In our own day the First Presidency of the Church has declared the doctrine of this church "that sexual sin—the illicit sexual relations of men and women—stands, in its enormity, next to murder" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75], 6:176). Some who do not know the plan of salvation behave like promiscuous animals, but Latter-day Saints—especially those who are under sacred covenants—have no such latitude. We are solemnly responsible to God for the destruction or misuse of the creative powers he has placed within us.

Abortion

The ultimate act of destruction is to take a life. That is why abortion is such a serious sin. Our attitude toward abortion is not based on revealed knowledge of when mortal life begins for legal purposes. It is fixed by our knowledge that according to an eternal plan, all of the spirit children of God must come to this earth for a glorious purpose, and that individual identity began long before conception and will continue for all the eternities to come.

We rely on the prophets of God, who have told us that while there may be "rare" exceptions, "the practice of elective abortion is fundamentally contrary to the Lord's injunction, 'Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do anything like unto it' (Doctrine and Covenants 59:6)" (1991 *Supplement to the 1989 General Handbook of Instructions*, p. 1).

Our knowledge of the great plan of happiness also gives us a unique perspective on the subject of marriage and the bearing of children. In this we also run counter to some strong current forces in custom, law, and economics.

Marriage is necessary in God's plan

Marriage is disdained by an increasing number of couples, and many who marry choose to forgo children or place severe limits on their number. In recent years strong economic pressures in many nations have altered the traditional assumption of a single breadwinner per family. Increases in the number of working mothers of young children inevitably signal a reduced commitment of parental time to nurturing the young. The effect of these reductions is evident in the rising numbers of abortions, divorces, child neglect, and juvenile crime.

We are taught that marriage is necessary for the accomplishment of God's plan, to provide the approved setting for mortal birth, and to prepare family members for eternal life. "Marriage is ordained of God unto man," the Lord said, "that the earth might answer the end of its creation; and that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made" (D&C 49:15-17).

Our concept of marriage is motivated by revealed truth, not by worldly sociology. The Apostle Paul taught, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11). President Spencer W. Kimball explained, "Without proper and successful mar-

riage, one will never be exalted" (*Marriage and Divorce* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], p. 24).

According to custom, men are expected to take the initiative in seeking marriage. That is why President Joseph F. Smith directed his prophetic pressure at men. He said, "No man who is marriageable is fully living his religion who remains unmarried" (*Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 275). We hear of some worthy LDS men in their thirties who are busy accumulating property and enjoying freedom from family responsibilities without any sense of urgency about marriage. Beware, brethren. You are deficient in a sacred duty.

Bear and nurture children

Knowledge of the great plan of happiness also gives Latter-day Saints a distinctive attitude toward the bearing and nurturing of children.

In some times and places, children have been regarded as no more than laborers in a family economic enterprise or as insurers of support for their parents. Though repelled by these repressions, some persons in our day have no compunctions against similar attitudes that subordinate the welfare of a spirit child of God to the comfort or convenience of parents.

The Savior taught that we should not lay up treasures on earth but should lay up treasures in heaven (see Matthew 6:19-21). In light of the ultimate purpose of the great plan of happiness, I believe that the ultimate treasures on earth and in heaven are our children and our posterity.

President Kimball said, "It is an act of extreme selfishness for a married couple to refuse to have children when they are able to do so" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, p. 6; or *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 6). When married couples postpone childbearing until after they have satisfied their material goals, the mere

passage of time assures that they seriously reduce their potential to participate in furthering our Heavenly Father's plan for all of his spirit children. Faithful Latter-day Saints cannot afford to look upon children as an interference with what the world calls "self-fulfillment." Our covenants with God and the ultimate purpose of life are tied up in those little ones who reach for our time, our love, and our sacrifices.

How many children should a couple have? All they can care for! Of course, to care for children means more than simply giving them life. Children must be loved, nurtured, taught, fed, clothed, housed, and well started in their capacities to be good parents themselves. Exercising faith in God's promises to bless them when they are keeping his commandments, many LDS parents have large families. Others seek but are not blessed with children or with the number of children they desire. In a matter as intimate as this, we should not judge one another.

President Gordon B. Hinckley gave this inspired counsel to an audience of young Latter-day Saints:

"I like to think of the positive side of the equation, of the meaning and sanctity of life, of the purpose of this estate in our eternal journey, of the need for the experiences of mortal life under the great plan of God our Father, of the joy that is to be found only where there are children in the home, of the blessings that come of good posterity. When I think of these values and see them taught and observed, then I am willing to leave the question of numbers to the man and the woman and the Lord" ("If I Were You, What Would I Do?" *Brigham Young University 1983-84 Fireside and Devotional Speeches* [Provo: University Publications, 1984], p. 11).

No blessing will be denied

Some who are listening to this message are probably saying, "But what about me?" We know that many worthy

and wonderful Latter-day Saints currently lack the ideal opportunities and essential requirements for their progress. Singleness, childlessness, death, and divorce frustrate ideals and postpone the fulfillment of promised blessings. In addition, some women who desire to be full-time mothers and homemakers have been literally compelled to enter the full-time workforce. But these frustrations are only temporary. The Lord has promised that in the eternities no blessing will be denied his sons and daughters who keep the commandments, are true to their covenants, and desire what is right.

Many of the most important deprivations of mortality will be set right in the Millennium, which is the time for fulfilling all that is incomplete in the great plan of happiness for all of our Father's worthy children. We know that will be true of temple ordinances. I believe it will also be true of family relationships and experiences.

Do all things in wisdom and order

I pray that we will not let the challenges and temporary diversions of mortality cause us to forget our covenants and lose sight of our eternal destiny. We who know God's plan for his children, we who have covenanted to participate, have a clear responsibility. We must desire to do what is right, and we must do all that we can in our own circumstances in mortality.

In all of this, we should remember King Benjamin's caution to "see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27). I think of that inspired teaching whenever I feel inadequate, frustrated, or depressed.

When we have done all that we are able, we can rely on God's promised mercy. We have a *Savior*, who has taken upon him not just the sins, but also "the pains and the sicknesses of his people . . . that he may know according to the

flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:11-12). He is our Savior, and when we have done all that we can, he will make up the difference, in his own way and in his own time. Of that I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

The Brethren have taught plain and precious truths about the gospel of Jesus Christ from this pulpit during this conference. I bear testimony that we have heard "the will of the Lord, . . . the mind of the Lord, . . . the word of the Lord, . . . the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation" (D&C 68:4).

As the Lord Himself said in His preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

We have missed the voices of President Benson, President Hunter, and Elder Ashton during this conference. I seek the help of the Lord because I want to teach an important principle with the same spirit and clarity as my Brethren have taught.

Councils in the Lord's church

God called a grand council in the premortal world to present His glorious plan for our eternal welfare. The Lord's church is organized with councils at every level, beginning with the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and extending to stake, ward, quorum, auxiliary, and family councils.

President Stephen L. Richards said: "The genius of our Church government is government through *councils*. . .

President Hinckley

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us, and we shall now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard, also of the Council of the Twelve.

I have had enough experience to know the value of councils. Hardly a day passes but that I see . . . God's wisdom, in creating councils . . . to govern his Kingdom. . . .

" . . . I have no hesitancy in giving you the assurance, if you will confer in council as you are expected to do, God will give you solutions to the problems that confront you" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, p. 86).

How councils should function

As a member of the Twelve, I serve on several general Church councils and committees. I meet regularly with the leaders of the auxiliaries. Together, we counsel, we search the scriptures, and pray for guidance as we strive to learn how the auxiliaries can more effectively bless and strengthen the members of the Church.

In many respects, general Church councils function much the same as stake and ward councils. All councils in the Church should encourage free and open discussion by conferring with one another and striving to have clear, concise communication. Councils should discuss objectives and concerns, with mutual understanding being the ultimate goal. Stake and ward councils are ideal settings for leaders of all organizations to converse together and strengthen one another. The primary focus of stake and ward council meetings should be coordinating activities and stewardship, not calendaring. In these meetings, priesthood and auxiliary leaders should

review together their responsibilities and find ways for Church programs to help members live the gospel in the home. Today individuals and families need wise and inspired help from the Church to combat the evils of the world.

Seek sisters' input in council meetings

In a recent council meeting with the presidencies of the women's auxiliaries, the sisters told me that very few women in the Church express any interest in wanting to hold the priesthood. But they do want to be heard and valued and want to make meaningful contributions to the stake or ward and its members that will serve the Lord and help accomplish the mission of the Church.

For example, not long ago we were talking about the worthiness of youth to serve missions. President Elaine Jack said, "You know, Elder Ballard, the sisters of the Church may have some good suggestions on how to better prepare the youth for missions if they were just asked. After all, you know, we *are* their mothers!" The sisters' suggestions can help equally regarding temple attendance and a host of other matters with which priesthood leaders may be struggling.

Brethren, please be sure you are seeking the vital input of the sisters in your council meetings. Encourage all council members to share their suggestions and ideas about how the stake or ward can be more effective in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead.

All council members should participate

Ideally all members of any Church or any family council should share their concerns and should suggest solutions based on gospel principles. I believe the Church and our families would be strengthened if stake presidents and bishops would use their council meet-

ings for finding answers to questions on how to improve sacrament meetings; how to improve reverence; how to focus on children; how to strengthen youth; how to help singles, including single parents; how to teach and fellowship investigators and new members; how to improve gospel teaching; and many similar issues.

During the last half of this year, we have been holding a special training meeting in conjunction with each stake conference to discuss the morality of our youth. Those who have been participating are members of stake and ward councils. Every question directed to me in the discussion period could be discussed most appropriately in a ward council meeting. Yet rarely do those asking the questions feel that they have had an opportunity in ward council meetings to raise their questions, voice their concerns, and offer their suggestions.

Create spiritual synergism in councils

In these perilous times we need the cooperative effort of men and women officers in the Church because absolute vigilance is required on the part of all who have been entrusted to help watch over the kingdom. We each have large individual responsibilities, but just as important is the responsibility we share with others to come together in council in a united effort to solve problems and bless all of our Church members. When we act in a united effort, we create spiritual synergism, which is increased effectiveness or achievement as a result of combined action or cooperation, the result of which is greater than the sum of the individual parts.

The ancient moralist Aesop used to illustrate the strength of synergism by holding up one stick and asking for a volunteer among his listeners who thought he could break it. Of course, the volunteer was able to break one stick easily. Then Aesop would put more

sticks together until the volunteer was unable to break them. The moral to Aesop's demonstration was simple: Together we generate synergism, which makes us much stronger than when we stand alone.

No one should stand alone

God never intended that His children should stand alone. Children have parents, and parents have the Church, with the scriptures, living prophets and Apostles, and the Holy Ghost to help them understand proper principles and act upon those principles in fulfilling their parental responsibilities.

The Apostle Paul taught that the Savior organized the Church, complete with Apostles, prophets, and other officers and teachers, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Paul compared the members of the Church and their various responsibilities to the body:

"For the body is not one member, but many. . . .

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him

"But now are they many members, yet but one body.

"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. . . .

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:14, 18, 20-21, 26).

The scriptures state clearly that while our respective callings may be different and may change from time to time, all callings are important to the operation of the Church. We need the priesthood quorums to assert themselves and fulfill their divinely man-

dated stewardship, just as we need the Relief Society, the Primary, the Young Women, the Sunday School, and the activities committees to perform their vital functions. And we need the officers and members of all of these inspired organizations to work together, assisting each other as needed for the benefit of individuals and families.

Suggestions for more effective councils

This is not man's work or woman's work; it is *all* God's work, which is centered on the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have some specific suggestions that, if followed, I believe can help us be more effective with our families and in our Church callings.

First, focus on fundamentals. We have certainly been taught about these fundamentals during this conference. Those who teach must make sure the doctrine remains pure and that it is taught. Teach by the Spirit, using the scriptures and the approved curriculum. *Do not* introduce or dwell on speculative and questionable topics. Study the teachings of this conference in family home evenings and in family discussions; they will strengthen your homes. In a world that is filled with sin, conflict, and confusion, we can find peace and safety in knowing and living the revealed truths of the gospel.

Second, focus on people. Coordination and calendaring have their time and place, but too many council meetings begin and end there. Rather than reciting a litany of organizational plans and reports, spend most of the time in council meetings reviewing the needs of individual members. In doing so, confidentiality is critical. Council members must hold all matters discussed in council meetings in strict confidence.

Third, promote free and open expression. Such expression is essential if we are to achieve the purpose of councils. Leaders and parents should establish a climate that is conducive to openness,

where every person is important and every opinion valued. The Lord admonished, "Let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when *all* have spoken that *all* may be edified" (D&C 88:122; italics added). Leaders should provide adequate time for council meetings and should remember that councils are for leaders to listen at least as much as they speak.

Fourth, participation is a privilege. With that privilege comes responsibility—responsibility to work within the parameters of the organization, to be prepared, to share, to advocate vigorously the position you believe to be right. But just as important is the responsibility to support and sustain the final decision of the council leader, even if you do not agree fully.

President David O. McKay told of a meeting of the Council of the Twelve Apostles where a question of grave importance was discussed. He and the other Apostles felt strongly about a certain course of action that should be taken, and they were prepared to share their feelings in a meeting with the First Presidency. To their surprise, President Joseph F. Smith did not ask for their opinion in the matter, as was his custom. Rather, "he arose and said, 'This is what the Lord wants.'"

"While it was not wholly in harmony with what he had decided," President McKay wrote, "the President of the Twelve . . . was the first on his feet to say, 'Brethren, I move that that becomes the opinion and judgment of this Council.'"

"Second the motion," said another, and it was unanimous. Six months did not pass before the wisdom of that leader was demonstrated" (*Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953], p. 264).

When a council leader reaches a decision, the council members should sustain it wholeheartedly.

Fifth, lead with love. Jesus taught that the first and greatest command-

ment in the law is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

Priesthood leaders are to lead with "persuasion, . . . long-suffering, . . . gentleness and meekness, . . . love unfeigned; . . . kindness, and pure knowledge" (D&C 121:41-42). Those are the principles that should guide us in our relationships as neighbors in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Those who hold the priesthood must never forget that they have no right to wield priesthood authority like a club over the heads of others in the family or in Church callings. The Lord told Joseph Smith that "when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (D&C 121:37).

In other words, any man who claims the special powers of heaven for his own selfish purposes and seeks to use the priesthood in any degree of unrighteousness in the Church or in the home simply does not understand the nature of his authority. Priesthood is for service, not servitude; compassion, not compulsion; caring, not control. Those who think otherwise are operating outside the parameters of priesthood authority.

Thankfully, most of our fathers and priesthood officers lead with love, just as most of our mothers and auxiliary leaders do. Leadership based on love brings incredible power. It is real, and it generates lasting results in the lives of our Father's children.

Achieve inspired consensus and unity

May God bless you, brothers and sisters, to find inspired consensus and unity as you counsel together in your service one to another. Only in so doing can the Church and our families begin to approach their full potential for doing good among the children of God on earth.

I know God lives and Jesus is the Christ. I know we can accomplish their work better through unity and love as we sit in council one with another. May we

be blessed to so do is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Twelve has just spoken to us. We note it is warm in here. We're sorry. You're not nearly as warm as you will be if you don't repent!

Sister Virginia H. Pearce, first counselor in the General Young Women Presidency, will now address us.

Sister Virginia H. Pearce

Blessings of participating in groups

It is good to gather in this inspiring setting in the presence of thousands and thousands who are brought together through the satellite network. I believe that Heavenly Father recognized that even though our relationship with him and our accountability to him are intensely personal, we gather strength when we meet in groups. We need to be reminded often that we are a part of something big and grand as we continue to do our own part. Each Sunday in gatherings around the world, young women stand and say aloud together, not "*I*," but "*We* are daughters of our Heavenly Father who loves *us*, and we love him. *We* will 'stand as witnesses,' " and so on (Young Women Theme, *Young Women Leadership Handbook* [1992], p. 4; italics added).

The ward family provides a safety net

Learning in groups is so important that Heavenly Father planned for us to be born into a group—the most basic, most hallowed, and most powerful group on earth: the family. We have heard good counsel about the family in these past two days. I would like to build on that by talking about the *ward* or *branch*

family—the basic ecclesiastical unit to which we all belong as members of the Church of Jesus Christ. For simplicity this afternoon, I will use the word *ward* to include both wards and branches, since they both serve the same purposes.

Wards are not designed to replace the family unit but to support the family and its righteous teachings. A ward is another place where there is enough commitment and energy to form a sort of "safety net" family for each of us when our families cannot or do not provide all of the teaching and growing experiences we need to return to Heavenly Father.

It is my desire and prayer that during the next few minutes we will expand our appreciation of the power of the ward family and renew our commitment to participate positively in that community of Saints.

A sense of belonging

First, ward families provide a sense of belonging. Robert Frost said in his narrative poem "The Death of the Hired Man":

Home is the place where, when you
have to go there,
They have to take you in.

I should have called it
 Something you somehow haven't
 to deserve.
 [Lines 118-20]

A ward is "something you somehow haven't to deserve." Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ gives us that home. In a ward, as in a family, every person is different and valuable. Paul said:

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; . . .

"For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:13-14).

The Savior instructed that we should meet together often and forbid no one (see 3 Nephi 18:22).

Several months ago while visiting our children in another state, I walked with our two-and-one-half-year-old grandson from the chapel to the nursery. As he moved rather energetically down the hall, at least five people called him by name—teenagers, children, adults. "Hi, Benjamin," "Hey, Benjamin," "Morning, Benjamin." My heart overflowed with gratitude that Benjamin is learning that he, as an individual, belongs to a ward family. Over a lifetime, ward families will do for him what his family alone cannot do.

In April 1992 conference, Young Women General President Janette C. Hales asked adult members to "learn the names of the young people in [their] ward or branch and call them by name" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, p. 112; or *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 80). Now I would enlarge her invitation, inviting you young men and young women to learn the names of the adults and the children. Overcome your natural timidity and greet as many people as you can by name each week. Our wards will be better places if, like Benjamin, everyone hears his own name four or five times between the chapel and the classroom. We can each help that to happen.

Listening ears

Next, ward families provide the reassurance of listening ears. Someone has said that people would rather be understood than be loved. In truth, the surest way to increase our love for someone is to listen with patience and respect. I believe that our baptismal covenant demands this. How can we "mourn with those that mourn" and "bear one another's burdens" (Mosiah 18:8-9) if we don't listen to know what those burdens are?

We discover and develop our thoughts through conversation. Talking itself is a sorting and learning process. We feel such comfort when others listen with the understanding that our words are not our final statement, but a wondering and wandering process used to reach a clearer understanding.

But we must be careful not to listen as Laman and Lemuel listened to each other. They encouraged mutual murmuring. When fellow ward members complain, blame others, and repeat negative tales, it takes self-discipline to stop ourselves from adding more fuel to their fire of disgruntlement. Mutual murmuring is a smoldering fire that can burst into flame and destroy a ward.

Encouragement

Third, ward families provide encouragement. Becky and Danny's second child was born prematurely. Recounting the days, then weeks and years of caring for a critically ill child, Becky says, "It was difficult for my mother to watch us dealing with this situation. She wished that she could take it away from me. We were living in a distant state, and Mother would call me on the phone and feel so helpless as she listened to our daily struggles. One day she said to me, 'Becky, I don't know how you will get through this, but I am confident that you can.' That encouragement was a turning point for me."

As a ward family, we can give the kind of encouragement that Becky's mother gave.

When friends express confidence in me, especially when I feel overwhelmed by difficult circumstances, the light at the end of the tunnel burns brighter. A steady belief in ward members can often be of far more value than casseroles or loaves of bread.

A mother was busily preparing dinner when her little boy burst into the kitchen. "Mother, will you play darts with me?" "Just-a-minutes" didn't seem to satisfy the little boy, so the mother followed him down the basement stairs. As they came into the playroom, she said, "I don't know the rules or how to play." "Oh, it's not hard at all," he beamed confidently. "I just stand right here and throw the darts, and you stand over there and say, 'Wonderful! Wonderful!'" "Pretty easy rules to remember, aren't they?"

"Wonderful, wonderfuls," notes, handshakes, hugs—all work so well in ward settings. Positive reinforcement changes behavior for the better, while criticism stabilizes negative behaviors and blocks change.

George Eliot, a nineteenth-century English novelist, said, "What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult to each other?" (*Middlemarch* [London: Penguin Books, 1965], p. 789). We can make life less difficult for each other as we make our wards emotionally safer places by being kind, accepting, tolerant, supportive, and positive. Those of us who teach children and youth have a special responsibility to insist, in respectful and kind ways, that class members use language and behavior which show respect for others. No one should be belittled or made to feel less than he is within the walls of a Church classroom.

A refuge

Ward families are a refuge. I know a young family that lived in south Los

Angeles during the violent summer of 1992. They could feel the heat from the fires as they sat terrified in their little apartment. They telephoned their parents in Salt Lake. Their families offered encouragement and their prayers, but they could do no more at such a distance. It was a ward member who made arrangements for the Parkins to get themselves and their baby out safely. They stayed with members until they could go back to their apartment. They were safe.

Multiply this story by every natural and civil crisis. Bishops and quorum leaders accounting for families after hurricanes, members carrying food and blankets—it makes no difference where you live or what kind of chaos might occur. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints *will* remain organized, and order *will* prevail. The wards and stakes of Zion will be a "refuge from the storm" (D&C 115:6).

Opportunities to serve

Ward families provide ways for us to contribute. There are no boundaries for contributing our time and talents. Hopefully we will contribute everywhere we go, but the structure of a ward provides a good training ground.

After living for twenty years in the same ward, I married and moved to a distant city, where my husband continued his schooling. The people were friendly, but I was shy by nature and struggled to feel comfortable. One Sunday morning as I stood up from the bench at the back of the chapel and turned to go to Sunday School, a member of the bishopric greeted me with a smile and a handshake. Brother Goates was one of many who had extended themselves in becoming acquainted with us. As he shook my hand, he said, "Virginia, get off the back row and quit thinking about yourself!"

All at once I saw with a new perspective. He was right, but I didn't

quite know *how* to quit thinking about myself. However, as the weeks moved on, the acceptance of a calling automatically moved me off the back row, demanding that I think about someone besides myself. My comfort and confidence grew proportionately. Callings and assignments are easy ways to become involved in the lives of others. Paradoxically, as we concentrate on the needs of others, our own needs become less controlling.

A laboratory to learn and practice the gospel

Ward families provide a laboratory to learn and practice the gospel. A CTR B teacher taught a lesson on fasting. After talking with their parents, she arranged for the children to visit Brother Dibble, a ward member who was very ill. As they visited, Sister McRae explained that their class had learned in Primary about fasting. Most of the children had never fasted before, and it was their desire, as a class, to fast and pray for Brother Dibble on the following fast Sunday. With tears rolling down his cheeks, he expressed in tender words his gratitude—for them, the gospel, and the principle of fasting. On Sunday, having fasted, Sister McRae and her class members knelt together in their classroom to pray for Brother Dibble and conclude their fast.

I have always believed that if people are really going to learn something, they need more than an explanation; they need an experience. Alma taught that principle as he encouraged experimenting upon the word (see Alma 32:27). Sister McRae's CTR B children received both an explanation and an experience. They learned and practiced the doctrine of fasting in a wonderful laboratory of gospel learning—their ward.

Like Sister McRae's CTR B class, young women are taught gospel principles during their Sunday lesson time. Then they are invited to "experiment on the word" by participating in Value

experiences found in their *Personal Progress* books—the same process: an explanation, then an experience.

Heavenly Father expects us to participate in our wards. It is part of the plan. But, Sister Pearce, you may be saying, you have such an idealistic picture of a ward—that's not like *my* ward!

You mean, your ward has real people in it—ones who are sometimes selfish or self-righteous, unskilled or undependable? I'm so glad! How could it be a *real* laboratory for practicing gospel principles like patience, long-suffering, charity, and forgiveness if there were no people or situations that would require the use of these principles? The miracle of it all is that we *are* real people put into an ingenious structure, designed by God, to help us become like him.

A Zion community

I would invite you to love whatever ward you are in—participate in it, enjoy it, learn from it.

Each of us can envision our ward or branch as a Zion community and then work to make it that way.

I bear witness that ward and branch families are a great and miraculous part of Heavenly Father's plan. May we use them more fully to help us grow and ultimately return to his presence, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We've just heard from Sister Virginia H. Pearce, a young woman of ability and beauty and faith just like her mother. She's first counselor in the General Young Women Presidency.

We'll now all stand and sing "Let Us All Press On," following which Elder W. Eugene Hansen of the Presidency of the Seventy will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Let Us All Press On."

Elder W. Eugene Hansen

The search for happiness

From the beginning of recorded history, mankind has been constantly searching for happiness. I believe it's fair to say that most of us are influenced greatly in our daily lives by what we perceive will result in happiness or joy for ourselves, as well as for others.

I submit this is certainly a laudable pursuit. The Lord has said, "Men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25).

The founding fathers of our nation considered happiness to be of such importance that it was ranked with life and liberty. I refer to the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The source of real happiness

What is happiness? Where do we find it? How do we obtain it? I remember reading the results some time ago of a national survey which attempted to summarize the responses as to what brings happiness.

While I don't remember all the details of that survey, I do remember that most people felt money was a significant part of happiness. The author's research, however, indicated that money alone seldom, if ever, resulted in true happiness.

Two thoughts come to mind here. I recall a talk given by President David O. McKay. He made reference to a statement by John D. Rockefeller—then one of the world's richest men—who apparently had stomach trouble and had purportedly said, "I would rather be able to enjoy a good meal than have a million dollars." Then with a wink of the eye, President McKay re-

marked, "Of course, he had a million dollars when he said that."

I readily concede that it's important to have sufficient money for our needs, but beyond that, money has little to do with true happiness. Often it is the work and sacrifice one experiences in obtaining money for a worthwhile purpose that produces the most satisfaction.

In my father's personal history he tells about Grandmother's experiences growing up in Brigham City, Utah, in the late 1800s. Their family was very poor, having emigrated from Denmark with little more than the clothes on their backs. She wanted so much to have a pair of shoes she could wear on special occasions. To accomplish this worthy desire took a full summer's work of picking berries and tending children, since money was very scarce and labor was cheap. But the joy Grandmother felt as she obtained those shoes is indescribable, for not only was she able to wear them, but her mother did also. In fact, they had it arranged so Grandmother would wear the shoes to Sunday School in the morning, and then her mother would wear them to sacrament meeting in the evening.

The words of William George Jordan are instructive here:

"Happiness does not always require success, prosperity or attainment. It is often the joy of hopeful struggle, consecration of purpose and energy to some good end. Real happiness ever has its root in unselfishness—its blossom in love of some kind" (*The Crown of Individuality*, 2nd ed. [New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1909], pp. 78–79).

The difference between happiness and pleasure

One of the most critical challenges mankind faces today is to recognize the difference between happiness and mere pleasure. Satan and his forces have be-

come extremely effective in their effort to convince people that pleasure should be the most sought-after objective. He slyly promises that wherever found, pleasure will bring happiness.

Our television and movie screens are filled with not-so-subtle messages that encourage and persuade young and old alike to unbridle their passions and they will experience happiness. The results of this reckless course should be so apparent as we watch the tremendous social and psychological costs continue to mount. The increasing incidence of teenage pregnancy, abortion, rape, child molestation, sexual harassment, assault, drug addiction, disease, alcoholism, and broken homes are all influenced by this persuasion. And the alarming statistics continue to testify, but with little if any effect.

Some years ago Elder James E. Talmage so aptly described what is taking place that it's almost as if he were writing for our day. I quote:

"The present is an age of pleasure-seeking, and men are losing their sanity in the mad rush for sensations that do but excite and disappoint. In this day of counterfeits, adulterations, and base imitations, the devil is busier than he has ever been in the course of human history, in the manufacture of pleasures, both old and new; and these he offers for sale in most attractive fashion, falsely labeled, '*Happiness*.' In this soul-destroying craft he is without a peer; he has had centuries of experience and practice, and by his skill he controls the market. He has learned the tricks of the trade, and knows well how to catch the eye and arouse the desire of his customers. He puts up the stuff in bright-colored packages, tied with tinsel string and tassel; and crowds flock to his bargain counters, hustling and crushing one another in their frenzy to buy.

"Follow one of the purchasers as he goes off gloatingly with his gaudy packet, and watch him as he opens it. What finds he inside the gilded wrap-

ping? He had expected fragrant happiness, but uncovers only an inferior brand of pleasure, the stench of which is nauseating" ("A Greeting to the Missionaries," *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1913, pp. 172-73).

How significant that Elder Talmage, writing several years ago, could so eloquently capture the conditions of this age in a way that it is perhaps even more descriptive today than it was then. Some may propose we take comfort from hearing the concerns of yesteryear and reason that things were as bad then as they are now. I choose not to regard it in that light. I suggest Elder Talmage's words should have served as a warning from which we could have learned much more than we did as a nation.

The gospel is the pattern for happiness

Real joy and happiness come from living in such a way that our Heavenly Father will be pleased with us. In section 52 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord tells us he will give us "a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations" (v. 14).

That pattern is the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness, the gospel which we are so blessed to have.

Learn with joy rather than sorrow

In order to be happy there are lessons we must invariably learn while in this life. We can either learn them with joy or with sorrow. I think of the words of Jacob, the brother of Nephi, as he wrote many centuries ago:

"Now in this thing we do rejoice; and we labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren and our children will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them *that they may learn with joy and not with sorrow*" (Jacob 4:3; italics added).

Isn't that true? Aren't there certain basic principles and truths that we must learn if we are to get along in this life and be happy? And we either learn them with joy by doing what's right, or we learn them with sorrow or through experiences that bring sorrow. One cannot break God's commandments and be happy. We should remember the scripture referred to earlier during this conference, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

I recall as a child hearing my father say, just prior to administering some well-deserved corporal punishment to one of his children, namely me, "If you won't hear, then you'll have to feel."

If we would all listen more, it would not be necessary to have to feel so often in that sense.

Youth, heed parents' warnings

Now may I speak to the youth for a few moments. We want you to be happy. As parents, grandparents, priesthood leaders, and advisers, we have great concern as we witness the moral laxness that is becoming so prevalent and apparently so accepted in this and other countries of the world.

Consequently, those concerns are translated into more frequent discussions with you; requests for more details about dating, activities, and parties; and in some cases, even restrictions with respect to certain locations, plans, and associations.

It may seem to you that we come on too strong with the counsel to bridle your passions, to avoid all forms of pornography, to keep the Word of Wisdom, to avoid unwholesome locations and situations, to develop and maintain your own high moral standards, to adopt a keen sense of personal accountability, to keep your eyes above the crowd and be willing to stand alone when principle requires it.

Yes, we may seem too concerned, but let me ask you this: Suppose you

saw a little brother about to trade his wagon for a popsicle on a hot summer day. Or suppose you saw a child toddling toward a busy boulevard or swift-running stream, not fully realizing the dangers that are so apparent to you because of your age and experience. Of course you would immediately offer aid in both cases. Failure to do so would be irresponsible.

Likewise, your parents and youth leaders feel a great responsibility to counsel and warn you of dangers you may not fully appreciate, which could have disastrous consequences—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Definition of true happiness

What is happiness, then? How does it differ from mere pleasure? Again I go to the words of Elder Talmage:

"Happiness is true food, wholesome, nutritious and sweet; it builds up the body and generates energy for action, physical, mental and spiritual; pleasure is but a deceiving stimulant which, like spirituous drink, makes one think he is strong when in reality enfeebled; makes him fancy he is well when in fact stricken with deadly malady.

"Happiness leaves no bad aftertaste, it is followed by no depressing reaction; it calls for no repentance, brings no regret, entails no remorse; pleasure too often makes necessary repentance, contrition, and suffering; and, if indulged to the extreme, it brings degradation and destruction.

"True happiness is lived over and over again in memory, always with a renewal of the original good; a moment of unholy pleasure may leave a barbed sting, which, like a thorn in the flesh, is an ever-present source of anguish.

"Happiness is not akin with levity, nor is it one with light-minded mirth. It springs from the deeper fountains of the soul, and is not infrequently accompanied by tears. Have you never been

so happy that you have to weep? I have" (*Improvement Era*, Dec. 1913, p. 173).

Oh, that we could become as a people like those referred to in the Book of Mormon:

"And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

"And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the

hand of God" (4 Nephi 1:15-16). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder W. Eugene Hansen of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Ronald E. Poelman of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve, who will be our concluding speaker.

Elder Ronald E. Poelman

How to obtain divine forgiveness

The Savior of the world, the Redeemer of all God's children, Jesus of Nazareth, has power to forgive sins. His own witness of such power is recorded in the New Testament (see Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:20, 24). His Apostles Peter and Paul testified of this truth (see Acts 5:31; 13:38-39; Ephesians 1:7), as did also the prophets of the Book of Mormon (see Enos 1:5; Mosiah 4:3; Moroni 6:8) and of modern times (see D&C 61:2).

Through the centuries, many have received great joy and peace of mind through understanding and accepting the Lord's forgiveness. Yet many others apparently continue to bear the burden of guilt, remorse, and self-doubt because of an incomplete understanding and testimony of the doctrine of Christ.

Recently I was in private conversation with one who, having committed a serious transgression, had also made intense effort to repent and receive forgiveness from those personally offended, from the Church, and from the Lord. When I asked, "Do you feel forgiven by your Heavenly Father?" he answered hesitantly with an affirmative but quali-

fied response. "How do we obtain divine forgiveness?" I asked.

He spoke of how he had forsaken his transgressive behavior of the past, confessed to proper priesthood authorities, and attempted to make restitution to those offended. He further described his efforts to live according to gospel principles and Church standards.

The Savior and his atoning sacrifice were not mentioned. The underlying assumption seemed to be that divine forgiveness is obtained through those steps of repentance limited to changing one's behavior. Despite the brother's earnest efforts to repent, he appeared to be burdened still by remorse and regret and to feel that he must continue to pay for his sins.

Unfortunately this is not an isolated case. Others, to my knowledge, are burdened by past mistakes, large and small, because of an incomplete or incorrect understanding of our Father's plan of redemption and mercy. Those so burdened may unnecessarily struggle through life without the joy and peace of mind which are the intended result of true repentance and divine forgiveness.

One who assumes that he can or must pay the price for his sins and

thereby earn divine forgiveness will not feel free to continue progress toward realizing his divine potential, that is, eternal life.

The fact is we cannot save ourselves.

Enos obtains forgiveness

The best source through which a correct understanding of how forgiveness may be obtained is the Book of Mormon. Let us consider some examples of its teachings.

Enos recorded for us his experience, alone in the forest, remembering the words of his father concerning eternal life:

"And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; . . .

"And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee. . . .

" . . . Wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

"And I said: Lord, how is it done?

"And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ" (Enos 1:4-8).

Lehi and Alma teach how to be forgiven

How is it done? The question each of us may ponder. Again we turn to the Book of Mormon for additional understanding.

Father Lehi teaches us that the divine purpose of our mortal probation requires us to experience opposition in all things and, knowing good from evil, to exercise our moral agency, make choices, and be accountable for the consequences (see 2 Nephi 2).

We learn from the prophet Alma that we are subject to divine law, which all have transgressed in some respect, making us subject to the demands of justice (see Alma 42:14, 18). God's justice is based upon divine laws, under which we receive what we deserve according to our disobedience or obedience to the law.

Justice affords no forgiveness for transgressors but imposes penalties (see D&C 82:4). None is exempt (see D&C 107:84). After all we can do to repent, we are still subject to the demands of justice and its penalties, which we cannot satisfy.

However, we learn from Alma of our Father's plan of mercy, whereby the Son of God would atone for the sins of the world and "appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also" (Alma 42:15).

The Savior's vicarious sacrifice satisfies the justice of God. Therefore, God extends his mercy, whereby we may receive forgiveness of our personal transgressions through faith in the Redeemer, followed by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

Father Lehi taught his son Jacob:

"Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

"Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (2 Nephi 2:6-7).

The repentance process

The beginning and completion of repentance leading to forgiveness is faith in Jesus Christ, who is the "author and the finisher of [our] faith" (Moroni 6:4). Our faith in him as Savior and Redeemer engenders in us godly sorrow for our transgressions, a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and a sense of personal accountability. There follows a change in attitude and a turning toward God.

We resolve to forsake disobedience, even carelessness, and strive better to know and love our Father in Heaven and to obey his laws and commandments. Throughout, we pray for our Father's forgiveness, for strength to resist temptation, and for inspiration

to fill our lives with that which is good and pleasing to the Lord. We seek the forgiveness of individuals whom we may have wronged and attempt restitution to the extent possible.

If our past behavior is such as to affect our standing in the Church, we confess to appropriate Church authorities and, if necessary, submit to Church discipline, which is not for the purpose of punishment only but is intended to heal and renew.

The Savior has paid the price

Throughout the repentance process we have feelings of regret, remorse, and guilt, which cause us to suffer. However, our individual suffering does not satisfy the demands of justice which follow disobedience to divine law. We cannot pay the price for our sins.

The resurrected Christ has said, "For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent" (D&C 19:16). To the Nephites he declared, "Return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that *I may heal you*" (3 Nephi 9:13; italics added).

The Lord's gift of forgiveness, however, is not complete until it is accepted. True and complete repentance is a process by which we may become reconciled with God and accept the divine gift of forgiveness.

In the words of Nephi, "It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23).

Twofold effect of the Atonement

The effect of the infinite, atoning sacrifice was twofold: First, resurrection and immortality for all, unconditionally granted. Second, eternal life for each one who fulfills the prescribed conditions, which are faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer, followed by repentance.

Then we must qualify for and receive the saving and exalting ordinances

of the gospel with their associated covenants, continuously striving to keep those covenants and obey the commandments of God.

Being mortal, and despite our resolve and efforts, we will continue to fall short of perfection. However, with Nephi of old, conscious of our weaknesses, temptations, and past mistakes, we may say, "Nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted" (2 Nephi 4:19). There follows a natural resolve to renew our efforts.

Accept the Father's mercy

Essential to receiving divine forgiveness are personal, individual recognition and acceptance of our Father's mercy, made available to us by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and a renewed covenant to obey the principles of the gospel.

Examples of this process and its results are found in the Book of Mormon. Having been taught the doctrine of the Atonement, the people of King Benjamin, conscious of their past transgressions, pleaded for mercy that by the atoning blood of Christ they might receive forgiveness of their sins, for, said they:

"We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . . .

"[And] the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ" (Mosiah 4:2-3).

Bearing testimony brings forgiveness

Each of us may ask, How may I know that I am forgiven?

Having completed the steps of repentance, relying upon the grace and mercy of God, it is natural for us to testify of the Savior and his atoning sacrifice and to strive to be an example of the believers.

From Elder Bruce R. McConkie, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, we receive these comforting words:

"The relationship between the bearing of testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost and the forgiveness of sins illustrates a glorious gospel truth. It is that whenever faithful saints gain the companionship of the Holy Spirit, they are clean and pure before the Lord, for the Spirit will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. Hence, they thereby receive a remission of those sins committed after baptism" (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980], 3:40-41, note 1).

The central core of the gospel is the vicarious sacrifice of the Savior, which satisfies divine justice and makes operative God's mercy, resulting in a universal, unconditional resurrection and the possibility of eternal life for each one who accepts Jesus Christ as Redeemer and obeys the principles, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel.

"With his stripes we are healed"

The ancient prophet Isaiah taught us:

"Cease to do evil;

"Learn to do well. . . .

" . . . Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:16-18).

And further:

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

" . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace

was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

The prophet of this dispensation, Joseph Smith, and his companion Sidney Rigdon gave testimony of the gospel, as recorded in the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Each of us may receive a *similar* spiritual witness, and therefore I suggest that we may express their testimony as our own in these words:

"And this is the gospel, . . .

"That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for [me], and to bear [my] sins . . . , and to sanctify [me], and to cleanse [me] from all unrighteousness;

"That through him [I] might be saved" (D&C 76:40-42).

In conclusion, these verses from a favorite hymn:

How gentle God's commands!
How kind his precepts are!
Come, cast your burdens on the Lord
And trust his constant care. . . .

Why should this anxious load
Press down your weary mind?
Haste to your Heav'nly Father's throne
And sweet refreshment find.

His goodness stands approved,
Unchanged from day to day;
I'll drop my burden at his feet
And bear a song away.
["How Gentle God's Commands,"
Hymns, no. 125]

To these truths which I have sought to teach I bear solemn, personal witness in the sacred name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard G. Scott

You wonderful, righteous members of this church constantly inspire and motivate me. Thank you for your zest for life, your generous giving of self, your devotion, and your determination to live worthily. I also express gratitude to our many friends who have joined us through these conference sessions. May the messages given bless your lives.

Importance of spiritual knowledge

Recently in South America a youth inquired, "Can you give us suggestions that will help us know the Savior better and be able to constantly follow His example?" That meaningful question and others like it have prompted this message on acquiring spiritual knowledge.

President Ezra Taft Benson emphasized the importance of spiritual knowledge, saying:

"We should make daily study of the scriptures a lifetime pursuit. . . .

" . . . The most important [thing] you can do . . . is to immerse yourselves in the scriptures. Search them diligently. . . . Learn the doctrine. Master the principles. . . .

" 'You must . . . see that . . . searching the scriptures is not a burden laid upon [us] by the Lord, but a marvelous blessing and opportunity' " (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, p. 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 47).

President Spencer W. Kimball commented:

"Spiritual learning takes precedence. The secular without the foundation of the spiritual is . . . like the foam upon the milk, the fleeting shadow. . . . One need not choose between the two . . . for there is opportunity to get both simultaneously" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 390).

How to acquire spiritual knowledge

As you seek spiritual knowledge, search for principles. Carefully separate them from the detail used to explain them. Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances. A true principle makes decisions clear even under the most confusing and compelling circumstances. It is worth great effort to organize the truth we gather to simple statements of principle. I have tried to do that with gaining spiritual knowledge. The result is now shared in hope that it will be a beginning place for your study. That statement of principle is:

To acquire spiritual knowledge and to obey it with wisdom, one must—

- *In humility, seek divine light.*
- *Exercise faith in Jesus Christ.*
- *Hearken to His counsel.*
- *Keep His commandments.*

As spiritual knowledge unfolds, it must be *understood, valued, obeyed, remembered, and expanded.*

I will explain that statement using examples from the scriptures, the prophets, and the precious, though difficult, laboratory of personal experience. My desire is that the suggestions given will help you in your quest for spiritual truth throughout your life. Then, in time, you may accomplish this objective given by President Joseph F. Smith:

"The greatest achievement mankind can make in this world is to familiarize themselves with divine truth, so thoroughly, so perfectly, that the example or conduct of no creature living in the world can ever turn them away from the knowledge that they have obtained. . . .

"From my boyhood I have desired to learn the principles of the gospel in such a way . . . that it would matter not to me who might fall from the truth, . . . my foundation would be . . . certain in

the truths that I have learned" (*Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], pp. 3-4).

Like President Smith, you and I need that kind of secure anchor to keep our life centered in righteousness and to avoid being swept away by the ruthless waves of worldliness.

Humbly seek divine light

The following scriptures teach why we should *seek divine light*:

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a *light* unto my path" (Psalm 119:105; italics added).

"I, the Lord, . . . will be a *light* unto them forever, that hear my words" (2 Nephi 10:14; italics added).

"It is I that speak; . . . I am the *light* which shineth in darkness, and by my power I give these words unto thee.

" . . . Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.

" . . . I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy;

"And . . . by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive" (D&C 11:11-14; italics added).

Analogies with physical light help us understand the power of spiritual light. A bulb ignited in a dark room overpowers darkness. Yet if the darkness is too intense, it can overpower light, as with a bulb plunged into a bucket of black ink. Spiritual light overcomes the darkness of ignorance and disbelief. When transgression severely clouds a life, the focused spiritual truths of repentance cut the blackness as a laser penetrates the darkest ink.

Humility is essential to the acquiring of spiritual knowledge. To be humble is to be teachable. Humility permits you to be tutored by the Spirit and to

be taught from sources inspired by the Lord, such as the scriptures. The seeds of personal growth and understanding germinate and flourish in the fertile soil of humility. Their fruit is spiritual knowledge to guide you here and hereafter.

A proud individual cannot know the things of the Spirit. Paul taught this truth, saying:

"The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. . . .

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:11, 14).

Since it requires much personal effort to gain and use worthwhile knowledge, you cannot endlessly sample from every fascinating arena of life. Therefore, you should select carefully a few vital areas where you can focus energy to learn and share vital truths. I know that to gain knowledge of great worth requires extraordinary personal effort. This is particularly true when our desire is to obtain spiritual knowledge. President Kimball said it this way:

"The treasures of both secular and spiritual knowledge are hidden ones—but hidden from those who do not properly search and strive to find them. . . . Spiritual knowledge is not available merely for the asking; even prayers are not enough. It takes persistence and dedication of one's life. . . . Of all treasures of knowledge, the most vital is the knowledge of God" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pp. 389-90).

Brigham Young learned truth by carefully listening to Joseph Smith and striving to understand everything that was taught by word, example, or the Spirit. The resulting tutoring has blessed generations. It conditioned Brigham Young to learn additional truths and to share far more than he had received personally from Joseph Smith. Follow his example.

Exercise faith and hearken to Jesus' counsel

The need to *exercise faith in Jesus Christ* is absolutely essential. It is the foundation of the plan of salvation. When that exercise of faith is coupled with sincere effort based upon a willingness to *hearken to His counsel*, great personal growth and blessings follow. The Savior declared:

"I now give unto you a commandment . . . to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

"For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

"For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is *light*, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

"And the Spirit giveth *light* to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.

"And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto . . . the Father" (D&C 84:43-47; italics added).

Obey the commandments

The role of *obedience* in gaining spiritual knowledge is crucial, as this comment of President Joseph Fielding Smith confirms:

"Now the Lord would give us gifts. He will quicken our minds. He will give us . . . a knowledge that will be so deeply rooted in our souls that [it] can never be rooted out, if we will just seek for the light . . . and the understanding which is promised to us, and which we can receive if we will only be true and faithful to every covenant and obligation pertaining to the gospel of Jesus Christ" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1958, p. 22).

To keep the commandments, you must know them. The best single source for learning them is the scriptures. President Joseph Fielding Smith gave this admonition:

"Today we are troubled by evil-designing persons who [endeavor] to destroy the testimonies of members of the Church, and many . . . are in danger because of lack of understanding and because they have not sought the guidance of the Spirit. . . . It is a commandment from the Lord that members . . . be diligent . . . and study . . . the fundamental truths of the gospel. . . . Every baptized person [can] have an abiding testimony . . . , but [it] will grow dim and eventually disappear [without] study, obedience, and diligent seeking to know and understand the truth" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, p. 22; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1963, p. 1062).

Profound spiritual truth cannot simply be poured from one mind and heart to another. It takes faith and diligent effort. Precious truth comes a small piece at a time through faith, with great exertion, and at times wrenching struggles. The Lord intends it be that way so that we can mature and progress. Moroni said, "Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith" (Ether 12:6). To explain that truth, President Harold B. Lee gave this wise instruction:

"The Savior's blood, His atonement, will save us, but only after we have done all we can to save ourselves by keeping His commandments. All of the principles of the gospel are principles of promise by which the plans of the Almighty are unfolded to us" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 246).

Apply spiritual knowledge

As packets of knowledge unfold, they must be *understood, valued, obeyed, remembered, and expanded*. I'll explain:

- *Understood*. As each element of truth is encountered, you must carefully examine it in the light of prior knowledge to determine where it fits. Ponder it; inspect it inside out. Study it from every vantage point to discover hidden

meaning. View it in perspective to confirm you have not jumped to false conclusions. Prayerful reflection yields further understanding. Such evaluation is particularly important when the truth comes as an impression of the Spirit.

- *Valued.* You show knowledge is valued by expressing appreciation for it, especially in heartfelt prayers of gratitude. The Lord said, "He who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more" (D&C 78:19).

- *Obedied.* Obedient application of truth is the surest way of making it eternally yours. The wise use of knowledge will permeate your life with its precious fruit.

- *Remembered.* Powerful spiritual direction in your life can be overcome or forced into the background unless you provide a way to retain it. Brigham Young declared, "If you love the truth you can remember it" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 10). Knowledge carefully recorded is knowledge available in time of need. Spiritually sensitive information should be kept in a sacred place that communicates to the Lord how you treasure it. That practice enhances the likelihood of your receiving further light.

- *Expanded.* This thought refers to rich benefits that come from your efforts to enlarge, extend, and increase your understanding of truth. Use the scriptures and the declarations of the prophets to expand your knowledge. You will find that efforts to share knowledge are often rewarded with more understanding as additional light flows into your mind and heart (see D&C 8:2-3).

Study and apply conference messages

We have come to the end of a great conference. Through its messages, you have been given inspired truth without much effort on your part. Make these

truths yours through study and thoughtful application and by emulating a prophet of God, Spencer W. Kimball, who at the conclusion of a conference, taught:

"While sitting here, I have made up my mind that when I go home from this conference this night there are many, many areas in my life that I can perfect. I have made a mental list of them, and I expect to go to work as soon as we get through with conference" (in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1975, p. 164; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, p. 111).

The privilege of learning absolute truth is sacred to me. I stand in awe that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son are willing, even anxious for us to learn from them. Please use what I have shared with sensitivity for the wondrous privilege given each of us, willing to obey, to be taught eternal truth. Gaining spiritual knowledge is not a mechanical process. It is a sacred privilege based upon spiritual law. I testify that you can receive inspired help. Humbly ask your Eternal Father. Seek divine light. Exercise faith in the Savior. Strive to hearken to His counsel and obey His commandments. He will bless and lead you as you move through this sometimes treacherous world.

I solemnly testify that Jesus Christ guides this, His church. He knows and loves you personally. As you walk in faithful obedience, He will bless you, inspire you, and lead you to greater knowledge and capacity. I certify that He lives, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Ronald E. Poelman of the Seventy has spoken to us, followed by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve, who has been our concluding speaker.

We express appreciation to those who have furnished the inspired music which we have had—the Tabernacle

Choir, the Mormon Youth Chorus, the Brigham Young University combined choirs, and all who have given of their great talents.

We thank our city officials; the doctors, nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those responsible for the beautiful flowers which have been on the stand and on Temple Square.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives and to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and to the owners and operators of the many other radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

The choir will sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," and we invite the congregation to join in singing the third verse. The benediction will then be offered by Elder Sam K. Shimabukuro of the Seventy, and we shall stand adjourned for six months.

We extend to each of you our love and blessing and pray that a renewed spirit of love and peace may be in your homes and in your hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," joined by the congregation on the third verse.

Elder Sam K. Shimabukuro offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, sang at the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie L. Goodliffe and Linda S. Margetts were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Brigham Young University combined choirs, directed by Ronald J. Staheli and Mack J. Wilberg. Clay Christiansen was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus provided the music. Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden conducted the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Richard L. Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard L. Elliott, Bonnie L. Goodliffe, and Linda S. Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the conference

A

Amado, Elder Carlos H.	61
Called to serve; María Coj gives the gift of sight; Expand your vision; Learn about Christ's mission; Serve as a missionary; Elder Hermelindo Coy's faith	
Authorities and Officers, The Sustaining of Church	3
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell	102
Councils in the Lord's church; How councils should function; Seek sisters' input in council meetings; All council members should participate; Create spiritual synergism in councils; No one should stand alone; Suggestions for more effective councils; Achieve inspired consensus and unity	
Banks, Elder Ben B.	38
The prayers of a lost child; Take time for your children; The importance of parenthood; Suggestions for strengthening families; Teach children gospel principles	
Brough, Elder Monte J.	84
David's mighty men; Men of loyalty and initiative; Men who understood the times; Men of single heart and pure motives; Men of perfect hearts; Other mighty men and women; Modern mighty warriors; He who is mightiest of all	
Busche, Elder F. Enzo	32
The spiritual and the natural man; Self-honesty is necessary to find truth; Honesty that brings us to Christ; Tragedies caused by lack of honesty; Great blessings of self-honesty	

C

Christensen, Elder Joe J.	12
Rearing children amid moral pollution; Pollution in the mass media; Set clear moral standards; Teach children to work; Create a spiritual environment; Follow the prophets' counsel	
Condie, Elder Spencer J.	18
Be ye perfect; Pride and discouragement; Overcoming evil habits; A mighty change of heart; Strengthening marriages; Heed warning voices	

D

de Jager, Elder Jacob	42
The Happy Dutchman; Blessings of Church service; Maintaining a cheerful disposition; Staying young through service; Happiness: the object of our existence	

F

Faust, Elder James E.	51
Unity in the priesthood; The nature of the priesthood; Order within the priesthood; Keeping the Church cleansed; Unity in quorum decisions; Limits of individual expression; Definition of apostate activities; Priesthood councils are in tune; Valuing women in the Church; Using priesthood power righteously; Oath and covenant of the priesthood	

G

General Authorities Present	1
General Priesthood Session	50
Groberg, Elder John H.	35
Faith in Christ underlies all else; A missionary in the South Pacific; Praying for wind; The Lord's wind; "Go teach them the truth"; "What more can I do?"	

H

Haight, Elder David B.	80
Faithfulness of convert ancestors; Faithfulness of modern missionaries; The Lord is hastening his work; Our responsibility for missionary work; Train and prepare missionaries; The Lord will perform miracles; Gratitude for missionaries	
Hales, Bishop Robert D.	8
Learning respect for the priesthood; Learning respect for womanhood; Father's teaching the creative process; How will our children remember us? Parents represent Heavenly Father; Teach by precept and example; When a child strays; The Lord will help parents; Parents must be Christlike; Jesus' love for his Father	
Hansen, Elder W. Eugene	110
The search for happiness; The source of real happiness; The difference between happiness and pleasure; The gospel is the pattern for happiness; Learn with joy rather than sorrow; Youth, heed parents' warnings; Definition of true happiness	

- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) 70**
 Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith; Testimony of the First Vision; Testimony of the Book of Mormon; Testimony of the priesthood; Testimony of the gospel; Testimony of temple and missionary work; Letter from Greg's mother; Testimony of tithing; Testimony of the Word of Wisdom; Testimony of Church leaders; Expressions of gratitude
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) 75**
 A painting of butterflies and flowers; President Benson, our beloved prophet; Moral deficit and decay; The answer: teach values at home; Shaping the honey locust tree; Parents' responsibility to teach children; Roles of father and mother; Bring up children in light and truth; Give love, patience, and encouragement
- Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. 15**
 Our contemporary "Black Plague"; Turn to God for deliverance; God's limitless love; God's sorrow for those who suffer; God is anxious to bless us; Katie Lewis trusts Jesus
- K**
- Komatsu, Elder Adney Y. 41**
 Gratitude and appreciation; "Trifle not with sacred things"; Sacredness of family relationships; Testimony of truth
- M**
- Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 22**
 Gospel preached from the beginning; Loss of the initial fulness; Apostasy during New Testament times; The hellenizing of Christianity; Prophecies of the Restoration; Restoration of the gospel fulness; Beware of individual apostasy; The Savior will be in our midst; Become more like Jesus
- Monson, President Thomas S., Presentation of Scouting Award to 64**
- Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 65**
 The Church's support of Scouting; Scouting experiences and reflections; Men of faith needed as leaders; Young men also can lead; Suggestions for reaching our potential; The upward reach; Jared Barney, a courageous Cub Scout
- Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session) 91**
 Suffering and sorrow brought by illness; Miraculous recovery from an accident; When illness or accident takes a life; "Joy cometh in the morning"; Faith of cancer-stricken teenagers; The smile that shines through tears; The Savior's comfort and compassion

Music, Summary of Conference	121
-------------------------------------------	------------

N

Nelson, Elder Russell M.	44
Constancy amid change; I. Personages; II. Plans; III. Principles	

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	96
Plan of salvation a road map of eternity; The Council in Heaven; Satan seeks to destroy God's plan; Gender, marriage, and child-bearing are essential to the plan; Necessity of the Fall; Eve's wisdom and courage; Contrast between <i>sin</i> and <i>transgression</i> ; First parents knew the Fall's necessity; Use and misuse of creative power; Abortion; Marriage is necessary in God's plan; Bear and nurture children; No blessing will be denied; Do all things in wisdom and order	

P

Packer, Elder Boyd K.	27
The great plan of happiness; God's plan requires marriage and family; God values men and women equally; The roles of men and women; Natural and spiritual laws are eternal; Multiply and replenish the earth; Motherhood is a holy calling; Parable of the treasure and keys	
Pearce, Sister Virginia H.	106
Blessings of participating in groups; The ward family provides a safety net; A sense of belonging; Listening ears; Encouragement; A refuge; Opportunities to serve; A laboratory to learn and practice the gospel; A Zion community	
Perry, Elder L. Tom	87
An inspiring CTR tie tack; The wrong choices of Nehor; Alma teaches Zeezrom; Decide now to choose righteousness; Three white dresses; Choose the right	
Peterson, Elder H. Burke	58
"Touch not . . . the unclean thing"; Consequences of evil entertainment; Stay away from evil media; We are men and boys of the covenant; A plan for cleansing the spirit; Come unto Christ	
Pinnock, Elder Hugh W.	56
A pilot's checklist; Your personal checklist; Honor and use the priesthood; Love family and friends; Don't feed the foxes; Get an education; Serve a mission	

Poelman, Elder Ronald E.	113
How to obtain divine forgiveness; Enos obtains forgiveness; Lehi and Alma teach how to be forgiven; The repentance process; The Savior has paid the price; Twofold effect of the Atonement; Accept the Father's mercy; Bearing testimony brings forgiveness; "With his stripes we are healed"	

Presentation of Scouting Award to President Thomas S. Monson	64
---------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Priesthood Session, General	50
------------------------------------------	----

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	26
-----------------------------------------	----

Saturday Morning Session	2
---------------------------------------	---

Scott, Elder Richard G.	117
Importance of spiritual knowledge; How to acquire spiritual knowledge; Humbly seek divine light; Exercise faith and hearken to Jesus' counsel; Obey the commandments; Apply spiritual knowledge; Study and apply conference messages	

Scouting Award, Presentation of, to President Thomas S. Monson	64
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Summary of Conference Music	121
------------------------------------------	-----

Sunday Afternoon Session	96
---------------------------------------	----

Sunday Morning Session	75
-------------------------------------	----

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers, The	3
-----------------------------------------------------------------	---

W

Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	4
President Benson's mighty influence; The gospel is the only way to find peace; The head of the Church; The Creator of the universe; The Savior's atoning sacrifice; Our judge at the Second Coming; Show gratitude by coming to know Jesus; Love one another; Testimonies of Jesus Christ; Bear testimony to strengthen others	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS



4 02931 49000

9314

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-fourth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 2 and 3, 1994

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-fourth
Annual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
April 2 and 3, 1994

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

© 1994 by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 164th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 2, 1994, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 2 and 3, 1994. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 2, 1994, at 6:00 P.M.

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

*The First Presidency:*¹ Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, and Robert D. Hales

The Presidency of the Seventy: Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, Loren C. Dunn, Henry B. Eyring, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goasland, John H. Groberg, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L. Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:*² Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, C. Max Caldwell, Albert Choules Jr., Gary J. Coleman, Claudio Roberto Mendes Costa, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Julio E. Dávila, John B. Dickson, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, Lloyd P. George, Han In Sang, Jay E. Jensen, Malcolm S. Jeppesen, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, John M. Madsen, Helvécio Martins, James O. Mason, Gerald E. Melchin, V. Dallas Merrell,

¹President Ezra Taft Benson was excused.

²Elder Clinton L. Cutler was excused.

Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Horacio A. Tenorio, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, J Ballard Washburn, Lance B. Wickman, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Merrill J. Bateman, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 164th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 2, 1994, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for the session was provided by a Relief Society choir from the Olympus Utah Region, with Bonnie Winterton conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the choir sang "How Gentle God's Commands." President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, in this, the first general session of the 164th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our love to President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference in his apartment. We miss him. We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Horacio A. Tenorio, and Cree-L

Kofford are seated on the stand, and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders William R. Bradford and F. David Stanley are in attendance. We welcome also the many others who are watching these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Clinton L. Cutler, who are excused. We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand. And we extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for the session will be provided by a Relief Society choir from the Olympus Utah Region, under the direction of Sister Bonnie Winterton, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ. The choir opened this session by singing "How Gentle God's Commands" and will now favor us with "Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning."

Elder John K. Carmack offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Carmack, for that beautiful and touching prayer.

Our first speaker at this session of the conference will be Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder James E. Faust

I come before you, my brothers, sisters, and friends, with the sincere hope that you will extend to me your faith and prayers as I humbly seek in the next few minutes to acknowledge the hand of the Lord our God in our lives. I extend to Sister Norma Ashton our love and prayers in the passing of our beloved associate, Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Five loaves and two fishes

Some months ago, as Elder Spencer J. Condie and I were in the Salt Lake airport, we unexpectedly met a devoted and faithful couple who have been friends for long years. This couple has spent a lifetime of service, meekly, faithfully, and effectively trying to build up the Church in many places in the world. Elder Condie noted, "Isn't it remarkable what people with five loaves and two fishes do to build up the kingdom of God?" This kind of quiet, devoted service is surely a fulfillment of the word of God "that the fullness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers" (D&C 1:23). Today I would like to speak of those of us who have only talents equal to five loaves and two fishes to offer the Savior to help feed the multitudes.

"When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"

"And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:5-6).

Philip answered quickly that there was not enough money to buy bread for the multitude. Then Andrew, Peter's brother, said, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes" (v. 9).

"And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

"And they did all eat, and were filled.

"And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

"And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men" (Mark 6:41-44).

Subsequently their hearts were hardened in that they forgot the divine mission of Jesus, "for they considered not the miracle of the loaves" (v. 52).

We have forgotten the miracle

In our time, we seem to have forgotten the miracle of the five loaves and the two fishes in favor of the miracles wrought by the mind and hand of men. I refer to the marvels of modern transportation and the increasing sophistication of all scientific knowledge, including the new electronic highway. We have forgotten that this amazing knowledge comes to mankind only as God chooses to reveal it, and it should be used for purposes nobler and wiser than mere entertainment. This knowledge permits the words of the prophets of God to be bounced off satellites hovering over the earth so it is possible

for much of mankind to hear their messages.

With this great knowledge has come also some skepticism about the simple and profound eternal truths taught in the miracle of the loaves and of the fishes—namely, that God rules in the heavens and the earth through his infinite intelligence and goodness.

God has fed us in our time

We are also to understand and remember that we too, like the lad in the New Testament account, are the spirit children of our Heavenly Father and that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior, and the Redeemer of the world. We believe that in the centuries following the establishment of his kingdom upon the earth, the doctrines and the ordinances were changed, resulting in a falling away and the loss of the keys of priesthood authority from the earth. A miracle even greater than that of the loaves and the fishes was the vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who saw the Father and the Son in the Sacred Grove near Palmyra, New York. Subsequently the keys, the priesthood, and the saving ordinances were restored in their fulness, and Christ's church was reestablished in our time. Thus God has again "fed" us and filled our "baskets" to overflowing.

Service of members with few talents

It has been said that this church does not necessarily attract great people but more often makes ordinary people great. Many nameless people with gifts equal only to five loaves and two small fishes magnify their callings and serve without attention or recognition, feeding literally thousands. In large measure, they make possible the fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream that the latter-day gospel of Christ would be like a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, rolling forth until it fills the

whole earth (see Daniel 2:34–35; D&C 65:2). These are the hundreds of thousands of leaders and teachers in all of the auxiliaries and priesthood quorums, the home teachers, the Relief Society visiting teachers. These are the many humble bishops in the Church, some without formal training but greatly magnified, always learning, with a humble desire to serve the Lord and the people of their wards.

Any man or woman who enjoys the Master's touch is like potter's clay in his hands. More important than acquiring fame or fortune is being what God wants us to be. Before we came to this earth, we may have been fashioned to do some small good in this life that no one else can do. The Lord said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). If God has a work for those with many talents, I believe he also has an important work for those of us who have few.

Ego and pride prevent service

What is the central characteristic of those having only five loaves and two fishes? What makes it possible, under the Master's touch, for them to serve, lift, and bless so that they touch for good the lives of hundreds, even thousands? After a lifetime of dealing in the affairs of men and women, I believe it is the ability to overcome personal ego and pride—both are enemies to the full enjoyment of the Spirit of God and to walking humbly before him. The ego interferes with husbands and wives asking each other for forgiveness. It prevents the enjoyment of the full sweetness of a higher love. The ego often prevents parents and children from fully understanding each other. The ego enlarges our feelings of self-importance and worth. It blinds us to reality. Pride

keeps us from confessing our sins and shortcomings to the Lord and working out our repentance.

What of those who have talents equal only to two loaves and one fish? They do much of the hard, menial, unchallenging, poorly compensated work of the world. Life may not have been quite fair to them. They struggle to have enough to hold body and soul together. But they are not forgotten. If their talents are used to build the kingdom of God and serve others, they will fully enjoy the promises of the Savior. The great promise of the Savior is that they "shall receive [their] reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23). The one who had only two talents was able to say, "Lord, thou deliverdst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them." Thus said the Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter . . . into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:22-23).

It is a blessing for some to be given minds and talents equal to fifteen loaves and ten fishes. They have so very much that they can contribute, but some become less than they might. They do not reach their potential of service, perhaps because they take so much pride in what they think they know and what they have. They seem unwilling or unable to yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit . . . and [become] as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [them], even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19).

Humble members strengthen the Church

During much of my life, a few journalists and dissidents have predicted the imminent downfall of this church. They have often pointed to the alleged

disaffection of the youth of the Church. The lives and the dedication of our almost 50,000 young missionaries are testament enough of the faithfulness of many of our youth. In addition, during my lifetime, the Church has grown from 525,000 to about 8,500,000. I believe and testify that this is because of the restoration of the fulness of the keys and authority of the gospel of Christ to Joseph Smith.

Recently an out-of-state journalist used the phrase that there were appearing "cracks in the walls of the temple," figuratively speaking, of course. By this I suppose he meant that the moorings of the Church were being shaken by a very few who do not fully sustain the leaders of the Church or keep their covenants. To dispel this perception of cracks in our members' faith, we need only to observe the joyful people who worship in any of our forty-five temples worldwide. Many are couples clutching their little bags and holding hands, and many are the unmarried, seeking the peaceful blessings of the house of the Lord. Their countenances reflect much joy and satisfaction in their lives.

A major reason this church has grown from its humble beginnings to its current strength is the faithfulness and devotion of millions of humble and devoted people who have only five loaves and two small fishes to offer in the service of the Master. They have largely surrendered their own interests and in so doing have found "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). I wish only to be one of those who experience this supernal inner peace.

Effects of Jeralee Underwood's life

In the listening audience today are Jeff and Joyce Underwood of Pocatello, Idaho. They are parents of Jeralee and their other five children. Jeff works on a building maintenance team that cares

for some of our chapels in Pocatello, Idaho. Joyce is a mother and homemaker. One day last July, their daughter Jeralee, age eleven, was going door to door collecting money for her newspaper route. Jeralee never returned home—not that day, nor the next day, nor the next, nor ever.

Two thousand people from the area had gone out day after day to search for her. Other churches sent support and food for the searchers. It was learned that Jeralee had been abducted and brutally murdered by an evil man. When her body was found, the whole city was horrified and shocked. All segments of the community reached out to Joyce and Jeff in love and sympathy. Some became angry and wanted to take vengeance.

After Jeralee's body was found, Jeff and Joyce appeared with great composure before the television cameras and other media to publicly express their profound thanks to all who had helped in the search and who had extended sympathy and love. Joyce said, "I know our Heavenly Father has heard and answered our prayers, and he has brought our daughter back to us." Jeff said, "We no longer have doubt about where she is." Joyce continued, "I have learned a lot about love this week, and I also know there is a lot of hate. I have looked at the love and want to feel that love, and not the hate. We can forgive."

Elder Joe J. Christensen and I, representing the General Authorities, were among the thousands privileged to attend Jeralee's funeral service. The Holy Spirit blessed that gathering in a remarkable way and spoke peace to the souls of all who attended. Later, President Kert W. Howard, Jeralee's stake president, wrote, "The Underwoods have received letters from people both in and out of

the Church stating that they prayed for Jeralee, and they hadn't prayed in years, and because of this, they had a renewed desire to return to the Church." President Howard continued, "We will never know the extent of activation and rededication this single event has caused. Who knows the far-reaching effects Jeralee's life will have for generations untold?" Many have come into the Church because they wanted to know what kind of a religion could give the Underwoods their spiritual strength.

I mention the good coming from this tragic event with Jeralee's parents' full approval and encouragement. Their sweet daughter was like the lad who had only five barley loaves and two small fishes to give to the cause of the Savior, but by the power of God, countless thousands have been spiritually fed.

I testify that the gospel we teach is the "power of God unto salvation" for all who listen and obey (Romans 1:16), regardless of their talents and abilities, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us and touched our hearts with that poignant and inspiring address. He was followed by the Relief Society Choir singing the matchless number, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Richard G. Scott

To be healed

Easter brings thoughts of the Savior—His life, His atonement, His resurrection, His love. He *has* risen from the dead “with healing in his wings.”¹

Oh, how we all need the healing the Redeemer can provide. Mine is a message of hope for you who yearn for relief from heavy burdens that have come through no conscious act of your own while you have lived a worthy life. It is based on principles embodied in the teachings of the Savior. Your challenge may be a serious physical disability, a struggle with lingering illness, or a daily wrestle with a life-threatening disease. It may have roots in the death of a loved one, the anguish caused by another bound by sin, or abuse in any of its evil forms. Whatever the cause, I testify that lasting relief is available on conditions established by the Lord.

Help from the Lord always follows eternal law. The better you understand that law, the easier it is to receive His help. Some of the principles upon which His healing is predicated follow.

The Lord's will in healing

It is important to understand that His healing can mean being cured, or having your burdens eased, or even coming to realize that it is worth it to endure to the end patiently, for God needs brave sons and daughters who are willing to be polished when in His wisdom that is His will.

Recognize that some challenges in life will not be resolved here on earth. Paul pled thrice that “a thorn in the flesh” be removed. The Lord simply answered, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”² He gave Paul strength to compensate so he could live a most meaningful life. He wants you to learn

how to be cured when that is His will and how to obtain strength to live with your challenge when He intends it to be an instrument for growth. In either case the Redeemer will support you. That is why He said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”³

The key to healing: humility and faith

When you feel you can do no more, temporarily lay your challenges at His feet. The scriptures tell you how. For example, when the oppressed people of Alma “did pour out their hearts to him; and he did know the thoughts of their hearts,” the Lord blessed them, saying:

“I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that . . . you cannot feel them, . . . that ye may know . . . that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

“And . . . the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did *submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.*”⁴

Submitting “cheerfully and with patience” to all His will lets you learn precious if difficult lessons and eternal truths that will yield blessings.⁵ The example of Alma and Amulek is enlightening. While striving to do good among the people of Ammonihah, they were taken captive. Amulek trusted his more seasoned companion, Alma, who led him to greater confidence in the Lord. Forced to observe women and children consumed by fire, Amulek said, “Perhaps they will burn us also.” Alma answered, “*Be it according to the will of the Lord*”—a vital principle. “But . . . our work is not finished; therefore they burn us not.”⁶

The chief judge and others over many days smote, spit upon, starved, questioned, and harassed them with

mocking words and threats. Though commanded to speak, they withstood, bound and naked, in silence waiting patiently for the Lord to inspire them to act. Then "the power of God was upon Alma and Amulek, and they rose." Alma cried, "Give us strength *according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance*. And they broke the cords with which they were bound."⁷ The earth shook; the prison walls were rent. All who smote Alma and Amulek were slain, and they were freed. On another occasion Alma prayed, "O Lord . . . , have mercy on this man, and heal him *according to his faith which is in Christ*."⁸

These two examples give the essential key to healing. The Lord will give relief with divine power when you seek deliverance in humility and *faith in Jesus Christ*.

Demonstrating faith and effort

Don't say, "No one understands me; I can't sort it out or get the help I need." Those comments are self-defeating. No one can help you without faith and effort on your part.⁹ Your personal growth requires that. Don't look for a life virtually free from discomfort, pain, pressure, challenge, or grief, for those are the tools a loving Father uses to stimulate our personal growth and understanding. As the scriptures repeatedly affirm, you will be helped as you exercise *faith in Jesus Christ*.¹⁰ That faith is demonstrated by a willingness to trust His promises given through His prophets¹¹ and in His scriptures, which contain His own words. You may not fully understand how to do this yet, but trust that He will help you use your agency to open the doors for His healing to occur. Faith in Christ means we trust Him; we trust His teachings. That leads to hope, and hope brings charity, the pure love of Christ—that peaceful feeling that comes when we sense His concern, His love, and His capacity to cure us or to

ease our burdens with His healing power.

Is there a potentially destructive pattern in your life? When discouraged do you feel overwhelmed and in desperation seek for others to solve your problems, overlooking your own capacity to make much improvement? Do you understand the necessity to do what you can so that the Lord can do what He will to help you?

Healing power of prayer and scriptures

Your access to the Savior's help comes in different ways. The most direct and often the most powerful way is through humble, trusting prayers to your Father in Heaven, which are answered through the Holy Ghost to your spirit.¹² Yet this help is sometimes difficult to initiate and hard to recognize when you are learning how to pray with faith. If so, begin elsewhere. Trust someone near to you; then as you learn, that trust will extend to God and His healing.¹³ Begin with a friend or bishop who understands the teachings of the Savior. Often they have personally obtained healing through application of truth with faith in the Redeemer. They can show you how. Or start by reading, pondering, and applying the teachings of the scriptures. They are a very powerful source of assistance.¹⁴ While examples and anecdotes will help to understand principle, you will find that power comes from scriptural doctrine, as these quotes illustrate:

- "I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you."¹⁵

- "Come unto me with full purpose of heart."¹⁶

- "Return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you."¹⁷

- "Turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, [and] if ye do this, he will, according to

his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage."¹⁸

Help from priesthood leaders

Even if they had unlimited time and resources, which they don't, priesthood leaders could not provide all of the help. They are agents of the Lord, and His law requires that you do your part. They will show you the way. They can provide priesthood blessings.¹⁹ Your faith,²⁰ purity, and obedience and that of the priesthood holder have great effect on the pronouncement and realization of the blessing. Healing can occur in the act, yet more often it occurs over a period of time determined by the faith and obedience of the individual and the will of the Lord.²¹ I feel that the pace is generally set by the individual, not by the Lord. He expects you to use other resources available, including competent professional help when indicated; then He provides the balance needed according to His will.²²

Healing power of love

Love is a potent healer. Realizing that, Satan would separate you from the power of the love of God, kindred, and friends who want to help. He would lead you to feel that the walls are pressing in around you and there is no escape or relief. He wants you to believe you lack the capacity to help yourself and that no one else is really interested. If he succeeds, you will be driven to further despair and heartache. His strategy is to have you think you are not appreciated, loved, or wanted so that you in despair will turn to self-criticism, and in the extreme even to despising yourself and feeling evil when you are not. Remember the wisdom of the Lord "is greater than the cunning of the devil."²³ If you have such thoughts, break through those helpless feelings by reaching out in love to another in need. That may sound cruel and unfeeling

when you long so much for healing, but it is based upon truth. Paul taught, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."²⁴

Love comes by learning how to give it to another in a spirit of trust. If you feel deprived of love, that is difficult. Yet sustained concern and support of others will engender their interest and love. You will feel needed. You become an instrument through which the Lord can bless another. The Spirit will let you feel the Savior's concern and interest, then the warmth and strength of His love. President Kimball said: "God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another mortal that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other."²⁵

Healing power of faith

Challenge comes as testing from a wise, knowing Father to give experience, that we may be seasoned, mature, and grow in understanding and application of His truths. When you are worthy, a challenge becomes a contribution to growth, not a barrier to it. Yet no matter what the source of difficulty and no matter how you begin to obtain relief—through a qualified professional therapist, doctor, priesthood leader, friend, concerned parent, or loved one—no matter how you begin, those solutions will never provide a complete answer. The final healing comes through faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and obedience to His commandments. That is why human reaction to challenge in life that engenders hatred, despondency, distrust, anger, or revenge must be supplanted by the tender mercies of a loving Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son.

Healing power of forgiveness

When anguish comes from evil acts of others, there should be punishment

and corrective action taken, but the offended is not the one to initiate that action. Leave it to others who have that responsibility. Learn to forgive; though terribly hard, it will release you and open the way to a newness of life.²⁶ Time devoted by one injured to ensure the offender is punished is time wasted in the healing process.

In summary, do what you *can* do a step at a time. Seek to understand the principles of healing from the scriptures and through prayer. Help others. Forgive. "Submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord."²⁷ Above all, *exercise faith in Jesus Christ.*

The surest path to healing

I testify that the surest, most effective, and shortest path to healing comes through application of the teachings of Jesus Christ in your life. It begins with an understanding of and appreciation for the principles of moral agency and the atonement of Jesus Christ. It leads to faith in Him and obedience to His commandments, and that brings healing.

If you are caught on a plateau of spiritual healing and don't seem to be making progress, if you seem to be constantly dependent on another mortal for support, look up in faith to Jesus Christ. I know that the Master loves you and will heal you according to your faith in Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Malachi 4:2; 2 Nephi 25:13.
2. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.
3. Matthew 11:29-30.

4. Mosiah 24:12, 14-15; italics added.
5. See Jacob 4:10.
6. Alma 14:12-13; italics added.
7. Alma 14:26; italics added; see vv. 15-26.
8. Alma 15:10; italics added.
9. See Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974), pp. 241-42.
10. See Enos 1:15-18.
11. See Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1969, pp. 57-60; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1969, pp. 66-69.
12. See Helaman 3:35.
13. See Ether 12:27-31.
14. See 2 Timothy 3:14-17.
15. 3 Nephi 17:8.
16. 3 Nephi 18:32.
17. 3 Nephi 9:13; see also D&C 112:13.
18. Mosiah 7:33.
19. See Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979-81), 3:28-29.
20. See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), pp. 510-11.
21. See James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), p. 226.
22. See *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941), p. 163.
23. D&C 10:43.
24. Galatians 6:2.
25. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 252.
26. See Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, pp. 43-46; or *Ensign*, May 1992, pp. 31-33.
27. Mosiah 24:15.

Elder Carlos E. Asay

"Can I die?"

A few years ago, I walked the halls of a care center. Most of the occupants were infirm individuals who were time-

worn and anxious to go elsewhere. In passing one of the rooms, I heard a weak cry for help. The door was slightly ajar, so I entered with the hope that I might help someone in distress. Once I was

inside, my eyes were met by a pleading look from a sweet, elderly woman in a wheelchair. She stared at me for a moment and asked, "Can I die? Can I die?"

Her tender look, soft voice, and delicate features melted my heart. The woman obviously was suffering physical pain and wanted to be released from a wasted body. She longed for the companionship of loved ones who had preceded her in death.

I don't recall exactly what I said on that occasion. But I did attempt to reassure the woman that she could and would die in the Lord's appointed time. I also tried to reassure her that she would live again, free of the infirmities that now troubled her.

The real issue: "Shall I live again?"

The real issue facing each of us is not *Can I die?* Physical death is one of life's certainties. It occurs regularly and is evidenced by the printed obituary notices and the empty chairs at our tables. For just as the sun sets at the close of each day, in accord with the eternal rhythm of life, so will we experience a temporary separation of body and spirit, whereby our tabernacles of flesh will be placed "in the cold and silent grave" (2 Nephi 1:14) and our spirits will be "taken home to that God who gave them life" (Alma 40:11).

But rather, the real issue is, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). Will the grave seal our fate forever? Or is there a resurrection and another sphere of existence awaiting our souls?

Those who believe that the grave is man's final destiny live without hope of a better world and are inclined to embrace that fatalistic approach, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (2 Nephi 28:7; see also 1 Corinthians 15:32). This approach often leads to wanton experimentation, immoral conduct, and all the other behaviors that

reap misery and remorse of conscience (see Alma 29:5).

Those who believe in a life after death are much more inclined to lead purposeful lives. Belief in a resurrection and related truths encourages one to obey the commandments, repent of sins, serve others, and do the other things that bring joy and happiness both here and hereafter. It seems, therefore, most appropriate that we address this real issue, *Shall I live again?* on the eve of Easter—a day when Christians the world over will commemorate the resurrection of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Two classes of evidence

A noted writer referred to Christ's resurrection as "the *greatest miracle* and the most *glorious fact of history*" (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1916], p. 699; italics added).

Miracles are "manifestations of divine or spiritual power" (Bible Dictionary, p. 732). They are not simply sleight-of-hand tricks or actions contrived by clever men. They are acts wrought by individuals with powers beyond those of mortals. What could possibly be greater than the act of laying one's body down in death and picking it up again in a resurrected state as did Jesus? Only by the use of godly powers and only through the grace of God could such a marvelous thing occur.

What about the claim that the Resurrection was "the most glorious fact of history"? The facts of the Resurrection may be placed in two groups or classes. One is the cloud of witnesses who saw the resurrected Christ; the other is the army of believers, both present and past, who on the strength of personal testimonies declare with conviction, "The grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ" (Mosiah 16:8). Both classes of evidence are significant and worthy of our review.

New Testament witnesses

In the Acts of the Apostles it is recorded: "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his sufferings by many *infallible proofs*, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (JST, Acts 1:3; italics added).

Included in the cloud of witnesses or among the "infallible proofs" were hundreds of followers who saw the risen Lord on multiple occasions.

- "He appeared first to Mary Magdalene" (Mark 16:9). She saw him and heard his voice.

- He appeared to Joanna, Mary (the mother of James), "and other women that were with them" (Luke 24:10). They "held him by the feet, and worshipped him" (Matthew 28:9).

- He appeared to Peter—the one who had denied him thrice (see Luke 24:34).

- He appeared to two disciples as they went into the country (see Luke 24:13–32).

- He appeared to his beloved Apostles at least four times.

- He was seen after the Crucifixion by "above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:6), according to Paul's account.

- Moreover, "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:52–53).

Even after all of these eyewitnesses, there were the skeptics. Some regarded the words of the women as "idle tales" (Luke 24:11). Jesus chided the two disciples by saying, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). And he upbraided some "because they believed not them which had seen him [earlier] after he was risen" (Mark 16:14).

One wonders how anyone could doubt the actuality of the Resurrection after reading the several accounts of his appearances to the women, the disciples, and the Apostles. What greater evidence would one want than the documentation of fact provided in holy writ?

Book of Mormon witnesses

But there is more. Christ said, "The testimony of two men is true" (John 8:17). If this is a valid statement, then surely the testimony of Christ's escape from the tomb provided by a second nation must not be overlooked. I refer, of course, to the Book of Mormon record of Christ's postmortal appearances in the Western Hemisphere.

Near a temple in the land called Bountiful, some 2,500 people heard a small, piercing voice declare, "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him" (3 Nephi 11:7). They stood in awe and experienced a change of heart as they heard God, the Eternal Father, introduce his Only Begotten Son—his means of extending the gifts of immortality and eternal life to all of his children (see John 3:16).

The multitude saw a man descending out of heaven. They heard him announce, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world" (3 Nephi 11:10). Then he invited the people to come forth one by one and see with their eyes and feel with their hands the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet (see 3 Nephi 11:14–17).

A cloud of people on two continents were eyewitnesses of the risen Christ. Thus, it can be said about this glorious fact of history, "The resurrection . . . is attested by evidence more conclusive than that upon which rests our acceptance of historical events in general" (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 699).

Personal testimonies

"Infallible proofs" of spiritual matters, such as Christ's resurrection, are not of the hand, but of the heart. They are not seen with the naked eye; they are seen through the "eye of faith" (Ether 12:19). Nor are they established by a touch of a finger. The reality of spiritual matters is confirmed by feelings stirred through the spoken or written words of God (see 1 Nephi 17:45). I say this because "the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13). The Holy Spirit deals with facts, not with fancied happenings.

You will recall that the two disciples who walked and talked with Christ on the road to Emmaus did not recognize him at first. Later, however, when "their eyes were opened, and they knew him," they reflected, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:31-32).

You will also recall that Jesus said to Thomas, "Be not faithless, but believing. . . .

"Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:27, 29).

"Walk with me"

Our "eyes of faith" will also be opened, and we shall know of a surety that he lives and that we shall live again, if we believe and accept the divine invitation "Walk with me" (Moses 6:34).

- Yes, we walk with him in the desert and feel his presence when we fast, pray, and withstand temptation.

- We walk with him to Jacob's well and our hearts burn within us when we study the scriptures and drink living waters.

- We walk with him to Galilee when we teach and live the truth.

- We walk with him in Gethsemane when we assume the burdens of others.

- We walk with him to Calvary when we take up our cross by denying ourselves of "all ungodliness, and every worldly lust" (JST, Matthew 16:26; italics added).

- We suffer with him on Golgotha when we sacrifice our time, talents, and means in building up the kingdom of God.

- We rise with him to a newness of life when we seek a spiritual rebirth and strive to become his sons and daughters.

And in the process of following in his footsteps (see 1 Peter 2:21), we gain the personal conviction or infallible proof that he lives, that he is the Son of the living God, and that he is our Redeemer.

We shall live again!

I cannot go back to that sweet old woman in the wheelchair who begged, "Can I die?" She has already crossed the bridge between earth and heaven—the bridge we call death. She now knows better than I that dying and living again are established facts. She knows of a certainty that "death is not a period but a comma in the story of life" (Amos John Traver, in Jacob M. Braude, ed., *Lifetime Speaker's Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962], 1:159), for she has gone back home and is cradled in the arms of God's love (see 2 Nephi 1:15).

Whether young or old, we need not "look upon death with any degree of terror, for [our] hope and views of Christ and the resurrection; therefore, death [is] swallowed up to [us] by the victory of Christ over it" (Alma 27:28). He is our Redeemer; he is "the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25).

I bear solemn testimony that *we shall live again!* Such testimony is founded upon the words of eyewitnesses, including modern prophets who have seen and heard the living God and the

living Christ (see D&C 76:22–24; Joseph Smith—History 1:17), and upon personal and sacred experiences of the Spirit gained in attempting to walk with God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and Elder

Carlos E. Asay of the Presidency of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Called to Serve,” following which we shall hear from Elder Albert Choules Jr. of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang “Called to Serve.”

Elder Albert Choules Jr.

Three commandments about love

The thoughts I would leave with you today center on three statements of the Savior when He was upon the earth. When asked to define “the first commandment of all,” He answered, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:28, 30). Therefore, obedience to this commandment should become our highest priority. All of our efforts should evidence love for our Father in Heaven.

Jesus indicated several ways to demonstrate the love we should have for Him and for our Heavenly Father but phrased it concisely in the simple statement, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Then our Savior added another short and easily understood statement: “Love one another” (John 13:34). Our love of God and Jesus Christ and for each other should undergird all that we do and feel. Love sincerely given brings love in return. Love so shared brings trust, support, and a level of security that is unsurpassed.

Children’s tendency to love

A child naturally nestles in the arms of his or her mother, seeking love and protection from her who gave life. That

kind of innate love seems to exemplify the commandment to love one another. Love of others seems to come so naturally to children. Their expectation of love in return seems also to be inborn.

This typical tendency of children to love became especially apparent to me on my first visit to Romania. I remember it vividly. Sister Choules and I went to various institutions with our humanitarian missionaries who were serving there. At an orphanage we saw a rather long, narrow, glass-enclosed room where twenty or so children were playing. They were about three years of age. Most of their daytime hours were spent entertaining themselves and each other, apparently with very little adult care.

I asked the supervisor if I could open the door and take some pictures. She agreed. When I opened the door, many of the children rushed out. I was reminded of days in my youth, when in like manner I saw cattle and horses rush to freedom when a corral gate was opened. These children, however, were not rushing to be free. They hungered for love. Soon we had one or more grasping at each of our legs, reaching up for the love for which they were so starved. I’ll forever have in my mind the picture I took of Sister Choules holding one of these children with their arms tightly wrapped around each other. These children just wanted to be loved and to give

love in return. These little ones and other children seem to be born with that unrestrained desire and capacity.

But as we get older, something seems to get in the way. It seems more difficult to give and receive sincere love as children do so naturally. The Lord not only said "love one another," but He prefaced those words with, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." Then He taught the kind of love that we should cultivate when He added, "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).

Develop a child's love matured

Often I have wondered, Why do we as adults have to be commanded to do that which comes so naturally to children? Perhaps that is why Christ said that each of us should strive to become as a little child, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

The kingdom of heaven for which we strive can begin with a heavenly life here and now. We can develop a child's love matured. President David O. McKay said:

"I know of no other place than home where more happiness can be found in this life. It is possible to make home a bit of heaven; indeed, I picture heaven to be a continuation of the ideal home. Some man has said: 'Home filled with contentment is one of the highest hopes of this life'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, p. 5; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, p. 520).

How do we make our home the ideal home and the proper prelude to heaven? I believe we start with the Savior's admonition to keep His commandments and to do so specifically within the walls of our own home. Husband and wife—father and mother—set the example and tone for all that happens within the home. Hopefully, the relationship starts at a sacred altar in a holy temple. There they kneel, knowing that they are both

worthy of that sacred privilege. They are prepared and desirous of entering into sacred covenants—to put each other and the goal of being together in heaven first in their lives. Selfishness is to be put aside. They begin a partnership—a full partnership—that is to be eternal.

Unrighteous dominion

In recent years I have become aware of too many instances in which a man particularly has tried to dominate and exercise unrighteous dominion simply because he has convinced himself that it is his male role. Some mistakenly declare that it is right because they hold the priesthood. Nothing could be further from the truth. The sacred declaration in section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants belies that erroneous concept. The scripture states clearly:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

"Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

"That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death" (D&C 121:41–44).

In contrast, a thoughtless and domineering man may mock the phrase "reproving betimes with sharpness." Indeed he may reprove sharply, oftentimes with raised voice, mouthing vulgar words and phrases, even punctuated with vile physical acts or other kinds of abuse. Forgotten is the qualifier: "when moved upon by the Holy Ghost." No abusive act would have the sanction of heaven, much less take origin from there. Such a man also

seems to have forgotten that not long ago he knelt at a sacred altar and covenanted with his sweet companion and with God to keep all of the Lord's commandments.

No man—particularly one who bears the priesthood—has the right to treat any woman unkindly, especially his wife, with whom he would hope to share eternal joy. Certainly unrighteous dominion cannot be excused upon the mistaken notion that permission comes by being the husband, head of the family, and particularly under the umbrella or authority of the priesthood. The scripture is clear that when sacred authority is abused, the authority of the priesthood is withdrawn (see D&C 121:34–37).

Leading in love

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve emphasized this at the last October conference. He said:

"Any man who claims the special powers of heaven for his own selfish purposes and seeks to use the priesthood in any degree of unrighteousness in the Church or in the home simply does not understand the nature of his authority. Priesthood is for service, not servitude; compassion, not compulsion; caring, not control. Those who think otherwise are operating outside the parameters of priesthood authority.

"Thankfully, most of our fathers and priesthood officers lead with love, just as most of our mothers and auxiliary leaders do. Leadership based on love brings incredible power. It is real, and it generates lasting results in the lives of our Father's children" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, p. 105; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, p. 78).

Love between husband and wife

Paul taught succinctly, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for

it" (Ephesians 5:25). When true love prevails between husband and wife, they want to give themselves to and for each other, as Christ gave of Himself. We give for each other on a daily basis when we endeavor always to make each other happy. Then we give up thinking selfishly of ourselves and our personal needs. Then we really think not only of the here and now but of the hereafter.

The Savior has told us that if we marry "by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . and if ye abide in my covenant, . . . it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever" (D&C 132:19). These are the great and marvelous blessings of exaltation, glory, and eternal life. They are sealed upon us only in the holy temples. They can indeed be ours. With that eternal perspective, only loving thoughts and actions should prevail in our homes, where we help each other along the road to exaltation. That perspective not only prepares us for eternity, but it makes the here and now much happier and more fulfilling.

I have watched the Brethren, those who understand the rights of the priesthood and the needs of eternity perhaps more clearly than anyone. I have watched how they speak of and treat their sweethearts. They give us an example of love, respect, and kindness that we would do well to emulate.

Children follow parents' example

Children learn to copy the patterns of their parents. If parents honor the Sabbath day, if they go to church, if they serve faithfully in their callings with

no criticism of leaders, if they heed the Word of Wisdom, if they cheerfully pay their tithes and offerings, if they honor covenants made in the temple, and if other commandments are lived and taught, children will receive a priceless foundation. Sons and daughters will treat their wives and husbands in the future as they see their parents treat each other. We can indeed make our home a bit of heaven here, as President McKay stated. We also set the groundwork for our children's homes to be so too.

I love my wife, Marilyn, so very much and am so grateful for her, for the years we have had together, and for her love given to me in so many ways. She is a marvelous wife and mother and grandmother and a faithful servant of the Lord in her own right. My daily prayer includes feelings of gratitude for her and a plea that I might be the kind of husband that I should be and want to be. I'm grateful for

our children and our grandchildren and the love that we share together.

I bear my witness that God and Jesus Christ live and that if we will love them and keep their commandments and love each other—particularly our companions and our children—we will be happier here and more secure eternally. I'm grateful for these great Brethren who lead us, and I testify of their sacred callings. I'm grateful for and humbled by the opportunity and blessing of serving with them. I pray for them and for each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Albert Choules Jr. of the Seventy has spoken to us.

Sister Elaine L. Jack, general president of the Relief Society, will now speak to us, and she will be followed by Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen of the Seventy.

Sister Elaine L. Jack

I stand before you today grateful for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, grateful for this gospel, grateful for the priesthood that blesses our lives and for the goodness of all of you. This gathering of Saints at general conference reminds me of the joyous proclamation "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Righteous Saints are the glory of God, and there are mighty legions gathered here and in many lands.

"Walk with me"

Before we came to this earth, we shouted for joy at the opportunity to take this leap of faith in our eternal progression. When we were baptized, we stepped firmly onto the path to eternal life. The prophet Nephi said:

"After ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? . . . Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him. . . .

"Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ. . . .

" . . . Behold, . . . this is the way" (2 Nephi 31:19–21).

How do we press forward on the straight and narrow way? How do we focus on our eternal progression when we live in a world that demands such attention to daily tasks? How do we remain steadfast when so much around us is laden with sin? The people in Enoch's day faced these same challenges. Enoch began his ministry preaching to an unrighteous audience, but the people softened their hearts and heeded the words of the Lord to "walk with me" (Moses 6:34).

So can we.

The journey of eternal progression

Our eternal progression on that straight and narrow path in the company of the Lord Jesus Christ is the focus of my message today. This is a journey made up of many steps. Our progress on this journey is determined by recognizing the straight and narrow path, having an eternal perspective, and acting accordingly.

Remember, our eternal progression is the very essence of our earthly existence. It is the Lord's plan to get us all the way home to our Father in Heaven. This I know: Each of us can get there from here.

President Spencer W. Kimball promised, "It may seem a little difficult at first, but when a person begins to catch a vision of the true work, when he begins to see something of eternity in its true perspective, the blessings begin to far outweigh the cost of leaving 'the world' behind" ("The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign*, June 1976, p. 6).

The straight and narrow path

Some of our steps come in learning that the path is indeed straight and narrow. The concept of a straight path intrigues me. So often we go around in a circle, spinning our spiritual wheels while only our temporal treads hit the road. That seems out of step and out of balance with the way the Lord intended. We have knowledge and spiritual power; such momentum far exceeds anything the world has to offer. Putting off until tomorrow is to fall behind, step backward, and open the door to the subtle influences of Satan. "There is no such thing as standing still in the eternal work of our God" (George Q. Cannon, *Milennial Star*, 23 Feb. 1899, p. 117).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said: "There are no separate paths back to that heavenly home. Just one straight and narrow way, at the end of which,

though we arrive trailing tears, we shall at once be 'drenched in joy'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, p. 15; or *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 11).

Indeed, the path is not soft, green grass; it is not without hardship and heartache. It is often an uphill climb strewn with rocks, many of them in the shape of mighty boulders. We can't predict what our challenges will be because our lives are all different. Though the path is narrow, our moves are not scripted. There are diversions which attempt to lure us from the straight and narrow. It is our covenants that are the road signs to eternal life. Just as it is more difficult to read the signs on the main road from a side street, so too it is more difficult to hear the still, small voice warning of rough road ahead when we have distanced ourselves from our covenants.

Develop spirituality

When the Lord says "walk with me" (Moses 6:34), He is asking us to become more spiritual by being obedient to His word. Developing spirituality is critical to our eternal progress.

Our prophet has spoken for the Lord in our day, and his messages have been explicit: rid your heart of pride; read the Book of Mormon every day. In following that counsel, I discover new insights suddenly appearing in my Book of Mormon which are so pertinent to my immediate needs.

We've been given tools to develop that spirituality. We are told to attend Church meetings, work hard in callings, go to the temple, be generous in offerings to the Lord, hold family home evening, and visit one another. But simply being there does not sanctify us; statistics do not drive eternal progression. Still, we cannot ignore that being in the right place at the right time will put us in a frame of mind to learn, in an

environment where the Lord's influence is invited and strong.

Alma described what happens when we are not only present but counted as Christ's disciples when he said: "Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" (Alma 5:14). Have ye "felt to sing the song of redeeming love?" (Alma 5:26). Spirituality is all about feeling the Spirit of God, wanting it with us, sharing the Spirit with others, and heeding its prompting.

Serve and be charitable

Finally, progressing along the straight and narrow is characterized by making the Lord's work our work, serving as He would. Such work is grounded in charity, a principle that Relief Society sisters have embraced for many years, for "charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:8). Charity helps us maintain our footing when all around us are skidding about.

Priscilla Samson-Davis, a sister in Ghana, has known struggles. There have been many rocks on the path of her life. As a teacher she has watched families nurse children through dysentery and malaria, work hard, barter daily for sacks of rice, onions, tomatoes—any food to keep their loved ones alive. She serves as a visiting teacher, regularly traveling on the bus to see a sister on the other side of town. When asked if this task were a burden, given all she had to manage, she simply replied, "It's not hard. The woman I visit can't read. When I go, I read the scriptures to her."

Her simple answer testified of the faith and assurance she had that she was on the proper path. Though her bus route was halting and likely wound up and down streets, in the Lord's eyes it was truly straight and narrow, for she was going in the right direction. She was about her Father's business. She exemplified the spirit described by President

Ezra Taft Benson when he said, "The best measure of true greatness is how Christlike we are" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 100; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 78).

A bishop teaches members to read

Without question, those progressing eternally are those on the straight and narrow; they are spiritual and charitable. A bishop in the Dominican Republic exemplifies such a life. After sacrament meeting in his ward, a new convert approached him and said, "Bishop, I notice that the members are always looking at books when they sing. I want to do that. They look at books in Sunday School class. I want to do that." Quietly the brother said, "Bishop, I want to be a good member. I want to do all the Lord's work. But I can't read. Is there someone who can teach me?"

"Yes," said the bishop. And then he tried to think of a likely tutor. He found himself saying, "I'll teach you to read."

For many months this new convert and his wife met weekly with the bishop. They learned to read using the scriptures. Now this was a busy bishop, like they all are. He could have delegated the responsibility, but the Spirit had prompted him to take the assignment. They became friends in the gospel as they studied together. After two years the bishop was released and a new bishop called. Sustained to follow him as the leader of the ward was his student of the scriptures. This bishop set out to teach his friends how to read the gospel message, and in the process he showed them how to live it. Could this bishop have seen the end when he began? How often do we follow the dictums of the Lord and in doing so influence eternity?

A sure path

Focusing on our eternal purposes can ease our burdens and make our lives

happy and more productive. Indeed, we often can do less and have it mean more.

In Luke we read of Martha receiving Jesus into her home. Her sister Mary "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving" (Luke 10:39-40), and she complained that Mary did not help her. Did Jesus urge Mary to rush back to the tasks of the day? No. "Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, . . . thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part" (vv. 41-42). The message holds true today: Choose the Lord's way, for it is glory everlasting.

We know why we are here. When we are on the path, we can feel it. The fruits

of eternal progress are manifest in joy, peace, love, hope, and increased confidence in the Lord. Though the path is narrow, it is sure. It is on this path that we testify daily of our love for the Lord, His children, His church, His counsel, and the richness of His blessings. By our good works we magnify what is mighty in us all, one step at a time, one day at a time, all the time.

We know the path; in fact, we know it well. The prophet Nephi promised, "If ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20). May it be so. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen

Observations about healing

Following Elder Scott's masterful address on healing, I would like to add a few observations by someone whose entire professional life was that of a healer. As a practicing physician for over forty years, I've had occasion to see many patients who were sick or who had sustained injuries to their bodies. I hereby make an admission: physicians do not cure patients. This marvelous and complicated machine we call the human body has built into it its own wonderful healing mechanism. All a physician can do is provide a good healing environment.

I soon learned in my medical practice that the ultimate healing process for an injured or sick body was already provided by our Heavenly Father. I also learned that a patient's attitude has much to do with healing. Those who would rely on Heavenly Father and exercise faith in the power of priesthood often enjoyed faster recoveries.

I have witnessed miracles! Many times when my medical training suggested a dismal prognosis, I have seen

individuals fully recover. I have also witnessed others who relied with faith on the Lord and sought blessings with their prayers, which were not answered in a way the person or loved one desired.

A condition for healing

The Lord has given a condition for healing blessings: "He that hath faith in me to be healed, and *is not appointed unto death*, shall be healed" (D&C 42:48; italics added). Even when a person relies on faith in the Lord for blessings, if it is his or her appointed time to die, there will not be restoration of health. Indeed, "death [must come] upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator" (2 Nephi 9:6). President Spencer W. Kimball has written:

"If all the sick for whom we pray were healed, if all the righteous were protected and the wicked destroyed, the whole program of the Father would be annulled. . . . No man would have to live by faith. . . . There would be little or no suffering, sorrow, disappointment, or even death, and if these were not, there

would also be no joy, success, resurrection, nor eternal life" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 97).

Spiritual healing

As in my medical practice when I assisted sick patients, my assignment now is to assist individuals who have seriously sinned to repent and be restored to full fellowship in the gospel by following a "prescription" provided by the Lord. In this assignment I have witnessed much sorrow, remorse, pain, and suffering because individuals have transgressed laws that our Heavenly Father provided for our happiness. I have also seen great sorrow come to families because of the sin of a transgressor in that family. I have seen repeatedly what all of us should already know—that there is no happiness in sin.

The only one who can accomplish the healing of a sick soul is the Great Physician Himself, our Father in Heaven, through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus promised those who will come to Him with full purpose of heart and repent, "I shall heal them" (3 Nephi 18:32). The Church cannot heal; priesthood leaders do not heal; only an omnipotent God can accomplish the miracle of spiritual healing.

A prescription for spiritual healing

May I take just a few moments to discuss what an individual can do to assist in the spiritual healing process when one's soul has become tainted with sin.

Our eight-year-old granddaughter was busy at work recently making cookies. She was following a recipe given to her by her mother but was stymied by one ingredient that was to be added to the recipe. It called for two teaspoons of soda. She asked her parents, "Does it matter if it's root beer or 7-Up soda?" When the cookies were baked, they tasted awful. Her mother concluded

that the recipe had failed because her daughter had misinterpreted a half teaspoon of salt to be a half cup of salt.

If the ingredients in the recipe for cookies are important, how much more important are the ingredients in the prescription for spiritual healing? And how much more important is it that we not misinterpret those instructions, as was done with the cookies?

A divine prescription for this healing has been given by our Heavenly Father. It has eternally significant implications. I restate the ingredients of this prescription as the Lord has given them to His servants and to us as His children.

1. Diagnose the cause of the malady

The first ingredient is an acknowledgment of the cause of the spiritual malady. In the healing of the physical body we call this the diagnosis, and it would come after a careful history and physical examination. In spiritual healing it is called confession. A careful examination of our spiritual self on a regular basis is not only worthwhile but necessary. Confession of one's sins is always necessary with serious transgressions (see D&C 58:43). A good start is the interview with our bishop for a temple recommend. That in itself is not unlike a history taken by a physician before diagnosing.

Where do we stand with the Lord? Are we happy with our own spirituality? Do we like what we see? Is the Holy Ghost our companion in life? Do we recognize the promptings of the Holy Spirit? The answers to these and other similar self-examination questions may help us to diagnose any spiritual illness we may have.

2. Feel contrition and remorse

The second ingredient is a deep contrition and remorse for any wrongdoing we may find. The Savior mentions this

when He says: "And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 9:20).

I feel certain that the more we are successful in drawing close to Heavenly Father, the more our own blemishes will be apparent to us. The Lord has instructed us, "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me" (D&C 88:63).

Yet sorrow and sadness by themselves do not constitute a spiritual cure. They almost always accompany sin and transgression, however.

3. Seek and offer forgiveness

A third ingredient is to seek forgiveness from those whom one has hurt by transgression. And they in turn must forgive, as the Lord has so forcefully stated: "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:10).

Recently there came over my desk the poignant words of a father who had erred years ago and who was repentant. He agonized as he related that his sons and daughters refused to forgive him, even to the point of refusing to talk to him or see him in person after more than five years. The Lord tells us in Doctrine and Covenants 64:9, "Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin."

I wonder if there might indeed remain with those children the greater sin.

I've seen many examples in my current assignment of those who just don't seem to be able to forgive another person or to put their own sins behind them. This surely is one of the more important ingredients in spiritual healing.

4. Abandon sin

A fourth ingredient: There must be total abandonment of the sin. All too often I see those who have repented slip sometime later into their old sinful ways. When that happens, sins that were previously repented of return to those who perhaps did not really repent after all. We read, "I, the Lord, will not lay any sin to your charge; go your ways and sin no more; but unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return, saith the Lord your God" (D&C 82:7).

5. Comply with all the commandments

A fifth ingredient: There must be compliance with *all* the commandments of God. This means that those guilty of serious transgressions haven't really repented until they become full-tithe payers, fully overcome Word of Wisdom problems, are morally clean, and keep the Sabbath day holy.

6. Plead for the Lord's forgiveness

Sixth, one must plead to the Lord for mercy, strength, and forgiveness until one receives through the Holy Ghost a "peace of conscience" (Mosiah 4:3). This is the essence of the atonement of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When King Benjamin had completed his sermon, he looked "round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth. . . . And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified" (Mosiah 4:1-2).

Then "the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins" (v. 3). Ultimate forgiveness comes from the Lord to the repentant individual. He

or she knows by the power of the Holy Ghost when forgiveness has come.

7. Endure faithfully

The final ingredient, number seven: There must be faithfulness and service throughout the rest of one's mortal life.

These seven ingredients provide the prescription for spiritual healing and allow us to come to the Lord with "full purpose of heart" (D&C 17:1). The prophet Nephi explained what that was: "I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, . . . behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; . . . and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel" (2 Nephi 31:13).

Testimony of Jesus' healing power

I urge any who are in need of such spiritual healing to follow this divine prescription from the Savior. Come to Him. Acknowledge your sins. Fully repent. Permit priesthood leaders to assist you. Be long-suffering and patient. Plead that the Savior's atonement will be efficacious for you. Then permit Him

to heal you. We sing a hymn that explains it well:

Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish;

Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.

Here bring your wounded hearts; here tell your anguish.

Earth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot heal.

["Come, Ye Disconsolate," *Hymns*, no. 115]

I testify that while there are physical ailments that are not healed, all spiritual illness can be healed because of the atonement of Jesus Christ. If we will but use the God-given ingredients to cause such healing, it will happen. I testify of His healing power and promise that His prescription is the only cure for peace, happiness, and rest to one's soul. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Sister Elaine L. Jack, general Relief Society president, and Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen of the Seventy have just addressed us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

The Church's support of the family

A family begins when a young man and woman are drawn to one another by an irresistible force of nature. They offer to one another that which distinguishes him as male and her as female, and they want, above all else, to find the one with whom they can completely express their love. They want to have children—to be a family.

These compelling forces of nature should not be resisted, only approached cautiously, protecting those life-generating powers until promises have been made to one another, covenants made with the Lord, and a legal ceremony performed, witnessed, and recorded.

Then, and only then, as husband and wife, man and woman, may they join together in that expression of love through which life is created.

The ultimate purpose of every teaching, every activity in the Church is that parents and their children are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, and linked to their generations.

Satan's attacks on the family

The ultimate purpose of the adversary, who has "great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time,"¹ is to disrupt, disturb, and destroy the home and the family. Like a ship without a rudder, without a compass, we drift from the family values which have anchored us in the past. Now we are caught in a current so strong that unless we correct our course, civilization as we know it will surely be wrecked to pieces.

Moral values are being neglected and prayer expelled from public schools on the pretext that moral teaching belongs to religion. At the same time, atheism, the secular religion, is admitted to class, and our youngsters are proselyted to a conduct without morality.

The family must endure

World leaders and court judges agree that the family must endure if we are to survive. At the same time, they use the words *freedom* and *choice* as tools to pry apart the safeguards of the past and loosen up the laws on marriage, abortion, and gender. In so doing, they promote the very things which threaten the family.

None of this is new. Jacob, the Book of Mormon prophet, told the people of Nephi:

"I . . . am weighed down with much more desire and anxiety for the welfare of your souls than I have hitherto been. . . .

" . . . It grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech concerning you, before your wives and your children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God."²

Prophetic preparation for the crisis

This crisis of the family is no surprise to the Church. We have certainly known what was coming.

I know of no better testimony that we are led by prophets than our preparation for this present emergency.

The scriptures speak of prophets as "watch[men] upon the tower" who see "the enemy while he [is] yet afar off"³ and who have "beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye . . . [for] a seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people."⁴

Thirty-three years ago the Brethren warned us of the disintegration of the family and told us to prepare. It was announced by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that the Church would be restructured.

The weekly family home evening was introduced by the First Presidency, who said that "the home [is] the basis of a righteous life and . . . no other instrumentality can take its place nor fulfil its essential functions."⁵

Parents are provided with excellent materials for teaching their children, with a promise that the faithful will be blessed.⁶

While the doctrines and revealed organization remain unchanged, all agencies of the Church have been reshaped in their relationship to one another and to the home.

So sweeping were those changes that the entire curriculum of the Church was overhauled—based on scriptures, with excellent manuals for each course.

And years were spent preparing new editions of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Except for correcting printing errors and adding three revelations to the Doctrine and Covenants, the scriptural text remains unchanged.

Cross-references and other helps were added to make the scriptures more

accessible. In the Topical Guide, for instance, under the heading "Jesus Christ" there are eighteen pages—small print, single-spaced—the most comprehensive compilation of scriptural references on the Lord that has ever been compiled in the history of the world.

The new editions of the scriptures are complete in English and Spanish, and work is now under way in dozens of languages.

We can only imagine where we would be if we were just now reacting to this terrible redefinition of the family. But that is not the case. We are not casting frantically about, trying to decide what to do. We know what to do and what to teach.

The family is very much alive and well in the Church. Hundreds of thousands of happy families face life with an unwavering faith in the future.

The Brethren know and care

The course we follow is not of our own making. The plan of salvation, the great plan of happiness, was revealed to us, and the prophets and Apostles continue to receive revelation as the Church and its members stand in need of more.

We, like Jacob, must teach "according to the strict commands of God," "notwithstanding the greatness of the task." Like Jacob, we also run the risk of enlarging "the wounds of those who are already wounded, instead of consoling and healing their wounds."⁷

When we speak plainly of divorce, abuse, gender identity, contraception, abortion, parental neglect, we are thought by some to be way out of touch or to be uncaring. Some ask if we know how many we hurt when we speak plainly. Do we know of marriages in trouble, of the many who remain single, of single-parent families, of couples unable to have children, of parents with wayward children, or of those confused

about gender? Do we know? Do we care?

Those who ask have no idea how much we care; you know little of the sleepless nights, of the endless hours of work, of prayer, of study, of travel—all for the happiness and redemption of mankind.

Because we *do* know and because we *do* care, we must teach the rules of happiness without dilution, apology, or avoidance. That is our calling.

I once learned a valuable lesson from a mission Relief Society president. In a conference, she announced some tightening up of procedures. A sister stood up and defiantly said, "Those rules can't apply to us! You don't understand us! We are an exception."

That wonderful Relief Society president replied, "Dear sister, we'd like not to take care of the exception first. We will establish the rule first, and then we'll see to the exception." Many times I have borrowed from her wisdom, grateful for what she taught me.

To the men of the Church

Now, following the example of Jacob, I speak to the men of the Church. Most of you are worthy fathers and husbands who do what you should do. But there are women whose hearts have been broken⁸ and children who are neglected, even abused.

If we are to help them, we must begin with the men. The next series of stake and regional conferences will be devoted to teaching the doctrines and principles of responsible and worthy manhood.

Some of you had no worthy example to follow and now visit the abuse or neglect of your own parents upon your wife and children.

Brethren, do you understand that we emphasize the teaching of the scriptures because they are the constant? From them we learn the purposes of life, the

gifts of the Spirit. From them we learn about personal revelation, how to discern good from evil, truth from error. The scriptures provide the pattern and the basis for correct doctrine.

From doctrine, we learn principles of conduct, how to respond to problems of everyday living, even to failures, for they too are provided for in the doctrines.

If you understand the great plan of happiness and follow it, what goes on in the world will not determine your happiness. You will be tried, for that is part of the plan, but "thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high."⁹

Your responsibility as a father and a husband transcends any other interest in life. It is unthinkable that a Latter-day Saint man would cheat on his wife or abandon the children he has fathered, or neglect or abuse them.

The Lord has "commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth."¹⁰

You are responsible, unless disabled, to provide temporal support for your wife and children.¹¹ You are to devote, even sacrifice, yourself to the bringing up of your children in light and truth.¹²

That requires perfect moral fidelity to your wife, with no reason ever for her to doubt your faithfulness.

Never should there be a domineering or unworthy behavior in the tender, intimate relationship between husband and wife.¹³

Your wife is your partner in the leadership of the family and should have full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating to your home.

Lead your family to the Church, to the covenants and ordinances. We are trying to reduce the length and number of meetings and activities outside of the home.

"I not a monkey, Daddy"

I cannot express the depth of my devotion to my wife and children, their companions, and their children. I have learned more by far from them than they from me. That learning comes in ordinary experiences, the joy and the pain of everyday life.

I learned from a little boy the identity and value of a human soul. Some years ago, two of our little boys were wrestling on the rug. They had reached that pitch where laughter turns to tears. I worked a foot gently between them and lifted the older boy (then just four) to a sitting position on the rug, saying, "Hey, there, you monkeys, you'd better settle down."

He folded his little arms and looked at me with surprising seriousness. His little boy feelings had been hurt, and he protested, "I not a monkey, Daddy; I a person."

I was overwhelmed with love for him. I realized he was a child of God. How much I wanted him to be "a person"—one of eternal worth. From such ordinary experiences I have learned to understand doctrine. "Children," truly, "are an heritage of the Lord."¹⁴

The family is safe within the Church

The family is safe within the Church. We are not in doubt as to the course we must follow. It was given in the beginning, and guidance from on high is renewed as need may be.

As we continue on our course, these things will follow as night the day:

The distance between the Church and a world set on a course which we cannot follow will steadily increase.

Some will fall away into apostasy, break their covenants, and replace the plan of redemption with their own rules.

Across the world, those who now come by the tens of thousands will in-

evitably come as a flood to where the family is safe. Here they will worship the Father in the name of Christ, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and know that the gospel is the great plan of happiness, of redemption, of which I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Revelation 12:12.
2. Jacob 2:3, 7; see vv. 1–13.
3. D&C 101:54; see vv. 45, 53–54; 2 Kings 9:17.
4. Moses 6:36; see also Mosiah 8:15–17.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1961, p. 79; or *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1962, p. 36.
6. See “Message from the First Presidency,” *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), p. iv.
7. Jacob 2:9–10.
8. See Jacob 2:35.
9. D&C 121:7–8.
10. D&C 93:40; see vv. 36–40.
11. See D&C 83:2.
12. See D&C 93:40.

13. See D&C 121:41–43.

14. Psalm 127:3.

President Monson

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has concluded this first session of the conference.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of the conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Relief Society Choir from the Olympus Utah Region will now sing “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.” The benediction will be given by Elder Jorge A. Rojas of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The choir sang “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.”

Elder Jorge A. Rojas offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 164th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 2, 1994, at 2:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks at the beginning of the meeting.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this second session of the 164th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference on television.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world, where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We express our gratitude to the owners and operators of these various properties, who are accommodating us so generously.

We note that Elders Neal A. Maxwell, Joseph C. Muren, and John M. Madsen are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Rulon G. Craven and Kwok Yuen Tai are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will begin by singing "Sweet Hour of Prayer," and the invocation will then be offered by Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

Elder Gene R. Cook offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief." President Thomas S. Monson will then present the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The chorus sang "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

We pay tribute to Elder Marvin J. Ashton, a member of the Council of the Twelve, who passed away 25 February 1994.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that council:

Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, and Robert D. Hales. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Cree-L Kofford, who has been serving as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Claudio R. Mendes Costa, W. Don Ladd, James

O. Mason, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Lance B. Wickman. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

In view of the call of Bishop Robert D. Hales as a member of the Council of the Twelve, it becomes necessary to release him as the Presiding Bishop. Those who wish to join us in a vote of appreciation to Bishop Hales and his Counselors, H. David Burton and Richard C. Edgley, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Merrill J. Bateman as Presiding Bishop, with H. David Burton as First Counselor and Richard C. Edgley as Second Counselor. Simultaneously, we release Elder Bateman as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative.

We now invite the newly sustained member of the Twelve, members of the Seventy, and Presiding Bishop to take their places on the stand.

President Hinckley

Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will now read the auditors' report; and then Brother Michael F. Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, will present the statistical report for the year 1993.

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1993

Ted E. Davis

The Church Audit Committee is independent of all Church officers, operations, departments, and employees and reports directly to the First Presidency. We have access to all operational and departmental records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibility. We have reviewed the adequacy of controls over receipts and expenditures of funds and other procedures that safeguard the assets of the Church and its controlled organizations, including their budgeting, accounting and reporting, and auditing systems. We have also reviewed the related combined financial statements of the Church for the year ended 31 December 1993.

Expenditures of Church funds for the year were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes, composed of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. The Appropriation and Bud-

get committees administer major expenditures within approved budgets.

The Church Auditing Department performs, on a test basis, financial and operational audits, including computerized information systems, for all Church operations worldwide. Its staff consists of certified public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors, and it is independent of all other Church operations and departments. Incorporated businesses owned or controlled by the Church are audited by the Church Auditing Department or independent public accounting firms. Audits of local ecclesiastical units are performed locally. Such local audit procedures are established by the Church Auditing Department, which also monitors local unit audit results.

Based on our review of financial and operating controls and of audit reports and responses thereto, we are of the opinion that the budgeting, accounting and reporting, auditing, and other control procedures have maintained ad-

equate accountability for Church assets and obligations. In all material respects, Church funds received and expended during the year ended 31 December 1993 have been controlled, accounted for, and reported in accordance with established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,
Church Audit Committee
Ted E. Davis, Chairman
Donald D. Salmon
James B. Jacobson

The Church Statistical Report for 1993

F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of 31 December 1993. The statistics are based on 1993 reports available prior to this conference.

Church units

Stakes	1,968
Districts	647
Missions	295
Wards and branches	21,002
Nations and territories with organized wards or branches	149

Church membership

Total membership	8,696,224
Eight-year-old children of record baptized during 1993 ...	76,312
Converts baptized during 1993 ..	304,808

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	48,708
------------------------------	--------

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Marvin J. Ashton, member of the Council of the Twelve; David

Lawrence McKay, former general superintendent of the Sunday School; Joseph Taylor Bentley, former general president of the Young Men Mutual Improvement Association; Keith Engar, former chairman of the Church Activity Committee; D. Arthur Haycock, former secretary to five Presidents of the Church; and Helena May Williams Larson Allen, former secretary to three Young Women Mutual Improvement Association general presidencies.

President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren, for those very important reports.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve will be our first speaker this afternoon.

I should say that Brother Ballard serves on the Utah Statehood Centennial Commission, which is making preparation for the 100th anniversary of Utah becoming a state, that anniversary occurring in 1996. The governor and Brother Ballard are asking that on May 14, 1994, we have a cleanup day in the state to make the state sparkle. This is 1994, and the centennial is 1996. I've seen some yards that I think could take two years to clean up!

Elder M. Russell Ballard

A well-tuned engine

Before I was called as a General Authority, I was in the automobile business, as was my father before me. Through the years I learned to appreciate the sound and the performance of a well-tuned engine. To me it is almost musical, from the gentle purring of an idling motor to the vibrant roar of a throttle that is fully open. The power that sound represents is even more exciting. Nothing is quite the same as sitting behind the wheel of a fine automobile when the engine is operating at peak performance with the assembled parts working together in perfect harmony.

On the other hand, nothing is more frustrating than a car engine that is not running properly. No matter how beautiful the paint or comfortable the furnishings inside are, a car with an engine that is not operating as it should is just a shell of unrealized potential. An automobile engine will run on only a part of its cylinders, but it never will go as far or as fast, nor will the ride be as smooth, as when it is tuned properly.

The one-cylinder ward

Unfortunately, some wards in the Church are hitting on only a few cylinders, including some that are trying to make do with just one. The one-cylinder ward is the ward where the bishop handles all of the problems, makes all of the decisions, and follows through on all of the assignments. Then, like an overworked cylinder in a car engine, he is soon burned out.

Our bishops have heavy demands placed upon them. They—and they alone—hold certain keys, and only they can fulfill certain responsibilities. But they are not called to be all things, at all times, to all people. They are called to preside and to lead and to extend God's

love to His children. Our Heavenly Father does not expect them to do everything by themselves.

The same is true of our stake presidents, priesthood quorum and auxiliary presidents, and, for that matter, mothers and fathers. All have stewardships that require large amounts of their time, talent, and energy. But none is left to do it alone. God, the Master Organizer, has inspired the creation of a system of committees and councils. If understood and put to proper use, this system will decrease the burden on all individual leaders and will extend the reach and the impact of their ministry through the combined help of others.

Make wise use of councils

Six months ago I stood at this pulpit and talked about the importance of the council system in the Church. I spoke about the great spiritual power and inspired direction that come from properly conducted family, ward, and stake councils. The Spirit continues to bear witness to me of how vital efficiently run Church councils are to the accomplishment of the mission of the Church. For that reason, I have been anxious to see how well my remarks in October were understood, particularly by our faithful and diligent bishops.

During training sessions I have conducted in various locations since last general conference, I have focused attention on the ward council. As part of that training, I invited a ward council to participate. I gave to the bishop a theoretical problem about a less-active family and asked him to use the ward council to develop a plan to activate this family.

Without exception, the bishop took charge of the situation immediately and said, "Here's the problem, and here's what I think we should do to solve it."

Then he made assignments to the various ward council members. This was a good exercise in delegation, I suppose, but it did not even begin to use the experience and wisdom of council members to address the problem.

Eventually I asked the bishop to try again, only this time to solicit ideas and recommendations from his council members before making any assignments. I especially encouraged him to ask the sisters for their ideas. When the bishop opened the meeting to council members and invited them to counsel together, the effect was like opening the floodgates of heaven. A reservoir of insight and inspiration suddenly began to flow between council members as they planned for fellowshiping the less-active family.

As I watched this same scenario played out before me time after time during the past six months, I decided that it would not be out of order to speak about the importance of councils once again. I speak not to scold those who did not give serious attention last time, but because we have an urgent need in the Church for leaders, particularly stake presidents and bishops, to harness and channel spiritual power through councils. Family, ward, and stake problems can be solved if we seek solutions in the Lord's way.

In my experience, lives are blessed when leaders make wise use of committees and councils. They move the work of the Lord forward much faster and farther, like a fine automobile operating at peak efficiency. Committee and council members are unified. Together they experience a much more pleasant trip along the highway of Church service.

Three ward committees and councils

For my purpose today, let me review three ward committees and councils that always should follow a prearranged agenda.

First is the *priesthood executive committee*. It consists of the bishopric, high priests group leader, elders quorum president, ward mission leader, Young Men president, ward executive secretary, and ward clerk. This committee meets weekly under the direction of the bishop to consider ward priesthood programs, including temple and family history, missionary, welfare, home teaching, and member activation.

Second is the *ward welfare committee*. It includes the priesthood executive committee plus the Relief Society presidency. This committee meets at least monthly, again under the direction of the bishop, to consider the temporal needs of ward members. Only the bishop may allocate welfare resources, but the committee helps care for the poor by planning and coordinating the use of ward resources, including the time, talents, skills, materials, and compassionate service of ward members. In this and in other committee and council meetings, delicate matters often are discussed, requiring strict confidentiality.

The third is the *ward council*. It includes the priesthood executive committee; the presidents of the Relief Society, Sunday School, Young Women, and Primary; and the activities committee chairman. The bishop may invite others to attend as needed. This council meets at least monthly to correlate planning for all ward programs and activities and to review ward progress toward accomplishing the mission of the Church. The ward council brings a varied group of priesthood and women leaders together to focus on the broad range of issues that affect ward members and the community. The council reviews suggestions from home teachers and visiting teachers.

Using councils to improve reverence

Recently a bishop who was concerned about reverence in his ward expressed his concern to the members of

the ward council and asked for their suggestions. Hesitantly, the Primary president raised her hand.

"Well," she said, "one person consistently does a lot of enthusiastic visiting in the chapel just before and after sacrament meeting. It can be pretty distracting."

The bishop had not noticed anyone being especially noisy in the chapel but he said he would talk to the offending party. He asked the sister who it was.

She took a deep breath. "It's you, Bishop," she said. "I know you're just reaching out to people, and we all appreciate your desire to greet everyone who comes to the meeting. But when others see you moving around the chapel talking to people during the prelude music, they figure it's OK for them to do the same thing."

When others in the ward council nodded in agreement, the bishop thanked her and asked for recommendations. The council soon decided that the bishopric, including the bishop, should be in their places on the stand five minutes before sacrament meeting to set an example of reverence in the chapel. During a follow-up discussion, the council members indicated unanimously that the simple plan had worked and that reverence in sacrament meeting had improved decidedly.

Using councils to improve testimony meetings

Another bishop was concerned about the trend he noticed in ward fast and testimony meetings. Members were bearing few testimonies of Christ and His gospel; instead, they were sermonizing, giving travelogues, sharing personal experiences that were not related to the gospel, and talking about family outings and activities. The bishop understood that those topics were important to the speakers. But they were not testimonies

of Christ and His gospel. He asked the ward council, "How can we teach the importance of using testimony meeting for testifying of Christ and His restored church without offending our members?"

After a little time and some comments by the sisters, the council suggested that the bishop should teach the members what a testimony is and what it is not. In addition the council concluded that the quorums and auxiliaries should discuss the purpose of testimony meeting, and home teachers and visiting teachers should review this subject with individual families during their monthly visits. The bishop now reports, "Our testimony meetings are much better. The witness of Christ and His love for us is expressed by the members, and the spirituality of our ward has improved greatly."

Using councils to help retain converts

One major concern of the General Authorities is the lack of retention in full fellowship of some new converts and those who are less active in the Church. If ward councils are functioning as they should, every new convert will be fellowshipped, will have home teachers or visiting teachers, and will receive an appropriate calling within days after baptism. The less active will receive callings that assure them that they are needed and loved by the ward members.

The Brethren also have expressed "concern regarding Church members' involvement in groups [which are often very expensive] that purport to increase self-awareness, raise self-esteem, and enhance individual agency." Church leaders and members should not become involved in such groups. Instead, "local leaders should counsel those desiring self-improvement to anchor themselves in gospel principles and to adopt wholesome practices that strengthen one's ability to cope with challenges" (*Bulletin*, 1993, number 2:1).

Become a problem-solving team

When stake presidents and bishops allow the priesthood and auxiliary leaders whom the Lord has called to serve with them to become part of a problem-solving team, wonderful things begin to happen. Their participation broadens the base of experience and understanding, leading to better solutions. You bishops energize your ward leaders by giving them a chance to offer suggestions and to be heard. You prepare future leaders by allowing them to participate and learn. You can lift much of the load from your shoulders through this kind of involvement. People who feel ownership of a problem are more willing to help find a solution, greatly improving the possibility of success.

Once the appropriate councils are organized and the brethren and the sisters have full opportunity to contribute, ward and stake leaders can move beyond just maintaining organizations. They can focus their efforts on finding ways to make their world a better place to live. Certainly ward councils can consider such subjects as gang violence, child safety, urban blight, or community cleanup campaigns. Bishops could ask ward councils, "How can we make a difference in our community?" Such broad thinking and participation in community improvement are the right things for Latter-day Saints to do.

How the Apostles counsel together

For the past eight and one-half years I have served as a member of a council of twelve men. We come from different backgrounds, and we bring to the Council of the Twelve Apostles a diverse assortment of experiences in the Church and in the world. In our meetings we do not just sit around and wait for President Howard W. Hunter to tell us what to do. We counsel openly with each other, and we listen to each other with profound respect for the abilities and experiences

our brethren bring to the council. We discuss a wide variety of issues, from Church administration to world events, and we do so frankly and openly. Sometimes we discuss issues for weeks before reaching a decision. We do not always agree during our discussions. But once a decision is made, we are always both united and determined.

Listen and reason in councils

This is the miracle of Church councils: listening to each other and listening to the Spirit! When we support one another in Church councils, we begin to understand how God can take ordinary men and women and make of them extraordinary leaders. The best leaders are not those who work themselves to death trying to do everything single-handedly; the best leaders are those who follow God's plan and *counsel* with their *councils*.

"Come now," said the Lord in an earlier dispensation through the prophet Isaiah, "and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18). And in this dispensation He repeated that admonition: "Let us reason together, that ye may understand" (D&C 50:10).

Let us remember that the basic council of the Church is the family council. Fathers and mothers should apply diligently the principles I have discussed in their relationships with each other and with their children. As we do so, our homes can become a heaven on earth.

Brothers and sisters, let us work together as never before in our stewardships to find ways to make more effective use of the wondrous power of councils. I ask you to consider all that I said on this subject last October with what I have said today. I testify that we can bring the full force of God's revealed plan for gospel governance into our ministries as we counsel together. May God bless us to stand united as we strengthen the Church and our members, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

Elder Lloyd P. George

Our importance in God's plan

The Psalmist asked the question:

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:3-6).

This clearly puts into perspective the importance of us, his children, in the plan of mortality and eternal life. We also have the word of the Lord to Job when he asked the question of Job:

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

"Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

"Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;

"When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7.)

Brothers and sisters, we were in that council in heaven when this plan was introduced, and we were happy for the privilege and opportunity and blessing of coming to earth to receive bodies, which would permit us to have experiences for good or for evil. My brothers and sisters, how grateful we are to have

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Lloyd P. George, followed by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy.

had part in this plan of redemption rather than to feel as Paul told the Corinthians, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Are we willing to give thanks for blessings and knowledge received?

The sin of ingratitude

I believe one of the greatest sins that we, the children of our Heavenly Father, are guilty of is the sin of ingratitude. President Joseph F. Smith said in one of his talks that when a man who has been blessed with additional gifts or greater intellect rises to the acclaim and success of his fellowmen, oftentimes he will attribute his success to his own energies, labors, and mental capabilities. Rather than acknowledge the hand of God in anything connected with his success, he ignores Him altogether and takes the honor to himself (see *Journal of Discourses*, 25:53).

In all the great modern discoveries in science, in the arts, and in all the material advancements of the age, the world says, "We've done it!" The individual says, "I've done it!" and gives no honor or credit to God. President Smith continues by saying, "One of the greatest sins of which the inhabitants of the earth are guilty today, is the sin of ingratitude" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 25:52).

I presume most of us have not thought of that as a serious sin. There is a great tendency for us in our prayers—in our pleadings with the Lord—to ask for additional blessings. Sometimes, I

feel, we need to devote more of our prayers to expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving for blessings already received. Of course, we need the daily blessings of the Lord. But if we sin in the matter of prayer, I think it is in our lack of expressing thanksgiving for daily blessings. God is not pleased with the inhabitants of the earth but is angry with them because they will not acknowledge his hand in all things.

"And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21).

The ten lepers

A classic example of ingratitude as spoken of by the Savior is in Luke, chapter 17:

"And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

"And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

"And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

"And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

"And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (vv. 11-19).

Much to be grateful for

I publicly express my gratitude. I am grateful this day to be able to testify to you that I know and understand the plan of our Father, that I can accept it with dedication and with thanksgiving, knowing the plan and the purposes for us being here on earth. I am grateful that the Lord loves us so much that he has allowed his Only Begotten Son to be sacrificed for us. I am also grateful for Joseph Smith—the prophet who is, was, and always will be a prophet of God, ordained and chosen to stand at the head of the dispensation of the fullness of times, with all the keys to unlock the doors into the kingdom of God.

I am grateful that the Lord has allowed me the great privilege and opportunity of being in his service. I have tried to dedicate myself to his holy principles and to his children here on earth.

I am grateful for the things which I have suffered in the flesh, which have been blessings in my life that have taught me patience, long-suffering, faith, and a sensitivity to those who are less fortunate. I am grateful and thankful for the heritage which I have, for those great ancestors who devoted themselves to the work of the Lord, who sacrificed their well-being, yes, and even their lives for their belief in God. How blessed I have been to have worthy parents who taught me in a loving, kind way the principles of salvation by deed and by example.

Grateful I am for a loving, eternal companion who loves the Lord and understands his plan. She is a woman with great patience and understanding. I am grateful for children and grandchildren who support and sustain me. I know well as a father the joy I receive from my children when they express appreciation and love for me. I could not have asked for greater children and grandchildren.

I am grateful that I have had this time to sit in council with those who have responsibility for the kingdom of our Father here on the earth. They are great men, dedicated men, men who have unconditional love for one another and for their God.

How blessed I am for the privilege of associating with the Saints throughout the world! This has brought joy and satisfaction, even a strengthening of my testimony as to how the Lord works.

Receive all things with thankfulness

Truly I have been blessed far beyond that which I merit. And in the coming days, I pray only that I might always be found as Abraham Lincoln said: "Die when I may, I would like it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle, and planted a rose where I thought a rose would grow." I have learned in my life that trials are blessings in disguise if we accept them

with humility, faith, and fortitude. All that we suffer and endure with patience will build within us a more charitable and tender person, having acquired the education we came on earth to receive.

God help us to be grateful for our blessings, never to be guilty of the sin of ingratitude, and to instill this same gratitude into the lives of our children. The Lord has said, "And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more" (D&C 78:19).

This great principle of gratitude, made a daily part of our lives and our prayers, can lift and bless us as individuals, as members of the Church, and as parents and families.

This testimony, and with a love unfeigned to all the special children of our Heavenly Father, I bear humbly and in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Kenneth Johnson

Dad's coming home!

At the time of my birth, the clouds of war had overshadowed Europe and were sweeping across the English Channel to the British coastline. My father, like thousands of other men of his generation, was required to report for active military service. My elder brother and I were shielded from the turmoil and fear that surrounded us by a mother who compensated for the absence of our father, involving us in a variety of activities. From this I learned that when fathers are absent, mothers can be the recipients of compensatory blessings. I have fond memories of those days and recall her speaking of her beloved companion as she received letters from him, without my fully understanding who he was or what he was doing.

My first recollection of meeting my father occurred when I was five years old. A telegram was delivered to our home. My mother stood with the gold-colored envelope in her hand, making no attempt to open it. I did not realize then as I do now the reason why, and the message it could have contained. Eventually, and with great difficulty, she fumbled with the flap of the envelope. This seemed to take a long time. Even when the telegram was opened and mother read its contents, there was no immediate response. Finally, raising the telegram high above her head, my mother joyfully exclaimed, "Dad's coming home! Dad's coming home!"

My father's parents lived in the adjoining house. Mother, holding the telegram high in the air and with a skipping step, set out in the direction of my grand-

parents' home, shouting, "Dad's coming home! Dad's coming home!" My brother, following close behind, shouted, "Dad's coming home! Dad's coming home!" I brought up the rear, also shouting, "Dad's coming home! Dad's coming home! Who's Dad?"

The next morning when I awoke, there was a man sitting on the edge of my bed holding a leather soccer ball from Italy. He asked if my brother and I would like to play soccer with him. Cautiously I agreed, and we went to an area of grassland near our home, where we played together. This was the beginning of my father's continuing influence in my life. I wanted to spend every moment that I could in his company.

Helping Dad in the shop

We lived, like many others in those war-torn years, in humble circumstances. Our home was modestly furnished. Dad had many skills and used them to beautify the home. He raised the Anderson air-raid shelter located in our garden to ground level and made it his workshop. He spent many hours there repairing shoes and making items of furniture for the home. I would wander into this workshop and watch him. Just to be in his presence was a thrill for me. He invited me to help him by passing a hammer, a screwdriver, or some other tool. I was convinced that my help was necessary and that without me he would not be able to complete his task.

He used a variety of pieces of wood, obtained from different sources and considered by others to be unsuitable for any practical use, and from them created items of great beauty and worth for our family. As he worked he played a game with me, inviting me to determine what he was making. I was seldom able to do so until the components were completed and the object assembled. Then I would declare with great excitement, "It's a bookcase!" or "A table!" and wonder at his ability to create so much from so little.

Service draws us closer to God

As I look back and reflect upon those wonderful memories, I realize that my contribution was not necessary for my father to complete the work he was engaged in. I was the beneficiary, as through these experiences I came to know him and to love him.

How like the association we have with our Heavenly Father, believing at times that the service we engage in is for his benefit, when in reality it is comparable with my handing tools to my father. It is the relationship that develops that is of greater significance than the contribution we make. As expressed by King Benjamin, "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Just as I was not able to fully comprehend what my earthly father was building until he completed his work, so it is with our Heavenly Father. When his kingdom is established and the work is complete, we will recognize our home and shout for joy.

Service is essential for a happy life

Selfless service is an essential ingredient for a full and happy life. The enlightening words of President Marion G. Romney enhance our understanding in this regard: "Service is not something we endure on this earth so we can earn the right to live in the celestial kingdom. Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the celestial kingdom is made" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 135; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 93).

It is not necessary for us to know the answer to every question or comprehend the reason for every challenge we face to feel secure in the knowledge of our divine Creator. In the words of Nephi, "I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:17).

Kevin helps paint

Twenty-six years after the experience with my father, I continued to learn important lessons through a father-and-son relationship. The exterior woodwork of our home was in need of redecoration. I cleaned and prepared the surface and applied an undercoat. In my mind I could visualize the flawless gloss finish that would be the product of my labors. Our five-year-old son, Kevin, watched as I prepared to apply the final gloss covering. He asked if he could help me. I hesitated before responding, considering what effect this would have on the fulfillment of my dream, or alternatively how he would feel if I declined his offer. It was almost as if I heard someone else say, "That would be a great help. Thank you."

After I provided him with an old shirt of mine that covered him completely, almost touching the floor and with sleeves rolled back several times, we went to work on the door that secured the main entrance to our home. He was applying paint to the bottom panel as I worked on the top section. I noticed that because of his age and physical stature, he wasn't able to spread the paint evenly and that beads of paint were resulting. Each time he bent down to recharge his brush, I would hastily smooth out the paint on the bottom panel, returning to my assigned area so that he would not realize what I was doing. After a while I decided that more important than a first-class paint job was the opportunity to work with my son. On reflection I realized how well he was doing. Thereafter, every time I approached the door and saw the distinctive style of decoration, I was reminded of what is really important in our lives.

The learning experiences we shared were not restricted to a temporal plane. As we participated together in ordinances and made covenants, the power of godliness was manifest.

Service strengthens families

My wife, Pamela, had been raised and nurtured with the principles of the restored gospel and was able to help me appreciate the value of family prayer, family home evening, and family council.

We determined early in our marriage that it was our responsibility to teach the gospel to our son and that Church programs would reinforce the teaching in the home. Kevin often accompanied his mother as she visited the sick and the elderly to administer compassionate service.

These experiences have contributed to a close family relationship that has flourished through the years, giving us an insight into the potential that exists in the eternities, as described in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 130, verse 2: "And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy."

Knowing the Father and the Son

We should always remember that regardless of our circumstances, we all have a Father in whom we can trust and to whom we can turn for comfort and counsel. He is our Heavenly Father.

What a thrill it is to hear children singing with conviction, "I am a child of God." We are in truth his offspring, and he is "not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27).

Each day I enjoy an increasing appreciation for the words of the Savior expressed in his great intercessory prayer: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

I know that he lives; I know that he loves us, for we are his children. His son Jesus Christ is our Advocate with the Father and leads his church today through living prophets. I testify that their words will guide us safely home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elder Lloyd P. George, who comes from Kanosh, and Elder Kenneth Johnson, who comes from England.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Put Your Shoulder to

the Wheel." And then Elder Merlin R. Lybbert, who originated in Canada, will address us.

The choir and congregation sang
"Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel."

Elder Merlin R. Lybbert

The special status of children

In a day when one of "the greatest problem[s] in our society is the abandonment of children through the abandonment of parental leadership" (Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983], p. 354), the First Presidency has asked that "we reemphasize the need for all adult members to focus on our children in an ongoing effort to help them learn to follow the teachings of the Savior." Also they have asked each of us to "rededicate ourselves to nourish and bless them temporally and spiritually" (First Presidency Letter, 1 Aug. 1993; see *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, p. 80).

It may be helpful to review some of the doctrines as contained in the scriptures pertaining to the special status of children. These doctrines provide direction for those who are raising children and comfort to those of us who have lost a child in death at an early age.

Parents protect and guide

Heavenly Father intended that each child should have the combined loving protection and guidance of caring parents. The pattern was established by Adam and Eve, our first parents. Joseph, the descendant of David, agreed to become the surrogate father of Jesus, the Son of God, when he accepted Mary as his wife, following a visitation of the

angel Gabriel. In Nazareth, Joseph was regarded as the father of Jesus (see Matthew 13:55).

The Christ child grew and developed in a modest home, where Joseph earned a humble living as a carpenter and where Jesus also learned this craft (see Mark 6:3). There were other members of the family. Mary and Joseph had four other sons and at least two daughters, all of whom were referred to in the community as the brothers and sisters of Jesus (see Matthew 13:55-56; Mark 6:3). The example of Joseph and Mary in providing a suitable home for their large family was such that Luke recorded that Jesus "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40).

Not accountable until age eight

The Lord extends special protection to children and shares jurisdiction with earthly parents, even as we enjoy their presence. They cannot sin until they reach the age of accountability, which the Lord has declared to be eight years (see D&C 18:42; 29:47). In fact, the power to even tempt them to commit sin has been taken from Satan. The prophet Mormon taught that "little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin. . . . Little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a

respector to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism!" (Moroni 8:8, 12).

Because they cannot sin, they have no need of repentance or baptism. Adam's original transgression has no claim, as a result of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Mormon declared the practice of baptizing little children to be a "solemn mockery before God" (v. 9), for repentance and baptism apply to those who are "accountable and capable of committing sin" (v. 10).

Because all children who die before the age of accountability are pure, innocent, and wholly sin-free, they are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven (see D&C 137:10; Mosiah 3:18).

Become as a little child

Understanding the special status of little children before God, because of their pure and innocent nature, brings understanding of the Lord's commandment to "repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in [his] name" (3 Nephi 11:37). The childlike qualities the Lord had reference to are developed by yielding to "the enticings of the Holy Spirit" so as to become "submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father." Truly, such a person "becometh a saint," as spoken by Mosiah (Mosiah 3:19).

A protected time to teach children

Parents in Zion have the special responsibility of teaching and training their children in righteousness. They are to be taught "to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old." Otherwise, the Lord declared, "the sin be upon the heads of the parents" (D&C 68:25).

This teaching is to be done before a child reaches the age of accountability and while innocent and sin-free. This is protected time for parents to teach the principles and ordinances of salvation to their children without interference from Satan. It is a time to dress them in armor in preparation for the battle against sin. When this preparation time is neglected, they are left vulnerable to the enemy. To permit a child to enter into that period of his life when he will be buffeted and tempted by the evil one, without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and an understanding of the basic principles of the gospel, is to set him adrift in a world of wickedness.

Offending these little ones

During these formative, innocent years, a child may learn wrong behavior; but such is not the result of Satan's temptations but comes from the wrong teachings and the bad example of others. In this context, the Savior's harsh judgment of adults who offend children is better understood, wherein he said, "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:2).

We offend a child by any teaching or example that leads a little one to violate a moral law, causes him to stumble or go astray, excites him to anger, creates resentment; or perhaps even leads him to become displeasing and disagreeable. Certainly, in the context of the Savior's harsh indictment concerning anyone who "offends" a child, one guilty of such conduct is in serious jeopardy.

Every child is entitled to live in a home, as Jesus did, where there is an environment permitting growth in gospel understanding, where each can wax strong in spirit and be filled with wisdom so that the grace of God will be upon him (see Luke 2:40). These precious little ones are as angels among us.

Fulfilling this opportunity of teaching is not dependent upon social status, wealth, or position. In fact, the most effective instruction may well be done at the humblest fireside.

Young children can understand

Some may rationalize their failure to follow this God-given instruction by assuming that children of tender years are not capable of understanding gospel principles. Parents who have followed the practice of teaching their children know otherwise. Family home evening presents a special opportunity to teach the gospel to the family. The parents of a five-year-old were concerned about how they should teach of Nephi's encounter with the wicked Laban. Laban had repeatedly refused to make the precious brass plates containing a religious record available to Nephi and had sought to kill him and his brothers after confiscating their family wealth. When Nephi encountered the drunken Laban, the Spirit directed Nephi to slay him:

"Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13).

As this young boy, my grandson, knelt beside his bed that evening, his

prayer demonstrated his understanding and personal application of the lesson. He said, "And help me, Heavenly Father, to be obedient like Nephi, even when it's hard."

Demonstration of these principles of truth as taught in the scriptures and applied in the various settings of life is a sure way of developing understanding and obedience in the lives of children. The Primary of the Church also teaches children the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a valuable support the Church gives to parents and their children.

It is my witness that our kind and loving Heavenly Father has made special allowances for little children, consistent with their innocence and the eternal principle of agency. It is also my witness that he gave parents, and all adults, the responsibility of properly teaching and protecting them. Offenders of these little ones face a divine wrath. The Savior's injunction to become as a little child is an invitation to purify our lives that we also may stand blameless before him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just heard from Elder Merlin R. Lybbert of the Seventy.

It will now be our privilege to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

The law of tithing

When the risen Lord appeared to the faithful on this continent, he taught them the commandments the prophet Malachi had already given to other children of Israel. The Lord commanded that they should record these words (see 3 Nephi 24:1).

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say: Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

"Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open

you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (3 Nephi 24:8-10; see also Malachi 3:8-10).

After the Savior quoted these words, "he expounded them unto the multitude" and said, "These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations" (3 Nephi 26:1-2).

Here we see that the law of tithing is not a remote Old Testament practice but a commandment directly from the Savior to the people of our day. The Lord reaffirmed that law in modern revelation, commanding his people to pay "one-tenth of all their interest annually" and declaring that "this shall be a standing law unto them forever" (D&C 119:4).

Blessings promised to tithe payers

No prophet of the Lord in modern times has preached the law of tithing more fervently than Heber J. Grant. As an Apostle and later as President of the Church, he frequently called upon the Saints to pay an honest tithe and made firm promises to those who would do so.

In a general conference in 1912, Elder Heber J. Grant declared:

"I bear witness—and I know that the witness I bear is true—that [to] the men and the women who have been absolutely honest with God, who have paid their tithing, . . . God has given . . . wisdom whereby they have been able to utilize the remaining nine-tenths, and it has been of greater value to them, and they have accomplished more with it than they would if they had not been honest with the Lord" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1912, p. 30).

In 1929, President Heber J. Grant said:

"I appeal to the Latter-day Saints to be honest with the Lord and I promise them that peace, prosperity and financial success will attend those who are

honest with our Heavenly Father. . . . When we set our hearts upon the things of this world and fail to be strictly honest with the Lord we do not grow in the light and power and strength of the gospel as we otherwise would do" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1929, pp. 4-5).

During the Great Depression, President Grant continued to remind the Saints that the payment of tithing would open the windows of heaven for blessings needed by the faithful. In that stressful period, some of our bishops observed that members who paid their tithing were able to support their families more effectively than those who did not. The tithe payers tended to keep their employment, enjoy good health, and be free from the most devastating effects of economic and spiritual depression (see "Tithing Is a Builder of Faith," *Church News*, 9 Dec. 1961, p. 16). Countless tithe-paying Latter-day Saints can testify to similar blessings today.

Mother's example in paying tithing

I am grateful to President Grant and other prophets for teaching the principle of tithing to my parents and to them for teaching it to me. My attitude toward the law of tithing was set in place by the example and words of my mother, illustrated in a conversation I remember from my youth.

During World War II, my widowed mother supported her three young children on a schoolteacher's salary that was meager. When I became conscious that we went without some desirable things because we didn't have enough money, I asked my mother why she paid so much of her salary as tithing. I have never forgotten her explanation: "Dallin, there might be some people who can get along without paying tithing, but we can't. The Lord has chosen to take your father and leave me to raise you children. I cannot do that without the blessings of the Lord, and I obtain those blessings by

paying an honest tithing. When I pay my tithing, I have the Lord's promise that he will bless us, and we must have those blessings if we are to get along."

Joseph F. Smith's mother's example

Years later I read President Joseph F. Smith's memory of a similar testimony and teaching by his widowed mother. In the April 1900 conference, President Smith shared this memory from his childhood:

"My mother was a widow, with a large family to provide for. One spring when we opened our potato pits she had her boys get a load of the best potatoes, and she took them to the tithing office; potatoes were scarce that season. I was a little boy at the time, and drove the team. When we drove up to the steps of the tithing office, ready to unload the potatoes, one of the clerks came out and said to my mother, 'Widow Smith, it's a shame that you should have to pay tithing.' . . . He chided my mother for paying her tithing, called her anything but wise or prudent; and said there were others who were strong and able to work that were supported from the tithing office. My mother turned upon him and said: 'William, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Would you deny me a blessing? If I did not pay my tithing, I should expect the Lord to withhold His blessings from me. I pay my tithing, not only because it is a law of God, but because I expect a blessing by doing it. By keeping this and other laws, I expect to prosper and to be able to provide for my family'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1900, p. 48).

Can't afford not to pay tithing

Some people say, "I can't afford to pay tithing." Those who place their faith in the Lord's promises say, "I can't afford not to pay tithing."

Some time ago I was speaking to a meeting of Church leaders in a country

outside of North America. As I spoke about tithing, I found myself saying something I had not intended to say. I told them the Lord was grieved that only a small fraction of the members in their nations relied on the Lord's promises and paid a full tithing. I warned that the Lord would withhold material and spiritual blessings when his covenant children were not keeping this vital commandment.

I hope those leaders taught that principle to the members of the stakes and districts in their countries. The law of tithing and the promise of blessings to those who live it apply to the people of the Lord in every nation. I hope our members will qualify for the blessings of the Lord by paying a full tithing.

Blessings to nations

Tithing is a commandment with a promise. The words of Malachi, reaffirmed by the Savior, promise those who bring their tithes into the storehouse that the Lord will open "the windows of heaven, and pour [them] out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The promised blessings are temporal and spiritual. The Lord promises to "rebuke the devourer," and he also promises tithe payers that "all nations shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a delightful land" (3 Nephi 24:10-12; see also Malachi 3:10-12).

I believe these are promises to the nations in which we reside. When the people of God withheld their tithes and offerings, Malachi condemned "this whole nation" (Malachi 3:9). Similarly, I believe that when many citizens of a nation are faithful in the payment of tithes, they summon the blessings of heaven upon their entire nation. The Bible teaches that "righteousness exalteth a nation" (Proverbs 14:34) and "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9; see also Matthew 13:33).

Blessings to individuals

The payment of tithing also brings the individual tithe payer unique spiritual blessings. Tithe paying is evidence that we accept the law of sacrifice. It also prepares us for the law of consecration and the other higher laws of the celestial kingdom. The *Lectures on Faith*, prepared by the early leaders of the restored Church, part the curtain on that subject when they say:

"Let us here observe that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things" (*Lectures on Faith* 6:7).

Tithing not unique to Church members

We should not think that the payment and blessings of tithing are unique to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Tithe paying is commanded in the Bible. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (see Genesis 14:20). Jacob covenanted to "give the tenth" unto God (Genesis 28:22). After the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt, the prophet Moses commanded that they should give a tenth to the Lord (see Leviticus 27:30-34).

The Savior reaffirmed that teaching when the Pharisees asked him whether it was lawful to pay taxes. The Savior replied with this command: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

A few years ago the *New York Times* carried a feature article on a dozen highly paid professional athletes who were giving a fixed share (usually 10 percent) of their income to their church (see George Vecsey, "As They Look Past Their Riches, Athletes Are Turning to Religion," *New York Times*, 29 Apr. 1991, pp. A1, C7).

None of the featured athletes was LDS. If the names of our tithe-paying LDS professional athletes had been added to the list, it would have been much longer.

There are accounts of good Christian businessmen who promised to give the Lord a share of their profits and then attributed their business success to the fact that the Lord was their partner (see Betty Munson, "His Two Strips of Wheat," *Guideposts*, Dec. 1991, pp. 24-27; William G. Shepherd, "Men Who Tithe," *Improvement Era*, June 1928, pp. 633-45). BYU president Ernest L. Wilkinson, who often spoke of the blessings he had received from paying his tithing, quoted this statement from a non-Mormon businessman:

"We would not lend a neighbor money with which to run his business without interest. Neither would we expect him to lend us money without paying interest. I found I was using God's money and the business talents He had given me without paying Him interest. That's all I've done in tithing—just met my interest obligations!" ("The Principle and Practice of Paying Tithing," *Brigham Young University Bulletin*, 10 Dec. 1957, pp. 10-11).

The proper way to pay tithing

In the Lord's commandment to the people of this day, tithing is "one-tenth of all their interest annually," which is understood to mean income." The First Presidency has said, "No one is justified in making any other statement than this" (First Presidency letter, 19 Mar. 1970, quoted in the *General Handbook of Instructions* [1989], p. 9-1; see also D&C 119).

We pay tithing, as the Savior taught, by bringing the tithes "into the storehouse" (3 Nephi 24:10; Malachi 3:10). We do this by paying our tithing to our bishop or branch president. We do not pay tithing by contributing to our favorite charities. The contributions we

should make to charities come from our own funds, not from the tithes we are commanded to pay to the storehouse of the Lord.

Expenditure of tithes

The Lord has directed by revelation that the expenditure of his tithes will be directed by his servants, the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric (see D&C 120). Those funds are spent to build and maintain temples and houses of worship, to conduct our worldwide missionary work, to translate and publish scriptures, to provide resources to redeem the dead, to fund religious education, and to support other Church purposes selected by the designated servants of the Lord.

Give only the best to the Lord

In earlier times, tithing was paid in kind—a tenth of the herdsman's increase, a tenth of the farmer's produce. I am sorry that our modern cash economy deprives parents of the wonderful teaching opportunities presented by the payment of tithing in kind. In a recent book, *Tongan Saints: Legacy of Faith*, the author quotes a Tongan bishop's memories of one such example:

"Grandpa Vānisi's spirituality inspired an awe in me as a child. I remember following him daily to his plantation. He would always point out to me the very best of his taro, bananas, or yams and say: 'These will be for our tithing.' His greatest care was given to these 'chosen' ones. During the harvest, I was often the one assigned to take our load of tithing to the branch president. I remember sitting on the family horse. Grandfather would lift onto its back a sack of fine taro which I balanced in front of me. Then with a very serious look in his eyes, he said to me, 'Simi, be very careful because this is our tithing.' From my grandfather I learned early in

life that you give only your best to the Lord" (in Eric B. Shumway, trans. and ed., *Tongan Saints: Legacy of Faith* [Laie, Hawaii: The Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1991], pp. 79–80).

I had a similar experience as a young boy on my grandparents' farm. They taught me about tithing with examples of one egg or one bushel of peaches out of ten. Years later I used those same kinds of examples to try to teach the principles of tithing to our own children.

"A very old horse"

Parents are always looking for better ways to teach, and the results of their efforts are sometimes unexpected. Attempting to teach tithing to our young son, I explained the principle of a tenth and how it would apply to the eggs gathered in a chicken farm and the young calves or horses born in a breeding herd. When I finished what I was sure was a clear explanation, I wanted to test whether our seven-year-old had understood. I asked him to imagine that he was a farmer with a harvest of eggs and young animals. I supplied the figures and then asked our little boy what he would give to the bishop as tithing. He thought deeply for a moment and then said, "I would give him a very old horse."

We obviously had some further conversations on the principle of tithing, and I am proud of the way he and his brother and sisters learned and practiced that principle. But I have often thought of that little boy's words as I have observed how some adult Church members relate to the law of tithing. I think we still have some whose attitude and performance consist of giving the bishop something like "a very old horse."

Tithe paying a test of priorities

The payment of tithing is a test of priorities. The Savior taught that reality when he gave this parable:

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

"And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16-21).

A modern illustration of that principle is suggested in the apocryphal story of two men standing before the casket of a wealthy friend. Asked one, "How much property did he leave?" Replied the other, "He left all of it."

President Lorenzo Snow taught that "the law of tithing is one of the most important ever revealed to man" (quoted in Le Roi C. Snow, "The Lord's Way Out of Bondage," *Improvement Era*, July 1938, p. 442). Faithful adherence to this law opens the windows of heaven for blessings temporal and spiritual. As a lifelong recipient of those blessings, I testify to the goodness of our God and his bounteous blessings to his children.

I pray that each member of this church will qualify for the blessings promised and bestowed on those who bring all their tithes into the storehouse. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just heard Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us, and he will be our concluding speaker.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Elder Hales, we welcome you as a member of the Council of the Twelve. Our friendship goes back, I guess, over three decades. Of course, I've always wondered why when I moved to New York, you moved to Boston. And then when I moved to Boston, you moved back to New York. No longer can you escape! You join the greatest quorum that you can possibly belong to because of the brotherhood and fellowship that are there. Welcome, Elder Hales!

Goodly parents

The Book of Mormon begins with these words: "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1). What a differ-

ent world this would be if the personal journals of each of our Father in Heaven's children could begin with a similar phrase—having goodly parents and being taught by them.

We live in such a special time in history, a time when the Lord's gospel has been restored in its fulness. Our missionary force is increasing in quality and quantity; thus, the gospel is being taught in more languages to more nations and to greater numbers of listening ears than ever before. As wards and stakes are being established in most parts of the world, creative minds have been inspired to develop communication instruments which are capable of bringing the instructions of the prophets to the ears of many, many more people. The good news of the gospel can now spread more rapidly

to bring the hope of everlasting peace to the hearts of mankind.

Family life in crisis

One of the great messages of the gospel is the doctrine of the eternal nature of the family unit. We declare to the world the value and importance of family life, but much of the confusion and difficulty we find existing in the world today is being traced to the deterioration of the family. Home experiences where children are taught and trained by loving parents are diminishing.

Family life where children and parents communicate together in study, play, and work has been replaced by a quick, individual, microwaved dinner and an evening in front of the TV set. In 1991 the National Association of Counties, meeting in Salt Lake City, thought that the lack of home influence had reached such a point of becoming a crisis in our nation and spent time in their meetings discussing their concerns. They identified five basic concepts that could increase every family's chances for success.

First, strengthen relationships through family activities; second, establish reasonable rules and expectations; third, build self-esteem; fourth, set achievable goals; and fifth, periodically evaluate family strengths and needs.

Suddenly the urgent and warning voice of our prophets from the very beginning of time has special relevance. As we have been counseled and encouraged, we must be attentive to our own families and accelerate our missionary effort to bring others to a knowledge of the truth and the importance of the family unit.

Adam and Eve learn parental duties

In the very beginning, the Lord's instructions to Adam and Eve made clear their responsibilities as parents. Their

roles were well defined. After they had received instructions from the Lord, we find them following His counsel and saying this:

"And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

"And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

"And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters" (Moses 5:10-12).

Teach and train children

Yes, from the very beginning the responsibility of parents teaching their children was among the instructions the Lord gave to our first earthly parents.

Revelations received as the Church has been restored in this day again admonish parents in their obligation to teach and train their children. In the ninety-third section of the Doctrine and Covenants, we find the Lord chastising some of the brethren for not paying attention to their family responsibilities. The scriptures read:

"But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.

"You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.

"And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house" (D&C 93:40, 42-43).

Importance of family home evening

Years ago the Church admonished all parents to hold weekly family home evenings. Today that admonition has been institutionalized in the homes of Church members. Monday night has been set aside as an evening for families to be together. No Church activities or social appointments should be sponsored on this night. We have been promised great blessings if our families would be faithful in this regard.

President Lee once counseled us:

"Now keep in mind this; that when the full measure of Elijah's mission is understood, that the hearts of the children will be turned to the fathers, and the fathers to the children. It applies just as much on this side of the veil as it does on the other side of the veil. If we neglect our families here in having family home night and we fail in our responsibility here, how would heaven look if we lost some of those through our own neglect? Heaven would not be heaven until we have done everything we can to save those whom the Lord has sent through our lineage" (in *Relief Society Courses of Study, 1977-78* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1977], p. 2).

Then he continued:

"So, the hearts of you fathers and mothers must be turned to your children *right now*, if you have the true spirit of Elijah, and not think that it applies merely to those who are beyond the veil. Let your hearts be turned to your children, and teach your children; but you must do it when they are young enough to be properly schooled. And if you are neglecting your family home evening, you are neglecting the beginning of the mission of Elijah just as certainly as if you were neglecting your research work of genealogy" (p. 2; italics added).

I've often thought of the happy times we had when our family was young and our children were at home. I have

made a mental review of those days and considered the changes I would make in our family organization and administration if we had the opportunity to live that period over again. There are two areas I would determine to improve if that privilege were granted to me to have young children in our home once again.

The first would be to spend more time as husband and wife in a family executive committee meeting learning, communicating, planning, and organizing to better fulfill our roles as parents.

The second wish I would like, if I could have those years over, would be to spend more family time. This includes more consistent, meaningful family home evenings.

Youth contribute to success

The full burden of planning and preparing for family home evenings should not be left to parents alone. The most successful ones I have witnessed are when the youth of the family take an active part.

I call on you great deacons, teachers, and priests, you Beehive girls, Mia Maids, and Laurels to make a major contribution in the success of your family home evenings. In many homes you can be the conscience of the family. After all, you have the most to gain from this experience. If you want to live in a world of peace, security, and opportunity, the family you contribute to can add to the well-being, yes, even of the whole world.

I remember an example of this that occurred over the Christmas holidays one year when we had the grandchildren on an outing with us. In order to have a real togetherness experience, we had arranged for a van to travel together. In the van were Grandpa and Grandma and my son and his three older children. My son's wife had stayed at home with the younger members of the family. I was taking my turn at the wheel, and

my wife was seated next to me acting as our navigator. From the back end of the van, I heard Audrey, the eldest child, counseling with her father. She was saying, "Dad, one of our goals this year was to finish the Book of Mormon in our family study. This is the last day of the year. Why don't we complete it now so that we will be on schedule?"

What a special experience it was to listen to my son and his three children, each taking turns reading aloud the final chapters of Moroni and completing their goal of reading the entire Book of Mormon. Remember, it was a young woman who made this suggestion, not one of the parents.

Challenge to youth

You are a chosen generation—saved for this special time in the history of mankind. You have so much to give to add to the growth and development of the families to which you belong. I challenge you to step forward in your family units with that special, enthusiastic spirit of your youth to make the gospel really live in your homes. Remember the counsel of President Joseph F. Smith when he said:

"I would like my children, and all the children in Zion, to know that there is nothing in this world that is of so much value to them as the knowledge of the gospel as it has been restored to the earth in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. There is nothing that can compensate for its loss. There is nothing on earth that can compare with the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Let, therefore, all the parents in Zion look after their children, and teach them the principles of the gospel, and strive as far as possible to get them to do their duty—not mechanically, because they are urged to do it, but try to instill into the hearts of the children the spirit of truth and an abiding love for the gospel, that they may not only do their duty because it is pleas-

ing to their parents, but because it is pleasing also to themselves" (*Masterpieces of Latter-day Saint Leaders*, comp. N. B. Lundwall [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1953], p. 78).

Revitalize family home evening

Family home evenings are for everyone, whether it be in a two-parent home, a single-parent home, or in a single-member family unit. Home teachers, we call upon you in your regular visits to encourage and revitalize the holding of family home evenings.

Our present prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, has reminded us again of the necessity of holding family home evenings and the ingredients which constitute a successful one. He has said:

"Designed to strengthen and safeguard the family, the Church's [family] home evening program establishes one night each week that is to be set apart for fathers and mothers to gather their sons and daughters around them in the home. Prayer is offered, hymns and other songs are sung, scriptures are read, family topics are discussed, talent is displayed, principles of the gospel are taught, and often games are played and homemade refreshments served" (in Conference Report, Philippine Islands Area Conference 1975, p. 10).

It is our hope that each of you might write down each of those suggestions made by the prophet on what a family home evening should contain.

Then he continues: "Now, here are the blessings promised by a prophet of God for those who will hold weekly [family] home evenings: 'If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them'" (p. 10; see also *Improvement Era*, June 1915, p. 734).

We encourage each of you to follow the counsel of our prophet. In all the family units throughout the Church, evaluate again the progress you are making in holding regular family home evenings. The application of this program will be a shield and a protection to you against the evils of our time and will bring you, individually and collectively, greater and abundant joy now and in the eternities hereafter.

May God bless us that we may revitalize and strengthen this tremendously important program as we counsel together as family members is my prayer in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Perry. Elder Perry has been our concluding speaker for this session.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at

6:00 P.M. mountain standard time. We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which follows immediately after it, must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express appreciation to the stirring music of the Mormon Youth Chorus and thank them for the effort they have made to be with us this afternoon. They will sing in conclusion "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning," following which the benediction will be offered by Elder Julio E. Dávila of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Julio E. Dávila offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 164th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 2, 1994. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from the University Utah Region. Edgar J. Thompson directed the choir and Richard L. Elliott was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to the general priesthood session.

We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching these proceedings in his apartment.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

We note that Elders David B. Haight, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, and Glenn L. Pace are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Rex D. Pinegar and Eduardo Ayala are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Elders Alexander B. Morrison and Harold G. Hillam are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon, Elder Robert D. Hales was released as Presiding Bishop and sustained as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Cree-L Kofford was sustained as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and Elders Claudio R. Mendes Costa, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Dieter Uchtdorf, and Lance B. Wickman were sustained as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Merrill J. Bateman was released as a member of the Seventy and sustained as the new Presiding Bishop of the Church, with H. David Burton and Richard C. Edgley as his counselors.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from the University Utah Region, under the direction of Brother Edgar J. Thompson, with Brother Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered," following which Elder Graham W. Doxey of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered."

Elder Graham W. Doxey offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now favor us with "Faith of Our Fathers." Following the choir number, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "Faith of Our Fathers."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My beloved brethren, I am humbled and honored to speak to the priesthood of the Lord's church. This priesthood now numbers more than two million throughout the world who have made a covenant with the Lord to be His servants here upon the earth. We do *His* work. Great is the charge He has given us to "warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ."¹ Ours is a call to labor with all our "heart, might, mind and strength"² "to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion."³ We are "called to serve"⁴ by the Father of us all.

Obedience brings peace and happiness

Tonight I would like to address the Aaronic Priesthood. I pray fervently for the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the Lord's promise might be fulfilled

that "he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together."⁵

My message to you young men is this: by obedience to the laws of the gospel, you can lift yourselves above the quagmire of sin that surrounds us in this world. In addition to helping you to become better servants of the Lord, obedience to these laws will help you to be better in everything you undertake in life, whether it be your activity in the Church, your family, education, business, profession, science, athletics, or any other worthwhile endeavor. You will be a better son, a better brother, and a better friend. You will enjoy your life more; you will be happier and at peace with yourself because you will know that your life is acceptable to your Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

We who serve in this great body of the priesthood do so because each of us has been called and chosen.⁶ God wants us to serve willingly and obediently. We who have made baptismal covenants and have accepted the call to serve in the Lord's kingdom as bearers of the holy priesthood have agreed to conform our will to His. We "should be humble, . . . submissive and . . . diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times."⁷ My young brethren, "learn wisdom in [your] youth; yea, learn in [your] youth to keep the commandments of God."⁸ Nothing is more important to you than obedience to God's commandments.

President Ezra Taft Benson has reiterated that "obedience is the first law of heaven."⁹ This principle applies to all of us.

Horses learned to obey while young

I observed a marvelous display of obedience during a recent visit to a large cattle ranch in Argentina. Early one morning, the gauchos brought forty horses into a corral to select their mounts for the day. Gauchos are like cowboys in the United States. Each gaucho went into the corral and whistled softly like this [whistling]. This established their presence. When the horses heard the soft whistling, they lined up quickly near the fence, facing the gauchos. The horses held their heads high, kept their eyes constantly on their masters, and kept their ears forward in an alert, receptive stance. They gave complete attention and appeared to be anxious to serve. They quickly organized themselves into a line as if for a full military dress inspection or review. The gauchos stepped back out of the way and whistled again. The horses circled quickly to the other side of the corral and lined up facing the gauchos. They looked as if a drill sergeant had called them to attention. Each gaucho chose his mount for the day's work and walked up to the

horse he had selected. The others stayed in line waiting for their assignments.

When I asked how the gauchos taught the horses to be so obedient, I was informed that their training started when the horses were colts. Each one learned from its caring mother and from other mature horses. The gauchos began training the colts when they were young, with kindness, never using the force of a lasso or a whip.

Watching this display of obedience, I thought of you Aaronic Priesthood brethren and how you are taught by your mothers, like the two thousand stripling sons of Helaman,¹⁰ and by caring fathers and priesthood leaders. I thought of you following their good example, disciplining yourselves, and keeping yourselves alert—willing to serve your Lord and Master as He chooses and calls you.

As you grow and mature, you will want and will earn more freedom to live your lives your way and to make your own choices. This you should do. Our hope and prayer is that you will grow up strong and obedient in the faith and that, like the young Jesus, you will increase "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."¹¹

Honor your priesthood

We urge you to be obedient and faithful to your priesthood duties. God has given you the authority to act in His name during this youthful season of your lives. The Aaronic Priesthood will prepare you for the time when you will be ready to receive the greater authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Prepare well for that great blessing by being faithful now in magnifying your Aaronic Priesthood.

Serve valiantly in any position to which you may be called. Prepare, bless, and pass the emblems of the holy sacrament worthily. Diligently gather fast offerings to assist your bishop in his duty to care for those in need. Tend to your

home teaching duties consistently. Home teaching is an excellent preparation for missionary service. Attend all of your meetings regularly. Study your scriptures and pray daily and pay your tithing.

If you will be obedient bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood, I can promise you that by the time you are an ordained elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood, you will be ready to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as a missionary boldly and persuasively. You will be better prepared for the later privileges and challenges of marriage and fatherhood.

To help missionaries remain faithful and obedient, we give them a little handbook. We ask them to carry it with them and read from it often. We have also provided a handbook for our young men and young women. Its title is *For the Strength of Youth*. We ask you to carry it with you, refer to it frequently, and live according to the counsel it contains. That counsel can protect you from evil and help you to obey even when obedience is difficult.

As you help your lives in obedience to the gospel and strive to achieve your goals, do not become discouraged by temporary setbacks and disappointments. Remember that "it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things."¹² You will grow and learn by overcoming obstacles. The Lord has admonished all of us to "keep [His] commandments and endure to the end."¹³

Overcoming temptation

No doubt, you young men have learned that obedience is not always easy. In fact, it can sometimes seem stifling, uncomfortable, or even impossible. "But with God all things are possible."¹⁴ You can be obedient. You can defeat Satan and overcome temptation. God "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."¹⁵ The

Lord does not expect anything of you that you cannot do. Remember Nephi's faith when he testified that "the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."¹⁶

We live in a world filled with evil. Swirling all around us are the whirlwinds of strife and contention, temptation and sin. "The priesthood is a shield against temptation; it motivates and inspires young men to the highest and noblest of deeds; every young man, whether he holds the office of deacon, teacher, or priest, is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁷

How could we serve Him unless we were free from the evils of mortal life? Some mistakenly think it is impossible to avoid the sins of the world. To escape evil, a few even attempt to isolate themselves from society. The Savior prayed "not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."¹⁸ That, too, is our prayer for you young men.

Willing obedience provides lasting protection against Satan's alluring and tantalizing temptations. Jesus is our perfect example of obedience. Learn to do as He did when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. Even though He was weakened by fasting, His answer was quick and firm: "Get thee behind me, Satan."¹⁹ Elder Neal A. Maxwell said this of the Savior's example in resisting temptation: "Jesus noticed the tremendous temptations that came to Him, but He did not process and reprocess them. Instead, He rejected them promptly. *If we entertain temptations, soon they begin entertaining us!*"²⁰ When Satan comes calling, cast him out as quickly as possible. Do not let temptation even begin to entertain you.

Be morally clean

I plead with you young brethren of the priesthood to live above the curse of

immorality that is plaguing the earth. Rise above the squalor of pornography, obscenity, and filth. Be virtuous and chaste. Uphold your young sisters in the gospel by respecting their budding womanhood and protecting their virtue. Always conduct yourselves according to the commandments of God when you are with them. You want your girlfriends to remain clean and pure. Just as you surely would protect the chastity of your own sister in your family, likewise protect the virtue of your sisters in God's family.

If you make a mistake, obtain forgiveness through sincere, humble repentance. God does forgive; it is a miracle made possible by the atoning sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. But mistakes that seem to be small to you, if uncorrected, can have enormous consequences.

The First Presidency has stated very clearly that serious sins, especially immorality, could disqualify a young man from serving a mission. Yes, repentance is possible, but the privilege and blessing of serving a full-time mission for the Lord could be lost through transgression. Momentary lapses in an otherwise outstanding life could jeopardize this significant privilege and blessing. Brethren, never let your guard down!

Even though a loving God has provided a pathway to repentance, you simply do not have the time to waste in transgression. Sin wounds the soul; healing slows progress and takes time that could have been used in productive service and progress. The Lord needs you faithful and worthy young men, now and in the future, to combat the forces of Satan that are ravaging the earth.

Byron "Whizzer" White

Let me share an experience from my own youth—an experience that taught me the importance of obedience in doing even small things well. I loved to play football in high school and at the

university. I wanted to be a good athlete. I especially remember one game. Our university team faced the University of Colorado in a contest for the conference championship. We were well coached and really well prepared.

The star of the Colorado team was Byron "Whizzer" White, an all-American who was a tremendous athlete. He was a fast, versatile, and powerful quarterback. His athletic prowess was legendary. His scholastic abilities were equally impressive. He later became a Rhodes scholar and retired recently as an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court.

Our wise coach was Ike Armstrong. His warnings before the game included two simple instructions: one, do not kick off or punt the ball to Whizzer White, and two, never let him get past the line of scrimmage.

We followed his instructions and held Colorado scoreless throughout the first half. Early in the second half, however, Whizzer White kicked a field goal. We answered with a touchdown and kicked the extra point. We were ahead seven to three at the end of the third quarter.

On the second play of the fourth quarter, we punted. The ball sailed deep into the corner of the field, near their end zone. Whizzer White plucked the tumbling ball out of the air at his fifteen-yard line and dropped back to his five-yard line to evade the first of our tacklers. Then with the speed, strength, and agility that had built his reputation, he started upfield and sidestepped every player of our team. I managed only to touch him with my little finger. He ran the entire length of the field for a touchdown—thrilling for Colorado, but disappointing for us.

Later in the fourth quarter, Whizzer dashed around his own right end and beyond the line of scrimmage and ran fifty-seven yards for another touchdown. The game ended with a score seventeen

to seven. Colorado won the game and the conference championship.

Though we lost, I learned the importance of constant obedience to detailed instructions of our leader. Failure to obey our coach's two pregame warnings for just two plays—two brief lapses in an otherwise outstanding effort—cost us the game and the conference championship. That is all it took for us to lose something we had worked so hard to achieve.

Prove yourselves worthy

I testify to you, my brethren, that your Heavenly Father loves you and wants you to receive and enjoy every blessing He has for His children, including the blessings of happiness and peace. We, the leaders of the Lord's church, love you. We pray for you earnestly and constantly. Your leaders in your wards and branches and in your stakes and districts likewise love you and pray for you. Your parents' prayers and love for you are beyond measure. We all want you to succeed in this life and to qualify for the greatest of God's gifts—eternal life in the celestial kingdom. To achieve your goals in this mortal life and prove yourselves worthy of eternal blessings, learn to obey. There is no other way. Obedience brings great strength and power into your lives.

The commandments of the gospel come from a tender, loving Father whose laws are given to make us happy, to protect us, and to help us avoid the inescapable pain and misery that always result when we yield to Satan and give in to temptation. "Wickedness never was happiness."²¹ God is indeed our loving Father. Everything He does is for our good. He knows all things. He knows us much better than we know ourselves, and He knows what is best for us.

May the Lord bless each of you special young men with strength and

courage to obey His will and to prepare diligently for the work and joy that lie ahead, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. D&C 20:59.
2. D&C 4:2.
3. D&C 6:6.
4. *Hymns*, no. 249.
5. D&C 50:22.
6. See John 15:16.
7. Alma 7:23.
8. Alma 37:35.
9. Ezra Taft Benson, address delivered at mission presidents' seminar, 21 June 1988; see also *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), p. 26.
10. See Alma 56:47–48.
11. Luke 2:52.
12. 2 Nephi 2:11.
13. D&C 14:7.
14. Matthew 19:26.
15. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
16. 1 Nephi 3:7.
17. Joseph L. Wirthlin, *A Heritage of Faith*, comp. Richard B. Wirthlin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), p. 78.
18. John 17:15.
19. Luke 4:8.
20. Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 88; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 71; italics added.
21. Alma 41:10.

President Monson

I just asked Elder Wirthlin how his little finger was. I suppose it healed, although the pain's still in his heart, isn't it?

We have heard from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Charles Didier, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Richard P. Lindsay of the Seventy.

Elder Charles Didier

Remembering covenants

As members and leaders of this church, we are often depicted as always going to or coming from meetings. This is generally true, but we need to remember why we do so. The Lord, by revelation, reminds us that when we are assembled, as we are here tonight, we are to be instructed and edified that we may know how to act upon his law and commandments (see D&C 43:8–9). How important is it to remember these instructions?

To remember is to keep in mind, to store in memory for later attention or consideration. I remember something so I can use it later for a certain purpose or result. For students like you young men, it means that you memorize facts or information to pass an exam, resulting in good grades and happiness. You may also have learned—perhaps by sad experience—that to forget is to cease to remember, resulting in poor grades and unhappiness. There is always a relationship between remembering, doing, and happiness or forgetting, not doing, and unhappiness.

The process is the same, of course, with spiritual matters. I remember the gospel and the covenants, and I act or participate. I commit and receive the blessings associated with the covenants or commandments. If I forget my faith and my covenants and do not commit and work for my salvation, I fail to receive the promised blessings.

Reflecting on this spiritual teaching pattern in my life, I would like to share with you some of my memories as a convert to the Church. This might help some of you—young or older—learn how to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9) under any circumstances.

Baptismal covenant

It all started on the day of my baptism. I was twenty-two years old and a college student. I was part of a small group that assembled at a swimming pool in Brussels, Belgium. We didn’t have a chapel at that time. There was no baptismal font, no bishop—just two missionaries and a few branch members to support us. I had no family members with me. It was a first step in the known and the unknown. The known was a sure testimony of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer; of Joseph Smith, a prophet; of the Book of Mormon; and of the Church, the only true one. The unknown was yet to be discovered and experienced. It started to be unveiled by receiving the priesthood after baptism.

Priesthood covenants

According to the procedures followed at that time, a convert almost had to stand at the bar of judgment to receive the priesthood. Three months passed before I was interviewed and ordained a deacon. Then on that Sunday morning I stood in front of the sacrament table to distribute the emblems of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. I still remember the surroundings, which were quite different from the ornate decorations of the church where I had previously worshiped. The dining room of a home had been transformed into a meeting hall for sacrament meetings that were attended by a few members. It was my first experience to magnify my priesthood calling. Nine months later I was ordained a teacher and learned how to teach and to watch over the few members of the branch during their contentions and ups and downs.

These were also interesting days, when attending priesthood meeting

meant sitting in a circle with two missionaries and two other brothers, and reading from one mimeographed sheet of paper that was the lesson. There was no priesthood manual, and only twenty sections of the Doctrine and Covenants had been translated into French. There was no Pearl of Great Price, but most importantly we did have the complete Book of Mormon. We passed this great book from hand to hand and learned about the covenants and teachings of the Lord and his doctrine. Precept upon precept, stone upon stone, I was building my spiritual memory bank and enjoying spiritual happiness.

Another four months passed, and I was ordained a priest. Now I stood on the other side of the sacrament table. The decor was the same, but I felt different. It impressed me that now I was blessing the emblems of the Atonement and memorizing "that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, . . . and always remember him and keep his commandments . . . that they may always have his Spirit to be with them" (D&C 20:77). It was an unforgettable experience, and I still visualize it today when I bless the sacrament as a General Authority.

Two years passed after my baptism, and the day arrived for me to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and to be ordained an elder. The mission president once again laid his hands upon my head. The authority and power to act in the name of the Lord were given. It was received by mutual agreement by an oath and covenant. The oath represented the assurance that the promises of the agreement would be kept by both participants; the covenant, that the conditions of the agreement would be kept.

As I recall that priesthood preparation in the service of the Lord, I can see how remembering my covenants helped me to honor and magnify my priesthood calling, to keep the commandments, and to bring spiritual happiness into my life

in preparation for eternal life. During those trial years, many of my young friends in the Church forgot their covenants and one by one returned to the world. The world always stands between man and God, representing two alternatives but only one true choice.

Covenant of eternal marriage

How can we be strengthened in making the choice to serve the Lord? By simply focusing on the doctrine of Jesus Christ that will ensure the salvation of those who remember it, accept it, and act upon it. How did the process work for me?

As a young man I considered and learned the doctrine of eternal marriage and family. This was of great interest to me and a determining factor in my conversion. I had witnessed the breakup of my parents' marriage; I had seen sorrow caused by death without spiritual knowledge and friends marrying without temple ordinances. I wanted to avoid these tragedies.

What is this doctrine? In the Bible it states that Adam was created, but he was alone. We read, "But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:20). Thus the Lord created woman—not another man—and commanded that they should be united in the sacred bonds of marriage. The first divine, righteous, ordained union between a man and a woman was sealed by these words: "A man . . . shall cleave unto his wife" (Genesis 2:24). This is the established doctrine, and it will never change. It is repeated in modern revelation: "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22).

This union is solemnized by the authority of the everlasting priesthood in a holy and sacred ordinance, the temple sealing. It is also called the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, and its purpose is to bind couples together

on earth and bring them to a fulness of exaltation in the kingdom of God in the hereafter. Then Adam and Eve were also commanded to multiply and replenish the earth. "And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20).

The true concept of marriage and family, the unit composed of a husband, wife, and children sealed together, was instituted at the beginning by God to create eternal families. That foundation principle became my vision and my goal and also reality as my companion and I were sealed in the temple in Zollikofen, Switzerland. As a husband and father and later as a grandfather, I was and still am responsible for the development, temporal support, protection, and salvation of my family.

The Church provides the framework

Another determining factor in my conversion was the Church as a divine institution led by the authority of the priesthood. It provided the framework that I needed for support as a member of that covenant group. I could not save my family by myself.

Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote: "The Church, the community of persons with the same intelligent faith and desire and practice, is the organized agency through which God deals with His children and presents His will. Moreover, the authority to act for God must be vested on earth in some one organization and not independently in every man. The Church through the Priesthood holds this authority for the use of man" (*Priesthood and Church Government* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 180).

The Church provides a unique support for individuals and families to do things that they cannot do by themselves, such as receiving the essential ordinances of salvation. It brings temporal relief in times of hardship. It is also a laboratory outside of the home where

we can serve, learn, and practice charity, the pure love of Christ.

The patriarchal order

I also found in this church that the priesthood has a patriarchal order and that God is a God of order. He is at the head, and following this pattern the priesthood is conferred upon worthy men so they can preside in their homes and families. The husband and father, a patriarch, is to preside in righteousness and exercise the power of his priesthood to bless his wife and family. The husband and wife serve as partners in governing their family, and both act in joint leadership and depend on each other. They are united in the vision of their eternal salvation, one holding the priesthood, the other honoring and enjoying the blessings of it. One is not superior or inferior to the other. Each one carries his or her respective responsibilities and acts in his or her respective role.

Much more could be said about the priesthood and its uniqueness, the divine commission given to man through which he acts in the plan of salvation. In essence, therein is the true doctrine of the Father, the irreversible correct principles to govern ourselves, and the know-how to act upon the law and commandments that we were given.

Remember, act, and commit

In this age of increased individualism and selfishness, opinions now matter more than facts or doctrine; attitudes glorify personal choice above other values and principles; and language is typified by "I don't need anyone to tell me how to be saved; I don't need prophets, seers, or revelators to tell me what God expects of me; I don't need to attend church meetings, to hear talks, or to be challenged."

Today the concept of priesthood and Church authority is on trial by the world

and even by some members who think that the Latin expression *vox populi, vox Dei* can be literally interpreted in the Church as "the voice of the people is the voice of God." The commercial slogan "Have it your way" certainly does not apply in God's plan for the salvation of his children when we read that the very cause of apostasy is when "every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god" (D&C 1:16). How do you overcome the temptation to have it your own way, to satisfy your own appetites, and to follow the world's trends?

One of my simple answers tonight is to constantly remember your covenants,

to act on them, and to commit to them. This sequence, as repeatedly stated in the scriptures, is a classic, spiritual teaching pattern to prepare us for eternal life. It is centered upon Christ and his doctrine and teachings. I will remember them forever.

I testify that Jesus lives, that this is the only true church, that the priesthood of the Son of God is vested herein, and that prophets, seers, and revelators who preside over this church are appointed to preserve the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ and the authority of his priesthood for the salvation of his people. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard P. Lindsay

Elder Wirthlin, I was at that football game and spent ten cents to watch that great run. But I forgive you for not tackling Whizzer White.

Gratitude for Aaronic Priesthood leaders

Along with Elder Wirthlin, I should like to speak tonight to the great army of young Aaronic Priesthood bearers and especially to those who are called in these challenging times by divine revelation to be their priesthood leaders. I have had a lifelong feeling of deep gratitude to the Aaronic Priesthood leaders who blessed my early life in ways I will never be able to repay. These good men helped fill the void in my life after my father, who had served nearly all his married life as our ward's bishop, was taken by a sudden illness when I was five years old.

Some years later in 1940 as a ward deacons quorum president, I received a letter from the Presiding Bishopric of the Church, signed by LeGrand Richards, Marvin O. Ashton, and Joseph L. Wirthlin. This letter said in part, "The Presid-

ing Bishopric of the Church extends to the Presidency of the Taylorsville Ward deacons quorum congratulations and best wishes on achieving more than 90% attendance in priesthood and sacrament meeting for the year 1939." Can you imagine, brethren, the impact of this letter on the Aaronic Priesthood bearers of our rural ward and especially the three thirteen-year-old deacons who composed the quorum presidency? From that moment on, these men of the Presiding Bishopric became my instant heroes.

Faithful deacons quorum adviser

In more mature reflection on that event, I realize that this letter was largely the result of a faithful, conscientious ward bishopric whose second counselor, assigned to the deacons quorum, frequently sat in council with us in our weekly quorum presidency planning meeting. He was *always* present for at least a portion of our weekly quorum meeting. Our quorum adviser was the kind of humble leader I envision the Savior trying to help Peter become as

He admonished the soon-to-be prophet-leader of the Church, "Peter, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (see Luke 22:32).

As we sat each Sunday morning in the dimly lit basement room of a nineteenth-century-built chapel, this great deacons quorum adviser poured out his heart to his young flock of eager youth. With pure love and plain words he told us of the folly of using harmful substances revealed by the Lord in the Word of Wisdom. He emphasized the need for us to be clean in body and mind in our personal lives and to be worthy to serve the Lord in the mission field. I remember that at appropriate times, with tears in his eyes, he would bear his humble testimony to the members of the deacons quorum of the divinity of the Savior and the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith.

He taught us faithfully that we were our brothers' keepers and that the purpose of the quorum was to bless each member's life. He emphasized that when we passed the sacrament or collected fast offerings or cut wood for widows living in the ward, we were doing just what the Lord would have us do. When one member of our quorum from a less-active family suffered a prolonged illness and could not attend priesthood meetings, we would go to his home, and he would there receive the weekly priesthood lesson and the fellowship of quorum members. When another less-active member, whose single parent was not a member of the Church, failed to attend, priesthood sessions were held in his home as well. Both of these young men in more recent years have blessed countless Church members as they have been called to positions of major responsibility.

Many years later I stood at the hospital bedside of this dear quorum adviser as he was about to exchange this life for eternity. Despite considerable

personal suffering, he wanted to use that brief time to have me review with him the current circumstances of each of those deacons who had belonged to that favored quorum more than thirty years earlier.

His life literally fulfilled the instruction of the Savior to Peter on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias in his final admonition to the Apostles: "Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

The battle for the Lord's sheep

The battle for the souls of our Heavenly Father's precious sheep and lambs is raging in every corner of the world.

An increasingly permissive culture, so heavily influenced by the media, especially television, has caused us all, and especially our youth, to be subjected to a moral wasteland of values. Television in America in most instances has almost single-handedly removed vulgarity from modern culture by making it the "norm." The result is a mass culture driven by profiteers who exploit the hunger for vulgarity, pornography, and even barbarism. Such influences cannot help but have a demoralizing effect on the religious faith and belief of our great young people.

Reach out to young men

Such is the condition envisioned by Bible and Book of Mormon prophets. And such is the world in which the faithful bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood in our time must live and emerge valiant and victorious. Against this worldly backdrop, leaders of Aaronic Priesthood must reach out, with love, to help each young man to—

- Become truly converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and live by its teachings;
- Magnify his priesthood callings;
- Give meaningful service;

- Prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood;

- Commit to, worthily prepare for, and serve an honorable mission;

- Live worthy to receive temple covenants and prepare to become a worthy husband and father.

Brethren, make sure that the love and fellowship of the priesthood reaches out to each young man in your quorum and that each one is included and friendshiped.

The lesson of the lambs

Since recently returning from a three-year Church assignment in Africa and becoming reacquainted with our twenty-three grandchildren, Sister Lindsay and I have often been requested on such visits to tell these grandchildren a bedtime story that is, first, true; second, exciting; and third, one they have never heard before. All you grandpas here tonight can understand the challenge which such a request represents. One such true story did come to my mind, however, as we visited recently in the home of a son and his wife who live in a midwestern city with their five children, including three bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood—a priest, a teacher, and a deacon. This story concerned their own father when he was a six-year-old boy.

I grew up in rural Salt Lake County when it was an economic necessity to care for a variety of barnyard animals. My favorite animals were sheep—prompted perhaps by the fact that sheep do not require being milked twice a day, seven days a week.

I wanted our own sons to have the blessing of being shepherds to such farm animals. Our older sons were each provided with a ewe to teach them the responsibility of caring for these sheep and the lambs that would hopefully follow.

Our second son, newly turned six years of age, called me excitedly at my office one cold March morning on the

phone and said, “Daddy, guess what? Esther [Esther was his mother ewe]—Esther has just had two baby lambs. Please come home and help me take care of them.” I instructed Gordon to watch the lambs carefully and make sure they received the mother’s milk and they would be fine. I was interrupted by a second phone call later in the morning with the same little voice on the other end saying, “Daddy, these lambs aren’t doing very well. They haven’t been able to get milk from the mother, and they are very cold. Please come home.”

My response likely reflected some of the distress I felt by being distracted from my busy work schedule. I responded, “Gordon, the lambs will be all right. You just watch them, and when Daddy comes home we will make sure they get mother’s milk and everything will be fine.” Again, later in the afternoon I received a third, more urgent call. Now the voice on the other end was pleading. “Daddy, you’ve got to come home now. Those lambs are lying down, and one of them looks very cold.” Despite work pressures, I now felt some real concern and tried to reassure the six-year-old owner of the mother sheep by saying, “Gordon, bring the lambs into the house. Rub them with a gunnysack to make them warm. When Daddy comes home in a little while, we will milk the mother, feed the lambs, and they will be fine.”

Two hours later I drove into the driveway of our home and was met by a boy with tear-stained eyes, carrying a dead lamb in his arms. His grief was overwhelming. Now I tried to make amends by quickly milking the mother sheep and trying to force the milk from a bottle down the throat of the now weak, surviving lamb. At this point, Gordon walked out of the room and came back with a hopeful look in his eyes. He said, “Daddy, I’ve prayed that

we will be able to save this lamb, and I feel it will be all right.”

The sad note to this story, brethren, is that within a few minutes the second lamb was dead. Then with a look that I will remember forever, this little six-year-old boy who had lost both of his lambs looked up into his father’s face and with tears running down his cheeks said, “Daddy, if you had come home when I first called you, we could have saved them both.”

Be with the lambs when needed

Dear brethren of the priesthood, those who are entrusted as keepers of the Lord’s precious flock—we must be there with the lambs when we are needed. We must teach with love, principles of faith, and goodness and be righteous examples to the lambs of our Heavenly Father. Each quorum member must be prepared for his future role as a bearer of the holy Melchizedek Priesthood in

a world plagued with sin and desperate for decisive moral leadership.

I leave my witness that this is God’s work. It is the most important work in all the world in which we can be engaged. That we will be instruments in His hands in saving the precious lambs for which He gave His life, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We’ve just listened to Elders Charles Didier and Richard P. Lindsay of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Oh Say, What Is Truth?” We shall then hear from Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, who is currently presiding as president of the New York Rochester Mission.

The choir and congregation sang “Oh Say, What Is Truth?”

Elder Marlin K. Jensen

Brethren, I am grateful to be a part of this vast assembly of priesthood bearers. I am also especially mindful of a wonderful little band of missionaries with which my wife and I are currently blessed to labor in the New York Rochester Mission. Speaking perhaps for all mission presidents and the missionaries’ parents, I wish to say during my temporary absence from them, “Please work hard, drive carefully, and be good!”

The power of a good life

All of us who hold the priesthood of God are involved in a glorious common cause—helping our Father in Heaven bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (see Moses 1:39). This task, in its simplest form, involves qualifying ourselves for the blessings of the Savior’s

atonement and helping others to do the same.

Over the years as I have struggled with my own weaknesses and have tried in my way to help others overcome theirs, I have received assistance and motivation from a variety of sources. Personal prayer, my knowledge of an interested, loving Father in Heaven and His plan of salvation, the scriptures, the temple, and the promptings of the Holy Ghost have been especially helpful. However, even more immediate than these in some ways have been the influence and inspiration provided by the lives of noble people. I am ever impressed and deeply moved by the power of even one good life.

From among many exemplary lives in our rich history as a people, I wish to share examples from just two. The first

is from the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Joseph Smith silences prison guards

During a bitter winter of imprisonment in Richmond, Missouri, Joseph and some fifty other brethren were subjected to great hardship and exposure. One of their greatest trials was to endure the blasphemies and filthy language of their guards as they boasted of their unspeakable cruelty to the Saints.

Of one particularly tedious night, Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote:

"I had listened till I became so disgusted, shocked, horrified, and so filled with the spirit of indignant justice that I could scarcely refrain from rising upon my feet and rebuking the guards; but had said nothing to Joseph, or any one else, although I lay next to him and knew he was awake. On a sudden he arose to his feet, and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words:

"'SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT!'"

"He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained, and without a weapon; calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel, he looked upon the quailing guards, whose weapons were lowered or dropped to the ground; whose knees smote together, and who, shrinking into a corner, or crouching at his feet, begged his pardon, and remained quiet till a change of guards."

Elder Pratt continues:

"I have seen the ministers of justice, clothed in magisterial robes, and criminals arraigned before them, while life was suspended on a breath, in the Courts of England; I have witnessed a Congress in solemn session to give laws

to nations; I have tried to conceive of kings, of royal courts, of thrones and crowns; and of emperors assembled to decide the fate of kingdoms; but dignity and majesty have I seen but *once*, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], pp. 210–11).

Does not this image of the Prophet Joseph courageously rebuking the forces of evil move us to do likewise?

Willard Bean, the "fighting parson"

The second example is from the life of Willard Bean, a remarkable man who became known as the "fighting parson." In the spring of 1915, Willard and his new bride, Rebecca, were called by President Joseph F. Smith to serve a mission for "five years or longer" in Palmyra, New York (Vicki Bean Topliff, *Willard Bean: "The Fighting Parson"* [Huntington Beach, Calif.: n.p., 1989], p. 87; for the account of their life in Palmyra, see pages 86–131). Their task was to occupy the recently acquired Joseph Smith home and farm and to reestablish the Church in the hostile environment which still existed at the time in Palmyra.

The Beans were rebuffed on every front as they settled into the Smith home. The townspeople would not speak to them or wait on them in their stores. Passersby would pause in front of the home and shout obscenities. Their children were assigned to sit in the back corners of the schoolroom and were shunned by the other children in class.

Willard, who was an accomplished athlete and had been a prize-winning boxer, decided to improve public relations by putting on a boxing exhibition in Palmyra. A ring was set up in an old opera house, and the "fighting parson" challenged all comers to a boxing match.

When the night of the exhibition arrived, the toughest men in Palmyra sat

in the first few rows. One by one they entered the ring, only to be carried out again in a matter of seconds! This continued until the seventh challenger was similarly disposed.

Brother Bean's fighting abilities were more spontaneously employed on another occasion as he walked along the unfriendly streets of Palmyra. A man watering his front lawn one afternoon suddenly turned the hose on Willard and taunted, "I understand you people believe in baptism by immersion." The spry, athletic Willard reportedly vaulted over the fence separating them and replied, "Yes, and we also believe in the laying on of hands" (*Willard Bean: "The Fighting Parson,"* p. 14).

Although Brother Bean's methods were a little unorthodox and definitely not compatible with the current approved missionary program of the Church, they were nonetheless effective. The people of Palmyra began begrudgingly to yield and to accept the Beans as the good people they were. In time, they were invited to participate in local churches and to join the civic organizations of the day. They established a branch of the Church and helped acquire the Hill Cumorah and the Martin Harris and Peter Whitmer farms. The "five years or longer" mission to which the prophet had called them stretched to nearly twenty-five years before it concluded. During that time, the attitude of the people of Palmyra had changed from hostility toward the Beans to toleration, then admiration, and finally to love. The power of good lives is truly great.

One piece of horehound candy

I am personally greatly motivated by the modest written and oral traditions of my own fathers which have been handed down.

For instance, as a young boy, my great-grandfather arose one Christmas morning with great anticipation and

came down from the loft where he slept to inspect the stocking he had hung by the fireplace the previous night. To his dismay he found what was to constitute his entire Christmas that year—one piece of horehound candy! He was immediately faced with a weighty decision: Should he eat the candy in one glorious burst of flavor, or should he make it last? The scarcity of such delicacies apparently convinced him to make it last. He carefully licked the solitary piece of candy a few times and then wrapped it in tissue paper and hid it under his mattress. Each Sunday thereafter, following dinner, he retreated to his bed, retrieved his treasure, and enjoyed a few pleasurable licks. In that way he nursed the piece of candy through an entire year's enjoyment.

This is obviously not an account of deeds of heroic proportions. And yet, in these times of overindulgence and excess, it is somehow very inspiring and strengthening to me to know that a little of my great-grandfather's frugal blood flows in my own veins.

Our need for good influences

The Lord is surely aware of our need to feel the influence of good people. That may be one reason why He has established a pattern of companionships as we work together through the priesthood to serve Him and His children. That also may be why He has counseled that "if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also" (D&C 84:106).

I have personally experienced the benefit of such a priesthood apprenticeship. In my Aaronic Priesthood years, a man who this evening is a silver-haired stake patriarch became my "senior" home teaching companion. Under his wise tutelage, and in spite of considerable resistance on my part, I learned

for the first time how to “warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ” (D&C 20:59). When the time later came at age nineteen for a full-time mission, I did not really need a missionary preparation course; I had had one! I thank God for the love and influence of such mentors.

“Just send your father!”

Before concluding, I hope you will pardon a personal reference to my own father and the power of his good life in mine. For a half century now I have benefited from his wisdom, his generosity, and his goodness. I am not sure I realized the full extent of his influence until recently as I prepared to return home following the final session of a stake conference to which I had been assigned. An elderly brother came up from the congregation to meet me. He thanked me for coming, and then, in obvious reference to the many times I must have quoted my father and referred to his teachings during the conference sessions, he said, “Brother Jensen, if you are ever assigned again to our stake, why don’t you just send your father!” My hope is that in some small way I will have a similar influence for lasting good in the lives of our own children.

A lasting influence for good

The list of valiant people whose lives touch our own includes family members, missionary companions, friends, Church leaders, teachers, and associates from various walks of life. Some we know intimately and others only by reputation. Less obvious to most of us is the influence we may be having in the lives of others. This interaction, to me, is one of the reasons why a community of believing Latter-day Saints is a foundational element of the gospel. It also explains why we build meetinghouses rather than hermitages.

It is through the lives of good people that we at least in part become better acquainted with the greatest of all lives. When we see Christ’s image in the countenances of others, it helps us live to receive it in our own.

I thank God for the blessing of good people in all of our lives and pray that we may all in some small way serve that same purpose in the lives of others, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

It will now be my opportunity to express a few thoughts on this occasion.

President Thomas S. Monson

The priesthood—a sacred trust

What a solemn thought, to contemplate the vast priesthood audience assembled here in the Tabernacle on Temple Square and gathered in hundreds of buildings throughout the world! I sincerely pray for the Spirit of the Lord to guide my remarks this evening.

The presence of those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood brings to mind my own experiences as I graduated from

Primary, having memorized the Articles of Faith, and then received the Aaronic Priesthood and the office and calling of a deacon. To pass the sacrament was a privilege, and to gather fast offerings a sacred trust. I was set apart as the secretary of the deacons quorum and, at that moment, felt that boyhood had passed and young manhood had begun.

Can you young men realize the shock I felt, while attending an officers’ meeting of our ward conference, when a

member of the stake presidency, after calling upon the priesthood and auxiliary leaders to speak, without warning read my name and office, inviting me to give an account of my stewardship and to express my feelings regarding my calling as secretary of the deacons quorum and thus a ward officer. I don't recall what I said, but a sense of responsibility engulfed me, never to depart thereafter.

I sincerely hope that each deacon, teacher, and priest is aware of the significance of his priesthood ordination and the privilege which is his to fulfill a vital role in the life of every member through his participation in administration and passing of the sacrament each Sunday.

Priesthood opening exercises

At the time I held the Aaronic Priesthood, it seemed we always sang the same hymns during the opening exercises of priesthood meeting. They were "Come, All Ye Sons of God," "Come, All Ye Sons of Zion," "How Firm a Foundation," "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling," and a few others. Our voices were not the best, nor was volume adequate, but we learned the words and remembered the message of each.

I smile when I reflect on an account I heard concerning Brother Thales Smith and his service in a bishopric with Bishop Israel Heaton. Sister Heaton called Brother Smith one Sunday morning and mentioned that her husband was ill and unable to attend priesthood meeting. Brother Smith reported this to the brethren assembled that morning and asked the brother who was to offer the invocation to remember Bishop Israel Heaton in the prayer. Then he announced that the opening hymn would be "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling." I suppose the smiles outnumbered any frowns. By the way, Bishop Heaton recovered.

The opening exercises of priesthood meeting may be brief but should be held

in each ward without fail. It brings to the hearts and souls of all assembled a spirit of unity, the brotherhood of priesthood, and a beautiful reminder of our sacred duties.

Priesthood is service

All who hold the priesthood have opportunities for service to our Heavenly Father and to His children here on earth. It is contrary to the spirit of service to live selfishly within ourselves and disregard the needs of others. The Lord will guide us and make us equal to the challenges before us. Remember His promise and counsel:

"The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—

"To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."¹

To merit this blessing, it is necessary for each of us to recall who is the Giver of every gift and the Provider of every blessing. "The worth of souls is great in the sight of God"² is not an idle phrase but a heaven-sent declaration for our enlightenment and guidance. We must ever remember who we are and what God expects us to become. This pearl of philosophy is hidden away in the delightful musical *Fiddler on the Roof* as the peasant father Tevye counsels his growing daughters.

Other contemporary plays carry thoughts worthy of our consideration as we prepare for service. From the production *Camelot* comes the observation, "Violence is not strength, and compassion is not weakness." From *Shenandoah*, "If we don't try, we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

Eliza Doolittle, the pupil of Professor Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady*, observes of Colonel Pickering her philosophy: "The difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves but how she is treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins because he always treats me as a flower girl and always will. But I know that I shall always be a lady to Colonel Pickering because he always treats me as a lady and always will." Again from *Camelot*, King Arthur pleaded with Guinevere, "We must not let our passions destroy our dreams."

The list continues. In reality, each magnificent observation is but a paraphrase of the teachings of our Lord, Jesus Christ. He is our exemplar and our guide. It is in His footsteps we must walk to be successful in our priesthood callings.

Guidelines to be a successful bishop

May I share with you tonight words of wisdom from fellow servants who labored in the ranks but who have now gone to their eternal reward.

First, from a wise stake president to a young bishop: "The work is all-consuming, but ever realize three guidelines to be a successful bishop: feed the poor, have no favorites, and tolerate no iniquity." Commenting on this last guideline, President Spencer W. Kimball declared, "When dealing with transgression, apply a bandage large enough to cover the wound—no larger, no smaller."³

The East Cache Stake's four-year plan

Second, prior to the creation of the Toronto Ontario Stake in 1960, Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, then an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, recounted for the benefit of priesthood leaders a lesson from his own life when he was called to preside over the East Cache

Stake in Logan, Utah. He mentioned that he and his counselors met to discuss what the stake members most needed and which principles of the gospel the stake presidency should stress. Their opinions varied from sacrament meeting attendance to observance of the Sabbath day, with a lot of territory in between. At length they agreed that the principle most needed was spirituality. They appreciated the truth found in the observation: *When one deals in generalities, he will rarely have a success; but when he deals in specifics, he will rarely have a failure.*

The four-year plan of President Christiansen and his counselors was refined in a splendid fashion. *Year one:* We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by every family having family prayer. *Year two:* We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by every member attending sacrament meeting weekly. *Year three:* We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by each member paying an honest tithing. *Year four:* We shall increase the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake by each member honoring the Sabbath day and keeping it holy. Each was the theme for the entire year; emphasis was given constantly.

After the four-year program was concluded, all four of the specific objectives had been attained, but of even greater significance, the spirituality of the membership of the East Cache Stake had shown marked improvement.

Spirituality comes through service

Spirituality is not bestowed simply by wishing; rather, it comes quietly and imperceptibly by serving. The Lord counseled, "Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work."⁴ Many years ago, while attending a district conference in Ottawa, Canada, I called two men from the small Cornwall

Branch to serve in responsible positions in the Lord's service. I jotted down their heartfelt response and share with you tonight the words of yesteryear. From John Brady: "I have covenanted; I will faithfully serve." From Walter Danic: "The gospel is the most important thing in my life; I will serve."

President John Taylor provided rather direct counsel to those of us who hold the priesthood: "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty."³

Somehow I feel that if we will always remember who it is we serve, and on whose errand we are, we will draw closer to the source of the inspiration we seek, even our Master and Savior.

President Harold B. Lee's influence

President Harold B. Lee had a marked influence on Sister Monson and me and our three children. On rather brief occasions he commented to each of our children in a tone which reflected deep spirituality, genuine interest, and inspired counsel.

Our youngest son, Clark, was about to turn twelve when we chanced to meet Brother Lee in the parking lot of the Church Office Building. He asked Clark how old he was. Clark answered, "Soon to be twelve."

Came the question: "What happens to you when you turn twelve?"

The response: "I'll receive the Aaronic Priesthood and be ordained a deacon."

With a warm smile and the clasp of his hand, Brother Lee said, "Bless you, my boy."

Our daughter, Ann, as a young teenager was with her mother and me when we encountered Brother Lee, and proper introductions were made. Brother Lee took our daughter's hand in his and, with a lovely smile, said to her, "You, my dear one, are beautiful

inside as well as outside. What a choice young lady you are."

In a more solemn setting, Brother Lee met me one evening on the steps of the LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City. By appointment we were to give a blessing to my eldest son, Tom, who was then in his later teens. Surgery awaited which could be of a most serious nature. Brother Lee took my hand before we ascended the stairs and, looking me straight in the eye, said, "Tom, there is no place I would rather be at this moment than by your side to participate with you in providing a sacred priesthood blessing to your son."

We then went to the room, where he said to Tom, "We are about to give you a blessing, even to provide a priesthood ordinance. We approach this privilege in humility, for we remember the counsel of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who said that when those who hold the priesthood place their hands on the head of a person in this sacred ordinance, it is as though the hands of the Lord are placed thereon." The blessing was given; the surgery turned out to be minor. But lessons were learned, spirituality of a great leader was observed, and a model to follow was provided.

Activation: a priesthood duty

Brethren, there are tens of thousands of priesthood holders scattered among you who, through indifference, hurt feelings, shyness, or weakness, cannot bless to the fullest extent their wives and children—without considering the lives of others they could lift and bless. Ours is the solemn duty to bring about a change, to take such an individual by the hand and help him arise and be well spiritually. As we do so, sweet wives will call our names blessed, and grateful children will marvel at the change in Daddy as lives are altered and souls are saved.

When I visited stake conferences as a member of the Twelve, I always took

note of those stakes which had excelled in bringing to activity those brethren whose talents and potential leadership had lain dormant. Inevitably I would ask, "How were you able to achieve success? What did you do and how did you do it?" One such stake was the North Carbon Stake when President Cecil Broadbent presided. Eighty-seven men had been reactivated and, with their wives and children, went to the Manti Temple in the space of one year. President Broadbent, upon hearing my questions, turned to his counselor, President Stanley Judd, a large and good-natured coal miner, and said, "This is President Judd's responsibility in the stake presidency. He will answer."

As I restated my questions to President Judd, I concluded with the plea, "Will you tell me how you did it?"

With a smile, he replied, "No." I was stunned! Then he said, "If I tell you how we did it, then you will tell others, and they will surpass our record." I was still stunned. Then, with a twinkle in his eye, this wonderful man added, "However, Brother Monson, if you will give me two tickets to general conference, I'll tell you how we did it."

The tickets were provided; the success pattern was revealed. However, President Judd felt the contract was open-ended and asked for and received from me two tickets for each conference until he was eventually ordained a patriarch.

The formula was the same, generally speaking, in each successful stake with regard to this phase of the work. It consisted of four ingredients: one, put forth your efforts at the ward level; two, involve the ward bishop; three, provide inspired teaching; and four, do not attempt to concentrate on all the brethren at once; rather, work with a few husbands and their wives at a given time and then have them help you as you work with others.

High-powered sales techniques are not the answer in priesthood leadership; rather, devotion to duty, continuous effort, abundant love, and personal spirituality combine to touch the heart, prompt the change, and bring to the table of the Lord His hungry children who have wandered in the wilderness of the world but who now have returned "home."

Releasing President Winters

Long years ago I reorganized the Star Valley Wyoming Stake at the time the legendary leader President E. Francis Winters was released. He had served faithfully and with distinction for many years.

The Sabbath day dawned; the members came from far and wide and crowded into the Afton, Wyoming, chapel. Every available space was taken. As the reorganization of the stake presidency was concluded, I did something I had not done before. I felt impressed to conduct a modest exercise, and I asked publicly, "Would all of you who have been given a name or been baptized or confirmed by Francis Winters please stand and remain standing." Many stood. Then I continued, "Now will all of you who have been ordained or set apart by Francis Winters please stand and remain standing." Another large number swelled the ranks of those standing. "Finally, will all of you who have received a blessing under the hands of Francis Winters please stand and remain standing." All the remainder stood.

I turned to President Winters and, with tears coursing down my cheeks, said to him, "President Winters, you see before you the result of your ministry as stake president. The Lord is pleased." Silence prevailed. Heads nodded their approval as sobs were then heard and handkerchiefs retrieved from every purse and pocket. It was one of the most

spiritually rewarding experiences of my life. No one in that vast throng will ever forget how he or she felt at that hour.

After the work of the conference had been concluded, good-byes were said and I began the drive home. I found myself singing the favorite hymn from the Sunday School days of my youth:

Thanks for the Sabbath School. Hail
to the day
When evil and error are fleeing
away.
Thanks for our teachers who labor
with care
That we in the light of the gospel
may share. . . .

Now in the morning of life let us try
Each virtue to cherish, all vice to
decry;
Strive with the noble in deeds that
exalt,
And battle with energy each childish
fault.

And then I literally boomed the chorus:

Join in the jubilee; mingle in song.
Join in the joy of the Sabbath School
throng.
Great be the glory of those who do
right,
Who overcome evil, in good take
delight.⁶

I was all alone in the car—or was I? The miles hurried by. In silent reverie I reflected on the events of the conference. Francis Winters, a bookkeeper at the community cheese factory, a man of modest means and humble home, had walked the path that Jesus walked, and like the Master he “went about doing good.”⁷ He qualified for the Savior’s description of Nathanael as he approached Him from afar: “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”⁸

Brethren, my prayer tonight is that all of us, in whatever capacities we serve

in the Church, may merit the gentle touch on our shoulder of the Master’s hand and qualify for that same salutation received by Nathanael. That we, at the conclusion of life’s journey, may hear those divinely spoken words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”⁹ is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. D&C 107:18–19.
2. D&C 18:10.
3. See *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975), p. 178.
4. D&C 4:3.
5. In *Journal of Discourses*, 20:23.
6. “Thanks for the Sabbath School,” *Hymns*, no. 278.
7. Acts 10:38.
8. John 1:47.
9. Matthew 25:21.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his remarks, we remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend the broadcast and the Sunday morning session which follows must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M., daylight saving time.

Because daylight saving time begins at 2:00 A.M. tomorrow, we encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening. And as you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the Melchizedek Priesthood Choir from the University Utah Region for the beautiful music this evening.

Following President Hinckley’s address, the choir will conclude by singing “The Priesthood of Our Lord.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder John E. Fowler of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Faith of our fathers, holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death!
["Faith of Our Fathers," *Hymns*,
no. 84]

I'm grateful for the singing of those words by the choir earlier in the meeting. My beloved brethren, this has been a wonderful meeting in which the inspiration of the Lord has been made manifest. I sense keenly the responsibility of speaking to you. I feel my own inadequacy and seek the strengthening, inspiring Spirit of the Lord to guide me.

Magnitude of priesthood offices

It is a tremendously humbling experience to realize that the Melchizedek Priesthood which we hold is after the order of the Son of God, and that we have responsibility and accountability to Him and our Eternal Father for all that we do in exercising the stewardship given us. What I say of myself concerning this matter is equally applicable to all who hold office in this the Church and kingdom of God. It is no simple or unimportant thing to wear the mantle of the holy priesthood in whatever office or at whatever level and in whatever responsibility we might be called to serve.

Every member of this church who has entered the waters of baptism has become a party to a sacred covenant. Each time we partake of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we renew that covenant. We take upon ourselves anew the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and promise to keep His commandments. He, in turn, promises that His Spirit will be with us. As Brother Didier has reminded us, we are a covenant people.

Sustaining Church officers

This afternoon we followed the customary practice of sustaining Church officers. It may appear as a somewhat

perfunctory exercise. But I remind you that it is an act of grave and serious importance, an act required under the revelation of the Lord, which states:

"Again I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11).

Concerning the sustaining of officers, President John Taylor once said:

"We hold up our right hand when voting in token before God that we will sustain those for whom we vote; and if we cannot feel to sustain them we ought not to hold up our hands, because to do this, would be to act the part of hypocrites. . . . For when we lift up our hands in this way, it is in token to God that we are sincere in what we do, and that we will sustain the parties we vote for. . . . If we agree to do a thing and do not do it, we become covenant breakers and violators of our obligations, which are, perhaps, as solemn and binding as anything we can enter into" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:207).

This principle applies to every priesthood quorum and every other organization of the Church where officers are sustained by the membership.

Called of God by prophecy

Almost universally the sustaining is unanimous in the affirmative, as it was this afternoon, because of acceptance in the Church of the validity of the declaration found in the fifth article of our faith:

"We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

Here again is set forth a significant and unique feature established by the Lord in the governance of His church. The right to nominate rests with the superior officer or officers at whatever the level. But that nomination must be sustained—that is, accepted and confirmed—by the membership of the Church. The procedure is peculiar to the Lord's church. There is no seeking for office, no jockeying for position, no campaigning to promote one's virtues. Contrast the Lord's way with the way of the world. The Lord's way is quiet; it is a way of peace; it is without fanfare or monetary costs. It is without egotism or vanity or ambition. Under the Lord's plan, those who have responsibility to select officers are governed by one overriding question: "Whom would the Lord have?" There is quiet and thoughtful deliberation. And there is much of prayer to receive the confirmation of the Holy Spirit that the choice is correct.

The calling of Elder Hales

We have sustained this afternoon a number of newly called officers. We welcome each with love and respect. Among these is Brother Robert D. Hales, to become a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. He fills a vacancy made by the passing of our beloved friend and associate, Elder Marvin J. Ashton. In filling that vacancy, each member of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve was at liberty to make suggestions. I am confident that in every case, there was solemn and earnest prayer. A choice was then made by the First Presidency, again after solemn and serious prayer. This choice was sustained by the Council of the Twelve. Today the membership of the Church in conference assembled has sustained that choice.

I give you my testimony, my brethren, that the impression to call Brother Hales to this high and sacred office came by the Holy Spirit, by the spirit of

prophecy and revelation. Brother Hales did not suggest his own name. His name was suggested by the Spirit.

He will be ordained and set apart under the hands of his associates who previously have been ordained to the holy apostleship. In that ordination, he will receive all of the priesthood keys available to men upon this earth. But there will be restrictions with reference to the exercise of some of those keys. The President of the Church holds the authority to exercise all of the keys of the priesthood at any given time. He may delegate, and in the present instance has delegated, to his Counselors and to those of the Twelve the exercise of various of those keys.

Governing the Church when the President is ill

This brings me to a matter of which I have spoken before from this pulpit. I do so again because of what some are writing and saying incident to the condition of President Benson's health.

People throughout the Church are naturally anxious to know of the President's condition. President Benson is now in his ninety-fifth year. As we have previously said from this and other pulpits, he suffers seriously from the effects of age and illness and has been unable to fulfill important duties of his sacred office. This is not a situation without precedent. Other Presidents of the Church have also been ill or unable to function fully in the closing months or years of their lives. It is possible that this will happen again in the future.

The principles and procedures which the Lord has put in place for the governance of His church make provision for any such circumstance. It is important, my brethren, that there be no doubts or concerns about the governance of the Church and the exercise of the prophetic gifts, including the right to inspiration and revelation in administering the

affairs and programs of the Church, when the President may be ill or is not able to function fully.

The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles, called and ordained to hold the keys of the priesthood, have the authority and responsibility to govern the Church, to administer its ordinances, to expound its doctrine, and to establish and maintain its practices. Each man who is ordained an Apostle and sustained a member of the Council of the Twelve is sustained as a prophet, seer, and revelator. Like those before him, President Benson was the senior Apostle at the time he was called as President of the Church. His Counselors were drawn from the Council of the Twelve. Therefore, all incumbent members of the Quorum of the First Presidency and of the Council of the Twelve have been the recipients of the keys, rights, and authority pertaining to the holy apostleship.

I quote from the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:22).

When the President is ill or not able to function fully in all of the duties of his office, his two Counselors together comprise a Quorum of the First Presidency. They carry on with the day-to-day work of the Presidency. In exceptional circumstances, when only one may be able to function, he may act in the authority of the office of the Presidency as set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 102, verses 10 and 11.

When, on 10 November 1985, President Benson called his two Counselors, it was he himself who was voice in setting them apart, with the members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles also laying their hands upon the heads of

the Counselors, each one in turn, as he was set apart. President Benson was at the time in good health, fully able to function in every way.

Furthermore, following this setting apart, he signed with his own hand powers of agency giving each of his Counselors the authority to direct the business of the Church.

Under these specific and plenary delegations of authority, the Counselors in the First Presidency carry on with the regular work of this office. But any major questions of policy, procedures, programs, or doctrine are considered deliberately and prayerfully by the First Presidency and the Twelve together. These two quorums, the Quorum of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, meeting together, with every man having total freedom to express himself, consider every major question.

Decisions made in unity

And now I quote again from the word of the Lord: "And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other" (D&C 107:27).

No decision emanates from the deliberations of the First Presidency and the Twelve without total unanimity among all concerned. At the outset in considering matters, there may be differences of opinion. These are to be expected. These men come from different backgrounds. They are men who think for themselves. But before a final decision is reached, there comes a unanimity of mind and voice.

This is to be expected if the revealed word of the Lord is followed. Again I quote from the revelation:

"The decisions of these quorums, or either of them, are to be made in all right-

teousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity;

"Because the promise is, if these things abound in them they shall not be unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord" (D&C 107:30-31).

I add by way of personal testimony that during the twenty years I served as a member of the Council of the Twelve and during the nearly thirteen years that I have served in the First Presidency, there has never been a major action taken where this procedure was not observed. I have seen differences of opinion presented in these deliberations. Out of this very process of men speaking their minds has come a sifting and winnowing of ideas and concepts. But I have never observed serious discord or personal enmity among my Brethren. I have, rather, observed a beautiful and remarkable thing—the coming together, under the directing influence of the Holy Spirit and under the power of revelation, of divergent views until there is total harmony and full agreement. Only then is implementation made. That, I testify, represents the spirit of revelation manifested again and again in directing this the Lord's work.

I know of no other governing body of any kind of which this might be said.

This procedure obtains even in the absence of the President of the Church. I hasten to add, however, that the Brethren would not be inclined to do anything which they feel would be out of harmony with the attitude, feelings, and position of their beloved leader, the prophet of the Lord.

Keys given to all Apostles

It must be recognized that the President, when he became the senior Apostle, had moved up through the ranks of

seniority over a period of many years of service in the Quorum of the Twelve. During this time, his Brethren came to know him well. During the years of his ministry, he expressed himself on the many issues that came before that quorum. His views became well known. Those who love him, respect him, sustain and honor him as President of the Church and prophet, seer, and revelator of the Lord would not be disposed to go beyond what they recognize his position would be on any issue under consideration.

I repeat for emphasis that all who have been ordained to the holy apostleship have had bestowed upon them the keys and the authority of this most high and sacred office. In this authority reside the powers of governance of the Church and kingdom of God in the earth. There is order in the exercise of that authority. It is specifically set forth in the revelations of the Lord. It is known to all of the Brethren and is observed by all.

I have said this, some of it repetitious of what I have said before, because of the present circumstances of our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson.

God is at the helm

Now brethren, let it be understood by all that Jesus Christ stands at the head of this church, which bears His sacred name. He is watching over it. He is guiding it. Standing at the right hand of His Father, He directs this work. His is the prerogative, the power, the option to call men in His way to high and sacred offices and to release them according to His will by calling them home. He is the Master of life and death. I do not worry about the circumstances in which we find ourselves. I accept these circumstances as an expression of His will. I likewise accept the responsibility, acting with my Brethren, to do all we can

to move forward this holy work in a spirit of consecration, love, humility, duty, and loyalty.

I assure each of you and the entire world that there is unity and brotherhood with total and united fidelity to one undergirding objective, and that is to build the kingdom of God in the earth.

We know that as men we are feeble and inadequate in terms of the massive responsibility to carry the gospel of salvation to the nations of the earth and to prepare men and women everywhere to walk the path of immortality and eternal life made possible through our Father's love and the atonement of our Divine Redeemer. We know also that with the blessing of the Almighty, if we are true and faithful, if we listen to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit and follow those whisperings, we can, with our brethren and sisters, bring miracles to pass and accomplish the purposes for which we have been called under a divinely given call.

God is at the helm. Never doubt it. When we are confronted with opposition, He will open the way when there appears to be no way. Our individual efforts may be humble and appear somewhat insignificant. But the accumulated good works of all, laboring together with a common purpose, will bring to pass great and wondrous accomplishments. The world will be a better place for our united service. Our people will be a happy people, a blessed people, a people whose shepherd is our Lord, leading us through pastures green and peaceful, if we will walk after His pattern and in His light.

Response to skeptics and critics

Let not any voices of discontent disturb you. Let not the critics worry you. As Alma declared long ago, "Trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments" (Mosiah 23:14).

The truth is in this church. The authority is in this priesthood. The leadership is in this great body of priesthood at every level of governance. As the Psalmist declared, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4).

He who is our Savior slumbers not nor sleeps as He watches over this His kingdom.

As surely as this is the work of the Lord, there will be opposition. There will be those, perhaps not a few, who with the sophistry of beguiling words and clever design will spread doubt and seek to undermine the foundation on which this cause is established. They will have their brief day in the sun. They may have for a brief season the plaudits of the doubters and the skeptics and the critics. But they will fade and be forgotten as have their kind in the past.

Meanwhile, we shall go forward, regardless of their criticism, aware of but undeterred by their statements and actions. Said the Lord even before the Church was organized:

"Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . .

"Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

"Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven" (D&C 6:34, 36-37).

God is our Father. His is "the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" (Matthew 6:13). Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. He is the head of this church. He makes known His will and will continue to make known His will concerning it. Joseph Smith was a prophet through whom all of the keys of the priesthood under which we operate were restored in this the dispensa-

tion of the fulness of times. Each man who has succeeded him as President of the Church has been a prophet. We have a prophet today. He may not be able to speak to us as he once did. He need not. During the time that he stood before us as the President of this church, he pleaded with us to do more than we are now doing and to be better than we now are. When the Lord calls him home, there will be another to take his place.

No one knows who that will be. No one need speculate.

I leave you my blessing and love and my testimony of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "The Priesthood of Our Lord."

Elder John E. Fowler offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 164th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 3, 1994. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "All Glory, Laud, and Honor." President Hinckley then opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this Easter morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 164th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our love to President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching conference in his apartment. We also excuse Elder Clinton Cutler because of illness.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Richard G. Scott, W. Mack Lawrence, and V. Dallas Merrill are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where

Elder Aldin Porter and Bishop Richard C. Edgley are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these facilities to make all of this possible.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The magnificent Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, will provide the music for this session.

The choir opened these services by singing "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" and will now sing "Lead, Kindly Light," following which Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light."

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson

On this beautiful Easter morning, prayers of gratitude for the life and mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, fill the Sabbath air while strains of inspiring music comfort our hearts and whisper to our souls the ageless salutation, "Peace be unto you."

Straying from the path of peace

In a world where peace is such a universal quest, we sometimes wonder why violence walks our streets, accounts of murder and senseless killings fill the columns of our newspapers, and family quarrels and disputes mar the sanctity of the home and smother the tranquillity of so many lives.

Perhaps we stray from the path which leads to peace and find it necessary to pause, to ponder, and to reflect on the teachings of the Prince of Peace and determine to incorporate them in our thoughts and actions and to live a higher law, walk a more elevated road, and be better disciples of Christ.

No disputations among you

The ravages of hunger in Somalia, the brutality of hate in Bosnia, and the ethnic struggles across the globe remind us that the peace we seek will not come without effort and determination. Anger, hatred, and contention are foes not easily subdued. These enemies inevitably leave in their destructive wake tears of sorrow, the pain of conflict, and the shattered hopes of what could have been. Their sphere of influence is not restricted to the battlefields of war but can be observed altogether too frequently in the home, around the hearth, and within the heart. So soon do many forget and so late do they remember the counsel of the Lord:

"There shall be no disputations among you, . . .

"For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away."¹

In Flanders fields

As we turn backward the clock of time, we recall that some fifty-five years ago a desperately arranged peace, a conference of peace, convened in the Bavarian city of Munich. Leaders of the European powers assembled even as the world tottered on the brink of war. Their purpose, openly stated, was to pursue a course which they felt would avert war and maintain peace. Mistrust, intrigue, a quest for power doomed to failure that conference. The outcome was not "peace in our time" but rather war and destruction to a degree not previously experienced. Overlooked, or at least set aside, was the hauntingly touching appeal of one who had fallen in an earlier war. He seemed to be writing in behalf of millions of comrades—friend and foe alike:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset
glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we
lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies
grow
In Flanders fields.²

The beaches of Normandy

Are we doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past? After such a brief interval of peace following World War I came the cataclysm of World War II. In fact, this June will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the famed landings of Allied forces on the beaches of Normandy. Tens of thousands of dignitaries and veterans will flock to the scene as the landings are reenacted. One writer observed:

“Lower Normandy has more than its share of [hallowed dead. Their bodies] lie in graves from Falaise to Cherbourg: 13,796 Americans, 17,958 British, 8,658 Canadian, 650 Polish, and around 65,000 Germans, more than 106,000 dead in all, and that is just the military, all killed in the space of a summer holiday.”³ Similar accounts could be written describing the terrible losses in other theaters of combat in that same conflict.

The way to peace

The famed statesman William Gladstone described the formula for peace when he declared: “We look forward to the time when the power of love will replace the love of power. Then will our world know the blessings of peace.”

World peace, though a lofty goal, is but an outgrowth of the personal peace each individual seeks to attain. I speak not of the peace promoted by man, but peace as promised of God. I speak of peace in our homes, peace in our hearts, even peace in our lives. Peace after the way of man is perishable. Peace after the manner of God will prevail.

We are reminded that “anger doesn’t solve anything. It builds nothing, but it can destroy everything.”⁴ The consequences of conflict are so devastating

that we yearn for guidance—even a way to ensure our success as we seek the path to peace. What is the way to obtain such a universal blessing? Are there prerequisites? Let us remember that to obtain God’s blessings, one must do God’s bidding. May I suggest three ideas to prompt our thinking and guide our footsteps:

1. Search inward;
2. Reach outward; and
3. Look heavenward.

Search inward

First: Search inward. Self-evaluation is always a difficult procedure. We are so frequently tempted to gloss over areas which demand correction and dwell endlessly on our individual strengths. President Ezra Taft Benson counsels us:

“The price of peace is righteousness. Men and nations may loudly proclaim, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there shall be no peace until individuals nurture in their souls those principles of personal purity, integrity, and character which foster the development of peace. Peace cannot be imposed. It must come from the lives and hearts of men. There is no other way.”⁵

Elder Richard L. Evans observed: “To find peace—the peace within, the peace that passeth understanding—men must live in honesty, honoring each other, honoring obligations, working willingly, loving and cherishing loved ones, serving and considering others, with patience, with virtue, with faith and forbearance, with the assurance that life is for learning, for serving, for repenting, and improving. And God be thanked for the blessed principle of repenting and improving, which is a way that is open to us all.”⁶

A return to family values

The place of parents in the home and family is of vital importance as we examine our personal responsibilities

in this regard. Recently a distinguished group met in conference to examine the increase of violence in the lives of individuals, particularly the young. Some observations from their deliberations are helpful to us as we examine our priorities:

"A society that views graphic violence as entertainment . . . should not be surprised when senseless violence shatters the dreams of its youngest and brightest. . . .

"Unemployment and despair can lead to desperation. But most people will not commit desperate acts if they have been taught that dignity, honesty and integrity are more important than revenge or rage; if they understand that respect and kindness ultimately give one a better chance at success. . . .

"The women of the anti-violence summit have hit on the solution—the only one that can reverse a downward spiral of destructive behavior and senseless pain. A return to old-fashioned family values will work wonders."⁷

Love at home

So frequently we mistakenly believe that our children need more things, when in reality their silent pleadings are simply for more of our time. The accumulation of wealth or the multiplication of assets belies the Master's teaching:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."⁸

The other evening I saw large masses of parents and children crossing an intersection in Salt Lake City en route to the Delta Center to see the Disney on Ice production of *Beauty and the Beast*.

I actually pulled my car over to the curb to watch the gleeful throng. Fathers, who I am certain were cajoled into going to the event, held tightly in their hands the small and clutching hands of their precious children. Here was love in action. Here was an unspoken sermon of caring. Here was a rearranging of time as a God-given priority.

Truly peace will reign triumphant when we improve ourselves after the pattern taught by the Lord. Then we will appreciate the deep spirituality hidden behind the simple words of a familiar song: "There is beauty all around when there's love at home."⁹

Reach outward

Second: Reach outward. Though exaltation is a personal matter, and while individuals are saved not as a group but indeed as individuals, yet one cannot live in a vacuum. Membership in the Church calls forth a determination to serve. A position of responsibility may not be of recognized importance, nor may the reward be broadly known. Service, to be acceptable to the Savior, must come from willing minds, ready hands, and pledged hearts.

Occasionally discouragement may darken our pathway; frustration may be a constant companion. In our ears there may sound the sophistry of Satan as he whispers, "You cannot save the world; your small efforts are meaningless. You haven't time to be concerned for others." Trusting in the Lord, let us turn our heads from such falsehoods and make certain our feet are firmly planted in the path of service and our hearts and souls dedicated to follow the example of the Lord. In moments when the light of resolution dims and when the heart grows faint, we can take comfort from His promise:

"Be not weary in well-doing. . . . Out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

"Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind."¹⁰

During the past year, the Primary organization has conducted an effort to have the children become better acquainted with the holy temples of God. Frequently this has entailed a visit to the temple grounds. The laughter of small children, the joy of unfettered youth, and the exuberance of energy displayed by them gladdened the heart of this observer. As a loving teacher guided a boy or girl to the large door of the Salt Lake Temple and the little one reached out and up to touch the temple, I could almost see the Master welcoming the little children to His side and could almost hear His comforting words: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."¹¹

Look heavenward

Number three: Look heavenward. As we do, we find it comforting and satisfying to communicate with our Heavenly Father through prayer, that path to spiritual power—even a passport to peace. We are reminded of His beloved Son, the Prince of Peace, that pioneer who literally showed the way for others to follow. His divine plan can save us from the Babylons of sin, complacency, and error. His example points the way. When faced with temptation, He shunned it. When offered the world, He declined it. When asked for His life, He gave it.

On one significant occasion, Jesus took a text from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound"¹²—a clear pronouncement of the peace that passeth all understanding.

Frequently, death comes as an intruder. It is an enemy that suddenly

appears in the midst of life's feast, putting out its lights and its gaiety. Death lays its heavy hand upon those dear to us and, at times, leaves us baffled and wondering. In certain situations, as in great suffering and illness, death comes as an angel of mercy. But to those bereaved, the Master's promise of peace is the comforting balm which heals: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."¹³ "I go to prepare a place for you . . . ; that where I am, there ye may be also."¹⁴

Letter from Major Sullivan Ballou

How I pray that all who have loved then lost might know the reality of the Resurrection and have the unshakable knowledge that families can be forever. One such was a Major Sullivan Ballou, who, during the time of the American Civil War, wrote a touching letter to his wife—just one week before he was killed in the Battle of Bull Run. With me, feel the love of his soul, his trust in God, his courage, his faith.

"July 14, 1861

"Camp Clark, Washington

"My very dear Sarah:

"The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days—perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again, I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

"I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. . . . I am . . . perfectly willing . . . to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government. . . .

"Sarah, my love for you is deathless; it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and

bears me unresistibly on with all these chains to the battle field.

"The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me—perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar, that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name. Forgive [me] my . . . faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have oftentimes been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness. . . .

"But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and the unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the gladdest days and in the darkest nights . . . always, always, and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath, as the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again."¹⁵

I know that my Redeemer lives

The darkness of death can ever be dispelled by the light of revealed truth. "I am the resurrection, and the life," spoke the Master. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."¹⁶

Added to His own words are those of the angels, spoken to the weeping

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary as they approached the tomb to care for the body of their Lord: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."¹⁷

Such is the message of Easter morn. He lives! And because He lives all shall indeed live again. This knowledge provides the peace for loved ones of those whose graves are marked by the crosses of Normandy, those hallowed resting places in Flanders fields where the poppies blow in springtime, and for those who rest in countless other locations, including the depths of the sea. "Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives: 'I know that my Redeemer lives!'"¹⁸ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 11:28–30.
2. John McCrae, "In Flanders Fields," in *The Best Loved Poems of the American People*, sel. Hazel Felleman (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing Co., 1936), p. 429.
3. David Hewson, "More than 13,000 Americans Are Buried in Normandy," *Deseret News*, 13 Mar. 1994, sec. T, p. 4.
4. L. Douglas Wilder, in Jill Lawrence, "Early Hardships Shaped Candidates," *Deseret News*, 1 Dec. 1991, sec. A, p. 2.
5. "Purposeful Living," *Listen, A Journal of Better Living*, Jan.–Mar. 1955, p. 19.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1959, p. 128.
7. "Family Values in a Violent Society," *Deseret News*, 16 Jan. 1994, sec. A, p. 12.
8. Matthew 6:19–21.
9. "Love at Home," *Hymns*, no. 294.
10. D&C 64:33–34.
11. Mark 10:14.
12. Isaiah 61:1.
13. John 14:27.
14. John 14:2–3.
15. In Dennis Lythgoe, "Extraordinary Letter Shows How Civil War Touched Ordinary Lives," *Deseret News*, 16 Oct. 1990, sec. C, p. 3.
16. John 11:25–26.

17. Luke 24:5-6.

18. "I Know That My Redeemer Lives,"
Hymns, no. 136.

The choir sang "The Heavens Resound."

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson has spoken to us, and the choir has sung "The Heavens Resound."

We will now be pleased to hear from President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

President Howard W. Hunter

"What manner of men ought ye to be?"

I am delighted to be with you today and to greet this wonderful general conference audience. In so doing, may I thank you for the prayers you offer in behalf of the General Authorities, for our health and our travel and our personal circumstances. We are blessed by these faithful prayers offered, and we wish you to know of our gratitude.

One of the most important questions ever asked to mortal men was asked by the Son of God himself, the Savior of the world. To a group of disciples in the New World, a group anxious to be taught by him and even more anxious because he would soon be leaving them, he asked, "What manner of men ought ye to be?" Then in the same breath he gave this answer: "Even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

Jesus Christ—the perfect example

The world is full of people who are willing to tell us, "Do as I say." Surely we have no lack of advice givers on about every subject. But we have so few who are prepared to say, "Do as I do." And, of course, only One in human history could rightfully and properly make that declaration. History provides many examples of good men and women, but even the best of mortals are flawed in some way or another. None could serve as a perfect model nor as an infallible pattern to follow, however well-intentioned they might be.

Only Christ can be our ideal, our "bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16). Only he can say without *any* reservation: "Follow me; learn of me; do the things you have seen me do. Drink of my water and eat of my bread. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the law and the light. Look unto me and ye shall live. Love one another as I have loved you" (see Matthew 11:29; 16:24; John 4:13-14; 6:35, 51; 7:37; 13:34; 14:6; 3 Nephi 15:9; 27:21).

My, what a clear and resonant call! What certainty and example in a day of uncertainty and absence of example.

We all miss President Ezra Taft Benson today and wish that he could address us. I wonder if I might pay a small tribute to him by quoting something he said from this pulpit on the subject of Christ's marvelous example. He said (and I add my own witness to it):

"Nearly two thousand years ago a perfect Man walked the earth—Jesus the Christ. . . . In His life, all the virtues were lived and kept in perfect balance; He taught men truth—that they might be free; His example and precepts provide the great standard—the only sure way—for all mankind" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 8).

The great standard! The only sure way! The light and the life of the world! How grateful we should be that God sent his Only Begotten Son to earth

to do at least two things that no other person could have done. The first task Christ did as a perfect, sinless Son was to redeem all mankind from the Fall, providing an atonement for Adam's sin and for our own sins if we will accept and follow him. The second great thing he did was to set a perfect example of right living, of kindness and mercy and compassion, in order that all of the rest of mankind might know how to live, know how to improve, and know how to become more godlike.

Become even as Christ is

Let us follow the Son of God in all ways and in all walks of life. Let us make him our exemplar and our guide. We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" and then be more courageous to act upon the answer. We must follow Christ, in the best sense of that word. We must be about his work as he was about his Father's. We should try to be like him, even as the Primary children sing, "Try, try, try" ("Jesus Once Was a Little Child," *Children's Songbook*, p. 55). To the extent that our mortal powers permit, we should make every effort to become like Christ—the one perfect and sinless example this world has ever seen.

His beloved disciple John often said of Christ, "We beheld his glory" (John 1:14). They observed the Savior's perfect life as he worked and taught and prayed. So too ought we to behold his glory in every way we can.

We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him. Then we will drink water springing up unto eternal life and will eat the bread of life.

What manner of men and women ought we to be? Even as he is. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Dearest Children, God Is Near You."

President Hinckley

We have appreciated the remarks of President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and also the choir singing "Dearest Children, God Is Near You."

We will now be pleased to hear the testimony of Bishop Merrill J. Bateman, who was sustained yesterday as the Presiding Bishop of the Church.

Bishop Merrill J. Bateman

Stretching the cords of the tent

Brothers and sisters, we have witnessed a miracle; I'm so grateful for Elder Hunter in exemplifying whom we should follow.

It is with a deep sense of concern and inadequacy that I come to the pulpit today. For two days, two passages of scripture have dominated my thoughts. One is Daniel, chapter 2, and the other is the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, both

of them related. Daniel 2 describes the vision of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's interpretation of the stone cut out of the mountain in the last days, representing the kingdom established by God that will roll across the earth, crushing peacefully all nations and inviting all to come to Christ (see Daniel 2:44–45).

Isaiah, fifty-fourth chapter, verses one and two, talk about the tent which represents the gospel of Christ. He states that in the last days the cords of the tent

would be stretched across the earth and stakes would be planted in every land. We literally are seeing that fulfilled today.

As I have thought about these passages, I have thought of the awesome task of supporting the Brethren in carrying the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The responsibility of the Presiding Bishopric and all those who work with them is to aid the Brethren in their worldwide ministry. Because of those visions of Isaiah and Daniel, I plead with you, brothers and sisters, for help through your faith and prayers. I desire with all my heart to be a servant to these men and to the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Tribute to wife

Today I pay tribute to my wife. She has stood beside me for thirty-five years. We moved nineteen times in the first twenty years of our marriage. She thought she had married an unstable man. But I pay tribute to her. I have marveled in the last eight months as she has worked by my side in the Asia North Area. Weekend after weekend we have gone to conferences, and I have watched as this little blonde-haired woman, among all these beautiful black-haired Saints, has won their hearts over and over again. There have been crowds of women around her giving her hugs as we have left. She is a mother of seven children and grandmother to fifteen. More importantly, she is my eternal companion. I'm grateful for her.

A young Japanese man gains a testimony

May I close my testimony with a short story. A few months ago, Sister Bateman and I were touring the Japan Fukuoka Mission. The missionaries in Kumamoto introduced us to a young Japanese brother who had just joined the Church and then told us of his con-

version. He was from a non-Christian background. When he met the missionaries, he was interested in the message. He liked the young men who were teaching him, but during the course of the lessons he could not understand or feel the need for a Savior. The missionaries took him through the lessons and taught him about our Heavenly Father, Christ, and the plan of salvation, but he didn't have a witness. The missionaries wondered what they should do and decided one day to show him a film, a Church film that deals with the Atonement. It is called *The Bridge*. The young man saw the film and was disturbed by it, went home, and couldn't sleep all that night, but still he didn't have a witness.

The next morning he went to work. He worked in an optician's shop making eyeglasses. During the course of the day, an elderly woman came in. He remembered her coming in a few weeks before. She had broken her glasses. She needed a new pair. When she had come in earlier, she didn't have enough money and had gone away to save more in order to purchase the new glasses. As she came in that day, she again showed him her spectacles and showed him the money that she now had. He realized that she didn't have enough yet. Then a thought came to him: *I have some money. I don't need to tell her. I can make up the difference.* So he told her the money she had was adequate, took her glasses, made an appointment for her to return when he had finished making the spectacles, and sent her on her way.

She returned later. He had the glasses ready for her. He handed them to her, and she put them on. "*Mimasu! Mimasu!* I see. I see." Then she began to cry. At that point, a burning sensation began to grow within his bosom and swelled within him. He said, "*Wakari masu! Wakari masu!* I understand. I understand." He began to cry. Out the door he ran, looking for the missionaries. When he found them, he said, "I

see! My eyes have been opened! I know that Jesus is the Son of God. I know the stone was rolled away from the tomb and on that glorious Easter morning He arose from the dead. He can make up the difference in my life when I fall short."

I pledge my all to the service of the Master. I have a deep testimony of Him and of His work on this earth. He is the one who guides and directs the affairs of this church. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Our new Presiding Bishop, Merrill J. Bateman, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

Bishop H. David Burton

I know that Bishop Edgley joins me this day in expressing our appreciation for the many years of service we have had with Elder Hales. We deeply love and appreciate him, and we feel like we've been taught at his feet for a number of years. We look forward to laboring in service with Bishop Bateman.

I was thrilled this morning, as I'm sure all of you were, to see and to hear President Hunter, a loving and gentle Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ who is an exceptional example of one who repeatedly displays extraordinary *courage* in *hearkening* to the will of his Father in Heaven.

President Hunter has sons who served their missions in Australia at the same time I served there. During this time, President Hunter received his call to the holy apostleship. Numerous of these missionaries have regarded him as "our Apostle." He is one of my heroes.

On this Sabbath day, a Sunday set aside to celebrate Easter, Christians should remember with thanksgiving the events surrounding the most momentous Sunday the world has ever known—the Sunday the Savior burst his three-day prison, completing victory over death. Descriptions of these events are vividly etched in my heart and mind.

Jesus' crucifixion

I can envision Jesus bearing the heavy crossbeam as the procession winds its way along the narrow streets of Jerusalem, through the massive wall at the city gate, to a place called Golgotha. I can hear women weeping and Jesus offering words of warning: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (Luke 23:28). The Savior knew destructive events would shortly come.

In my mind's eye I can see the executioners going about their abhorrent, heartless tasks. I can hear the Savior, in the spirit of compassion, appealing for his crucifiers as he uttered, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

As this brutal incident proceeded, one of the thieves also suffering crucifixion discerned something divine in the Savior's demeanor and said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Jesus responded with a promise only he could make: "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42–43).

Picture in your minds a weeping mother and a devoted disciple invited past the centurion to the foot of the cross. Jesus, in his agony, looked down

upon them and said to Mary, with an economy of words, "Woman, behold thy son!" and, looking steadily at John, said, "Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26-27).

Who can forget the pleading voice calling out at about the ninth hour through the oppressive darkness that gripped the land, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). The Father seemingly withdrew, allowing the Savior of mankind to complete his victory over death and sin.

I can imagine the bitter taste of the vinegar that was pressed to his lips when he said, "I thirst" (John 19:28), his one recorded response to physical suffering.

When the atoning sacrifice had been accepted, Jesus declared in a loud voice, "It is finished" (John 19:30). And then in final petition he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). His body sagged on the cross; Jesus gave up his life.

Jesus' victory over death

In the early morning darkness of the third day, Sunday, the first Easter, the earth began to quake. An angel rolled away the stone blocking the tomb and announced:

"Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

"He is not here: for he is risen, as he said" (Matthew 28:2, 5-6).

Later in the morning, the grieving Mary Magdalene returned to the cold, dreary, empty tomb. She heard a familiar voice call, "Mary." Turning, she saw the Lord and reached out to him. In a worshipful greeting she lovingly declared, "Rabboni." Jesus responded, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:16-17).

During the following forty days, the Savior frequently taught and ate with his Apostles. He concluded with the glo-

rious charge: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Jesus' courage to obey

Jesus Christ is *the* magnificent example of courage in hearkening to the will of the Father.

The wise Psalmist said, "Be of good *courage*, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord" (Psalm 31:24; italics added).

President Thomas S. Monson explained *courage* by saying, "Courage becomes a living and attractive virtue when it is regarded not as a willingness to die manfully, but the determination to live decently" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, p. 72; or *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 70).

In latter-day scriptures the Lord often uses action words in the first sentences of his revelations. Interestingly, *hearken* is used a number of times in this fashion. We are counseled by the Lord, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, to *behold*, to *hearken*, to *listen*, to *hear*, in over sixty revelations.

Jay's courage to hearken

May I tell you about a young man who had the *courage to hearken*. Elder Marion D. Hanks introduced us to Jay nearly twenty years ago at general conference. Elder Hanks described a twelve-year-old deacon whose body suffered from muscular atrophy. His loving father carried him as he passed the sacrament, gathered fast offerings, and went about his Scouting activities.

The remainder of Jay's story exemplifies inspiration and *courage*. His body continued to suffer the ravages of his disease while his mind continued to be inquisitive and very bright. Because of his disease, Jay was unable to attend

high school but rather had home study. He loved seminary and attended regularly. He was one of the speakers at his seminary graduation, addressing his classmates from his wheelchair. Jay's positive approach to life and his cheery, radiant disposition were uplifting. Jay loved to attend dances. He made his wheelchair dance. He enjoyed music and often sang the hymns of the Restoration in beautiful, clear, melodic tones.

More than anything, Jay loved the Lord. When he turned nineteen, he wanted to *hearken* to the prophet's request that every young man serve a mission. By this time, Jay spent much of his time on a soft mat on the living room floor of his home. Much of the muscle tissue of his body had wasted away. He desperately wanted to serve a mission. He found a way to serve in spite of his handicap. While lying on his back on the floor, he painstakingly prepared, with the help of some friends, over 150 copies of the Book of Mormon with his picture and testimony. They were sent to friends serving missions around the world for distribution. Jay received a letter from President Kimball expressing gratitude for his service and *courage* in *hearkening* to the call to missionary service.

Thanks to "angel" parents, Jay attended college. He was pushed by his dad from class to class. At times it was necessary for him to lie on a table at the rear of the classroom. He was an excellent student, receiving distinguished grades in difficult courses. Jay passed away three years ago, but his splendid example of one who *courageously hearkened* lives on.

Courage to avoid evil music and movies

Someone once said that the *courageous* man finds a way, and the ordinary man finds an excuse. Recently I learned of some *courageous* young people who *hearkened* to the counsel of their stake presidency.

In the Boise Idaho North Stake, a loving stake presidency helped their youth have a better understanding of the pitfalls of being continually bombarded by the degrading lyrics of many of today's popular songs and the indecent images portrayed in some movies and videos. They were taught that these mediums can produce much that is positive, inspiring, uplifting, and attractive; or they can also desensitize the mind and make what is wrong and evil look normal, exciting, and acceptable.

Many of the young people hearkened to their stake presidency and courageously destroyed their tapes, discs, and videos which were not "virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Young people, please don't listen to music that contains ideas that contradict principles of the gospel. "Don't listen to music that promotes Satanism or other evil practices, encourages immorality, uses foul and offensive language, or drives away the Spirit" (*For the Strength of Youth* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1990], p. 14).

The folly of underestimating Satan

Some may feel they are too intelligent or sophisticated to be influenced by the craftiness of Satan. What a tragic miscalculation. Nephi warned us of the perils of this misjudgment when he said:

"O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they *hearken* not unto the counsel of God. . .

"But to be learned is good if they *hearken* unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:28-29; italics added).

President Hinckley said: "One of the great tragedies we witness almost daily is the tragedy of men of high aim and low achievement. Their motives are noble. Their proclaimed ambition is praiseworthy. Their capacity is great. But their

discipline is weak. They succumb to indolence. Appetite robs them of will" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, p. 88; or *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 65).

Purge ourselves of pride

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to our ability to *hearken courageously* to the word of the Lord involves our egos, vain ambitions, and pride. It seems that the proud find it burdensome to hear and accept the instruction of God. We are told in Proverbs that "pride goeth before destruction" (Proverbs 16:18). The proud are more anxious about man's judgment than they are of God's judgment.

You may remember a story about a ship's captain who had a problem with his pride. One night at sea, this captain saw what looked like the light of another ship heading toward him. He had his signalman blink to the other ship: "Change your course 10 degrees south." The reply came back, "Change *your* course 10 degrees north." The ship's captain answered, "I am a *captain*. Change *your* course south." To which the reply came, "Well, I am a seaman first class. Change *your* course north." This so infuriated the captain, he signaled back, "I say change *your* course south. I am on a battleship!" To which the reply came back, "And I say change *your* course north. I am in a lighthouse" (adapted from *Hope Health Letter* [Kalamazoo, Mich.: Hope Health Institute], Oct. 1993, p. 1).

Like the captain, if we fail to modify our course and purge ourselves of pride, we may find ourselves shipwrecked upon the shoals of life, unable to *courageously hearken* to the beckonings of the Savior to "come unto me" (Matthew 11:28).

I can be courageous

I like what Edgar A. Guest said in a few lines of his poem entitled "Equipment":

Two arms, two hands, two legs, two eyes,
And a brain to use if you would be wise.

With this equipment they all began,
So start for the top and say, "I can." . . .

You are the handicap you must face,
You are the one who must choose your place,

You must say where you want to go,
How much you will study the truth to know.

God has equipped you for life, but He

Lets you decide what you want to be. . . .

Courage must come from the soul within,

The man must furnish the will to win.
So figure it out for yourself, my lad,
You were born with all that the great have had,

With your equipment they all began.
Get hold of yourself, and say: "I can."
[Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest
(Chicago: Reilly and Lee Co., 1934),
pp. 666-67; italics added]

May we all "get hold of [ourselves]," as Edgar Guest so beautifully suggests, and say, "I can be courageous in hearkening to the invitation of the Lord." "Live in such a way that people who know you but don't know Christ will want to know Christ because they know you" (author unknown). In the holy name of him for whose glorious resurrection and atoning sacrifice I express my deepest appreciation this Easter Sunday—even Jesus Christ—amen.

President Hinckley

Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, has spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Tolerance

Dear brothers and sisters, I join my brethren in extending Easter greetings to each of you, while expressing personal gratitude for the atonement of Jesus Christ, for His example, and for His teachings that have motivated my message today.

I have been impressed to speak on the subject of tolerance—a virtue much needed in our turbulent world. But in discussing this topic, we must recognize at the outset that there is a difference between *tolerance* and *tolerate*. Your gracious tolerance for an individual does not grant him or her license to do wrong, nor does your tolerance obligate you to tolerate his or her misdeed. That distinction is fundamental to an understanding of this vital virtue.

I attended a “laboratory of tolerance” some months ago when I had the privilege of participating in the Parliament of the World’s Religions. There I conversed with good men and women representing many religious groups. Again I sensed the advantages of ethnic and cultural diversity and reflected once more on the importance of religious freedom and tolerance.

I marvel at the inspiration of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he penned the eleventh article of faith: “We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”

That noble expression of religious tolerance is particularly poignant in light of the Prophet’s personal persecution. On one occasion he wrote, “I am at this time persecuted the worst of any man on the earth, as well as this people, . . . and all our sacred rights are trampled under the feet of the mob.”¹

Joseph Smith endured incessant persecution and finally heartless martyrdom—at the hands of the intolerant. His brutal fate stands as a stark reminder that we must never be guilty of *any* sin sown by the seed of intolerance.

Two great commandments to love

Revealed to that revered prophet was the fulness of the gospel. He was tutored by the resurrected Christ, whom Joseph adored. He taught doctrines declared by the Lord, including these He gave in response to the question of an exacting lawyer:

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”²

Hence, our highest priorities in life are to love God and to love our neighbors. That broadly includes neighbors in our own family, our community, our nation, and our world. Obedience to the second commandment facilitates obedience to the first commandment. “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”³

Parental love

That concept is easy for mothers and fathers to understand. Parental love includes gratitude for service extended to any of their children, especially in their time of need.

I was amused recently when one of our grown children confided that she

had always thought that she was her daddy's favorite daughter. She was surprised to discover later that each of her eight sisters harbored that same feeling. Only when they had become mothers themselves did they realize that parents hardly have favorites. (Incidentally, our only son never had to wonder who was our favorite son.)

Our Father in Heaven loves all of His children too. Peter taught that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."⁴

Yet His children can be so intolerant with one another. Neighboring factions, whether they be identified as groups or gangs, schools or states, counties or countries, often develop animosity. Such tendencies make me wonder: Cannot boundary lines exist without becoming battle lines? Could not people unite in waging war against the evils that beset mankind instead of waging war on each other? Sadly, answers to these questions are often no. Through the years, discrimination based on ethnic or religious identity has led to senseless slaughter, vicious pogroms, and countless acts of cruelty. The face of history is pocked by the ugly scars of intolerance.

How different our world would be if all parents would apply this inspired instruction from the Book of Mormon:

"Ye will not suffer your children . . . that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another. . . .

"But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another."⁵

If such training occurred, children and parents around this globe would join in singing, "Fill our hearts with sweet forgiving; Teach us tolerance and love."⁶ Men and women would respect their neighbors and the beliefs held sacred by them. No longer would ethnic jokes and cultural slurs be acceptable. The tongue of the tolerant speaks no guile.

Independence and cooperation

While we strive for the virtue of tolerance, other commendable qualities need not be lost. Tolerance does not require the surrender of noble purpose or of individual identity. The Lord gave instruction to leaders of His restored church to establish and maintain institutional integrity—"that the church may stand independent."⁷

Meanwhile, its members are encouraged to join with like-minded citizens in doing good.⁸ We are grateful for the many examples of heroic service rendered in times of earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, or other disasters. Such cooperative efforts to help neighbors in distress transcend any barriers posed by religion, race, or culture. Those good deeds are latter-day love in action!

Humanitarian relief rendered by members of this church is extensive, multinational, and generally unpublicized. Even so, there are doubtless many who wonder why we don't do more to assist the innumerable worthy causes to which our hearts respond.

Of course we are concerned with the need for ambulances in the valley below. But at the same time, we cannot ignore the greater need for protective guardrails on the cliffs above. Limited resources needed for the accomplishment of the higher work cannot be depleted in rescue efforts that provide only temporary relief.

The biblical prophet Nehemiah must have felt that same commitment to his important calling. When he was asked to divert attention away from his primary purpose, he replied, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?"⁹

Fortunately, we in the Church rarely have to make such a decision. We consider love of neighbor an integral part of our mission. And while we serve one another, we continue to build a spiritual

house of refuge on the cliffs above. Such a sanctuary becomes a blessing for all mankind. We are but the builders; the architect is almighty God.

Missionary responsibilities

Latter-day Saints throughout the world work side by side with others—regardless of race, color, or creed—hoping to be good examples worthy of emulation. The Savior said:

"I give unto you a commandment, that every man, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member, . . . prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded.

"And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness."¹⁰

This we are to do with tolerance. While in Moscow in June 1991, in that spirit of preparation and with sincere respect for leaders of other religious denominations, Elder Dallin H. Oaks and I had the privilege of meeting with the presiding official of the Russian Orthodox Church. We were accompanied by Elder Hans B. Ringger and the mission president, Gary L. Browning. Patriarch Aleksei was most gracious in sharing a memorable hour with us. We perceived the great difficulties endured for so many years by this kind man and his fellow believers. We thanked him for his perseverance and for his faith. Then we assured him of our good intentions and of the importance of the message that missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would be teaching among his countrymen. We affirmed that ours is a global church and that we honor and obey the laws of each land in which we labor.¹¹

To those with an interest in the fullness of the restored gospel—regardless of nationality or religious background—we say as did Elder Bruce R. McConkie: "Keep all the truth and all the good that you have. Do not abandon any sound or

proper principle. Do not forsake any standard of the past which is good, righteous, and true. Every truth found in every church in all the world we believe. But we also say this to all men—Come and take the added light and truth that God has restored in our day. The more truth we have, the greater is our joy here and now; the more truth we receive, the greater is our reward in eternity. This is our invitation to men [and women] of good will everywhere."¹²

Each of you with a testimony of the truth of the restored gospel has opportunity to share that precious gift. The Lord expects you to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness."¹³

Baptism transcends background

On every continent and across isles of the sea, the faithful are being gathered into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Differences in cultural background, language, gender, and facial features fade into insignificance as members lose themselves in service to their beloved Savior. Paul's declaration is being fulfilled:

"As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."¹⁴

Only the comprehension of the true Fatherhood of God can bring full appreciation of the true brotherhood of man. That understanding inspires desire to build bridges of cooperation instead of walls of segregation.

Our Creator decreed "that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another."¹⁵

Intolerance seeds contention; tolerance supersedes contention. Tolerance is the key that opens the door to mutual understanding and love.

Risks of boundless tolerance

Now may I offer an important note of caution. An erroneous assumption could be made that if a little of something is good, a lot must be better. Not so! Overdoses of needed medication can be toxic. Boundless mercy could oppose justice. So tolerance, without limit, could lead to spineless permissiveness.

The Lord drew boundary lines to define acceptable limits of tolerance. Danger rises when those divine limits are disobeyed. Just as parents teach little children not to run and play in the street, the Savior taught us that we need not tolerate evil. "Jesus went into the temple of God . . . and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers."¹⁶ Though He loved the sinner, the Lord said that He "cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance."¹⁷ His Apostle Paul specified some of those sins in a letter to the Galatians. The list included "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, . . . wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."¹⁸

To Paul's list I might add the regrettable attitudes of bigotry, hypocrisy, and prejudice. These were also decried in 1834 by early Church leaders who foresaw the eventual rise of this church "amid the frowns of bigots and the calumny of hypocrites."¹⁹ The Prophet Joseph Smith prayed that "prejudices may give way before the truth."²⁰ Hatred stirs up strife²¹ and digs beneath the dignity of mature men and women in our enlightened era.

Paul's list included "uncleanness." As members of the Church entrusted with its holy temples, we are commanded that "no unclean thing shall be permit-

ted to come into [His] house to pollute it."²²

That assignment requires great fortitude as well as love. In former days, disciples of the Lord "were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin."²³ In latter days, devoted disciples of the Lord are just as firm. Real love for the sinner may compel courageous confrontation—not acquiescence! Real love does not support self-destructive behavior.

Tolerance and mutual respect

Our commitment to the Savior causes us to scorn sin yet heed His commandment to love our neighbors. Together we live on this earth, which is to be tended, subdued, and shared with gratitude.²⁴ Each of us can help to make life in this world a more pleasant experience. Not long ago the First Presidency and the Twelve approved a public statement from which I quote:

"It is morally wrong for any person or group to deny anyone his or her inalienable dignity on the tragic and abhorrent theory of racial or cultural superiority.

"We call upon all people everywhere to recommit themselves to the time-honored ideals of tolerance and mutual respect. We sincerely believe that as we acknowledge one another with consideration and compassion we will discover that we can all peacefully coexist despite our deepest differences."²⁵

That pronouncement is a contemporary confirmation of the Prophet Joseph's earlier entreaty for tolerance. Unitedly we may respond. Together we may stand, intolerant of transgression but tolerant of neighbors with differences they hold sacred. Our beloved brothers and sisters throughout the world are *all* children of God. He is our Father. His Son, Jesus, is the Christ. His church has been restored to the earth in these latter days to bless all of God's children. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 5:157.
2. Matthew 22:36–40; see also John 13:34–35; 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11–12; 2 John 1:5.
3. Mosiah 2:17.
4. Acts 10:34–35; see also D&C 38:16, 24–26.
5. Mosiah 4:14–15; see also Romans 12:18.
6. “In Humility, Our Savior,” *Hymns*, no. 172.
7. D&C 78:14.
8. See Articles of Faith 1:13.
9. Nehemiah 6:3.
10. D&C 38:40–41; see also D&C 88:81.
11. See Articles of Faith 1:12.
12. In Conference Report, Tahiti Area Conference 1976, p. 31.
13. 1 Peter 3:15; see also D&C 60:2.
14. Galatians 3:27–28.
15. Mosiah 18:21; see also Mosiah 23:15; 4 Nephi 1:13.
16. Matthew 21:12; see also Mark 11:15.
17. D&C 1:31.
18. Galatians 5:19–21.
19. Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote.

20. D&C 109:56; see also v. 70.
21. See Proverbs 10:12.
22. D&C 109:20.
23. Alma 24:19.
24. See Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28; Abraham 4:28; D&C 59:15–21.
25. “Church Exhorts Ethnic, Religious Tolerance,” *Church News*, 24 Oct. 1992, p. 4.

The choir sang “Know This, That Ev’ry Soul Is Free.”

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung “Know This, That Ev’ry Soul Is Free.”

Following my remarks the choir will conclude by singing “The Lord Be with Us.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Augusto A. Lim of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley**The greatest miracle in human history**

My beloved brethren and sisters, I add my testimony to the testimony of my brethren this Easter morning. For all of Christendom, for all of mankind, today is observed as the anniversary of the greatest miracle in human history. It is the miracle that encompasses all who have lived upon the earth, all who now live upon the earth, and all who will yet live upon the earth. Nothing done before or since has so affected mankind as the atonement wrought by Jesus of Nazareth, who died on Calvary’s cross, was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and on the third day arose from the grave as the Living Son of the Living

God—the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

As mortals we all must die. Death is as much a part of eternal life as is birth. Looked at through mortal eyes, without comprehension of the eternal plan of God, death is a bleak, final, and unrelenting experience described by Shakespeare as “the undiscover’d country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns” (*Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1, lines 79–80).

But our Eternal Father, whose children we are, made possible a far better thing through the sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This had to be. Can anyone believe that the Great Creator would provide for life and growth and achievement only to snuff it

all into oblivion in the process of death? Reason says no. Justice demands a better answer. The God of heaven has given one. The Lord Jesus Christ provided it.

His was the ultimate sacrifice, His the sublime victory.

New Testament witnesses

Doubters there may be. But is there a more fully attested experience in the history of humankind than the resurrection of Jesus that first Easter morn? He spoke with Mary, who was first at the tomb. He spoke with the other women who ran to tell their brethren, two of whom came running. He appeared unto ten of His Apostles, Thomas being absent. And then He came again when Thomas was present. The doubter, upon seeing Him, declared, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). He talked with the two brethren on the way to Emmaus, and they said, "Did not our heart burn within us?" (Luke 24:32). And Paul declared that "after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:6). Then Paul adds that "last of all he was seen of me" (v. 8).

All of this and more is found in the New Testament. It has served as the foundation of the faith of uncounted millions across the world into whose hearts there has come the witness of the Holy Spirit that it is true. They have lived by this testimony, and they have died by it. When the dark shadow of death has crossed their paths, when hope normally would have fled, there has come the reassurance that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). In such hours of darkness there has shown forth a light, steady and certain, to sustain and comfort and bless.

Book of Mormon witnesses

But if that is not enough, there is another testament. This so-called Book

of Mormon, this scripture of the New World, is before us as an added witness of the divinity and reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the encompassing beneficence of His atonement, and of His coming forth from the darkness of the grave. Within these covers is found much of the sure word of prophecy concerning Him who should be born of a virgin, the Son of the Almighty God. There is a foretelling of His work among men as a living mortal. There is a declaration of His death, of the lamb without blemish who was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. And there is an account that is moving and inspiring and true of the visit of the resurrected Christ among living men and women in the western continent. The testimony is here to handle; it is here to be read; it is here to be pondered; it is here to be prayed over with a promise that he who prays shall know by the power of the Holy Ghost of its truth and validity (see Moroni 10:3-5).

Joseph Smith's witness

And again, if this is not enough, there is the testimony of a prophet, whose name was Joseph, who sealed with his blood the testimony of his Lord. Today we celebrate the anniversary of Easter. This year we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith. On the sultry afternoon of 27 June 1844, he and his brother Hyrum were killed by an armed mob, the members of which had painted their faces black to hide their identity. John Taylor, who was with them on that occasion and who was wounded, later wrote this appraisal:

"Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. . . . He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission

and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. . . . Their innocent blood . . . is a witness to the truth of the everlasting gospel that all the world cannot impeach" (D&C 135:3, 7).

Joseph Smith and Governor Ford

Because this is the sesquicentennial year of that tragic event, I wish to say a few words about the leading character on each side of that equation at Carthage. On the one side was Joseph the prophet-martyr; on the other, Thomas Ford, governor of Illinois, whose broken pledge culminated in the tragedies of that day.

Joseph Smith and Thomas Ford were contemporaries. Governor Ford was born in Pennsylvania in 1800. Joseph Smith was born in Vermont in 1805. The governor was five years the Prophet's senior. My information concerning the Prophet comes from sources with which all of you are familiar. That which I have concerning the governor comes from his own writings and for the most part from a historical introduction to those writings written by M. M. Quaife, as well as an introduction by General James Shields to the first edition of Ford's *History of Illinois*. I am indebted to Mrs. Doris M. Davis of Peoria for research help. I give these details so that you may know that what I say comes from sources that may be regarded as reliable.

Joseph Smith died at the age of thirty-eight in 1844. He would have been thirty-nine the following December.

Governor Ford died in 1850, a month prior to his fiftieth birthday. He completed his term as governor in 1846, and moved to the farm of his wife's parents, where he wrote his *History of Illinois*.

In this history, he gives a rather detailed account of the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. He concludes with this summary statement:

"Thus fell Joe Smith, the most successful impostor in modern times; a man who, though ignorant and coarse, had

some great natural parts which fitted him for temporary success, but which were so obscured and counteracted by the inherent corruption and vices of his nature that he never could succeed in establishing a system of policy which looked to permanent success in the future" (*A History of Illinois*, ed. Milo Milton Quaife, 2 vols. [Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1945-46], 2:213).

Such the appraisal of Joseph Smith by Thomas Ford.

Demise of Governor Ford and family

I wish not to be critical of Governor Ford. I feel sorry for him. I regard him as one who sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

In April of 1847, when our people began the long westward march from Winter Quarters on the Missouri to the valley of the Great Salt Lake, Governor Ford and his family moved to Peoria with the intent that he would there practice law. I now quote from Mr. Quaife:

"The story of his three-years' sojourn there is one of unrelieved poverty and defeat. Mrs. Ford, afflicted with cancer, died October 12, 1850 at the early age of thirty-eight. Three weeks later, on November 3, he followed her to the grave. Left behind were five orphaned children, penniless and of tender years, to face the world as best they might. To the credit of common humanity, all were taken in charge by considerate townsmen and reared in homes which were better than their own father could provide. In his closing weeks he had been an object of charity, and his funeral expenses were met by the gifts of a group of citizens" (*A History of Illinois*, 1:xxvi-xxvii).

Both he and his wife were buried in the Peoria City Cemetery. Their remains were later moved to the Springdale Cemetery, where the grave remained unmarked until 1896, when the legislature provided an appropriation of \$1,200 for

the monument that now marks the site of his burial.

I have stood before that monument and pondered the events and circumstances of which I speak.

After the governor's death and after his debts were paid, there remained the sum of \$148.06 for distribution among his five children as their inheritance.

In his introduction to Ford's *History*, General James Shields relates: "In 1850 while the author of this work was on his death-bed, he placed in my hands a manuscript, with the contents of which I was then wholly unacquainted, with the injunction that after his decease I should have it published for the benefit of his family. He soon after departed this life, leaving his orphan children in a destitute condition" (p. xlvii). The royalties from the sale of the book yielded \$750, making it possible for each of his five children to receive \$150 as their meager financial inheritance beyond the \$29.61 left each by their father.

The eldest daughter married; her husband died in 1878; she lived until 1910, the last few years cared for by others. The second daughter married, reared a family, and died in St. Louis. The younger daughter, born in 1841, died at the age of 21 of "consumption," and was buried with her parents. Concerning the two sons, I quote again from Mr. Quaife:

"In the autumn of 1872 Thomas [the youngest son] was hung as a horse thief near Caldwell, Kansas, by a lynching party. Two years later, in 1874, Seuel [his brother] and two other outlaws were hung from the same branch of a tree near Wellington, Kansas, by another lynching party" (*A History of Illinois*, 1:xxxii). They were buried in unmarked graves on the Kansas prairie.

I mention these things to say that there was tragedy on both sides of the Carthage problem. Joseph and Hyrum were murdered. Governor Thomas Ford, who had pledged the protection of the

state of Illinois, and failed to provide it, fell upon tragic and sorrowful circumstances, dying in abject poverty and leaving a destitute family who for the most part also lived with disappointment and died with much of misery.

Joseph's work lives on

While Governor Ford wrote his dismal appraisal of Joseph Smith, another contemporary, Parley P. Pratt, wrote one of his own. Speaking of Joseph Smith at that time, he said:

"His works will live to endless ages, and unnumbered millions yet unborn will mention his name with honor, as a noble instrument in the hands of God, who, during his short and youthful career, laid the foundation of that kingdom spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, which should break in pieces all other kingdoms and stand forever" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], p. 46).

Parley Pratt wrote with a surer sense of prophecy than did Tom Ford. He wrote out of a spirit of love, yes, but also with something of a vision of this great millennial movement.

The shadow of the events of June 1844 has now lengthened over a century and a half. That shadow has reached across a substantial part of the world. The history is clear, and it is wonderful to survey. It is a poignant and tremendous story, an epic without parallel. Two years after the martyrdom, while the governor was writing his history, most of our people left Nauvoo, their beloved city on the Mississippi. They left behind their beautiful and comfortable homes. They left their magnificent temple. Their exodus began in February of 1846 in the cold of winter, so cold that the Mississippi froze and some were able to cross on the ice. They did not leave out of a desire to go. They had to leave, driven by the bitter and unrelenting hatred of vicious mobs.

They threaded their way across the Iowa prairie to the Missouri River at Council Bluffs, then named Kaneshville. On the west side of the river they established their Winter Quarters. The next spring they moved up the Elkhorn River and along the Platte, across what is now Nebraska and Wyoming, and on to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Death marched beside them. Some six thousand were buried along that trail before completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. Here in the valleys of the mountains they grubbed sagebrush, they fought crickets, they brought water from the canyon streams to make the desert blossom.

Praise to the man

From that time until this, the work has spread over the earth until today congregations in more than 165 different tongues and more than 140 nations sing of Joseph Smith the tribute given by W. W. Phelps:

Praise to the man who communed
with Jehovah!

Jesus anointed that Prophet and
Seer.

Blessed to open the last dispensa-
tion,

Kings shall extol him, and nations
revere.

[“Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27]

[The following text includes a segment prepared for delivery but deleted due to time constraints.]

Growth and reconciliation

Church membership is now approaching nine million. Last year alone, more than 4.5 million copies of the Book of Mormon were printed and distributed as “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” Thousands of meetinghouses, with more than 21,000 congregations, and scores of beautiful temples carry

the name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Governor Ford could not see the virtues of this man whose blood stained the floor of the little jail in Carthage. But an angel from heaven years earlier had spoken the destiny of the boy Joseph. Said Moroni: “Your name shall be known among the nations, for the work which the Lord will perform by your hands shall cause the righteous to rejoice and the wicked to rage: with the one it shall be had in honor, and with the other in reproach; yet, with these it shall be a terror because of the great and marvelous work which shall follow the coming forth of this fulness of my gospel” (in Oliver Cowdery, “Rise of the Church,” *Times and Seasons*, 1 May 1841, pp. 394–95).

One hundred and fifty years have now passed. We are grateful for the reconciliation which has come. We thank God our Eternal Father for a more tolerant day and greater understanding. Gone are the days of burnings and forced marches. The sunshine of goodwill is upon our people. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now owns the scene of the martyrdom, the Carthage Jail with the block on which it stands. It has been made beautiful and attractive for the tens of thousands who visit from many nations. Nauvoo is a place of goodwill, a remnant of a remarkable history. The site of the once-beautiful temple has become a scene of reverent curiosity. Today there is a stake of Zion which carries the name Nauvoo. And north of Chicago is a magnificently beautiful temple in which are administered ordinances of salvation to benefit the sons and daughters of God of all generations, a work which has come through the priesthood revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, a work which extends to the generations of the past the wondrous opportunities afforded by the atonement of the Savior of mankind.

The ends of the earth shall inquire

On another occasion Joseph had been incarcerated in another jail, that in Liberty, Missouri. In the misery of that foul place he cried out, "O God, where art thou?" (D&C 121:1).

In answer to that prayer came this remarkable promise:

"The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

"While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.

"And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors" (D&C 122:1-3).

You and I are witnesses to the fulfillment of these remarkable and prophetic words. As I speak today I am heard in thousands of halls across this and other nations. This is but a small token of the fulfillment of that promise. And what we see today, I am certain, is but a foreshadowing of what the future holds.

Joseph Smith's testimony of the Savior

Joseph Smith lived as an instrument in the hands of the Lord for the establishment of His restored work in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. He died in testimony of the Savior of mankind. The Church which was established through him carries the name of the Redeemer of the world. Out of a vision wondrous and beautiful, experienced in the prime and vigor of his life, the Prophet Joseph wrote these words, which confirm the truth of that first Easter morning and the glory of Him from whom he drew all of his inspiration

as the Prophet of this great latter-day dispensation. Said he:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:22-24).

Our personal testimony

And so, on this Easter Sabbath, we bear testimony of the Redeemer of the world, He who was born the Only Begotten of the Father, He who went about doing good in the exercise of His divine power, He who died on Calvary's hill, and He who rose to become the first-fruits of the Resurrection. We testify to the truth of the words of the Apostles and other witnesses of old. We further confirm the truth of the testimony of the great seer and revelator of this dispensation, the Prophet Joseph Smith, who 150 years ago gave his life as a witness of the Risen Redeemer. And by the power of the Holy Ghost, we give our personal testimony that He who was slain on Calvary's hill rose from the dead, our Savior, whose sacrifice made possible the gift of eternal life to all who will keep His commandments. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, amen.

The choir sang "The Lord Be with Us."

Elder Augusto A. Lim offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 164th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 3, 1994. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 164th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson is watching this session in his apartment, and Clinton Cutler is excused, being ill.

We note that Elders M. Russell Ballard, Ted E. Brewerton, and David E. Sorensen are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; and Elders J. Richard Clarke and Dennis B. Neuenschwander are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere, who are par-

ticipating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, accompanied by John Longhurst, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service by singing "Come, All Whose Souls Are Lighted." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Monte J. Brough, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Come, All Whose Souls Are Lighted."

Elder Monte J. Brough offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Brough.

The choir will now sing "With All the Power of Heart and Tongue." Elder David B. Haight of the Council of Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "With All the Power of Heart and Tongue."

Elder David B. Haight

Longings that lead us to Jesus

I pray for a portion of your faith and prayers as I bear witness of Christ. In the hearts of all mankind, of whatever race or station in life, there are inexpressible longings for something they do not now possess. This longing is implanted by a concerned Creator.

A loving Heavenly Father's design is that this longing of the human heart should lead to the One who alone can

satisfy it—even Jesus of Nazareth, who was foreordained in the Grand Council before the earth was created.

To the brother of Jared, the premortal Jesus said:

"Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name" (Ether 3:14).

Expand our understanding of Christ

Today is Easter—a day designated to solemnize the bodily resurrection of the Savior of the world. As members of His restored church, it is imperative that we do our utmost to expand our understanding of His premortal commission, His earthly ministry, His unjust crucifixion, the agony of His suffering, His final sacrifice, and His resurrection. Each of us is profoundly indebted to Him, for we were purchased by the shedding of His own precious blood. We are surely obligated to follow His admonition, to believe on His name, and to testify of Him and His word.

I am indebted for some of my remarks to eyewitness accounts of Christ's life as recorded in the New Testament; to prophets—ancient and modern—especially to the Prophet Joseph Smith for his personal witness that God the Father and His Son live and for his faithfully following divine instructions in bringing forth the fulness of the everlasting gospel as contained in the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scriptures; also to the apostolic writings of Elders James E. Talmage and Bruce R. McConkie; and to others, including theologian and believer Frederic Farrar. Our scriptures teach us gospel truths, and inspired writers add to our understanding.

Washing the disciples' feet

We have learned that during the last days of His mortal life, Jesus had withdrawn from all public teaching and had spent the Wednesday before Passover in Bethany in seclusion. The next day, Thursday, Jesus instructed Peter and John to go to Jerusalem, where they would find a room prepared so they could meet together. In that room Jesus met with the Twelve, and they sat down to eat.

It was custom that as a person entered a room, he laid aside his sandals at the door and his feet were washed to

remove the dust from his travels. A servant usually performed this lowly task, but on this sacred night, "Jesus Himself, in His eternal humility and self-denial, rose from His place at the meal to do [this] menial service" (Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* [Portland, Oreg.: Fountain Publications, 1964], p. 557).

Jesus said to them:

"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:13–14).

"He their Lord and Master had washed their feet. It was a kind and gracious task, and such ought to be the nature of all their dealings with each other. He had done it to teach them humility, . . . self-denial, [and] love" (*Life of Christ*, p. 559).

During the course of the meal, He revealed the terrible news that one among them would betray Him, and a deep sadness fell over all of them.

Jesus spoke to Judas, "That [which] thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27). And Judas left the room to do his awful deed.

Teaching the chosen eleven

Conscious of the impending events, Jesus opened His heart to His chosen eleven, saying:

"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. . . .

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: [but] whither I go, ye cannot come. . . .

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:31, 33–35).

While in that upper room, Jesus—initiating the sacrament—took bread, brake it, prayed over it, and passed it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body

which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

And then, passing the cup, He said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (v. 20).

The Savior prayed to the Father for the Apostles and all believers, saying:

"Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:1-3).

The time which remained for Him to be with them was short. He told them of the Holy Ghost, whom He would send to comfort and guide them in truth. He taught them many things that night in the upper room as He tried to prepare them for that which He knew was coming.

Anguish in Gethsemane

They rose from the table, united their voices in a hymn, and left the room together to walk to the Garden of Gethsemane and all that awaited them there.

"The awful hour of His deepest [suffering] had arrived. . . . Nothing remained . . . but the torture of physical pain and . . . mental anguish. . . . He . . . calm[ed] His spirit by prayer and solitude to meet that hour in which all that is evil in the Power of [Satan] should wreak its worst upon the Innocent and Holy [One]. And He must face that hour alone" (*Life of Christ*, p. 575).

"My soul," He said, "'is full of anguish, even unto death'" (*Life of Christ*, p. 576). It was not the anguish and fear of pain and death but "the burden . . . of the world's sin which lay heavy on His heart" (p. 579).

"He withdrew to find His only consolation in communing with [His Fa-

ther]. And there He found all that He needed. Before that hour was over He was prepared for the worst that Satan or man could do" (p. 580).

"From the terrible conflict in Gethsemane, Christ emerged a victor. Though in the dark tribulation of that . . . hour He had pleaded that the bitter cup be removed from His lips, . . . the Father's will was never lost sight of" (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916], p. 614).

Betrayal, trials, and scourging

And then came Judas with his betraying kiss; Christ's surrender to His enemies; the arrest of the Son of God and three sham trials before the priests in the Sanhedrin; the insults and the derision of the multitudes; Christ's appearance before Pontius Pilate, then Herod, then again before Pilate. Then came the final pronouncement of Pilate. After three appeals to the multitude of Jews to spare one of their own fell upon deaf ears, he delivered Jesus to be scourged.

"Scourging was the ordinary preliminary to crucifixion. . . . The . . . sufferer was publicly stripped, . . . tied . . . to a pillar, and then . . . blows were inflicted with leathern thongs, weighted with jagged . . . bone [or rock]. The victim generally fainted, [or] often died" (*Life of Christ*, p. 624).

The Crucifixion

When the cross had been prepared, they placed it upon His shoulders and led Him to Golgotha. "But Jesus was enfeebled . . . by [hours] of violent . . . agitation, . . . by an evening of deep . . . emotion, . . . by the mental [anguish] of the garden, [and] by [the] three trials and three sentences of death before the Jews. . . . All [of] these, [added] to the [wounds] of the scourging [and loss of blood], had utterly broken . . . His physi-

cal strength" (*Life of Christ*, pp. 634–35). So a bystander was enlisted to carry the heavy cross.

At Calvary, Christ was laid down upon the cross. "His arms were stretched along the cross-beams; and at the centre of the open palms, the point of a huge iron nail was placed [and driven through the quivering flesh] into the wood" (*Life of Christ*, p. 639). His feet were also nailed to the cross, which was slowly raised and fixed firmly in the ground. "All the voices about Him rang with blasphemy and spite, and in that long slow agony His dying ear caught no [words] of gratitude, of pity, or of love" (p. 644). Every movement would be agony to the fresh wounds in the hands and the feet. "Dizziness, . . . thirst, . . . sleeplessness, . . . fever, . . . long [hours] of torment. . . . Such was the death to which Christ was doomed" (p. 641).

Jesus was nailed to the cross on that fateful Friday morning, probably between nine and ten o'clock. "At noontide the light of the sun was obscured, and black darkness spread over the whole land. The terrifying gloom continued for a period of three hours. . . . It was a fitting sign of the earth's deep mourning over the impending death of her Creator" (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 660).

At the ninth hour Christ uttered that anguished cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). "In that bitterest hour the dying Christ was alone. [So] that the supreme sacrifice of the Son might be consummated in all its fulness, the Father seems to have withdrawn . . . His immediate Presence, leaving to the Savior of men the glory of complete victory over the forces of sin and death" (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 661).

"It is finished"

Later, "realizing that He was no longer forsaken, but that His atoning sacrifice had been accepted by the Father, and that His mission in the flesh had

been carried to glorious consummation, He exclaimed in a loud voice of holy triumph: 'It is finished.' In reverence, resignation, and relief, He addressed the Father saying: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' He bowed His head, and voluntarily gave up His life" (*Jesus the Christ*, pp. 661–62).

"At that moment the vail of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. An earthquake shook the earth. . . . The multitude, [now] utterly sobered . . . , returned to Jerusalem" (*Life of Christ*, pp. 651–52).

Christ's body was lovingly taken from the cross, placed on fine linen purchased by Joseph of Arimathea, covered with rich spices, and carried to a nearby garden where a new tomb belonging to Joseph was located.

It was now late in the afternoon, and "the preparations had to be hurried, because when the sun had set the Sabbath would have begun. All that they could do, therefore, was to wash [and lay the precious body] amid the spices, to wrap the head in a white napkin, to roll the fine linen round . . . the wounded limbs, and to lay the body reverently in the rocky niche" (*Life of Christ*, p. 659). Then a great stone was rolled across the opening of the tomb.

The empty tomb

On the dawn of that first-ever Easter morn, the two Marys, along with other women, carried their precious spices and ointments to the tomb to finish preparing the body. They wondered who would help them remove the stone from the opening of the sepulchre. To their amazement, they found the heavy stone already rolled away, the body of Jesus gone, and two angels in white bearing witness that Christ had risen from the dead. The two women hurried to the disciples with their news. John and Peter rushed to the tomb to find that it was so. The grave was empty.

Mary of Magdala returned once more to the tomb and there uttered the words, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (John 20:13). And then Jesus Himself stood before her and said to her, "Mary" (v. 16). Now that she recognized Him, He gently instructed her, "Touch me not; for I [have] not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (v. 17). And she hastened to obey.

After rising from the tomb on the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus appeared not only to Mary but to the other women also. A third appearance of Jesus was to Peter. On the same day, two of the disciples were on their way to the village named Emmaus when Christ joined with them. Once more, for the fifth time on that memorable Easter day, Jesus manifested Himself to His disciples. Ten of them were gathered together seeking solace when Christ appeared before them.

"Peace be unto you," He said.

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:36, 39).

"Feed my sheep"

Later on, at the seashore at Galilee, while the Savior and the disciples were eating fish together, Jesus asked Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

"Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

"Feed my lambs."

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" He asked again.

"Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

"Feed my sheep."

A third time: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

In anguish, Peter said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

And the Savior replied yet again, "Feed my sheep" (see John 21:15-17).

As the place of His ascension, Jesus chose the Mount of Olives. Here on the Mount the Savior instructed the Apostles and those whom He had commissioned:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

This is our mandate. This is why we go to all nations of the earth proclaiming His gospel.

How great the wisdom and the love

Eliza R. Snow, who loved this work—as do I—wrote these precious lines:

How great the wisdom and the love
That filled the courts on high
And sent the Savior from above
To suffer, bleed, and die!

His precious blood he freely spilt;
His life he freely gave,
A sinless sacrifice for guilt,
A dying world to save. . . .

How great, how glorious, how complete,
Redemption's grand design,
Where justice, love, and mercy meet
In harmony divine!
["How Great the Wisdom and the Love," *Hymns*, no. 195]

The prophet Alma taught that the plan of mercy required an atonement to be made by God himself "to appease the demands of justice," that God might be a perfect, just, and merciful God (Alma 42:15). I bear witness that He lives, that He is our Savior. His is the pathway to

true happiness, I declare in His holy name, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Haight, for that touching account of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Robert D. Hales, who was sustained yesterday as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Gerald E. Melchin of the Seventy, who is currently presiding over the Toronto Ontario Temple.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Shaking of the oak tree

It is time for my response. Nineteen years ago, after I was set apart by the Quorum of the Twelve in the temple as an assistant to the Twelve Apostles, Elder LeGrand Richards gave me two pieces of wisdom that have come to me over and over in the past fifty-some-odd hours that I have known of this call. First was, "Oh, to be a boy and have your whole life ahead of you." I was forty-two years of age. I am now sixty-one and am once again a boy. There are men sitting on this stand who have been Apostles and in the First Presidency for half my age.

The second gem of wisdom that Elder LeGrand Richards gave me was that each time a new assignment in the Church came to him, it was like the shaking of an oak tree: when the tree shook, an acorn would fall and be planted, allowing him a new beginning in that assignment. "You know, my life has been like a great oak tree. From a tiny acorn I would grow a great oak tree." Then he said, "I did it in business, and the oak tree shook. An acorn came down, and they sent me out as a mission president. Then I grew another oak tree; they sent me out a second time as a mission president, and then a third." Then he talked of being a Presiding Bishop. And each time the oak tree would shake, an acorn would be planted.

At this time, I understand the oak tree has shaken. An acorn has been planted; it is a new beginning.

Expressions of gratitude

I express gratitude, my brothers and sisters, for the strength which comes through your faith and prayers. I am in need of your prayers at this time of my calling. To be an Apostle of the Lord, I am finding, is a process—a process of repentance and humility, to look inward as we've been instructed and ask for forgiveness and strength to be what I should be. Unfortunately, I am not a perfect man, and infallibility does not come with the call. Therefore, I must ask for forgiveness from Heavenly Father for those things which I have done which are less than perfect and ask forgiveness of anyone I might have offended knowingly or unknowingly because of my personality or style.

The strength which will come through your prayers will be invaluable to what I need to do to forge the spiritual strength required to have my voice and my testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ penetrate the hearts of those who will hear.

I express my appreciation to my parents, my dear brother who has passed away, and my sister for their loving example. I am grateful for the many teachers, and the priesthood leaders who work week after week, teaching us as youth to love the Lord. I wish, also, to express appreciation and my deep love for my wife, children, and grandchildren. I have been privileged to work among the finest Brethren that this earth can have in the Quorum of the Seventy—working

together and forging our testimonies to further the Lord's work.

Service as Presiding Bishop

In the closing of this chapter of my stewardship as the Presiding Bishop, I wish to welcome and sustain Bishop Bateman as the new Presiding Bishop of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and let him know of the marvelous experiences that he will have in his calling.

I love the four Counselors who have served with me—Elder Eyring, Elder Pace, Bishop Burton, and Bishop Edgley. They are deeply spiritual and truly devoted men whose love for the Lord has been an example to me. I would also like to express thanks and appreciation to the loyal staff in the Presiding Bishopric's office, both at Church headquarters and around the world. My expression of appreciation would not be complete without communicating my thanks for the faithful talents and labors of the Saints around the world.

We have such faithful members of the Church. I have known of the tithes and offerings and the freewill offerings that have led to welfare and humanitarian efforts. This is a marvelous work and a marvelous Church with magnificent members. All, in their own individual callings, live the gospel and are an example to those of us who travel the world and meet them.

My testimony grew as I grew—nourished and taught by countless others who helped me by their example of living the gospel. I shall be eternally grateful for the many good people who, in serving the Lord, have blessed my life.

I bear witness to what President Hinckley taught last night in priesthood meeting about Church government. Over the past nine years, on a daily basis, I have seen the wisdom of the Lord's plan as it functions under today's circumstances.

Special witness of Jesus Christ

But that closes the chapter. The oak tree is shaken. The acorn is planted, and this is Easter—commemoration of the Savior coming forth after three days as the resurrected, risen Lord. For the rest of my sojourn here in mortality, I will have the opportunity to bear testimony as a special witness of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is a God; he is Jehovah of the Old Testament (see Abraham 2:7–8); he is the Savior of the New Testament.

Jesus' premortal work

Jesus Christ dwelt in the heavens with his Father (see John 1:1–5), and we dwelt with them as spirit children of God the Father.

Jesus Christ presented his Father's eternal plan, that plan of which we are all part. We come to this earth to undergo testing for a probationary period and to have opposition in all things. Through the eternal principle of agency, we are free to choose liberty and eternal life and return with honor to God's presence if we live righteous lives; or to choose captivity and spiritual death (see Moses 4:1–4).

Jesus Christ is the creator of all things on earth, under the direction of his Father (see Moses 1:33; Ephesians 3:9).

Jesus' mortal ministry

"The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). Jesus Christ came to this earth, born of Mary, a mortal mother. His Father was Almighty God (see Luke 1:26–35).

Jesus Christ was baptized by immersion by John the Baptist, and the Holy Ghost was manifest in the "Spirit like a dove descending upon him" (Mark 1:10). And his Father spoke, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

Jesus Christ organized his church and selected twelve Apostles, and also prophets, sevens, and evangelists (see Ephesians 4:11; Luke 6:13; 10:1).

Jesus Christ's message is unique. He stands between us and his Father; he is the Mediator (see D&C 76:41–43; John 3:17). Through him shall all mankind be saved and by him shall all mankind be saved.

Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, our Savior; only he with a mortal mother and an immortal Father could fulfill the Atonement and die to save all mankind. He did so of his own free will and choice (see Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:34–36; Luke 22:41–42).

Jesus' resurrection and postmortal work

Jesus Christ was resurrected and appeared to many after his resurrection (see John 20:11–30; Luke 24:13–44). He taught us the physical characteristics of a resurrected being and told us that we could follow his example and that we would be able to progress and be like him.

Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven before the eyes of his disciples was accompanied by the promise that in like manner he would come again (see Acts 1:9–11; Mark 16:19–20; Luke 24:51–53). The second coming of Jesus Christ is nigh at hand, as the signs of the Second Coming are being fulfilled this very day.

Jesus Christ appeared with his Father and restored the same organization

he established during his ministry through Joseph Smith the Prophet in these latter days. In addition to the Bible, the Book of Mormon was revealed to the world as another witness to testify of his divine calling and ministry.

Jesus Christ leads and guides his church today through revelation to a prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, and his Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles—the same organization he established when he was here on earth (see D&C 102:9, 23; Articles of Faith 1:6).

Follow thou me

Jesus Christ's admonition to "come . . . follow me" and "follow thou me" is the challenge that he gave to each of us (see Matthew 19:21; John 21:22). He lived in the preexistence in the spirit world; he dwelt and we dwelt with God the Father. He is the Son, Jesus Christ.

We took a mortal body upon us. We will have opposition; we will taste death and be resurrected because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

May I close my testimony in the same words as the prophet Mormon did shortly after recounting the birth of the Savior:

"Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Gerald E. Melchin

Decisions

I'm grateful to be here with you in general conference today, and I'd like to add my appreciation and support to these Brethren who have just been called, to Bishop Hales and the others.

The past few months have been a spiritual highlight for Sister Melchin and me while serving in the Toronto temple. We've been blessed with two great counselors, along with their companions, and dedicated ordinance workers, some serving as full-time missionaries. The area is

multicultural, and members from many nations and tongues share with us their inner feelings as they receive their endowments.

I often think about the circumstances and the many decisions that have brought us together in this holy house. I have never counted the number of decisions that I make each day, but I am aware that they are one continual process. The dictionary says that a decision is arriving "at a solution that ends uncertainty" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed.). It is the uncertainty that makes decisions so difficult. When decisions are made in haste or without contemplating the end result, we may find ourselves wishing we could turn the clock back.

Freedom to act for ourselves

Some time ago I was watching the opera called *The Sorcerer*. The story tells of a prince and princess who were concerned at the number not married in their kingdom. (Sounds familiar.) They asked a sorcerer to prepare a potion that would put people to sleep, and upon awakening they would fall in love with the first person they saw. All who were single were invited to a banquet where the potion was served. The potion worked, but needless to say there were some pretty unequal partnerships formed. The prince and princess were alarmed at the results and realized that this was not the answer. Father Lehi gave the solution when he said: "Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other" (2 Nephi 2:16). And this is the freedom the Lord wanted preserved for us.

Joseph Smith's decision

One of the most important decisions made in this dispensation was that of the

boy Joseph Smith. A nephew of mine painted a picture and later reproduced it as a mural in the Logan, Utah, institute building. He gave it the title "The Grove Awaits." It pictures a young boy approaching the Sacred Grove. I wonder what Joseph thought awaited him that beautiful spring morning. His decision to come to the grove was based on his desire to know the truth, on his faith and obedience to the counsel of the Lord. Joseph's experience in the grove was of greater import than he could have imagined and one that has affected the lives of all of us. The principles he followed in going to the grove should be the basis for all the decisions we all face.

Christ's decision

There is Another who approached a grove some hundreds of years prior to the days of Joseph. Though He had spoken beforehand of the offering He was to make, He may not have fully comprehended the severity of the experience that awaited Him. He made His way, knowing He had power over life and death and could command angels to come to His assistance. He speaks of being "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38), and described the experience as causing Him "to tremble because of pain, . . . to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18). It was His love and obedience to the Father that made it possible for Him to finally say to Peter, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26:54). He completed the mission for which He was foreordained and opened the door of salvation and eternal life to all.

Our decisions

We approached a grove of uncertainty as we awaited our call to this earth. It must have been an anxious and

rather frightening experience as we left our loved ones to part the veil. When Spartacus was asked by one of his followers if he was afraid to die, he said, "No more than I was to be born." That our premortal existence was also a testing period where we were free to choose is confirmed by our prophets. Alma suggests that it was our exceeding faith and good works that earned us the right of priesthood (see Alma 13:3).

There is a grove that awaits all of us. It's referred to as death. Though it is not optional and must be accepted, our decisions here lay the foundation for what awaits us there. Like the Savior, we realize that this experience must come but do not fully understand what lies ahead. One would naturally think that everyone would seek as much information as possible to prepare for the inevitable. However, some are lulled into a sense of security, not giving heed to the Lord's warning that "without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh" (D&C 84:21). There is a change that must come upon us through sanctification that only obedience to the laws and compliance to the ordinances can bring.

Purposes of temple work

The reason the Lord commanded Moses to construct a "tabernacle . . . in the wilderness" and a "house in the land of promise" was to reveal ordinances "which had been hid from before the world was" (D&C 124:38). Joseph was told to build a house to His name so that ordinances that were lost or taken away could be restored. If we will reason upon the many scriptures we have at our disposal, we must come to the conclusion that the full blessings of the Lord are found within the walls of the temple. It is there that we prepare to enter the most important of all groves, wherein the promise of eternal companionship

and families forever is finally realized, where "all that my Father hath shall be given . . . him" (D&C 84:38). Though we cannot comprehend the significance of those blessings, the decisions must be made today.

The doors of the temple open to us many experiences. Increasing numbers of family files that our computers help us to compile will soon become a large portion of the work taking place in our temples. They will lead us into involvement in other ordinances where we will have unexpected experiences. If we include our family, friends, or ward members and come as a group to do the work for our ancestry, we will be able to share together a very spiritual and precious few moments. I have seen the impact on converts who come for the first time with friends, bringing a family group sheet and completing the work in the sealing room.

We can also be called as ordinance workers for ward and stake excursions, providing involvement that adds greater appreciation of the temple. From Doctrine and Covenants section 109 we read, "And . . . all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord's house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness" (v. 13).

The Lord will help us make decisions

The Lord's willingness to assist in our decisions will be based on the same principles that led the Prophet to the grove and the Savior to the garden. There are times when we wish that life could be a guided tour where we have no responsibility for details or for our safe arrival. I recently saw a gadget in a store called "an executive decision maker." You pressed a button, and a flashing light pointed to the answer, such as "Definitely," "Never," or "Why Not?" Can we afford to leave our future to chance when

the Lord encourages us to ask, seek, and knock? (see Matthew 7:7).

Unfortunately many vital decisions are made when we are most inexperienced. Our desire for freedom can be dangerous if we have not followed the proper guidelines. The book *Mythology*, by Edith Hamilton, tells of a boy named Icarus and his father. Imprisoned on the isle of Crete, they made a pair of wings composed of feathers held together by wax. They hoped that they could use them to fly to their freedom, and the boy was given the chance to try them out. His father warned him not to fly too close to the sun lest the wax melt. But Icarus became exhilarated with his newfound freedom and flew too high. The wax melted, and the wings fell apart, and the boy fell to his death. Our future can be imperiled by freedom left uncontrolled (New York: New American Library, 1969, pp. 139–40).

Seek a testimony and build faith

Our foremost decision must be to seek a testimony of the gospel and to build our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a loving and concerned parent, as we see in these words from Doctrine and Covenants 67:1: “Ye elders of my church, who have assembled yourselves together, whose prayers I have heard,

and whose hearts I know, and whose desires have come up before me.” He will not leave us alone in our decisions, for He promised, “I will not leave you comfortless” (John 14:18). It is this Comforter, who is the spirit of revelation, that confirms all truths unto us.

I am grateful for the privilege to serve the Lord and for the spirit which has touched my heart and soul and for my wonderful companion and my faithful family. And I leave my witness with you and with them of the divinity of this work and of our Lord Jesus Christ, who leads and directs and presides over it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Robert D. Hales, a new member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder Gerald E. Melchin of the Seventy and president of the Toronto Ontario Temple.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Sweet Is the Work, My God, My King.” Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang
“Sweet Is the Work.”

Elder F. Melvin Hammond

Trying to be like Jesus

The work is sweet. Just a few days ago in faraway Mexico, Sister Hammond and I picked up the telephone and heard the voice of a little child begin to sing, perfectly on key and angelic to our ears, “I’m trying to be like Jesus,” and sweetly continue:

Love one another as Jesus loves you.
Try to show kindness in all that you do.

Be gentle and loving in deed and in thought,
For these are the things Jesus taught.
[“I’m Trying to Be like Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, p. 78]

To that precious grandchild, one of many, and to everyone else who is trying to be like Jesus, we congratulate you and express our deepest affection for you. Today I desire to bring us nearer to Jesus. I would like us to love Him

more than we do now. Will you listen as I tell you about Jesus Christ and His infinite love?

The premortal Christ

It was Christ who in the premortal state presented Himself to become the Savior of men, saying, "Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first" (Abraham 3:27). From that time forth it was proclaimed that the Son of Man would come to earth to sacrifice Himself as an atonement for the sins of all men (see Mosiah 3).

Christ's birth

As the day of His mortal birth approached, Nephi heard the voice saying, "Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, . . . on the morrow come I into the world" (3 Nephi 1:13).

Thus, on the next day in Bethlehem of Judea, a tiny babe lay in a manger while an attentive mother gloried in the presence of her newborn son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, a God come to earth.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40).

Christ's mortal ministry

In succeeding years "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). At the age of thirty He began His ministry, teaching the great plan of happiness—faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, the laying on of hands to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end (see 3 Nephi 27).

Being obedient to the commandment, He was baptized by immersion in the River Jordan by John the Baptist (see Matthew 3).

Later twelve men were called and ordained as His Apostles. Some of them were humble fishermen. He invited them to come "follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Immediately they left their nets and followed Him, as all who are called should willingly do.

The fame of His glory and power spread throughout the land. To a father who mourned the death of his dear, young daughter, He said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth" (Luke 8:52), and He took her by the hand and she rose from the dead.

To a poor cripple He spoke, "Take up thy bed, and walk" (John 5:8). And miraculously it was done!

He rebuked all sinners. The guilty plotted to take His life. He reminded the Twelve of the awful fate that awaited Him: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified" (Matthew 26:2).

On that eventful last night in the upper room, He knelt meekly and humbly before each Apostle and tenderly washed their feet (see John 13:3–17).

He instituted the sacred ordinance of the sacrament. Blessing bread and wine, He gave it to each one and commanded them to eat and drink in remembrance of His body and His blood, which was shed for them (see Matthew 26:26–28).

After Judas, the betrayer, had gone out into the night, the Savior instructed the remaining eleven with these familiar words, saying:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34–35).

Christ's atonement and crucifixion

Then Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and the quiet, lovely Garden of

Gethsemane. There He knelt down and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). The law demanded a perfect Lamb for the atoning sacrifice. He alone could qualify. His love for us was so great, so intense that voluntarily He suffered both body and spirit until blood came from every pore to pay the price of sin (see Mosiah 3:7). Somehow we must try to understand and internalize the ransom that He actually paid for each one of us.

Betrayed by a traitor's kiss, condemned to die at foreign hands for a crime He did not commit, He humbly submitted Himself to the ugly lash and was nailed by His hands and feet to a wooden cross. Yea, the greatest of all of God's children was left to die on a horrible cross. When finally all things were accomplished, He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30) and "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Jesus Christ was dead. The spirit had fled. The body was placed in a borrowed tomb.

Christ's resurrection

And then, on the third day, in mighty power He arose, the bonds of death to break. The spirit had returned to reclaim the flesh. His victory over death was complete!

For forty days He tarried on the earth, showing Himself to many and instructing them in "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Finally, from Bethany He rose from their midst and ascended into heaven (see Luke 24:50-51).

Apostasy and Restoration

The faithful Apostles continued vigorously with their ministry. But with their passing came a rapid decline of spirituality. The sacred ordinances were

changed, priesthood authority was lost, and spiritual darkness enveloped the earth. Mankind had ceased to know God.

Then in the spring of 1820, to a fourteen-year-old boy, Joseph Smith Jr., the voice of God the Father pierced through the blackness: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Pure light emerged, and darkness fled. God had spoken to man again.

Once again the fulness of the gospel, as found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and other sacred scriptures, is flooding the earth. The holy priesthood has been restored to man. The sacred ordinances are being administered to every worthy soul who will receive them—all this to prepare the world for the glorious Second Coming proclaimed by the Savior Himself (see D&C 29:11).

Humbly I testify to you that He will come again in glory, and on that day He will manifest Himself to mankind, saying: "I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God" (D&C 45:52). Then He will reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Do we love Christ?

Now, during these last few minutes we have focused on Christ's love. Did we feel His Spirit burn within us? Have we felt a greater love for Him? Are we really trying to be like Jesus? If so, may I ask each one of us to think of the following questions as they relate to our love for Him.

First, do we love Jesus Christ enough to follow His chosen prophets and Apostles, giving heed to their counsel and guidance as if it came from His own mouth? (see D&C 1:38).

Second, do we love the Savior enough to forsake our lovely home, our precious family, and accept a call to proclaim His gospel in any part of the world?

Third, do we love Christ sufficiently that we will be true to our mates, casting out all our unclean thoughts and never betraying their sweet love for us?

Can we do too much for the Lord? Certainly we all love Him. Therefore, I implore us, keep His commandments and become more like Him. Come unto Christ, eat the bread of life, drink the living water, and feast on His limitless love. He is our Savior, our Master, of

whom I bear my humble witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Sister Ruth B. Wright, second counselor in the general Primary presidency, and she will be followed by Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy.

Sister Ruth B. Wright

Focus on children

Sister Wilson carefully studied each young child as she entered the Primary classroom. *How they have grown and developed since January*, she thought. She gathered them around her and began her lesson. "You are each very special! You have learned so many things. You have learned to sit reverently and listen to our lessons. Why, you can even say your own prayers!"

"Well, of course," responded Clayton, "I've already been on this earth five years!"

Clayton's lifetime seemed a very long time to him, and he saw no limits to what he could learn. Brothers and sisters, our children are eager to learn. They want to be taught. They need to be taught.

The First Presidency has admonished all adult members of the Church to focus on children in an ongoing effort to help them learn to follow the teachings of the Savior. The purpose of "Focus on Children" is to direct the attention and efforts of adult members to care for children in a way that will enable them to have a strong foundation of testimony and faithfully live the gospel of Jesus Christ (see "Focus on Children, Guidelines and Suggestions"). When we consider all the eager young Claytons, we

realize that this is an important and exciting responsibility.

The First Presidency has suggested four goals to help us focus on children. The goals are one, to recognize the worth of our children; two, to activate children who are not participating in the blessings of the gospel; three, to teach children the gospel in such a way that they will understand and live it; and four, to ensure that children are prepared for and given the opportunity for baptism and ordination. I would like to focus my remarks on the third goal, teaching children the gospel in such a way that they will understand and live it.

Teach children to walk uprightly

The Lord, through revelation, has taught us in section 68 of the Doctrine and Covenants that parents have the responsibility to teach and train their children in righteousness. Parents have been instructed to "teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (v. 28).

What does it mean to walk uprightly before the Lord? The word *upright* is defined as honest, honorable, straightforward. Thus, to walk uprightly, our children need to choose to live in an honest, honorable, straightforward manner. Children who understand and live

the gospel today can walk with assurance and joy and someday will enter the presence of the Lord, walking uprightly.

Sometimes it isn't easy as parents to teach our children. Sometimes we make mistakes. Our children may react with opposition to what we are teaching them. As parents, we should keep our desire to do our best, constantly show our love, and not blame ourselves if our children choose another way.

In our efforts to help our children desire to walk uprightly before the Lord, we can ask ourselves three questions:

What to teach children?

One: What do we teach our children? It is essential that we teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). I believe the scriptures are the main source to help us teach our children to walk uprightly.

We need to help our children gain a sense of their relationship with Heavenly Father. They can know that each person is a literal child of God, that each is born with a divine birthright and unlimited potential. When my nephew was four years old, his father took great delight in asking him to repeat his name. Rich would ask, "Mark, what is your name?" Mark would stand up tall and answer with a happy grin, "My name is Mark Andrew Broadbent, Child of God." When our children understand that Heavenly Father is real and that He loves and cares about each of them, they will want to walk uprightly.

Our children need to learn how to pray so they can communicate with Heavenly Father. A mother I know has taught her children to pray from the moment they began to utter their first words. Not only did she teach each child to express sincere gratitude for his blessings but also to seek Heavenly Father's guidance by specifically asking Him to "help me choose the right."

Our children need to understand the principle of agency and the significance of the choices they make. I remember a time when I was in high school and wanted to drop out of a type class because it was too hard for me. I hated that class. I begged my parents to sign the form giving their permission for me to drop the class from my schedule. My father explained over and over all the reasons why he thought I should stay in the class. He said, "It's important to stay with something once you begin it, especially when it's hard. You need to work and try to do your best." Finally in desperation he said, "I've told you how I feel, and now, Ruth, the decision is up to you. I'll sign the paper if you want me to." After spending a sleepless night fighting off my desire to do what I wanted, I finally chose to stay in the class. Although I struggled with typing for the rest of the year, I'm glad I stayed, and I'm especially glad for the counsel of my father. He helped me to understand my options. He was clear on how he felt about the matter, but he didn't force me.

Where to teach children?

Question two: Where do we teach our children? The best place to teach our children the gospel is in our homes. A mother of eleven children once said to me, "The gospel needs to be in the air of our homes. Our children should almost be able to feel it. We can provide a safe, comfortable environment for them so they can feel free to learn and to develop their own personal testimonies."

We teach our children everywhere we are with them, and I believe we should have fun with them while we are doing it! We have opportunities many times a day to teach them as we walk together, drive in the car, work side by side, kneel in prayer, talk at the dinner table, and even when we change diapers. It didn't take me long to realize soon after our first child, Natalie, was born that changing diapers was not on my list of favorite

things to do. So to help me survive this recurring ordeal, I sang Primary songs to her to make it nicer for both of us. Soon the routine of changing diapers became second nature and didn't bother me anymore. However, I continued to sing to Natalie and the rest of our children as I performed this duty, because I realized I had an opportunity many times a day to teach my child.

How to teach children?

Question three: How do we teach our children? We teach by example. Our children will learn far more by observing us walk uprightly than any other way. Blair's parents showed him, by their example, the importance of prayer. He remembers many times as a child walking down the hall to his parents' bedroom and seeing them kneeling at the side of their bed, holding hands as they prayed to Heavenly Father.

We teach children to walk uprightly a step at a time, over and over again. I know of a mother who has her children repeat this simple yet powerful statement as they leave home: "The gospel is true, I love you, and I am a child of God, no matter what!" The words "Return with honor" written on a sign hung above the doorway of a home are a constant reminder to all who walk through the door how they should return.

Our children respond best when taught with respect and love. In the eighth chapter of Moroni, the prophet Mormon is deeply concerned about a dissension that has arisen among the members of the Church. He has written a letter giving counsel to his son, Moroni, regarding the matter. But before he addresses this problem, Mormon expresses his devotion to his son:

"My beloved son, Moroni, I rejoice exceedingly that your Lord Jesus Christ hath . . . called you to his ministry, and to his holy work.

"I am mindful of you always in my prayers, continually praying unto God

the Father in the name of his Holy Child, Jesus, that he, through . . . grace, will keep you through the endurance of faith on his name to the end" (vv. 2-3). First, Mormon reaffirmed his love for Moroni, and then he taught him. When our children first know they are loved, they are more likely to listen and be taught.

Clara's advice to her mother

Our children will be more able to survive the challenges that will come to them when they know and understand that keeping God's commandments can bring them peace and joy in their lives and enable them to walk uprightly. While traveling in the car with her mother and younger sister, five-year-old Clara sensed that her mother was deeply troubled about something. "Mommy, what's the matter? You seem so sad."

Not wanting to go into detail about her concerns, but feeling that she needed to acknowledge to her daughter that she was worried, Clara's mother asked, "Clara, what would you do if you felt sad and frustrated?"

"Well," responded Clara, and there was a long pause, "you need to take time out and think. Then you need to pray all the time and read the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. You need to bless other people. Just think about the good things people do for you and the good things in your life, not the bad." Young Clara is beginning to understand how to walk uprightly before the Lord.

To earthly parents God sends children

To guide and teach, protect and love.

Oh, let us keep the sacred trust
That he has placed with each of us
And help to guide them back to
God above.

["How Dear to God Are Little Children," *Children's Songbook*, pp. 180-81]

May God bless us as parents to teach our children to walk uprightly before the

Lord is my prayer in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Hans B. Ringger

"What shall we do?"

A few years ago the world was at a political turning point. People believed that nations would achieve a long-awaited peace. Many overlooked, however, that we live in societies and cultures in which norms and values are changing and where secular reforms often define the nature of men and women. One injustice is often replaced by another injustice. We live in a time of ambiguous mores and of little direction. We are confronted with the same question that the disciples were asked after the resurrection of Christ: "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

This is the question we ask in uncertain times or when confronted with new challenges. We may answer with unreflective action, hoping to find solutions merely through results. Fortunately the Lord understands us better than we understand ourselves. The gospel teaches us first to ponder and develop faith. Only after we have honestly decided in favor of good, based on the gospel, can we bring forth righteous deeds. Active faith leads to good works. We will receive the strength from above to strive toward what is right. However, great works and deeds are not sustained in themselves. Continuity of great deeds requires our obedient dedication and the dedication of future generations.

Gospel satisfies eternal needs

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only plan in which there are no calculated errors. After the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord warned His disciples of future adversities and the need for just works. He explained that they should not rely on their own strength when they

served but on His name and His calling. We too are disciples and live in a world of many needs, be they spiritual, material, or emotional. Through gospel service our eternal needs can be satisfied, and we will be able to serve in the world. Our needs cannot be met through searching for the unenduring but only in discovering the eternal. When we look for answers on an eternal plane, we will secure our relationship to God and gain a better understanding of our fellow beings. We will thus be capable of serving; such is the purpose of life.

The visible expression of doing God's will often results in personal cheerfulness—a silent, sunny brightness and a joy for life, feelings which are sung about in Psalms. We live, however, not without adversity and possible moments of deep despair. Our surroundings entice us to the unenduring, to injustice and disobedience. If we want to prevail, we must act in accordance with gospel principles. We cannot ask for more than to find the true meaning of life. "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). We are promised that we will receive plentifully and gain eternal life when we give up those things the Lord requires of us.

We choose to accept or reject the gospel of Christ. Human life was created on the basis of freedom of choice. God wants free people and people who serve Him freely. It is therefore a challenge in everyone's life to choose the straight and narrow path which avoids a life which lacks eternal direction. There are probably times in our lives when we wonder if there are other paths or shortcuts. The gospel gives us the answer, together with the promise of divine

guidance. It is a path we can follow only one step at a time, with patience, hope, and faith. Decisions we make today will influence our future course, our future strengths and abilities.

Spiritual road signs

Thomas Carlyle once remarked, "Know your destiny and follow it." We are here today because we believe that our destiny in life is to gain eternal exaltation. This is the highest goal in life, and it demands all of our strength, devotion, and work. It is impossible to achieve our highest potential destiny without direction and guidance. The Lord gives us spiritual "road signs" which we should follow. Some signposts are:

First, be true. Stand up for the prophets and the scriptures. We want to be able to say, along with Nephi, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

Second, keep the first of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). Through the choices and temptations of this world, we often lose sight of true values and turn our hearts to wealth, careers, hobbies, persons, honor, pride and, worst of all, to the gratification of our own ego.

Third, distinguish between essence and appearance. God knows our heart, and He cannot be deceived. We might be able to fool the world at times, but we cannot fool God. We will never obtain the joy of loving and trusting relationships with our fellow beings unless these relationships are based on honesty. The Psalmist David says of the Lord:

"O Lord, thou hast . . . known me.

"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. . . .

"There is not a word in my tongue, but . . . thou knowest it altogether" (Psalm 139:1-2, 4).

Fourth, rise above selfishness. This includes spiritual selfishness, when one looks toward personal edification and strengthening and has no other interest than one's own salvation. To be blessed is not an end in itself; we must be a blessing to others. All people have a talent in one way or another to touch and inspire other people's lives. Let us not only look inward and proudly say, "All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth" (2 Nephi 28:21), but let us be a light unto a chaotic world.

Commit to serve the Lord

Are we able and capable of following such admonitions? How often have we made resolutions which we did not carry out? The only answer to these questions is to commit ourselves to serve the Lord and to meet His challenges. As Moroni wrote, the Lord's grace is sufficient for all who humble themselves before Him. If we humble ourselves and have faith in Him, He will make our weaknesses into our strengths (see Ether 12:27). He will provide His strength to meet our challenges, and many things will take care of themselves. The Spirit of God strengthens us physically, spiritually, and emotionally. It is now up to us to choose the way! Caterina Di Genova, who died in the Middle Ages as a martyr and who inspired future generations, is believed to have said, "Once God possesses the will of a person, God will dwell within this person and will lead him to perfection." To prevail in this world without God is difficult. Through God, however, all things are possible.

Should we expect or ask for a reward for our efforts? The disciples asked Jesus about a reward. Instead of chastising them, He answered, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren,

or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29).

What are we contributing?

The ills of today's world and fleeting social peace are the result of past wrongdoings and disregard of godly principles. The spiritual strength of every new generation has its roots in parents' and grandparents' love for God and obedience to the gospel. As individuals and as a church, we must ask ourselves what we are contributing to our fellow beings. When Switzerland was in the process of political consolidation at the beginning of its new federation in 1862, the Swiss poet and novelist Gottfried Keller had questions similar to those of our time.

"Have I and my house lived such that I am in a position to be of benefit to the whole and to contribute to the humble embellishment, not in the eyes of an ignorant world, but in the eyes of the highest judge? Then when we ask ourselves how we fare today as a nation before nations and how we have held in trust the assets which have been given us, in that day we should not present ourselves in vain self-glory before the Lord of all nations, for He sees through all insufficiencies, understands how to distinguish between luck and honest efforts, and between substance and appearance."

Let us search our hearts as we ask the question "What shall we do?" and follow the advice of Joshua: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but

as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Sister Ruth B. Wright, second counselor in the general Primary presidency, and Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker. Before hearing his address, we express appreciation to the Relief Society Choir from the Olympus Utah Region, the Mormon Youth Chorus, the Melchizedek Priesthood Choir from the University Utah Region, and the Tabernacle Choir, and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference.

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of the conference in many countries.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Gospel provides precious perspective

During the last days, when "all things shall be in commotion" (D&C 88:91), the restored gospel of Jesus Christ provides so many essential things, including precious perspective of seeing "things as

they really are" (Jacob 4:13).

The eminent historian Will Durant wrote of the human need "to seize the value and perspective of passing things. . . . We want to know that the little things are little, and the big things big, before it is too late; we want to see things now

as they will seem forever—"in the light of eternity."¹

The gospel's illumination provides so much greater perspective for us concerning the role of the family.

Before citing some challenges to family life, consider, first, brothers and sisters, how living without God in the world brings a functional lack of consistent perspective. If there were no eternal truths, to what principles would mortals look for guidance? If not accountable to God, to whom are we ultimately accountable? Furthermore, if nothing is ever really wrong, then no one is ever really responsible. If there are no fixed boundaries, then there cannot be any excesses. Why should we be surprised, then, at so many disturbing outcomes, including the lack of community, when every man does that which is "right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25) and seeks not the righteousness of the Lord but instead follows "in his own way"? (D&C 1:16).

Reflect, for instance, on how inoperative the Ten Commandments are in many lives. Today, *killing*, *stealing*, and bearing *false witness* still carry some social stigma and legal sanction, but sanction is effectively gone regarding sexual immorality, the Sabbath day, honoring fathers and mothers, and the taking of the name of the Lord in vain. Some of this decline represents the bitter harvest of ethical relativism, the philosophy of choice of many, reflecting no fixed, divine truths but merely the mores of the moment. No wonder Ortega y Gasset wisely warned, "If truth does not exist, relativism cannot take itself seriously."²

Terrible trends in society

Note several terrible trends which, *if uncorrected*, will produce an even worse coalition of consequences.

- In ten years, one-half of all children born in America will be illegitimate.³

- More and more children have no functioning fathers. Already 70 percent of our juvenile criminals come from fatherless homes.⁴

- "Less than half of all children born today will live continuously with their own mother and father throughout childhood."⁵

- "One-fourth of all adolescents . . . contract a sexually transmitted disease before they graduate from high school."⁶

- "Fifty-five percent of [American] children under the age of six . . . have both parents or their only parent working in the labor force."⁷

Endangered families

Father Lehi once described himself as a "trembling parent" (2 Nephi 1:14). There are trembling parents and grandparents today! Some of today's families already exist in a worse wilderness than did Father Lehi's. Healthy, traditional families are becoming an endangered species! Perhaps, one day, families may even rank with the threatened spotted owl in effective attention given!

As parenting declines, the need for policing increases. There will always be a shortage of police if there is a shortage of effective parents! Likewise, there will not be enough prisons if there are not enough good homes.

There is, as we all know, much talk about family values, but rhetoric, by itself, cannot bring reform. Nostalgically, many wish for the family life of yesteryear; they regard family decline as regrettable but not reversible. Others, genuinely worried over the spilling social consequences, are busy placing sandbags downstream, even when the frenzied use of sandbags often destroys what little is left of family gardens. A few regard the family as an institution to be drastically redefined or even to be rid of.

There are no perfect families, either in the world or in the Church, but there are many good families. My spiritual

applause also goes to those heroic parents—left alone by death or divorce—who are righteously and “anxiously engaged” in nurturing and providing for their families, often against such heavy odds.

Alas, in some families things do go wretchedly wrong, but these gross failures are no reason to denigrate further the institution of the family. We should make course corrections and fix the leaks, not abandon ship!

Unhealthy attitudes toward families

Much modern despair and violence grow out of unhealthy attitudes towards any authority, including that in families. Thirty-five years ago, a BBC commentator insightfully worried “that we are turning out adults who have an even less clear and consistent attitude towards authority than we have ourselves, and who will be even less capable than their parents in raising children with a sane attitude towards authority, and so an insidious avalanche may be developing, gathering a ghastly momentum from generation to generation.”⁸

The “ghastly momentum” increases as profound social changes now occur in “only a few years” (Moroni 9:12).

Creating successful families

Unfortunately it is easier to praise the family than to create a successful family. It is easier to talk, as I am doing, of family values than to implement those values. It is easier to rejoice over our rich memories of a good family than to provide the rising generation with its own rich memories.

The hard doctrines, however, insist that we ask some hard questions. How can a nation nurture family values without consistently valuing and protecting the family in its public policies? How can we value the family without valuing parenting? And how can we value par-

enting if we do not value marriage? How can there be “love at home” without love in a marriage? So many selfish tugs draw fathers and mothers away from each other and away from their children.

In contrast, so much of the Restoration focuses on fundamental principles pertaining to the family, including sealings of eternal families. Latter-day Saints therefore have no choice but to stand up and to speak up whenever the institution of the family is concerned, even if we are misunderstood, resented, or brushed aside.

After all, mortal families predate the founding of nations, and families will exist after the Almighty “hath made a full end of all nations” (D&C 87:6). For Latter-day Saints, though it is to be done in the Lord’s own way, every year should be the Year of the Family. However, as Latter-day Saints we need to do better in our families—much better! There should be less wringing of hands and more loving arms around our families.

Of all the work of “perfecting the Saints,” none compares to that done in healthy families. President David O. McKay taught, “The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place nor fulfill its essential functions.”⁹ Sometimes, unintentionally, even certain extracurricular Church activities, insensitively administered, can hamper family life.

Instructively, after the resurrected Jesus taught the Nephites, He said, “Go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said,” and pray and prepare “for the morrow” (3 Nephi 17:3). Jesus did not say go to your civic clubs, town meetings, or even stake centers!

Tend to the family garden

Attending to all family duties includes really teaching our children “to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God”

(D&C 68:25). What a different view of parenting from that of the world. Marie Winn lamented in *Children without Childhood* how there is an emerging but unjustified tendency to treat children as if they have the capacity for unrestricted adult experience.¹⁰

Brothers and sisters, we may not be able to change such trends, but we can refuse to be a part of them.

When parents fail to transmit testimony and theology along with decency, those families are only one generation from serious spiritual decline, having lost their savor. The law of the harvest is nowhere more in evidence and nowhere more relentless than in family gardens!

In addition to our having loving family "sociality," which, one day, will be "coupled with eternal glory," we stress again and again the available remedies of family prayers, family home evenings, and family scripture study (D&C 130:2). Moreover, personal revelation regarding parenting can provide customized guidance and reassurance!

Basic remedies to family problems

Applying basic remedies will take some time and will not fix everything immediately. What could be more basic, however, than "love at home," when annually in America there are four million reports of domestic violence, rivaling the number of births in America!¹¹ Violence in America now kills "the equivalent of a classroomful" of children "every two days."¹²

In the face of such challenges, we need more mothers who know the truth, whose children do not doubt their mothers know it (see Alma 56:48). My children and grandchildren are blessed with such a mother and grandmother. We need more kind and thoughtful fathers who also carry the authority of example. More parents should be remembered as a prophet's daughter, Helen Lee Goates, remembers hers: "A father who

was gentle beneath his firmness, and a mother who was firm beneath her gentleness."¹³

In the healthy family, first and best, we can learn to listen, forgive, praise, and to rejoice in the achievements of others. There also we can learn to tame our egos, work, repent, and love. In families with spiritual perspective, yesterday need not hold tomorrow hostage. If we sometimes act the fool, loving families know this is not our last act; the curtain is not rung down.

To some, these remedies, and things like them, may seem too simple to heal a society stung by so many afflictions. In afflicted ancient Israel, some also disdained the simple, divinely provided remedies, and they perished (see 1 Nephi 17:41).

Focus anew on the family

Obviously, family values mirror our personal priorities. Given the gravity of current conditions, would parents be willing to give up just one outside thing, giving that time and talent instead to the family? Parents and grandparents, please scrutinize your schedules and priorities in order to ensure that life's prime relationships get more prime time! Even consecrated and devoted Brigham Young was once told by the Lord, "Take especial care of your family" (D&C 126:3). Sometimes it is the most conscientious who need this message the most!

Society should focus anew on the headwaters—the family—where values can be taught, lived, experienced, and perpetuated. Otherwise, brothers and sisters, we will witness even more widespread flooding downstream, featuring even more corruption and violence (see Genesis 6:11–12; Matthew 24:37).

If the combination of rainmakers prevails, however, the rains will continue to descend, and the floods will continue to come. Dikes and sandbags downstream will be no match for the coming

crests. More and more families, even nations, if built upon secular sand instead of gospel granite, will suffer.

As the number of dysfunctional families increases, their failures will spill into already burdened schools and streets. It is not a pretty scene even now.

Nations in which traditional idealism gives way to modern cynicism will forfeit the blessings of heaven, which they so urgently need, and such nations will also lose legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens.

Praise be to Jesus

Amid the Babel of prescriptions from "so many kinds of voices in the world," rescuing and redeeming perspective requires our coming to know who Jesus Christ is, how He lived, and what He died for (1 Corinthians 14:10; see also John 10:27). After all, it is Jesus who has given us commanding perspective concerning families.

Therefore, as this Easter day draws to a close, how fitting that we contemplate atoning Jesus—bending and curved in Gethsemane. His bleeding curvature transformed the grammar of death. Until Gethsemane and Calvary, death was a punctuating, rigid exclamation point! Then death, too, curved—into a mere comma!

Praise be to Jesus for bearing the sins and pains of all "the family of Adam" back then (2 Nephi 9:21; 2:20). Let us strive here and now to take especial care of our families as Jesus did of His, "even the family of all the earth" (2 Nephi 2:20). I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1927), p. 1.
2. José Ortega y Gasset, *The Modern Theme*, trans. James Cleugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 29.
3. See President Clinton, "State of the Union Address," CNN Specials, 25 Jan. 1994, p. 3.
4. See "The Basics Debate," *Wall Street Journal*, 18 Nov. 1993, sec. A, p. 18.
5. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *Atlantic Monthly*, Apr. 1993, p. 47.
6. *Research Briefs from Utah Foundation*, 16 July 1993, p. 1.
7. *Research Briefs*, p. 1.
8. Quoted in *The Listener*, 12 Feb. 1959.
9. *Family Home Evening Manual* (1965), p. iii.
10. See *Children without Childhood* (New York: Penguin, 1983), p. 5.
11. See "Callers Weigh in on Domestic Abuse," CNN, 6 Nov. 1993; *The World Almanac* (Mahwah, N.J.: Funk and Wagnall's, 1993), p. 954.
12. Jennifer Dixon, "A Youth Dies by Gunfire Every Two Hours," *Deseret News*, 20 Jan. 1994, sec. A, p. 1.
13. In Neal A. Maxwell, *That My Family Should Partake* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974), p. 56.

President Monson

He to whom we have listened is Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. And with his remarks and the hymn and the prayer to follow, another great conference comes to a close.

We have missed Elder Marvin J. Ashton and another familiar soul at our conferences, D. Arthur Haycock, each of whom has passed away since our last conference. Our hearts and our prayers go out to Sister Ashton, Sister Haycock, and all who have loved and lost someone during this period.

President Benson's chair, situated between President Hinckley and me, has been unoccupied at this conference, although he has viewed the conference proceedings at his apartment by television. Our hearts are full of love for

the prophet of God, and his teachings ring in our ears. If he were standing before us at this moment at the conclusion of the conference, I believe he would say, "Lord, it has been good for us to be here."

We have sustained with our uplifted hands and also with our hearts those called to new positions of responsibility.

As we leave for our homes, may we travel in peace and safety. May we be obedient to the commandments of God. As we reflect upon the messages of conference, we see woven like a beautiful golden thread in a fine tapestry the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sanctity of the home, and the importance of obedience to divine teachings.

I like the thought, "Before Easter, there must be a cross." And many have heavy crosses to bear. With the birth of the Babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment—a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. He may come to us as one unknown, without a name, as by the lakeside He came to those men

who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words, "Follow thou me," and sets us to the task which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands, and to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings that they shall pass through in His fellowship; and they shall learn in their own experience who He is.

May we praise His name, follow His example, and incorporate His truths into our lives, and then this conference will have been successful. That such may be our experience, I pray in His worthy name—even Jesus Christ—amen.

The choir will now sing "More Holiness Give Me," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder Jay E. Jensen offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

Music for the Saturday morning session of the conference was provided by a Relief Society choir from the Olympus Utah Region. Bonnie Winterton conducted the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided the music for the Saturday afternoon session. Linda Margetts was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from the University Utah Region provided the music. Edgar J. Thompson conducted the choir, and Richard L. Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Clay Christiansen and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard L. Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

A

Asay, Elder Carlos E.	10
"Can I die?" The real issue: "Shall I live again?" Two classes of evidence; New Testament witnesses; Book of Mormon witnesses; Personal testimonies; "Walk with me"; We shall live again!	
Authorities and Officers, The Sustaining of Church	28
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell	31
A well-tuned engine; The one-cylinder ward; Make wise use of councils; Three ward committees and councils; Using councils to improve reverence; Using councils to improve testimony meetings; Using councils to help retain converts; Become a problem-solving team; How the Apostles counsel together; Listen and reason in councils	
Bateman, Bishop Merrill J.	84
Stretching the cords of the tent; Tribute to wife; A young Japanese man gains a testimony	
Burton, Bishop H. David	86
Jesus' crucifixion; Jesus' victory over death; Jesus' courage to obey; Jay's courage to hearken; Courage to avoid evil music and movies; The folly of underestimating Satan; Purge ourselves of pride; I can be courageous	

C

Choules, Elder Albert, Jr.	14
Three commandments about love; Children's tendency to love; Develop a child's love matured; Unrighteous dominion; Leading in love; Love between husband and wife; Children follow parents' example	
Church Audit Committee Report for 1993, The	29
Church Statistical Report for 1993, The	30

D

Didier, Elder Charles	57
Remembering covenants; Baptismal covenant; Priesthood covenants; Covenant of eternal marriage; The Church provides the framework; The patriarchal order; Remember, act, and commit	

F

- Faust, Elder James E.** 3
 Five loaves and two fishes; We have forgotten the miracle; God has fed us in our time; Service of members with few talents; Ego and pride prevent service; Humble members strengthen the Church; Effects of Jeralee Underwood's life

G

- General Authorities Present** 1
General Priesthood Session 51
George, Elder Lloyd P. 35
 Our importance in God's plan; The sin of ingratitude; The ten lepers; Much to be grateful for; Receive all things with thankfulness

H

- Haight, Elder David B.** 100
 Longings that lead us to Jesus; Expand our understanding of Christ; Washing the disciples' feet; Teaching the chosen eleven; Anguish in Gethsemane; Betrayal, trials, and scourging; The Crucifixion; "It is finished"; The empty tomb; "Feed my sheep"; How great the wisdom and the love
- Hales, Elder Robert D.** 105
 Shaking of the oak tree; Expressions of gratitude; Service as Presiding Bishop; Special witness of Jesus Christ; Jesus' premortal work; Jesus' mortal ministry; Jesus' resurrection and postmortal work; Follow thou me
- Hammond, Elder F. Melvin** 110
 Trying to be like Jesus; The premortal Christ; Christ's birth; Christ's mortal ministry; Christ's atonement and crucifixion; Christ's resurrection; Apostasy and Restoration; Do we love Christ?
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session)** 72
 Magnitude of priesthood offices; Sustaining Church officers; Called of God by prophecy; The calling of Elder Hales; Governing the Church when the President is ill; Decisions made in unity; Keys given to all Apostles; God is at the helm; Response to skeptics and critics
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session)** 94
 The greatest miracle in human history; New Testament witnesses; Book of Mormon witnesses; Joseph Smith's witness; Joseph Smith and Governor Ford; Demise of Governor Ford and family; Joseph's work lives on; Praise to the man; Growth and reconciliation; The ends of the

earth shall inquire; Joseph Smith's testimony of the Savior; Our personal testimony

Hunter, President Howard W.83

"What manner of men ought ye to be?" Jesus Christ—the perfect example; Become even as Christ is

J

Jack, Sister Elaine L.17

"Walk with me"; The journey of eternal progression; The straight and narrow path; Develop spirituality; Serve and be charitable; A bishop teaches members to read; A sure path

Jensen, Elder Marlin K.63

The power of a good life; Joseph Smith silences prison guards; Willard Bean, the "fighting parson"; One piece of horehound candy; Our need for good influences; "Just send your father!" A lasting influence for good

Jeppsen, Elder Malcolm S.20

Observations about healing; A condition for healing; Spiritual healing; A prescription for spiritual healing; 1. Diagnose the cause of the malady; 2. Feel contrition and remorse; 3. Seek and offer forgiveness; 4. Abandon sin; 5. Comply with all the commandments; 6. Plead for the Lord's forgiveness; 7. Endure faithfully; Testimony of Jesus' healing power

Johnson, Elder Kenneth37

Dad's coming home! Helping Dad in the shop; Service draws us closer to God; Service is essential for a happy life; Kevin helps paint; Service strengthens families; Knowing the Father and the Son

L

Lindsay, Elder Richard P.60

Gratitude for Aaronic Priesthood leaders; Faithful deacons quorum adviser; The battle for the Lord's sheep; Reach out to young men; The lesson of the lambs; Be with the lambs when needed

Lybbert, Elder Merlin R.40

The special status of children; Parents protect and guide; Not accountable until age eight; Become as a little child; A protected time to teach children; Offending these little ones; Young children can understand

M

Maxwell, Elder Neal A.118

Gospel provides precious perspective; Terrible trends in society; Endangered families; Unhealthy attitudes toward families; Creating

successful families; Tend to the family garden; Basic remedies to family problems; Focus anew on the family; Praise be to Jesus

Melchin, Elder Gerald E. 107

Decisions; Freedom to act for ourselves; Joseph Smith's decision; Christ's decision; Our decisions; Purposes of temple work; The Lord will help us make decisions; Seek a testimony and build faith

Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 66

The priesthood—a sacred trust; Priesthood opening exercises; Priesthood is service; Guidelines to be a successful bishop; The East Cache Stake's four-year plan; Spirituality comes through service; President Harold B. Lee's influence; Activation: a priesthood duty; Releasing President Winters

Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session) 78

Straying from the path of peace; No disputations among you; In Flanders fields; The beaches of Normandy; The way to peace; Search inward; A return to family values; Love at home; Reach outward; Look heavenward; Letter from Major Sullivan Ballou; I know that my Redeemer lives

Music, Summary of Conference 123

N

Nelson, Elder Russell M. 90

Tolerance; Two great commandments to love; Parental love; Independence and cooperation; Missionary responsibilities; Baptism transcends background; Risks of boundless tolerance; Tolerance and mutual respect

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H. 42

The law of tithing; Blessings promised to tithe payers; Mother's example in paying tithing; Joseph F. Smith's mother's example; Can't afford not to pay tithing; Blessings to nations; Blessings to individuals; Tithing not unique to Church members; The proper way to pay tithing; Expenditure of tithes; Give only the best to the Lord; "A very old horse"; Tithe paying a test of priorities

P

Packer, Elder Boyd K. 23

The Church's support of the family; Satan's attacks on the family; The family must endure; Prophetic preparation for the crisis; The Brethren know and care; To the men of the Church; "I not a monkey, Daddy"; The family is safe within the Church

Perry, Elder L. Tom	47
Goodly parents; Family life in crisis; Adam and Eve learn parental duties; Teach and train children; Importance of family home evening; Youth contribute to success; Challenge to youth; Revitalize family home evening	

Priesthood Session, General	51
------------------------------------------	----

R

Ringger, Elder Hans B.	116
"What shall we do?" Gospel satisfies eternal needs; Spiritual road signs; Commit to serve the Lord; What are we contributing?	

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	27
Saturday Morning Session	2
Scott, Elder Richard G.	7
To be healed; The Lord's will in healing; The key to healing: humility and faith; Demonstrating faith and effort; Healing power of prayer and scriptures; Help from priesthood leaders; Healing power of love; Healing power of faith; Healing power of forgiveness; The surest path to healing	
Summary of Conference Music	123
Sunday Afternoon Session	100
Sunday Morning Session	77
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers, The	28

W

Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	52
Obedience brings peace and happiness; Horses learned to obey while young; Honor your priesthood; Overcoming temptation; Be morally clean; Byron "Whizzer" White; Prove yourselves worthy	
Wright, Sister Ruth B.	113
Focus on children; Teach children to walk uprightly; What to teach children? Where to teach children? How to teach children? Clara's advice to her mother	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS



4 02940 91000

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-fourth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 1 and 2, 1994

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-fourth
Semiannual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
October 1 and 2, 1994

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

© 1994 by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

Report of the 164th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 164th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 1994, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 1 and 2, 1994. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 1, 1994, at 6:00 P.M.

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Howard W. Hunter, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, and Jeffrey R. Holland

The Presidency of the Seventy: Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*¹ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, Loren C. Dunn, Henry B. Eyring, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goaslind, John H. Groberg, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Kenneth Johnson, Cree-L. Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector Jr., Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, C. Max Caldwell, Albert Choules Jr., Gary J. Coleman, Claudio Roberto Mendes Costa, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Julio E. Dávila, John B. Dickson, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, Lloyd P. George, In Sang Han, Jay E. Jensen, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, John M. Madsen, Helvécio Martins, James O. Mason, Gerald E. Melchin, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley,

¹Elders Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Glenn L. Pace, and Hans B. Ringger were excused.

Kwok Yuen Tai, Horacio A. Tenorio, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, J Ballard Washburn, Lance B. Wickman, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Merrill J. Bateman, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

Solemn Assembly

The first general session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 1994, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for the session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand." President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

Good morning. President Howard W. Hunter, who presides at this conference, has asked me to conduct this solemn assembly session.

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 164th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Han In Sang and Lino Alvarez are seated on the stand, and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders

John H. Groberg and Henry B. Eyring are in attendance. We welcome also the many others who are watching these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except Elders Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, and Glenn L. Pace, who are serving as temple or mission presidents; and Elder Hans B. Ringger, who is excused because of illness.

We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for this session will be provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand" and will now favor us with "Lord, Accept Our True Devotion." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder F. Enzo Busche of the Seventy. Then President Gordon B. Hinckley will present the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for the sustaining vote of this solemn assembly.

The chorus sang "Lord, Accept Our True Devotion."

Elder F. Enzo Busche offered the invocation.

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brothers and sisters, President Hunter has requested that I now handle the business of the solemn assembly for which we are met. This is an occasion of great significance for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We shall vote by quorums and groups. Wherever you are, you are invited to stand when requested and express by your uplifted hand whether you choose to sustain those whose names will be put before you. Only those standing should vote at any given time. Following your expression, you may then be seated as indicated.

General Authorities assigned to the Assembly Hall on Temple Square or to the Joseph Smith Memorial Building will observe the voting in those gatherings. In stake centers, a member of the stake presidency will observe the voting. And should there be any negative votes, he will advise us. We shall now proceed with the business of this great constituent gathering, which extends to thousands of halls and homes across the world.

First Presidency

The First Presidency will please arise. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Those in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church and Thomas Spencer Monson as Second

Counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon B. Hinckley as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and Boyd K. Packer as Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Those in favor. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain as members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, and Jeffrey R. Holland. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed. The First Presidency will please be seated.

Council of the Twelve Apostles

The members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will please arise. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his Counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed. You may be seated.

Seventy and Presiding Bishopric

The members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy and the

Presiding Bishopric will please arise. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his Counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed. You may be seated.

Patriarchs, high priests, and elders

The following will please arise whenever you may be participating. All ordained patriarchs and all members of high priests and elders quorums, please arise. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his Counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it. Please be seated.

Priests, teachers, and deacons

Will all of the Aaronic Priesthood please arise—that is, all ordained priests, teachers, and deacons. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his Counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Any opposed. You may now be seated.

Entire Church membership

Will the entire congregation, including all of those who have stood previously, now arise. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as

prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his Counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Any who may feel opposed. Thank you. You may be seated.

We shall now remain seated as we sustain other General Authorities and general officers of the Church. It is proposed that we sustain as the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy Elders Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen.

As further members of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Loren C. Dunn, Gene R. Cook, William R. Bradford, John H. Groberg, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Dean L. Larsen, Robert E. Wells, James M. Paramore, Hugh W. Pinnock, F. Enzo Busche, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Ronald E. Poelman, F. Burton Howard, Ted E. Brewerton, Jack H. Goasland, Angel Abrea, John K. Carmack, J. Richard Clarke, Hans B. Ringger, Marlin K. Jensen, Earl C. Tingey, Alexander B. Morrison, L. Lionel Kendrick, Harold G. Hillam, Carlos H. Amado, Ben B. Banks, Spencer J. Condie, Robert K. Dellenbach, Henry B. Eyring, Glenn L. Pace, F. Melvin Hammond, Kenneth Johnson, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Neil L. Andersen, D. Todd Christofferson, Cree-L Kofford, Dennis B. Neuen-schwander, Andrew Wayne Peterson, and Cecil O. Samuelson.

As members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Helvécio Martins, J. Ballard Washburn, Durrel A. Woolsey, W. Mack Lawrence, Rulon G. Craven, Joseph C. Muren, Graham W. Doxey, Jorge A. Rojas, Julio E. Dávila, In Sang Han, Stephen D. Nadauld, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archi-

bald, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, John B. Dickson, John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madson, V. Dallas Merrell, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Lowell D. Wood, Claudio R. M. Costa, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Lance B. Wickman.

As the Presiding Bishopric: Merrill J. Bateman as Presiding Bishop; H. David Burton, First Counselor; and Richard C. Edgley, Second Counselor. All in favor, please manifest it. Any who may feel opposed.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elder Hartman Rector Jr. and that he be designated an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it.

With gratitude for their service as General Authorities, it is proposed that we release Elders Albert Choules Jr., Lloyd P. George, Gerald E. Melchin, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, and Horacio A. Tenorio as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

Elder Clinton L. Cutler was serving as first counselor in the Sunday School general presidency at the time of his passing on April 9, 1994. Those who wish to join in a vote of appreciation for his service and to release with a vote of thanks Elder Merlin R. Lybbert as the Sunday School general president and Elder Ronald E. Poelman as the second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks and deep appreciation Sisters Michaelene P. Grassli, Betty Jo N. Jepsen, and Ruth B. Wright as the Primary general presidency and Sister Patricia P. Pinegar as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. We also release all members of

the Primary general board. All who wish to join in an expression of profound appreciation to these most faithful sisters for their excellent service may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Charles Didier, J Ballard Washburn, and F. Burton Howard as the Sunday School general presidency; Sister Patricia Peterson Pinegar as the new general president of the Primary with Sister Anne Goalen Wirthlin as first counselor and Sister Susan Lillywhite Warner as second counselor; and Sister Bonnie Dansie Parkin as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may express themselves.

It is proposed that we sustain the other general officers and board members as presently constituted. All in favor. Any opposed.

President Hunter, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Tabernacle has been unanimous in favor of the proposals made. Any negative votes in any other assemblies will be noted and brought to our attention.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote and your faith and prayers. We feel that you have sustained us not only with your hands but also with your hearts. We urgently need your prayers and pray that you will continue to offer them in our behalf as your servants. We shall now ask the new Seventies, the new Primary general presidency, and Sister Parkin to take their places on the stand, if you please.

President Monson

That's a long walk, brothers and sisters. Thank you, President Hinckley and all who have been read in our presence here today.

It will now be our privilege to listen to President Howard W. Hunter, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Howard W. Hunter

Accepting the call

My beloved brothers and sisters, thank you for your sustaining vote. I come before you humbly and meekly, saddened by the recent passing of our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. My heart is tender upon the passing of my dear friend, particularly in light of the new responsibilities that have come to me.

I have shed many tears and have sought my Father in Heaven in earnest prayer in the desire to be equal to this high and holy calling. I have prayed to be worthy to bear the assignment which thirteen other men in this dispensation have borne. Perhaps only they, watching from the other side of the veil, can fully understand the weight of responsibility and the deep dependence on the Lord that I feel in accepting this sacred calling.

My greatest strength through these past months has been my abiding testimony that this is the work of God and not of men. Jesus Christ is the head of this church. He leads it in word and deed. I am honored beyond expression to be called for a season to be an instrument in his hands to preside over his church. But without the knowledge that Christ is the head of the Church, neither I nor any other man could bear the weight of the calling that has come.

In assuming this responsibility, I acknowledge God's miraculous hand in my life. He has repeatedly spared my life and restored my strength, has repeatedly brought me back from the edge of eternity, and has allowed me to continue in my mortal ministry for another season. I have wondered on occasion why my life has been spared. But now I have set that question aside and ask only for the faith and prayers of the members of the Church so we can work together, I laboring with you, to fulfill God's purposes in this season of our lives.

I also acknowledge the prayers and faith of my wife and family, my Brethren of the General Authorities, and the multitudes of faithful members who have prayed for me, cared for me, and shown concern for my health.

It has been thirty-five years since I was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Those years have been rich in preparation. I have met the Saints and borne testimony in North and South America; in Europe and Eastern Europe; in Asia, Australia, and Africa; and in the islands of the sea. Many times have I been to the Holy Land and walked where Jesus walked. My walk is slower now, but my mind is clear, and my spirit is young.

Revelations on governing the Church

As I answer the call from the Lord to lead the Church, I am overcome with gratitude for the revelations which have established the marvelous system by which his church is governed. Each man who is ordained an Apostle and set apart as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve is sustained as a prophet, seer, and revelator. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, called and ordained to hold the keys of the priesthood, have the authority and responsibility to govern the Church, to administer its ordinances, to teach its doctrine, and to establish and maintain its practices.

When a President of the Church is ill or not able to function fully in all of the duties of his office, his two Counselors, who with him comprise a Quorum of the First Presidency, carry on the work of the Presidency. Any major questions, policies, programs, or doctrines are prayerfully considered in council by the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. No decision emanates from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the

Twelve without total unanimity among all concerned.

Following this inspired pattern, the Church will move forward without interruption. The governance of the Church and the exercise of the prophetic gifts will always be vested in those apostolic authorities who hold and exercise all of the keys of the priesthood.

I feel just as President Joseph F. Smith felt on a similar occasion many years ago, when he said:

"I propose that my counselors and fellow Presidents in the First Presidency shall share with me in the responsibility of every act which I shall perform in this capacity. I do not propose to take the reins in my own hands to do as I please; but I propose to do as my brethren and I agree upon and as the Spirit of the Lord manifests to us. I have always held, and do hold, and trust I always shall hold, that it is wrong for one man to exercise all the authority and power of presidency in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I dare not assume such a responsibility, and I will not, so long as I can have men like these to stand by and counsel with me in the labors we have to perform and in doing all those things that shall tend to the peace, advancement and happiness of the people of God and the building up of Zion."

President Smith then continued:

"If at any time my brethren of the Apostleship shall see in me a disposition to depart from this principle or a forgetfulness on my part of this covenant that I make today before this body of Priesthood, I ask them in the name of my Father, that they will come to me, as my brethren, as counselors in the Priesthood, as watchmen on the towers of Zion, and remind me of this covenant and promise which I make to the body of the Church in general conference assembled at this time.

"The Lord never did intend that one man should have all power, and for that

reason He has placed in His Church Presidents, Apostles, High Priests, Seventies, Elders and the various offices of the Lesser Priesthood, all of which are essential in their order and place according to the authority bestowed on them" (in Conference Report, Oct.-Nov. 1901, p. 82).

Those words of President Joseph F. Smith represent my feelings today.

Like my Brethren before me, I receive with this calling the assurance that God will direct his prophet. I humbly accept the call to serve and declare with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped" (Psalm 28:7).

Follow the Savior's example

At the time of my call, I issued two invitations to the members of the Church. I feel impressed to give these continued emphasis.

First, I invite all members of the Church to live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion he displayed. I pray that we will treat each other with more kindness, more patience, more courtesy and forgiveness.

To those who have transgressed or been offended, we say, come back. The path of repentance, though hard at times, lifts one ever upward and leads to a perfect forgiveness.

To those who are hurt or are struggling and afraid, we say, let us stand with you and dry your tears. Come back. Stand with us in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Take literally his invitation to "come, follow me" (see Matthew 16:24; 19:21; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 18:22; John 21:22; D&C 38:22). He is the only sure way; he is the light of the world.

We will, as you would expect us to do, continue to hold to the high standards of conduct which define a Latter-

day Saint. It is the Lord who established those standards, and we are not free to set them aside.

Let us study the Master's every teaching and devote ourselves more fully to his example. He has given us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." He has "called us to glory and virtue" and has "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these [we] might be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:3-4).

I believe in those "exceeding great and precious promises," and I invite all within the sound of my voice to claim them. We should strive to "be partakers of the divine nature." Only then may we truly hope for "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

Attend the temple

In that spirit I invite the Latter-day Saints to look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of your membership. It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church worthy to enter the temple. It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families.

Let us be a temple-attending people. Attend the temple as frequently as personal circumstances allow. Keep a picture of a temple in your home that your children may see it. Teach them about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing.

If proximity to a temple does not allow frequent attendance, gather in the history of your family and prepare the names for the sacred ordinances performed only in the temple. This family

research is essential to the work of the temples, and blessings surely will come to those who do that work.

We desire to bring the temples closer to our people. New temples have been announced and are under construction. Others are being planned. Soon we will dedicate the Orlando Florida and Bountiful Utah Temples.

Preserve and protect the family

In the ordinances of the temple, the foundations of the eternal family are sealed in place. The Church has the responsibility—and the authority—to preserve and protect the family as the foundation of society. The pattern for family life, instituted from before the foundation of the world, provides for children to be born to and nurtured by a father and mother who are husband and wife, lawfully married. Parenthood is a sacred obligation and privilege, with children welcomed as a "heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3).

A worried society now begins to see that the disintegration of the family brings upon the world the calamities foretold by the prophets. The world's councils and deliberations will succeed only when they define the family as the Lord has revealed it to be. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1).

As we become more removed from the lifestyle of the world, the Church becomes more the welcome refuge for hundreds of thousands who come each year and say, "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

My brothers and sisters, I testify that the impressions of the Spirit have weighed heavily upon me in considering these matters. Our Eternal Heavenly

Father lives. Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, guides his church today through his prophets.

Let us, as Latter-day Saints, claim those "exceeding great and precious promises" so that we, "Holy Father, . . . may grow up in thee, and receive a fullness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing" (D&C 109:14-15).

I invoke his blessings upon you in your homes, in your work, in your service in his church.

I pledge my life, my strength, and the full measure of my soul to serving him. May we have ears to hear and hearts to feel and the courage to follow,

I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

President Monson

President Howard W. Hunter, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has just spoken to us and delivered a masterful address. He has been followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve will now address us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

President Hunter, we have been thrilled by your inspired message. We express our love to you. We also congratulate the newly called and sustained General Authorities and general officers of the Church.

Our hearts have united with the Mormon Youth Chorus's spirited singing of Charles Wesley's inspired words, "Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore!" (*Hymns*, no. 66). With the events of this solemn assembly, we have also felt the overwhelming gratitude expressed in our beloved hymn "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" (*Hymns*, no. 19). We have rejoiced in the privilege of sustaining President Howard W. Hunter as President of the Church and Presidents Hinckley and Monson as his Counselors. In this worldwide assembly, we have pledged our prayers and best efforts to support the men whom the Lord has called to lead his church. I testify that what we have done has been recorded in the heavens

and that each of us will be accountable to God for the way we respond to the leadership we have sustained in this solemn and sacred way.

Hymns invite the Spirit

Last spring I made my first visit to Brasília, Brazil. Over three thousand Saints gathered for a regional conference. The printed program listed the musical numbers, but the Portuguese words meant nothing to me. But when their beautiful choir began to sing, the music crossed all barriers of language and spoke to my soul:

The morning breaks, the shadows
flee;

Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled! . . .

The dawning of a brighter day

Majestic rises on the world.

["The Morning Breaks," *Hymns*, no. 1]

Through the miracle of sacred music, the Spirit of the Lord descended

upon us, and we were made ready for gospel instruction and worship.

The First Presidency has said:

"Inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. The hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord.

"Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end" (*Hymns*, p. ix).

The singing of hymns is one of the best ways to put ourselves in tune with the Spirit of the Lord. I wonder if we are making enough use of this heaven-sent resource in our meetings, in our classes, and in our homes.

Hymns bring peace and calm

Last July I visited the Church's Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii. Before the evening show of dancing and music from various island cultures, I went backstage to thank the performers. I arrived during those frantic moments before the show began. Scores of performers were hurrying through the last-minute tasks required to coordinate their efforts in a fast-moving performance. I wondered how the director would bring this turmoil to order in preparation for my brief remarks.

It happened as if by miracle. On signal, one strong voice began, and the strains of "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" quickly swelled into a beautiful chorus as the uniquely talented young people brought their thoughts into harmony with the Lord.

We had a similar experience in our family. Last spring some of our children and fourteen of our grandchildren had a family outing in the mountains. One of our activities was a meeting to share

experiences and testimonies. We gathered at the appointed time, but the little people were gathered only in body. The large spirits in those little bodies were clamoring for more of the exciting outdoor activities they had been enjoying. The cabin where we met was too small to contain them, and it seemed as if a dozen restless children and their outcries were ricocheting off the walls in every direction. Grandparents will appreciate the apprehension I felt at trying to sponsor something serious in that setting.

Suddenly the instinctive wisdom of young mothers rescued our efforts. Two mothers began to sing a song familiar to the children. Others joined in, and within a few minutes the mood had changed and all spirits were subdued and receptive to spiritual things. I offered a silent prayer of thanks for hymns and for mothers who know how to use them!

Hymns used to learn and worship

The singing of hymns is one of the best ways to learn the doctrine of the restored gospel. Elder Stephen D. Nadauld captured this unique strength in some lines he wrote and shared in a General Authority meeting:

If I would teach with power
The doctrine and the plan,
I'd wish for gentle music
To prepare the soul of man.

And then to press forever
These truths upon his mind,
We'd sing the hymns of Zion
With their messages sublime.

The scriptures contain many affirmations that hymn singing is a glorious way to worship. Before the Savior and his Apostles left the upper room where they had the sublime experience of the Last Supper, they sang a hymn. After their hymn, the Savior led them to the Mount of Olives (see Matthew 26:30).

The Apostle Paul advised the Colossians that they should be “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16; see also Alma 26:8).

Modern revelation reaffirms the importance of sacred music. In one of the earliest revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord appointed Emma Smith “to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church.

“For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (D&C 25:11–12).

In a revelation given through another prophet a generation later, the Lord commanded his people to “praise the Lord with singing, [and] with music” (D&C 136:28).

Hymns in temple meetings

This direction to praise the Lord with singing is not limited to large meetings. When the Lord’s Apostles meet in modern times, the singing of hymns is still part of their meetings. The weekly meetings of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the Salt Lake Temple always begin with a hymn. Elder Russell M. Nelson plays the organ accompaniment. Members of the First Presidency, who conduct these meetings, rotate the privilege of selecting the opening song. Most of us record the date each hymn is sung. According to my records, the opening song most frequently sung during the decade of my participation has been “I Need Thee Every Hour” (*Hymns*, no. 98). Picture the spiritual impact of a handful of the Lord’s servants singing that song before praying for his guidance in fulfilling their mighty responsibilities.

The veil is very thin in the temples, especially when we join in worshipping through music. At temple dedications I have seen more tears of joy elicited by music than by the spoken word. I have read accounts of angelic choirs joining in these hymns of praise, and I think I have experienced this on several occasions. In dedicatory sessions featuring beautiful and well-trained choirs of about thirty voices, there are times when I have heard what seemed to be ten times thirty voices praising God with a quality and intensity of feeling that can be experienced but not explained. Some who are listening today will know what I mean.

All should participate in singing

Sacred music has a unique capacity to communicate our feelings of love for the Lord. This kind of communication is a wonderful aid to our worship. Many have difficulty expressing worshipful feelings in words, but all can join in communicating such feelings through the inspired words of our hymns.

When a congregation worships through singing, all present should participate. Here I share another experience. I had finished a special assignment on a Sunday morning in Salt Lake City and desired to attend a sacrament meeting. I stopped at a convenient ward meetinghouse and slipped unnoticed into the overflow area just as the congregation was beginning to sing these sacred words of the sacrament song:

’Tis sweet to sing the matchless love
Of Him who left his home above
And came to earth—oh, wondrous
plan—
To suffer, bleed, and die for man!
[“’Tis Sweet to Sing the Matchless
Love,” *Hymns*, no. 177]

My heart swelled as we sang this worshipful hymn and contemplated renewing our covenants by partaking of

the sacrament. Our voices raised the concluding strains:

For Jesus died on Calvary,
That all thru him might ransomed
be.

Then sing hosannas to his name;
Let heav'n and earth his love proclaim.

As we sang these words, I glanced around at members of the congregation and was stunned to observe that about a third of them were not singing. How could this be? Were those who did not even mouth the words suggesting that for them it was *not* "sweet to sing the matchless love" or to "sing hosannas to his name"? What are we saying, what are we thinking when we fail to join in singing in our worship services?

I believe some of us in North America are getting neglectful in our worship, including the singing of hymns. I have observed that the Saints elsewhere are more diligent in doing this. We in the center stakes of Zion should renew our fervent participation in the singing of our hymns.

Guidelines for worshipping through music

There are a few conventions all of us should observe as we worship through music. As we sing we should think about the messages of the words. Our hymns contain matchless doctrinal sermons, surpassed only by the scriptures in their truth and poetic impact.

We depend on our choristers and organists to lead us at the prescribed pace. Singing too slowly or too fast can detract from a worshipful mood.

We should be careful what music we use in settings where we desire to contribute to worship. Many musical numbers good for other wholesome settings are not appropriate for Church meetings.

Our hymns have been chosen because they have been proven effective to

invite the Spirit of the Lord. A daughter who plays the violin described that reality. "I love to play classical music," she said, "but when I play our hymns, I can just feel the Spirit of the Lord in my practice room."

Soloists should remember that music in our worship services is not for demonstration but for worship. Vocal or instrumental numbers should be chosen to facilitate worship, not to provide performance opportunity for artists, no matter how accomplished.

Our sacred music prepares us to be taught the truths of the gospel. This is why we are selective in the kinds of music and the kinds of instruments we use in our worship services. This is why we encourage our choirs to use the hymnbook as their basic resource. We can make selective use of other music that is in harmony with the spirit of our hymns, such as Charles Gounod's marvelous "O Divine Redeemer," sung at the funeral of President Ezra Taft Benson. But a hymnbook's hymn is often the most inspiring and appropriate musical selection for a choir, a vocalist, or an instrumentalist (see Michael F. Moody, "Conversation: Learning and Singing Hymns," *Ensign*, Aug. 1994, p. 79).

Sacred music can help us even where there is no formal performance. For example, when temptation comes, we can neutralize its effect by humming or repeating the words of a favorite hymn (see Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, pp. 21-26; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, pp. 25-28).

Singing with deaf members

Our hymns can work their miraculous effect even when the chorus of voices is few and even when hardly a sound can be heard. I felt this a few months ago as I participated in a musical performance that was unique in my church experience. I had been invited to speak at the Great Basin LDS Deaf

Conference, hosted by the Salt Lake Valley (Deaf) Ward of the Salt Lake Park Stake. Over three hundred deaf brothers and sisters were in attendance. The members of the stake presidency and I were almost the only adults in the congregation who could hear and who attempted to sing audibly. The rest of that large assembly sang with their hands. Hardly a lip moved, and hardly a sound was heard except the organ and four faint voices from the stand. In the audience, all hands moved in unison with the leader as the audience signed, "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning!" (*Hymns*, no. 2). As we sang together, the Spirit of the Lord descended upon us, and we were made ready for prayer. Our sacred music is a powerful preparation for prayer and gospel teaching.

Make better use of hymns

We need to make more use of our hymns to put us in tune with the Spirit of the Lord, to unify us, and to help us teach and learn our doctrine. We need to make better use of our hymns in missionary teaching, in gospel classes, in quorum meetings, in home evenings, and in home teaching visits. Music is an effective way to worship our Heavenly

Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. We should use hymns when we need spiritual strength and inspiration.

We who have "felt to sing the song of redeeming love" (Alma 5:26) need to keep singing that we may draw ever closer to him who has inspired sacred music and commanded that it be used to worship him. May we be diligent in doing so is my humble prayer, which I offer with a testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the divine calling of those we have sustained today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

Now as we demonstrate our acceptance of his message, the choir and congregation will join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Sister Michaelene P. Grassli, who was released this morning as general president of the Primary.

The chorus and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Sister Michaelene P. Grassli

It is a distinct privilege to participate in this historic meeting, adding my heart and hand and voice to sustain the Lord's living prophet—and I do so with all my heart. I support also the action taken today sustaining Sister Patricia Pinegar as the new Primary general president. My time here has been full of extraordinary experiences, and I will miss them. But I know Sister Pinegar, Sister Wirthlin, and Sister Warner, and I know our children

are in good hands. I wish this new presidency well.

Love and protect children

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has always cherished children. The First Presidency, recognizing today's unprecedented world conditions, has taken unprecedented action that renews our commitment to our little ones. Through a message to the Church called

"Focus on Children," they have asked us to love and protect our children as never before, to teach them better than we have done in the past, to prepare them more thoroughly to conquer Satan's power in their lives and to receive of the Lord's eternal peace and glory (see "Focus on Children," *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, p. 80).

We care what happens to our children. They are precious to our Heavenly Father, and they are our hope for bringing about good in the world. President Boyd K. Packer once told me, "It is today's children who will bring the gospel to all the world. The children must be powerful and strong and independent in their agency. In order for that to be, they must have a knowledge of the gospel and a testimony that it is true."

Let me tell you about a little girl who is well on her way. Eight-year-old Lindsay had studied well for her math test at school. She said, "When the test began, my friend leaned over and asked if I would help her with the answers. I thought of the family home evenings we have at the first of every school year. Dad reminds us that we should always do our own work. He says it's better to be honest than to cheat for a higher grade. I knew if I helped my friend cheat, I would be cheating too. So I shook my head, no. The next day, the teacher called my friend and me out into the hall and said our answers were the same. It was easy for me to look at the teacher and tell her I didn't cheat. When I looked at my friend, she was crying. She told the teacher she had looked on my paper. I was really sorry for my friend, but I was very glad I had been honest."

Discerning truth from error

Children need to be able to discern truth from error for themselves and have the courage to act on what they know, as Lindsay did. As I have studied principles

governing discernment, I've made some discoveries. One discovery comes from the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price.

We read in the first chapter of Moses that God talked to Moses face to face, taught him that he was a son of God, and showed him the earth from its beginning to the end. Then "Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man, worship me" (v. 12).

And how did Moses respond to Satan's confrontation? "It came to pass that Moses looked upon Satan and said: Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee?" (v. 13).

Because Moses knew God, he recognized that Satan was an imposter. If our children know truth, they can recognize error.

When Moses recognized error, he took action. He didn't hang around with Satan for the experience. No, he said, "I can judge between thee and God; . . . Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not" (vv. 15-16).

He prayed for help and continued to do so, although Satan became agitated and insistent and redoubled his efforts, tempting Moses again. Satan told him, "I am the Only Begotten, worship me" (v. 19).

Moses knew this was not true, but Satan's rantings had a terrifying effect on him. However, he did not let fear overtake him. He prayed again, received strength from God, and commanded Satan again to depart. Then with loud wailing, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, Satan finally departed (see vv. 20-22).

Moses recognized error, he prayed continually for help, and he overcame fear. Thus he was able to defy Satan's attempts to intimidate him.

We want to enable our children to recognize error and take action as Moses did. This is much more than simply telling them what to think and what to

do. It is helping them seek for and love truth and choose independently to act according to it.

Teach children of Jesus and his gospel

Two ways we can do this are, first, teach them of Jesus Christ and the simple truths of his gospel. To do that we need to be with them so we can verbalize our beliefs to them and so they can watch us as we apply principles in our lives. Work time, playtime, planned lessons, the teaching moments that just happen—anytime is the time! Family home evening, family prayer, and times alone with each child will help plant truth in the hearts of our children.

Our children need to know that if we read the scriptures and the words of the prophets and heed the whisperings of the Spirit, we are learning from the source of all truth. If we oppose the Lord's appointed teachers of truth, then we oppose truth. But if we honestly desire to know what is true, it follows that we would want to learn from the source of truth.

Parents, use the support the Church offers you, including taking your children to Primary. Primary leaders and teachers can provide loving, supporting arms and hearts and unforgettable gospel lessons and activities for your children. They can help you immerse your children in truth.

With all my heart I thank each of you who are serving in Primary. You are blessing the children, and you are helping yourselves. President Hunter recently stated about Primary leaders and teachers:

"Those who have the opportunity to teach children in the Church are particularly blessed as they help children understand their divine origin and Heavenly Father's plan for them. These individuals will receive spiritual understanding in their own lives as they teach the precious truths of the gospel to children."

Help children practice discerning

A second way we can help children learn to discern truth from error is to give them opportunities to *practice* discerning the truth and choosing righteously.

One mother says each time one of her children leaves the house, "Remember!" And they respond, "I know, CTR!" They know CTR means "choose the right."

In family home evening, a family we know role-play situations they are likely to encounter, and they practice possible responses to the situations. In this way the children are able to have a plan before the confrontation comes. These children are learning to discern truth from error and to be independent in using their agency wisely.

When our children are familiar with truth, they can face opposing voices with confidence. No one can tell them the Church is not true, because that will sound wrong to them. When they make mistakes or have questions about doctrines, as we all do, the feelings and memories of truth from their childhood can help draw them back.

When I was a little girl, my father sat at the foot of my bed at night and taught my sister and me that we had lived with our Heavenly Father before the world was, that we had made a choice to obey God's commandments and to reject Satan. He taught us that Satan rejoices when we disobey Father. I made a determination then as a very young child that I wanted my Heavenly Father to rejoice over me, not Satan. That commitment has had a very powerful effect on my life.

I feel my Savior's love

May all our children be immersed in gospel teachings and have opportunities to practice using their agency wisely. I pray that all children will have the opportunity to know, as I do, that God lives, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and

that we are led by a living prophet today. May the words to this favorite Primary song ring in their hearts as they do in mine today:

I feel my Savior's love
And know that he will bless me.
I offer him my heart;
My shepherd he will be.
He knows I will follow him,
Give all my life to him.
I feel my Savior's love,
The love he freely gives me.
["I Feel My Savior's Love," *Children's Songbook*, p. 74]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder David B. Haight

Solemn assemblies

From the depths of my soul I have prayed for the direction and influence of the Holy Ghost on this heaven-directed occasion. The proceedings have been most impressive as a new chapter of Church history begins.

Only a few months ago we mourned the death and loss of a great leader, President Ezra Taft Benson, who served a lifetime of faithful service, dedicating his time and inspired leadership to the building of God's kingdom here upon the earth and serving his countrymen with deep loyalty and concern for the nation's welfare. He has joined his eternal companion, Flora, and their other loved ones on the other side in a continuation of his foreordained calling.

Today we are witnesses to and participants in a most sacred occasion—a solemn assembly to act upon heavenly things. As in olden times, there has been much fasting and prayer offered by the Saints throughout the world that they may receive an outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord, which is so much in evidence here on this occasion this morning.

President Monson

We have just heard from Sister Michaelene P. Grassli, former general Primary president. She has served as a board member of the Primary, a counselor in the Primary presidency, and as president for a total of twenty years. We thank her and her wonderful counselors, Sister Jepsen and Sister Wright, and welcome to their opportunities our new Primary presidency.

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

A solemn assembly, as the name implies, denotes a sacred, sober, and reverent occasion when the Saints assemble under the direction of the First Presidency. Solemn assemblies are used for three purposes: the dedication of temples, special instruction to priesthood leaders, and sustaining a new President of the Church. This conference session today is a solemn assembly for the purpose of sustaining a newly called Church President and other officers of the Church.

There is a pattern to solemn assemblies that distinguishes them from other general Church meetings where we sustain officers of the Church. That pattern, which was established by the Prophet Joseph Smith, is that the priesthood quorums, commencing with the First Presidency, stand and manifest by the uplifted right hand their willingness to sustain the President of the Church as a prophet, seer, and revelator, and uphold him by their confidence, faith, and prayers. The priesthood quorums of the Church so manifest by their vote. Then the general body of all the Saints stand and signify their willingness to do the

same. The other leaders of the Church are similarly sustained in their offices and callings.

Sustaining leaders—a solemn covenant

When we sustain the President of the Church by our uplifted hand, it not only signifies that we acknowledge before God that he is the rightful possessor of all the priesthood keys; it also means that we covenant with God that we will abide by the direction and the counsel that come through His prophet. It is a solemn covenant.

On the day the Church was organized, the Lord gave this commandment to the Church:

“For his [the Church president’s] word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

“For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory.

“For thus saith the Lord God: Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good” (D&C 21:5–7).

The first solemn assembly was held in the Kirtland Temple on 27 March 1836. Following the voting procedure that I described, the Prophet Joseph Smith recorded, “I prophesied to all, that inasmuch as they would uphold these men in their several stations, . . . the Lord would bless them; . . . in the name of [Jesus] Christ, the blessings of heaven should be theirs” (*History of the Church*, 2:418).

Today, by exercising the principle of common consent, we have expressed our will. How sacred is this privilege and responsibility? So sacred that in the great priesthood revelation, the Lord said that these matters “may be brought before a general assembly of the several quorums, *which constitute the spiritual authorities of the church*” (D&C 107:32; italics added).

Succession in the Presidency

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “Where [the President is] not, there is no First Presidency” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 106). Following the death of the President of the Church, the next ranking body, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, becomes the presiding authority. The president of the quorum becomes the *Acting* President of the Church until a new President of the Church is officially ordained and set apart in that office.

Our fifth article of faith declares, “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.”

The revealed process by which Howard W. Hunter became the President of the Church began when he was called, ordained, and set apart to become a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—a call that was inspired of the Lord. That calling and ordination placed the newly called Apostle in a priesthood quorum with eleven other men who hold the apostleship.

Each Apostle is ordained under the direction of the President of the Church, who holds the keys of all of the kingdom of God. He gives to each new Apostle the priesthood authority necessary for him to hold every position in the Church.

We declare that the authority to administer in the name of God is operative in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today. We further testify that this power or commission was conferred on the first officers of the Church by ordination under the hands of those who held the same power in earlier dispensations. Joseph Smith received the keys of the apostleship from Peter, James, and John, the same who held the authority of the apostleship in the New Testament

times. This authority has come down from the Prophet Joseph Smith to President Howard W. Hunter.

False claims of apostolic authority

During the days of Joseph Smith, there were some who were pretenders to apostolic authority. One such was an elder who was sent by Joseph Smith to preach the gospel. It was not long until this elder proclaimed himself a high priest and said he had been ordained by an angel from heaven. He deceived some Church members. He was called back to Ohio by the Prophet Joseph Smith and questioned about his claims. He soon confessed that he had lied, and he begged forgiveness. Orson Hyde, one of the Twelve Apostles, recorded the principle that the Prophet then taught all those who were assembled in the School of the Prophets:

"No true angel from God will ever come to ordain any man, because they have once been sent to establish the priesthood by ordaining me thereunto; . . . the priesthood being once established on earth, with power to ordain others, no heavenly messenger will ever come to interfere with that power by ordaining any more. . . . You may therefore know, from this time forward, that if any man comes to you professing to be ordained by an angel, he is either a liar or has been imposed upon in consequence of transgression by an angel of the devil, for this priesthood shall never be taken away from this church" ("Although Dead, Yet He Speaketh," *Millennial Star*, 20 Nov. 1846, p. 139).

In later years another Apostle, Elder George Q. Cannon, reaffirmed that principle to the Church. Quoting Brother Cannon:

"God, having once bestowed the keys of the holy Priesthood on man here on the earth for the up-building of His Church, will never take them from the man or men who hold them [who lead

the Church] and *authorize others to bestow them*" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:47; italics added).

The instructions by the Prophet Joseph Smith and Elder George Q. Cannon should be a warning and testimony to any pretender who claims apostolic authority on the basis that he has been visited by angels. It should also be a warning to anyone who may be so deceived as to follow these false shepherds.

President Hunter is truly Christlike

We have sustained as God's prophet on earth a kind, sensitive servant of God—Howard William Hunter. He is a humble, faithful, scholarly, and gentle soul, one who has experienced deep sorrow and suffered serious infirmities and even a threat upon his life, but, with his Scottish ancestral determination, has never given in or given up.

How tenderly he cared for his Claire during her illness, sitting by her bedside night after night, caring for her every need. We are witnesses of President Hunter's deep sorrow and loneliness in the slow losing of his eternal companion.

President Hunter understands compassion, thankfulness, graciousness, charity, and gratitude toward individuals and toward mankind, and he has the saintly bearing of a prophet of God. He, in my estimation, is truly Christlike.

Service as bishop and stake president

More than forty years ago he was ordained as a new bishop in Southern California. In his blessing he was promised, "You shall be known as an honest, just and honorable bishop among the members of [your] ward—and in future years, these members will come to you with tears . . . and thank you for your blessings, and your guiding hand, and the administration of the work you are now called upon to do" (quoted in Eleanor Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter* [Salt Lake

City: Deseret Book Co., 1994], p. 101). That blessing has proven true.

In February 1950, Bishop Howard W. Hunter was called to be the new stake president of the Pasadena California Stake by Elders Stephen L. Richards and Harold B. Lee. President Hunter not only served his stake members with distinction but assisted the expanding Church in many priesthood leadership assignments in welfare, education, and missionary opportunities, and he had a significant role in the building of the Los Angeles Temple.

President Hunter's leadership and strong moral values were recognized as a powerful influence in the Church organization, which he loves, and also in the Los Angeles civic community.

Special witness of Jesus Christ

The calling to the apostleship was issued to Brother Hunter by President David O. McKay in October 1959. On that occasion President McKay said to him, "The Lord has spoken. You are called to be one of his special witnesses, and tomorrow you will be sustained as a member of the Council of the Twelve" (quoted in Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter*, p. 144).

A prophet is one who knows by personal revelation from the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, for "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," as the Prophet Joseph taught us (Revelation 19:10; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 119). Thus every prophet bears record of Jesus Christ.

The sermons, writings, and teachings of him whom we have sustained this day attest that he is indeed a prophet and a special witness of our Lord and Savior. I quote from one of President Howard Hunter's many public statements of testimony of our Lord and Savior that he has offered to the Church and to the world. President Hunter declared:

"As one called and ordained to bear witness of the name of Jesus Christ to all the world, I testify . . . that he lives. He has a glorified, immortal body of flesh and bones. He is the Only Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh. He is the Savior, the Light and Life of the world. Following his crucifixion and death, he appeared as a resurrected being to Mary, to Peter, to Paul, and to many others. He showed himself to the Nephites. He has shown himself to Joseph Smith, the boy prophet, and to many others in our dispensation. This is his church; he leads it today" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 19; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 17).

So testified at that time President Hunter. And so I have the honor and privilege on this day to testify of President Hunter. With all my heart and every fiber of my body, I support, sustain, and express my love to President Howard W. Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—and to the noble men, President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson, who stand by his side in the First Presidency. All are great men of God—faithful and fearless—who, as inspired servants of God, will lead the Church forward, on to greater heights and expansion throughout the world.

I bear this testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Praise to the Man."

President Monson

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Praise to the Man."

Elder L. Tom Perry, also of the Council of the Twelve, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Sister Grassli, on behalf of my grandchildren and hundreds of thousands of other great young people we have in the Church, whom you've led so faithfully with such inspiration, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Sustaining Church leaders

April 6, 1830, is a significant date for Latter-day Saints. It is the day The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. The translation and printing of the Book of Mormon had been completed, the priesthood had been restored, and now the Lord directed that His church should again be organized here on the earth.

Prospective members of the Church gathered at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York, for this special occasion. The meeting was simple. Joseph Smith, then twenty-four years of age, called the group to order and designated five associates to join with him in satisfying New York's legal requirements for the incorporation of a religious society. After kneeling in solemn prayer, Joseph Smith proposed that he and Oliver Cowdery be called as teachers and spiritual advisers to the newly organized Church. Everyone raised his right arm to the square, and the pattern of sustaining Church leadership was established.

At that meeting the revelation contained in the twenty-first section of the Doctrine and Covenants was received. In that revelation the Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

"Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith" (D&C 21:1-2).

Today we have had the opportunity of raising our right arms to the square and sustaining Howard W. Hunter as our President. This is a historic occasion, as well as an opportunity to contemplate the blessing it is to have a prophet of God to lead us. I believe we should pause at the conclusion of this memorable session to remember what it means to sustain a President of the Church as a seer and a prophet.

The President is a seer

First, the title of seer. Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and many others were seers. They were seers because they were blessed with a clearer vision of divine glory and power than other mortals.

Perhaps the best description we have of a seer is in the Book of Mormon when Ammon finds the land of Lehi-Nephi. There was much rejoicing in the land at the arrival of Ammon. King Limhi addressed his people and called on Ammon to rehearse what had happened to their brethren since they had been separated. Then King Limhi sent his people to their homes and requested that the plates containing a record of his people from the time they had left Zarahemla be brought before Ammon that he might read them. As soon as Ammon had read the record, the king inquired of him if he could interpret languages from other records he had in his possession, and Ammon told him he could not. Then Ammon said:

"I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. . . .

"And the king said that a seer is greater than a prophet.

"And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God.

"But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known" (Mosiah 8:13, 15-17).

The President is a prophet

What does it mean to be a prophet? The word *prophet* in the Greek language means "inspired teacher" (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 3:1164). In Hebrew the word *prophet* means "one who announces or brings a message from God." According to Elder John A. Widtsoe:

"A prophet is a teacher. That is the essential meaning of the word. He teaches the body of truth, the gospel, revealed by the Lord to man; and under inspiration explains it to the understanding of the people. He is an expounder of truth. Moreover, he shows that the way to human happiness is through obedience to God's law. He calls to repentance those who wander away from the truth. He becomes a warrior for the consummation of the Lord's purposes with respect to the human family. The purpose of his life is to uphold the Lord's plan of salvation. All this he does by close communion with the Lord until he is 'full of power by the spirit of the Lord'" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, comp. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960], p. 257).

Father's experience with Joseph F. Smith

While my father attended LDS High School, he worked and lived in the home of President Joseph F. Smith. He wrote in his life history about President Smith:

"Most great men that I have known have been deflated by intimate contact. Not so with the prophet Joseph F. Smith. Each common everyday act added inches to his greatness. To me he was a prophet even while washing his hands or untying his shoes."

My father tells of one experience in which the prophet taught him a practical lesson late one night as he entered the Beehive House. Again quoting from my father's life history:

"I walked with guarded steps through the office, then into the private study to the door at the foot of the steps that led to my bedroom. But the door would not open. I pushed and I pushed to no avail. Finally I gave up and went back to a rug that I had noticed in the hall with the intention of sleeping there until morning.

"In the darkness I bumped against another partially opened door and the collision awakened the prophet. He turned on the light and, seeing who it was, came down the stairway and inquired concerning my difficulty.

"The door is locked that leads to my room,' I explained. He went to the door and pulled instead of pushed, and the door opened. Had he been disturbed by my foolish blunder I would not have been surprised, for I had robbed him of a precious night's sleep by a thoughtless act. He only smiled and stopped to inquire of a strange stable boy what I had stumbled into. I pointed to the half open door at the other end of the hall.

"Let me show you something.' He took time at midnight to explain, 'When in the dark, never go groping with hands parted and outstretched; that permits doors to get by your guard and hit you. Keep your arms in front, but hands together; then you will feel with your

hands and not your head.' I thanked him and moved to my quarters. He waited until I reached the rear stairway and then he retired."

A prophet teaches and guides

Isn't a prophet someone who teaches us to open doors we could not open ourselves—doors to greater light and truth? Isn't a prophet like a pair of hands clasped together in front of the body of the Church, helping members navigate through the dark corridors of the world? Isn't a prophet someone who watches and waits for us patiently while we get to where we need to be?

Never has there been a time when the written and spoken word can descend upon us from so many different sources. Through the media we find analysts analyzing the analysts, almost overwhelming us with opinions and different views.

What a comfort it is to know that the Lord keeps a channel of communication open to His children through the prophet. What a blessing it is to know we have a voice we can trust to declare the will of the Lord. As the prophet Amos taught, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

A prophet keeps the doctrine pure

The Lord surely understood the need to keep His doctrines pure and to trust their interpretation to only one source. Of course, we are all admonished to study and gain as much knowledge as we can possibly obtain in this life. We are encouraged to discuss and exchange ideas one with another to further our understanding. However, the Lord has only one source for the declaration of His basic fundamental doctrines. Even as General Authorities of the Church, we are instructed, "In order

to preserve the uniformity of doctrinal and policy interpretation, you are asked to refer to the Office of the First Presidency for consideration [of] any doctrinal or policy questions which are not clearly defined in the scriptures or in the *General Handbook of Instructions*."

In this way, conflict and confusion and differing opinions are eliminated.

President Brigham Young has assured us we can have complete confidence in the prophets. He said:

"The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother's arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray, for if they should try to do so the Lord would quickly sweep them from the earth. Your leaders are trying to live their religion as far as [they are] capable of doing so" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:289).

The good spirit of President Hunter

Today, by sustaining a new prophet, we have placed ourselves under solemn covenant to heed his voice. The Lord has designated Howard W. Hunter as our prophet, seer, and revelator.

An illustration of the spirit of President Hunter occurred at the conclusion of a regional conference at BYU's Marriott Center as he was exiting the building through the west tunnel. This was the period when he was just beginning to stand again and use his walker, but he was still a little unsteady. My son Lee and three of his children had attended the conference, and they were also exiting the Marriott Center through the west tunnel. As Lee and his children moved up the tunnel, his son Justin, who was wandering more left and right than in a straight line, drew dangerously close to President Hunter. Lee cautioned Justin, "Don't get in President Hunter's way." President Hunter stopped

for only a moment, turned his head around, smiled, and with a twinkle in his eye said, "Nothing gets in my way."

Follow President Hunter, our prophet

How typical of President Hunter. His life's story is filled with accounts of determination, accomplishment, faith, and true Christian love. He is an inspiration to all of us. He is our prophet. We sit at his feet ready to feast on the wisdom of this true and faithful servant-leader. We stand ready to heed his voice because we know he speaks for the Lord.

May God bless us that we may follow him who has been called to be our prophet, seer, and revelator. I give witness that divine intervention has preserved and prepared President Hunter for this great and important responsibility. He is the Lord's servant. Of this I testify in the name of Him whose church this is, even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Perry, for that stirring message and testimony. Elder Perry is a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and has been our concluding speaker for this solemn assembly session of the conference.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of the conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "O My Father." The benediction will be given by Elder C. Max Caldwell of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The chorus sang "O My Father."

Elder C. Max Caldwell offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 1994, at 2:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Primary children's choir from the Kaysville Utah Region, with Sister Vanja Y. Watkins conducting and Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Primary choir sang "Because God Loves Me" and "Thank Thee for Everything." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Howard W. Hunter, who this morning was sustained in the solemn assembly as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presides at this conference and has asked that I conduct this session.

We welcome you to the second session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance and who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders L. Tom Perry, F. Burton Howard, and J Ballard Washburn are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Vaughn J. Featherstone and Earl C. Tingey are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by this beautiful Primary children's choir from the Kaysville Utah Region, under the direction of Sister Vanja Y. Watkins, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Because God Loves Me" and "Thank Thee for Everything." They will now sing "The Light Divine." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy.

The choir sang "The Light Divine."
Elder Spencer J. Condie offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

Sister Watkins will lead this choir again in singing "Home" and "Love Is Spoken Here."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Home" and "Love Is Spoken Here."

Elder Robert D. Hales

Our personal testimonies

My beloved brothers and sisters, this morning was a historic occasion. It was a great honor and privilege to join with you in a solemn assembly to sustain President Howard W. Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

When we raise our hands to sustain the prophet, it is important for each of us to have a personal testimony that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, who leads his church today through the prophet he has chosen.

Our testimony comes by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost. The testimony received and carried within us enables us to hold a steady course in times of prosperity and to overcome doubt and fear in times of adversity. Each of us needs to know what a testimony is, how we can get it, and what our responsibilities are once we have received a testimony.

What is a testimony?

A testimony is the spirit of prophecy (see Revelation 19:10). It is a personal revelation from God, revealing the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A testimony comes through the Holy Ghost; it makes a deep and lasting impression on the soul.

Individual testimonies are the foundation and strength of the Church. Our testimony provides a guiding light that leads to a commitment which directs our conduct and our way of life. Our testimony is true north on a spiritual compass. It is a moving force that cannot be seen but can truly be felt. It is a burning within that tells us what is right. It is when "your heart tells you things your mind doesn't know" (Harold B. Lee, "Be Loyal to the Royal within You," in *Speeches of the Year, 1972-73* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1973], p. 101).

Our testimony is the fruit of obedience in the form of peace, joy, and un-

derstanding in our hearts of gospel principles. A testimony is a shield of faith "wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (D&C 27:17).

Our testimony is a measurement of our faith. Faith is testimony; testimony is faith. Having a strong testimony allows us to help others in their search for truth. Our testimony is a gift from God. It should be shared, but we do not have the authority to bestow a testimony upon someone else, because a personal testimony is granted by the Holy Ghost. It can aid others in gaining knowledge for themselves—a knowledge abiding in the heart that leaves no room for doubt.

Our testimony is a knowledge of who we are—a child of God, where we came from—the presence of our Heavenly Father, and where we are going eternally if we are faithful—back into the presence of our Heavenly Father. We must each gain such a testimony if we are to withstand the trials and adversities of mortality and go on to the glorious eternal future we all desire.

The prophets' testimonies

Today we rejoice in sustaining a new President of the Church. President Hunter declared:

"My greatest strength through these past hours and recent days has been my abiding testimony that this is the work of God and not men, that Jesus Christ is the authorized and living head of this church and He leads it in word and deed" (quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4).

What do we learn about testimony from the lives and teachings of the prophets of God? We learn that a testimony is very personal. We can each gain a testimony of the truth through the Holy Ghost.

Fourteen men have presided over The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this dispensation. Every one of them has had an unshakable tes-

timony of the reality of God, the divine sonship of Jesus Christ, the truth of the gospel, the Book of Mormon, and the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith. How did they receive their testimonies? Can we obtain a testimony in the same way?

How Joseph Smith gained a testimony

We are familiar with the vision received by the Prophet Joseph Smith and how he obtained his testimony of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Joseph had serious reflection about religions of his time. He read in the scriptures that if he lacked wisdom, he could ask of God, and wisdom would be given to him. The passage of scripture found in James 1:5 came to his heart with great power and feeling. Joseph reflected on the scripture again and again. He retired to the woods to express in humble prayer the desire of his heart, to do as James directed—to ask of God.

As we humbly testify to the world, there appeared to Joseph in answer to his prayer the very Eternal God of heaven and earth and His Only Begotten Son, who is the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. They appeared to this young man, who in the eyes of the world seemed to be a common lad, revealing in a few brief moments more truth about the nature of God than was had among all the churches and professions of belief in the entire world. The boy prophet, Joseph, now knew that God the Father and Jesus Christ were separate personages. Each had a body of flesh and bones. They could indeed reveal themselves to their chosen prophets just as they did to the prophets in ancient times. Living testimony, personal revelation, is the foundation stone of true religion.

Joseph Smith sealed his testimony with his own blood. The Prophet's martyrdom was a voluntary acceptance of death to seal the testimony of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Cov-

enants (see D&C 135:1) and to bear holy witness of Jesus Christ and his gospel in this dispensation. We do not give our testimony and lives in the manner that Joseph Smith, the martyred Prophet, gave his life. Rather, we give testimony by devoted service in our lives each day to lift and strengthen others.

How other prophets gained testimonies

The prophets who followed Joseph Smith in this dispensation each obtained their own testimonies by the same basic principles with individual application. If we consider their lives carefully, we can discover the process by which testimony comes. For example, President Brigham Young received a testimony of the truth of the Book of Mormon after two years of studious consideration. President John Taylor required only three weeks to discover that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ embodied the true religion that existed anciently as recorded in the Bible and now again restored to the earth. President Wilford Woodruff searched diligently for six years before finding the truth. He finally found it in the teachings and testimony of two Mormon missionaries. President Lorenzo Snow was the fifth President of the Church. When he met the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1831, he wrote, "A light arose in my understanding which has never been extinguished" (quoted in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 3:1367).

How David O. McKay gained a testimony

President David O. McKay was the ninth President of the Church. In his boyhood he desired to know, as Joseph Smith had known, of the reality of God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. One day while herding cattle in the foothills near his home, he sought a testimony through prayer. He said:

"I dismounted, threw my reins over my horse's head, and there under a serviceberry bush I prayed that God would declare to me the truth of his revelation to Joseph Smith" (quoted in *New Era*, Jan. 1972, p. 56).

He prayed fervently and sincerely with as much faith as he could find within him. When he finished his prayer, he waited for an answer. Nothing seemed to happen. Disappointed, he rode slowly on, saying to himself at the time, "No spiritual manifestation has come to me. If I am true to myself, I must say I am just the same 'old boy' that I was before I prayed" (p. 56).

A direct answer to this prayer was many years in coming. While serving a mission in Scotland, Elder McKay received a powerful spiritual manifestation. He later commented: "Never before had I experienced such an emotion. . . . It was a manifestation for which as a doubting youth I had secretly prayed most earnestly on hillside and in meadow. It was an assurance to me that sincere prayer is answered 'sometime, somewhere'" (quoted in Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986], p. 50).

Each of the prophets has testified of the personal revelation by which he came to know the truthfulness of the gospel and of the spiritual strength of such revelation.

How to gain a sure testimony

People often ask me, "How do you know? How can you know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ?" While there seems to be no exact formula by which each of us receives a testimony, there does seem to be a discernable pattern. Though prayer is important in gaining a testimony, we cannot merely ask in prayer for a testimony and expect it to be given immediately to us.

Generally, testimony emerges over time and through life's experiences. We

can compare testimony to the process of watching a photograph develop. Powerful impressions of the Spirit come like flashes of light on receptive photographic film. Like the chemicals needed to develop the picture, certain spiritual conditions and experiences are needed in our lives for our personal testimony to develop into a certain truth and knowledge. And like a photograph, a testimony, if not carefully preserved, will fade with time.

Testimonies often come when there is willingness to serve where we are called. They come when a decision is made to strive to be obedient. Testimonies come during efforts to help, lift, and strengthen others. They come from prayer and from studying the scriptures and applying them in our lives. Whatever our circumstances, there seem to be moments in each of our lives when we can be given the knowledge that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. There is no greater search in life that we can embark upon than the quest to gain a testimony of the truth.

While each of our lives is different, I believe we can, with some confidence, outline from the testimony of others, such as the prophets, and our own personal experience the process and phases we go through to gain a testimony:

Have a sincere desire to know the truth and express that desire in humble prayer to our Heavenly Father. "If ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you" (Alma 32:27).

Search the scriptures. Continue to pray. The scriptures are filled with the testimonies of those who have gone before. Even they, though long dead, can reach your heart and bring peace to your mind and direction to your life.

Search and ponder the truths you are learning about gospel principles. Think about them. Test them with further prayer. Relate them to what you know and feel. All the truths you will learn

can eventually fit together into a fervent, undoubting testimony.

Be humble and receptive. Have ears to hear when Heavenly Father leads us to someone who can teach us about the gospel of Jesus Christ. This may be a teacher, family member, neighbor, friend, or acquaintance. It might be a missionary who contacts us through tracting or referral. But know that once we pray, study, and have faith with a desire to learn spiritual matters, the Lord will provide a way for us to gain further light and knowledge.

Live your testimony. We must obediently follow the Savior's teachings and the prophets' examples. Our testimony and example will assist others who are searching for the truth.

Share your testimony. "O that I were an angel," proclaimed Alma, "and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God" (Alma 29:1). Let others know that you know. Bear your testimony in fast meeting. Tell your family; tell your friends. You will find when you share your testimony it becomes stronger, and there are many others around you who also want to embrace the truth.

Be willing to endure the test of time. Do not think that it is easy to maintain a testimony. Others will test you. Sometimes they will point the finger of mockery and scorn. Sometimes they may persecute you openly. Be prepared. Know in advance that the best of God's children have had the courage of true conviction and were willing to suffer ridicule, deprivation, and even death for the sake of true testimony. Is each of us willing to do likewise?

The fruits of a testimony

In our day, those blessed with a testimony of the truth have a shield of faith that will protect them from the fiery darts of the adversary at the hands of critics and detractors. We should not

let others determine our faithfulness and affect our testimony and ultimately our eternal salvation.

Doubts about matters of religion that arise from a lack of knowledge can be constructively resolved. The solutions are instruction, study, and prayer, which result in increased testimony, which drives out further doubts.

Years ago Elder Howard W. Hunter spoke to the youth regarding their testimony:

"I have sympathy for young men and young women when honest doubts enter their minds and they engage in the great conflict of resolving doubts. These doubts can be resolved, if [youth] have an honest desire to know the truth, by exercising moral, spiritual, and mental effort. They will emerge from the conflict into a firmer, stronger, larger faith because of the struggle. They have gone from a simple, trusting faith, through doubt and conflict, into a solid substantial faith which ripens into testimony" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1960, p. 108).

The fruits of testimony may be observed in the lives of the faithful. Those lifted by the power of testimony can find greater happiness and fidelity in marriage. Their testimonies are an antidote to the plague of divorce. They enjoy greater freedom, seldom enslaved to alcohol, tobacco, drugs, abuse, and other forms of self-indulgence. They find strength to deal with the problems of life.

Each of us will be tested, tempted, and tried for our testimonies and to find out if we will remain true and faithful through these trials of our faith.

We also know, beloved brothers and sisters, that if we do not continue faithful in the testimony that is imparted to us by the Spirit, then the light dwindles until it is extinguished. A testimony must be constantly nourished and defended, or it will waste away.

To the other testimonies borne this day, I wish to add my own testimony in the strongest and most direct manner possible. I know that God lives. I bear witness to the reality and divinity of his Son, Jesus Christ, who leads this church and reveals the word of the Father to our generation. I bear my testimony to the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, the eternal nature of the priesthood, the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the assurance that God has again spoken through a living prophet in President Howard W. Hunter, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Elder Horacio A. Tenorio, who was released as a member of the Seventy this morning, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Hartman Rector Jr., who received emeritus status in this morning's session.

Elder Horacio A. Tenorio

Satan's efforts to corrupt youth

In our world of escalating crisis, where the fraternal wars, corruption, secret combinations, and immorality are reminiscent of the wickedness described in the Book of Mormon, Satan has in-

tensified his efforts to destroy the family by corrupting the youth and robbing childhood of its innocence.

Our youth are especially vulnerable as the enemy cunningly utilizes every means at his disposal, including the mass media and changes in constitutional law,

to deceive them. He bombards our homes with enticements of destructive and harmful products and morals through television, videos, press, books, and so forth.

Parental responsibilities

We as Latter-day Saints and all good people anywhere must conscientiously screen what comes into our homes. Parents have the inalienable right and the responsibility to educate their children. No inappropriate outsider should be allowed to dictate our family's values nor what our children are being taught.

The gospel is based on the principle of agency, and our Heavenly Father has made us responsible for raising our families in such a way that they can be saved and return to his presence. In section 68 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 25, the Lord tells us, "Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, . . . the sin be upon the heads of the parents."

Make our homes fortresses

In medieval times, great fortresses were built around castles or cities to protect them from enemy attacks. In the Book of Mormon, the Nephites built fortresses to defend their families against their enemies. We must make of our homes fortresses to protect our families against the constant attacks of the adversary.

I am not suggesting that we isolate ourselves from the world by digging deep moats or constructing barriers several meters high around our homes, but rather that in our family councils, under the influence of the Spirit, we establish the activities, entertainment,

books, friendships, rules, and habits that will constitute our fortresses.

Our fortress consists of teaching our children the gospel through the scriptures, establishing the habit of reading them every day as a family, and basing a large part of our conversations on them. It means kneeling together daily to pray and to teach our children the importance of direct, personal communication with our Heavenly Father.

Our fortress is erected by showing our children, through our example, that the principles and teachings of the gospel are a way of life that helps us find peace and happiness on this earth and provides the strength necessary to withstand the trials and tribulations that come into our lives. We must teach our children to avoid compromising themselves with inappropriate fashions and negative practices of the world by simply saying no when confronted with them.

Creating a fortress requires the family to counsel together in weekly family home evenings, where they make decisions and agreements.

Establish a security system

In ancient times a fortress required regular inspections to ensure that no weak spots developed that an enemy could take advantage of, and guards in the watchtowers ensured that no enemy could approach undetected. In other words, once a city was fortified, a constant effort was made to maintain the fortress so that it could serve its purpose.

By establishing a security system of our own, we can prevent the enemy from finding and exploiting weaknesses in our family fortress through which he could gain access to, and harm, our most precious treasure, our family.

Father's interviews

One of the watchtowers on our fortress can be the regular habit of a father's

interview with each member of his family. Personal interviews are an important resource in maintaining the integrity of our fortress. Through them we become better acquainted with our children, learn about their problems and concerns, and establish open communication and trust that will enable us to foresee any danger, help them make decisions, and support them during difficult times. Our Heavenly Father has given us as parents the stewardship of caring for and protecting our families. It is a responsibility that we cannot and must not delegate.

In Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verses 39 and 40, it says:

"And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

"But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth."

A loving interview guided by the Spirit can give direction to our children's lives, bring about necessary adjustments or changes, and may even result in miracles.

Interviewing a young grandson

I wish to share with you a very special family experience. This is an interview I had with my grandson. Several years ago, when I was preparing myself spiritually in prayer to interview one of my daughters, I felt inspired to interview Kemish, my grandson who was a little over three years old and was living with us. Kemish was a bundle of energy and could not stay quiet for more than a minute, always running, jumping, and playing. So I let that feeling pass, thinking that I would wait until he was a little older and able to pay attention.

Several months later, while praying, the feeling came again; only this time it was stronger, and I heeded it. I went to Kemish and told him, "Tomorrow you and I will have an interview." The next day, at the beginning of the interview, I told him that during an interview we had to look each other in the eye and remain seated all the time, among other things. It was a real miracle; Kemish sat and stayed quiet for almost ten minutes. But more marvelous than that, however, was that I got to know his thoughts and feelings. The thing that worried him the most was when he could get a two-wheel bicycle. When I explained to him that he would have to wait until he was a little older, he understood perfectly. He then told me the story he had learned about Nephi and his brothers. But the greatest thrill for me, as his grandfather, was when he told me that he knew who Jesus Christ was and bore his testimony of the Savior to me. Nowhere could you ever find more truth and purity than in the testimony of a three-year-old boy.

I can picture an interview with my Heavenly Father before coming to this earth—an interview in which he called to me and spoke to me, showing me what he had in store for me. It must have been a tender interview with a loving Father who was about to let his son go for a time. I anxiously await my next interview.

I know we have a loving Father who is waiting for us. I know that he instructs us through his Only Begotten, our Savior and Redeemer. I know that his church and his gospel are real fortresses which will give peace and security to our most precious treasure on this earth, our family. Of this I testify in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Hartman Rector Jr.

Receiving emeritus status

When a Seventy of the First Quorum becomes seventy years old, he becomes emeritus. Or you can call it "emeritis." It's in the air; all you have to do is keep breathing and you'll get it. It seems that just about everything I do of late, I am doing for the last time, and so it is with speaking in general conference.

I can't say that this is doing any particular violence to my sensitivities, however, because I have never felt particularly comfortable in this position behind this microphone anyway.

I do appreciate the opportunity to express my love to my Brethren, most of whom I have seen called, and to all the many strong Saints all over the world whom I have had the privilege to know and serve with.

Yes, the gospel of Jesus Christ does truly make us brothers and sisters and a great family of Jesus Christ as we seek to follow him and become his sons and his daughters (see John 1:12; Ether 3:14).

Story of conversion

As most of you are aware, I am a convert to the Church, having been baptized in Tokyo, Japan, back in 1952 while serving in the U.S. Navy during the Korean conflict. I was born and reared in Missouri, where much of the early history of this church took place. But I had never heard anything about the Mormon church. I was looking for the truth, and although I had read the Bible and believed that Jesus Christ had lived on the earth and had been resurrected, yet I had so many unanswered questions—questions such as: Why doesn't God speak to man today as he did anciently when the Bible was being written? How can Jesus be his own father and the Holy Ghost too? Why did Jesus have to be

baptized when he had no sin? Where was I before I was born, and where do I go when I die? How can just believing in Christ save me when I haven't kept God's Ten Commandments?

I knew there must be answers that I had not heard. The answers came when Elders Ted Raban and Ronald Flygare knocked on my door in San Diego, California, in July 1951. My wife, Connie, let them in and accepted a copy of the Book of Mormon from them. I was in Hawaii at the time, attending a fourteen-week training course preparatory to deployment to Korea.

When I returned home, Connie gave me a copy of the Book of Mormon, and I began to read. I knew the book was true before I had finished 2 Nephi—Nephi had converted one more—and began to attend church in the old Valencia Park Ward in San Diego. Because of my preparation for deployment, I was not able to study and attend church as I wanted to and longed for the time when I could. The time came aboard the aircraft carrier *Philippine Seas*, where I read fourteen of the best books that have ever been written. They included the standard works of the Church, plus the writings of each of the Presidents of the Church from Joseph Smith Jr. to David O. McKay, plus Parley P. and Orson Pratt and a few others. I was like a starving man who had found food and drink for the first time. I loved it.

When we arrived in Japan, the LDS group aboard ship decided I should be baptized. So we traveled to the Tokyo mission home, where I requested baptism. I was informed that I had not been an investigator for the required one-year time period; therefore, I could not be baptized. However, I persisted. I asked to be interviewed. The interview took an hour and a half, but in the end I received a recommend for baptism and confirma-

tion. McDonald B. Johnson, the LDS group leader on the *Philippine Seas*, baptized me, and Fred Gaylord Peterson confirmed me, and I became a member of the Church on February 26, 1952. I was ordained a deacon that day and subsequently to another office in the priesthood each time the ship returned to Japan, until on July 26, 1952, I was ordained an elder and returned to San Diego in August, where my wife had been baptized on March 1 of that same year. We were a united family in the gospel of Jesus Christ and were looking forward with much anticipation to being sealed together with our three children in the Mesa Arizona Temple, which happened in May 1953.

Sixteen years after baptism, I was called by President David O. McKay to be a member of the First Council of the Seventy. That was in April of 1968. I was the first convert to be called as a General Authority since John Morgan, a period of eighty-six years. I have served in this capacity for twenty-six years.

Repent of sins

I have found the gospel to be very simple but also very profound. Once we have sufficient faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we believe he has paid for our sins, then we will repent. And no one truly repents until he believes in Christ.

You see, there is a difference between stopping sinning and repentance. In the first instance we are still guilty; in the second we are free of the sin and guilt. People stop sinning all the time because they are afraid they will get AIDS or die of lung cancer or some other reason, but they do not get rid of their sins. That can happen only when a nonmember follows Jesus Christ down into the waters of baptism, then comes forth and receives the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by priesthood authority. That's how we get clean before the Lord (see D&C 84:74).

Again, in the first instance we are still in our sins, but in the second instance we are free from our sins. The word of the Father to Nephi was "Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son." Then Nephi reports he heard a voice from the Father saying, "Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (2 Nephi 31:11, 15).

Endure to the end

Then after baptism by the water and the Spirit, it appears that all the Father requires of us is that we endure to the end. What does that mean? I believe it means basically three things.

One: We must continue to repent for the rest of our lives because we will still make mistakes, and we must go home clean or we can't dwell with the Father and the Son (see D&C 84:74).

Two: We must continue to forgive others. If we do not forgive others, we cannot obtain forgiveness ourselves (see D&C 64:9-10).

And three: Yes, we must be nice. If we're not nice, I don't think we're going to make it. In other words, we must have charity, which is really love plus sacrifice. We must serve our fellowmen, women, and children, and if we do all else but we do not serve the poor, the needy, the downtrodden, the oppressed, the sick and afflicted, both temporally and spiritually, according to their wants, we cannot retain a remission of our sins from day to day. Without serving others, we cannot "walk guiltless before God" (Mosiah 4:26).

It is a fact that God is no respecter of persons. He loves all of his children, and I believe he loves them equally. Of course, he cannot bless his children if they do not keep his commandments, for he has said:

"There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this

world, upon which *all* blessings are predicated—

“And when we obtain *any* blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21; italics added).

God tells us he cannot deny his words. Quite obviously he is much more pleased with us when we keep his commandments, and he delights to bless us when we do. But if we do not keep his commandments, he will chasten us. It does not mean that he doesn’t love us, any more than when parents discipline children. In fact, it is because he *does* love us that he chastens us so we might learn obedience (see Hebrews 12:6; D&C 95:1).

Love and serve others

Then to walk guiltless before God, we must love and serve others. His statement through King Benjamin that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17), I believe, can properly be turned around to say that “unless you *are* in the service of your fellow beings you are *not* in the service of your God.” Mormon expressed this thought, which was recorded by his son Moroni, when he said:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. . . .

“ . . . And whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him. . . .

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:46–48).

I am persuaded that only this charity—this pure love of Christ, this love plus sacrifice, which is exemplified in the work that goes on in our temples—can save this nation (and the world, for that matter) when the Lord comes. The Lord was willing to spare Sodom and Gomorrah if Abraham could find just ten good men, which he could not do. I presume I could not have a more important hope for you and me than that we may be filled with this charity, this pure love of Christ, to serve our fellowman. I express this hope to you in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

These two delightful and impressive men have spoken to us out of their hearts as they leave their service as General Authorities. That doesn’t mean they’re through. Brother Tenorio’s native tongue is Spanish—Mexican. Brother Rector’s native tongue is Missourian.

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa, who was called as a Seventy at the April conference, will be our next speaker.

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa

Learning the true meaning of success

Dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful to my Heavenly Father for having sent me to this earth to loving parents who, from my boyhood, taught me

the priceless principles of righteousness, honesty, faithfulness, and how to work.

I was born into a poor family, and early in my life I had to work. This has been a great blessing to me. When I was twelve years old, I had to go to evening

school because I worked ten hours during the day. Many times on the way to school I would sleep on the bus or train. Sometimes I would even fall asleep during class. However, upon arriving home late at night, I would always find my loving parents waiting for me.

At that time all I wanted in life was to become a successful man, which to me meant having many material possessions, comfort, and a life of ease. With this as a goal, I went on working and studying.

After I was baptized into the Church, I came to understand the true meaning of success. Being successful means to be a servant of God, serving our fellowmen, being truly committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and keeping the commandments of God.

Sacrifices to go to the São Paulo Temple

During the time I presided over the Brazil Manaus Mission, I witnessed great examples of true success, stories which came from people truly devoted to the gospel and to their covenants with God.

One man I met lived simply in a tiny, little town in the middle of the Amazon. After being baptized with his family, he could hardly wait to complete a year's membership in the Church so he could take his wife and children to the temple. The São Paulo Brazil Temple is very far from the Amazon. It usually takes four days by boat and four days by bus to get to the temple—about a week's travel. This man was a cabinetmaker. How could he save enough money to pay for himself, his wife, and his children? Although he worked hard for many months, he made very little money.

When the time came to go to the temple, he sold all his furniture and appliances, even his electric saw and his only means of transportation, a motorcycle—everything he had—and went to the temple with his wife and children.

It required eight days of travel to reach São Paulo. After spending four glorious days in the temple doing the work of the Lord, this family then had to travel seven more days to return to their home. But they went back home happy, feeling that their difficulties and struggles were nothing compared to the great happiness and blessings they had experienced in the house of the Lord.

During my mission I met missionaries—young men and women—who for me were examples of true success. They were so faithful and excited about the gospel that they were never bothered by the scorching high temperatures and excessive humidity of the Amazon climate. They were truly angelic messengers carrying the gospel message to the people of northern Brazil.

A truly successful man

I remember a faithful and devoted member of the Church who was always in a good mood and always smiling. But one day I saw him crying. He told me the reason he was sad was because, at the age of seventy, he saw himself as a failure for having never been able to give his family the material comforts he felt they deserved.

I asked him, "How many children do you have?" He answered, "Four." I continued, "How many are members of the Church?" He said, "Four." I asked further, "How many are faithful members of the Church?" His answer: "Four." "How many are sealed to you?" "Four." "How many have married in the temple?" Again his answer was "Four." Then, moved by the Spirit, I told him that the success he had achieved in his life was one of the greatest success stories I had ever heard.

Scriptural teachings about success

I have learned much from the scriptures about success. It is wonderful to

read about the journey of Lehi and his family to the promised land. Of Lehi's older sons, Nephi and Sam, through their faithfulness to the Lord, charted their course for true success. For them, being successful meant being faithful in following the Lord's commandments. Through their example the lives of millions of people have been blessed to this date. And because of their obedience, many people have followed the path of truth and righteousness, striving to be worthy of the Spirit of the Lord in their lives.

I often think about the rich young man who approached the Master to ask Him what he should do to gain eternal life. Upon receiving the answer that eternal life meant giving up his riches and following the Lord, he turned his back and went away sorrowful because he was unwilling to forsake his many possessions.

I am grateful to the Lord for having touched my heart and for helping me to choose the better part—that which, so long as I strive for worthiness, cannot be taken from me. Being faithful to God as worthy members of His church, learning about Him and how to truly follow and worship Him, is more priceless than gold, silver, or diamonds.

Gratitude for General Authorities

The General Authorities of the Church, for whom I am most grateful, are true heroes for me. I had been a member of the Church for just one week when I met my first General Authority, Elder Royden G. Derrick, a member of the Seventy. I shall never forget the challenge he presented to the members of the Church to be exemplary in all aspects of our lives.

I shall always remember the counsel given by our beloved President Spencer W. Kimball about not only spiritual matters but also how to manage our temporal lives. I have followed his counsel, and I am happy and grateful for the protection that comes from hearkening to the words of the prophets, apostles, my Brethren of the Quorum, and my local leaders. Only when we keep the commandments of the Lord and do His will can we feel totally safe.

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know that we are guided by a prophet today. I testify to you that President Howard W. Hunter is a prophet of God. My testimony is renewed every time I hear and follow his counsel. My life has been very blessed through the gospel. For this I am most grateful, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Claudio Mendes Costa. His native tongue is Portuguese. We have heard powerful testimonies as we have seen the reach and spread of this work out across the world and the raising up of strong and faithful and tremendous advocates.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," following which Elders W. Don Ladd and James O. Mason will speak to us. Both of them were sustained as Seventies at the April conference.

The choir and congregation sang
 "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder W. Don Ladd

A rising tide of evil

"There are . . . so many kinds of voices in the world," said the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians two thousand years ago (1 Corinthians 14:10). They seemed to be troubled by the same conflicting messages we hear today, and it can be frightening when you consider how fragile and fickle the fabric of our society really is.

There have always been strident sounds and discordant voices, and our day is no exception. Every day in the newspapers, over television, in movies and magazines we are bombarded with violence and immorality clothed in the enticing voices of permissiveness.

In His sermon on the mount, the Master admonished, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34).

Sufficient indeed is the evil thereof unto this day in which we live. There seems to be a rising tide of evil, a flood of iniquity spreading throughout the world. Crime and violence are increasing at an alarming rate. Fear openly stalks our streets and invades our homes.

It has been said that you can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisements, and many of the ones I see do not speak well of us. Someone said there was a time when movies were rated on how good they were, not on who was allowed to see them.

According to the Book of Mormon, the devil "seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). The evidence of his handiwork is certainly around us. Elder Richard L. Evans once said, "If we don't change direction, we will arrive at where we are going" (*Richard Evans' Quote Book* [Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1971], p. 244).

Strengthen ourselves and our families

It is not in idleness that our prophets admonish again and again to strengthen ourselves and our families—to hold family home evenings, to read and study the scriptures, to have daily personal and family prayers, and, to quote our prophet, Howard W. Hunter, to "treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness" (quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4).

The immoral influences of the world are especially destructive to children. But our children, like ourselves, aren't going to live in a vacuum. They never have and they never will. In all their growing and developing, we can do much to help them, to protect them, and to guide them. But we cannot isolate them from the influences of their own time and generation. There will be times when other voices are in their ears, when other hands are on their shoulders, and when they are away from home.

We would do well, then, while ours is still the strongest influence in their lives, to give them a sure set of standards and a firm foundation of safe and sound principles.

Build a personal ark

The Lord said to Noah, "Make thee an ark" and "with thee will I establish my covenant" (Genesis 6:14, 18).

"And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him. . . .

" . . . And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark" (Genesis 7:5, 23).

We all need to build a personal ark, to fortify ourselves against this rising tide of evil, to protect ourselves and our families against the floodwaters of iniquity around us. And we shouldn't wait until it starts raining, but prepare

in advance. This has been the message of all the prophets in this dispensation, including President Hunter, as well as the prophets of old.

Unfortunately we don't always heed the clear warnings of our prophets. We coast complacently along until calamity strikes, and then we panic.

When it starts raining, it is too late to begin building the ark. However, we do need to listen to the Lord's spokesmen. We need to calmly continue to move ahead and prepare for what will surely come. We need not panic or fear, for if we are prepared, spiritually and temporally, we and our families will survive any flood. Our arks will float on a sea of faith if our works have been steadily and surely preparing for the future.

The key is to accept the invitation of our prophet, whom we sustained this morning, "to live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed" (quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4).

Build a relationship with Christ

The most important thing we can do—young or old—is develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If we do,

we will always be comfortable with ourselves. Any questions of self-esteem and self-worth will diminish, and we will have a quiet confidence that will see us through any trial. And the Savior's promise to us is "Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world" (D&C 50:41).

Whatever the anxiety or fear or frustration, we have only to remember the Lord's comforting words to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Liberty Jail: "My son, peace be unto thy soul" (D&C 121:7). To each of us, He will always be there to say, "My son, my daughter, my child, peace be unto thy soul."

And in return we should pledge, as did the poet George Herbert:

Sev'n whole dayes, not one in seven,
I will praise thee. . . .
Ev'n eternitie is too short
To extoll thee.
["Praise (II)," lines 17–18, 27–28]

My brothers and sisters, I bear you my witness that Jesus is the Christ, that He indeed overcame the world through His atonement, and that He will always be there to comfort us if we will follow His example and do the will of the Father. And I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder James O. Mason

The dawning of a brighter day in Africa

We heard the music and stirring words of "Onward, Christian Soldiers" as we entered the house used as the chapel of the Lagos Nigeria Fourth Branch. The singers—eighteen elders, two sisters, and one missionary couple—were preparing for their zone conference. We were impressed by their bright, eager smiles and faces glowing with enthusiasm. The single missionaries had been called to serve from homes in Ghana,

Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. The couple from Canada were on their second mission.

We sang with conviction the opening hymn of the conference:

Go forth with faith to tell the world
Of Jesus Christ, the Lord.
Bear witness he is God's own Son;
Proclaim his wondrous word.
Go forth with hope and courage
strong
To spread the word abroad

That people of all nations
Are children of our God. . . .

Go forth with pow'r to tell the world
The gospel is restored,
That all may gain eternal life
Thru Jesus Christ, the Lord.
["Go Forth with Faith," *Hymns*, no. 263]

A few days earlier I had presided at a stake conference in Benin City, Nigeria. The stake had been created a year earlier and had grown by over 260 members, mostly families, during that period. The percentage of member families receiving home teaching visits in this large, sprawling city is well within the range of established stakes in developed countries, even though few families in Benin City own cars or telephones. Attendance at sacrament meeting in the new stake is high in spite of ongoing political turmoil and frequent public transportation disruptions. Nearly 50 percent of stake members were present at the Sunday morning session of stake conference; many families walked considerable distances to attend. A well-trained choir sang with joy the hymns of Zion. Comparable levels of participation and dedicated, competent leadership are evident wherever the Church is established in sub-Saharan Africa. Africa is truly seeing the dawning of a brighter day.

Steady growth of the Church in Africa

The first stake on the continent was created in South Africa in 1970. There are now five stakes in that country. The Johannesburg South Africa Temple was dedicated in 1985. Five additional stakes have more recently been organized in Nigeria and Ghana, the first a mere decade after the 1978 revelation on the priesthood. Over fifty districts of the Church are growing in Africa under inspired local leadership. The Church is authorized to do missionary work in

twenty-six of the forty-four countries included in the Africa Area.

Growth of the Church in Africa moves forward deliberately and steadily according to inspired design. Altogether there are 80,000 members, 12 missions, 10 stakes, and 425 wards and branches. The number of baptisms during 1993 totaled over 9,000. Even greater numbers of baptisms would be possible if that were the sole measure of success. However, we are anxious that each of our African brothers and sisters be remembered and "nourished by the good word of God" (Moroni 6:4). The Church therefore proceeds in an orderly and planned fashion. Efforts are focused to create centers of strength. The goal is to establish deep pools of leadership that will become the foundation for future Church expansion.

Missionary work is concentrated geographically around existing chapels. Buildings are sited for occupancy by two or more Church units. The missionaries concentrate their efforts on converting families and potential leaders. Major attention is given to training local leadership, which is made easy because members in Africa are eager to be taught and are quick to learn and abide by gospel principles.

Missionary couples needed in Africa

Nearly half of the 960 full-time missionaries serving in Africa are Africans, and the number is growing. Retired couples from the United States and Canada play a significant role. Unselfishly leaving behind home, children, and grandchildren, these devoted couples are ministering angels to grateful, loving people. Finding, testifying, baptizing, and above all else loving are duties eagerly assumed by the missionary couples who truly comprehend what retirement can be. These couples also provide deeply appreciated gifts of literacy, better health,

and humanitarian service to members and nonmembers.

Rich and eternal are the rewards as these couples nourish and carry "in their arms, and . . . upon their shoulders" the truth-seeking people they are called to bless (see 1 Nephi 21:22). Sacrifice may be required—discipleship is not always easy—but life is never the same for a couple who have tasted the sweetness and joy of missionary service. Otherwise, why do so many return for second and even third missions? More couples are urgently needed in Africa and elsewhere. My brothers and sisters who are retired or approaching retirement, please prayerfully consider the rich blessings that flow from missionary service. If you should "bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy . . . in the kingdom of my Father" (D&C 18:15).

The truth of God goes forth

When the Church was still in its infancy, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated: "Our missionaries are going forth to different nations; . . . the Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; . . . but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every

clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

Yes, in spite of challenges, the work of the Lord moves forward steadily in Africa. I am humbly grateful for my calling as a Seventy, and I rejoice in this opportunity to serve. I love the people of Africa. I am thankful for the sweet companionship of my wife and for the faithful prayers of my children and their families.

Brothers and sisters, I know that my Redeemer lives and is the Savior of the world, that this is the only true and living church upon the earth, and that President Howard W. Hunter is a prophet of God. And to this I bear solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Elders W. Don Ladd, who grew up in the Deep South, and James O. Mason, who grew up in Salt Lake City and has had a distinguished medical career, including service as surgeon general of the United States.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, who was called as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles in June, will now speak to us.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

A special witness of Jesus Christ

My beloved brothers and sisters, this is my first opportunity to stand before you since the events of June 23 altered the course of my life and of my service forever. That was exactly one hundred days ago, and every one of those days I have prayed to be worthy of and equal to this sacred responsibility. Perhaps you can understand the immense personal inadequacy I feel and the deep,

often painful examination of my soul I have experienced.

Obviously my greatest thrill and the most joyful of all realizations is that I have the opportunity, as Nephi phrased it, to "talk of Christ, . . . rejoice in Christ, . . . preach of Christ, [and] prophesy of Christ" (2 Nephi 25:26) wherever I may be and with whomever I may find myself until the last breath of my life is gone. Surely there could be no higher purpose or greater privilege than that of "special

[witness] of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23).

But my greatest anxiety stems from that very same commission. A line of scripture reminds us with searing understatement that "they which preach the gospel should live . . . the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). Beyond my words and teachings and spoken witness, my life must be part of that testimony of Jesus. My very being should reflect the divinity of this work. I could not bear it if anything I might ever say or do would in any way diminish your faith in Christ, your love for this church, or the esteem in which you hold the holy apostleship.

I do promise you—as I have promised the Lord and these my brethren—that I will strive to live worthy of this trust and serve to the full measure of my ability.

I know I cannot succeed without the guidance of the Master, whose work this is. On occasion the beauty of his life and the magnitude of his gift come to my heart with such force that, as a favorite hymn says, "I scarce can take it in" ("How Great Thou Art," *Hymns*, no. 86). The purity of his life, his mercy and compassion for us have led me again and again to "bow in humble adoration and there proclaim, 'My God, how great thou art!'"

Gratitude to family

I wish to thank my beloved wife, Pat, and our heaven-sent children for their prayers and their love, not only through these recent weeks, but always. My wife has the purest faith and deepest spirituality I know. Never in her entire life has she sought her own reward or pursued a selfish motive. Paraphrasing what Mark Twain's Adam said of his Eve, I say of her: Wherever she was, there was paradise (see "Eve's Diary," in *The Works of Mark Twain*, 37 vols. [New York: Gabriel Wells, 1922–25], 24:383).

And to each of our children, I say, Thank you for being the kind of person I

prayed at your birth you would become. It is high privilege indeed when a father's best friends and noblest examples are his own children. To my wife, my children, my saintly parents, and scores of others along the path of life who teach and serve and sacrifice to make us what we are, I express my undying appreciation.

Prophetic calling of President Hunter

If I may, I wish to bear personal witness to two kinds of miracles that I have seen in the process of coming to this new office.

One divine manifestation I have seen is of the prophetic calling of President Howard W. Hunter, whom we had the privilege of sustaining this morning in solemn assembly. Because of the unexpected call which came to me in the first weeks of his prophetic ministry, I have had something of a unique vantage point from which to observe the miracle of his renewal, the profound evidence of God's hand upon this chosen leader.

In a rapid sequence of events that Thursday morning, President Hunter interviewed me at length, extended to me my call, formally introduced me to the First Presidency and the Twelve gathered in their temple meeting, gave me my apostolic charge and outline of duties, ordained me an Apostle, set me apart as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, added a magnificent and beautiful personal blessing of considerable length, then went on to conduct the sacred business of that first of my temple meetings, lasting another two or three hours!

President Hunter did all of that personally. And through it all he was strong and fixed and powerful. Indeed, it seemed to me he got stronger and more powerful as the day progressed. I count it one of the greatest privileges of my life just to have observed the Lord's anointed engaged in such a manner.

I include in that tribute President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson, who that day and always stand so faithfully at President Hunter's side in the First Presidency, and President Boyd K. Packer, who leads the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Yes, I testify that God has worked his will on Howard William Hunter. He has touched his lips and spread the prophetic mantle of ordained leadership upon his shoulders. President Hunter is a miracle—one who has been fashioned, molded, refined, and sustained for the service he now renders. He is a most remarkable blend of velvet and steel. Like every prophet before him—including Joseph Smith Jr.—and every prophet who will succeed him, President Hunter was called and foreordained in the grand councils of heaven before this world was. I bear solemn witness of that fact and the principle of Church governance it teaches. And age? Age has nothing to do with it. Whether an incomparable fourteen-year-old in 1820 or an invincible eighty-six-year-old in 1994, it is obvious that the number of birthdays doesn't count, that "time . . . is measured [only] unto men" (Alma 40:8). President Hunter, we all bask in the glow of those candles on your cake and look forward to lighting yet another one in six weeks' time.

Strength from Church members

I have also seen another miracle. That miracle is you, the great faithful but often unheralded body of the Church, who play your part in the ongoing saga of the Restoration. In a real sense, the wonder and beauty of this historic day would not, could not be complete without you.

Certainly I, for one, have taken great strength from you today—you who come from a hundred different nations and ten hundred walks of life; you who have

turned away from the glitter and glare and "vain imaginations" (1 Nephi 12:18) of the world to seek a holier life in the splendor of the city of God; you who love your families and your neighbors and, yes, those who hate you and curse you and "despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44); you who pay tithing with certainty even when you are uncertain about every other aspect of your financial future; you who send your sons and daughters on missions, clothing that child in better apparel than you now wear—or will wear—for the eighteen or twenty-four months of sacrifice that lie ahead; you who plead for blessings to be bestowed on others, especially those in physical or spiritual distress, offering to give them your own health or happiness if that would be something God could allow; you who face life alone, or face it without advantage, or face it with little success; you who carry on in quiet courage, doing the best you can. I pay tribute to every one of you and am deeply honored to stand in your presence.

I especially thank you for sustaining your leaders, whatever their personal sense of limitation may be. This morning, in common consent, you volunteered to uphold—or more literally "hold up"—the presiding officers of the kingdom, those who bear the keys and responsibility for the work, not one man of whom sought the position or feels equal to the task. And even when Jeffrey Holland's name is proposed as the last and the least of the newly ordained, your arm goes lovingly to the square. And you say to Brother Holland through his tears and his nights of walking the floor: "You lean on us. Lean on us out here in Omaha and Ontario and Osaka, where we have never even seen you and scarcely know who you are. But you are one of the 'Brethren,' so you are no stranger or foreigner to us, but a fellow citizen in the household of God. You will be prayed

for in our family, and you will hold a place within our hearts. Our strength shall be your strength. Our faith will build your faith. Your work will be our work."

This church, the great institutional body of Christ, is a marvelous work and a wonder not only because of what it does for the faithful but also because of what the faithful do for it. Your lives are at the very heart of that marvel. You are evidence of the wonder of it all.

Debbie, Tanya, and Liza Avila

Just twenty-four hours after my call as an Apostle last June, I left for a Church assignment in southern California, where in due course I found myself standing by the bedsides of Debbie, Tanya, and Liza Avila. These three lovely sisters, ages thirty-three, thirty-two, and twenty-three, respectively, each developed muscular dystrophy at age seven. Since that tender age, each has had her rendezvous with pneumonia and tracheotomies, with neuropathy and leg braces. Then came wheelchairs, respirators, and, finally, total immobility.

Enduring the longest period of immobility of the three sisters, Tanya has been on her back for seventeen years, having never moved from her bed during that period of time. Never once in seventeen years has she seen the sun rise or set or felt the rain upon her face. Never once in seventeen years has she picked a flower or chased a rainbow or watched a bird in flight. For a lesser number of years, Debbie and Liza have also now lived with those same physical restrictions. Yet somehow through it all, these sisters have not only endured, they have triumphed—earning Young Women personal achievement awards, graduating from high school (including seminary), completing university correspondence courses, and reading the standard works over and over and over again.

Avila sisters go to the temple

But there has been one other abiding ambition these remarkable women were determined to see fulfilled. They rightly saw themselves as daughters of the covenant, offspring of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Rachel. They vowed that somehow, some way, someday they would go to the house of the Lord to claim those eternal promises. And now even that has been accomplished. "It was the most thrilling and fulfilling day of my life," Debbie said. "I truly felt I was home. Everyone was so gracious and helpful with the innumerable and seemingly insurmountable arrangements that had to be made. Never in my life have I felt more loved and accepted."

Of her experience, Tanya said, "The temple is the only place I have ever been where I felt truly whole. I have always felt I was a daughter of God, but only in the temple did I understand what that truly meant. The fact that I went through the experience lying horizontally with a respirator took absolutely nothing away from this sacred experience."

Elder Douglas Callister, who, along with the presidency and workers in the Los Angeles Temple, assisted these sisters in making their dream come true, said to me, "There they were, dressed in white, long black hair falling down nearly to the floor from their horizontal position, eyes filled with tears, unable to move their hands or any other part of the body except their heads, savoring, absorbing, cherishing every word, every moment, every aspect of the temple endowment." Debbie would later say of the experience, "I now know what it will be like to be resurrected, surrounded by heavenly angels, and in the presence of God."

One year after her own endowment, Debbie Avila made her way back to the temple, again with staggering special

arrangements and assistance, to do the work for her beloved grandmother who had literally given her life in the care of these three granddaughters. For twenty-two consecutive years, without reprieve or respite or exception, Sister Esperanza Lamelas cared for these three day and night. Virtually every night for twenty-two years she awakened each hour on the hour to physically turn each child so that she would be comfortable in her sleep and avoid the problem of bedsores. In 1989, at age seventy-four, her own health now broken, she died, having given new meaning to the Prophet Joseph's invitation to "waste and wear out our lives . . . do[ing] all things that lie in our power [for the benefit of] the rising generation, and . . . all the pure in heart" (D&C 123:13, 17, 11).

Doing the best things in the worst times

The ongoing miracle of the Restoration. Covenants. Temples. Quiet, unsung Christian living. The work of the kingdom done with worn hands, weary hands, hands which in some cases cannot be raised to the square, but which are surely sustaining hands in every holy and sacred sense of the word.

Let me close. The mid-1600s were a terrible time in England. The Puritan revolutionaries had executed a king, and political life—including Parliament—was in total chaos. A typhus epidemic turned the whole island into a hospital. The great plague, followed by the great fire, would turn it into a morgue.

In Leicestershire, near where Sister Holland and I lived and labored for three magnificent years, there is a very small church with a plaque on the wall which reads, "In the year of 1653, when all things sacred were . . . either demolished or profaned, Sir Robert Shirley [built] this church; whose singular praise it is, To have done the best things in the worst times, and hoped them in the most calamitous."

To have done the best things in the worst times, and to have hoped them in the most calamitous. Those are lines I would use to praise the prophets *and* the faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ down through the years—legions of the quietly heroic in every decade of the dispensation, led by the Lord's anointed, whose arms can also grow weary and whose legs are sometimes weak.

In the spirit of that legacy from those who have given so much—prophets and apostles and people like you—I pledge to "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Nephi 31:20). I pledge to "take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me" (Philippians 3:12, New English Bible).

I testify of him, the Redeemer of the world and Master of us all. He is the Only Begotten Son of the living God, who has exalted that son's name over every other, and has given him principality, power, might, and dominion at his right hand in the heavenly place. We esteem this Messiah to be holy, harmless, undefiled—the bearer of unchangeable priesthood (see Hebrews 7:24, 26). He is the anchor to our souls and our high priest of promise. He is our God of good things to come. In time and in eternity—and surely in striving to fulfill this new responsibility that has come to me—I shall forever be grateful for his promise: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). I thank him for that blessing upon us all, in his name, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

As I raised my arm this morning, I raise my voice this afternoon gladly to sustain President Hunter. He is a meek and special man. And, as we've heard the testimonies from two new Apostles whom we sustained this morning, I raise my sustaining voice this afternoon. I rejoice in two outstanding new Seventies and in new special sister leaders.

Increasing despair and hopelessness

For some years, brothers and sisters, there has been an increasing and profound sense of existential despair in the world. This mortal hopelessness both reflects and affects much of mankind. Whether tribal or national, wars constitute "the continued experience of twentieth-century man" (Alfred Kazin, *Bright Book of Life* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973], p. 81). A grumpy cynicism pervades politics in so many places on this planet. Holocausts, famine, pestilence, and tides of refugees have taken a terrible toll on human hope, with much of that toll coming from man-made, avoidable disasters. Causality can be assigned to one or another form of iniquity. No wonder, as the scriptures say, despair comes of iniquity! (see Moroni 10:22).

Of course, many disagree over what constitutes sin, but surely they do not welcome the deepening of human despair! Some moderns do not lament the loss of traditional faith either, but surely they lament the further loss of hope and charity, ever in such short supply anyway.

Consequences of lack of hope

Does hope really matter, or is it merely an antique virtue?

Without hope, what is the future of lubricating forgiveness among the human family? Without hope, why forgo now in order to preserve precious resources for

future generations? Without hope, what will keep the remaining idealism from also souring into cynicism and thereby laying waste to governments and families—institutions already in such serious jeopardy?

A coalition of consequences is emerging. As prophesied, the love of many waxes cold (see Matthew 24:12). Even those affectionally secure themselves can sense the chill in the air. The loss of hope sends selfishness surging as many turn even more intensively to pleasing themselves. The diminished sense of sin diminishes shame, that hot, sharp spur needed for repentance. Shame is often replaced by the arrogance of those morally adrift, including strutting celebrities whose outer boldness camouflages their inner emptiness. Henry David Thoreau correctly observed that "unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusement of mankind" (*Walden* [New York: Harper and Row, 1965], p. 7). No wonder so much hollow laughter emanates from the "lonely crowd."

As societies trivialize traditional values, we witness a flow of immense suffering. We anguish, for instance, over what happens to the unborn, who cannot vote, and to children at risk. We weep over children having children and children shooting children. Often secular remedies to these challenges are not based on spiritual principles. To borrow a metaphor—secular remedies resemble an alarmed passenger traveling on the wrong train who tries to compensate by running up the aisle in the opposite direction!

Ultimate hope is in Christ

Only the acceptance of the revelations of God can bring both direction and correction and, in turn, bring a "brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20). Real

hope does not automatically “spring eternal” unless it is connected with eternal things!

“What is it that ye shall hope for?” Moroni wrote. “Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ” (Moroni 7:41; see also Alma 27:28). From this triumphal act, resulting in the eventual resurrection of all mankind, so many lesser hopes derive their significance!

Prophets have always had and taught ultimate hope in Christ. Jacob wrote, “We knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and . . . also all the holy prophets which were before us” (Jacob 4:4).

You and I can be repeatedly reassured concerning this grand hope by the Comforter, who teaches us the truth about “things as they really are, and . . . really will be” (Jacob 4:13; see also Moroni 8:26). Such hope constitutes the “anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:19). Such hope is retained through faith in Christ (see Alma 25:16; Ether 12:9). In contrast, a resurrectionless view of life produces only proximate hope (see 1 Corinthians 15:19).

Having ultimate hope does not mean we will always be rescued from proximate problems, but we will be rescued from everlasting death! Meanwhile, ultimate hope makes it possible to say the same three words used centuries ago by three valiant men. They knew God could rescue them from the fiery furnace if He chose. “But if not,” they said, nevertheless, they would still serve Him! (Daniel 3:18).

Relation of faith, hope, and charity

Unsurprisingly the triad of faith, hope, and charity, which brings us to Christ, has strong and converging linkage: faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ, hope is in His atonement, and charity is the “pure love of Christ” (see Ether

12:28; Moroni 7:47). Each of these attributes qualifies us for the celestial kingdom (see Moroni 10:20–21; Ether 12:34). Each, first of all, requires us to be meek and lowly (see Moroni 7:39, 43).

Faith and hope are constantly interactive and may not always be precisely distinguished or sequenced. Though not perfect knowledge either, hope’s enlivened expectations are “with surety” true (Ether 12:4; see also Romans 8:24; Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21). In the geometry of restored theology, hope has a greater circumference than faith. If faith increases, the perimeter of hope stretches correspondingly.

Just as doubt, despair, and desensitization go together, so do faith, hope, and charity. The latter, however, must be carefully and constantly nurtured, whereas despair, like dandelions, needs so little encouragement to sprout and spread. Despair comes so naturally to the natural man!

Hope strengthens and illuminates us

Souls can be roused and rallied by hope’s “reveille” as by no other music. Even if comrades slumber or desert, “lively hope” performs like a reconnoitering scout out in advance of God’s columns; “there is hope smiling brightly before us” (1 Peter 1:3; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19). Hope caused disciples to go quickly and expectantly to an empty garden tomb (see Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:8–12). Hope helped a prophet to see rescuing rain in a distant cloud which appeared to be no larger than a man’s hand (see 1 Kings 18:41–46).

Significantly, those who look forward to a next and better world are usually “anxiously engaged” in improving this one, for they “always abound in good works” (D&C 58:27; Alma 7:24). Thus, real hope is more than wishful musing. It stiffens, not slackens, the

spiritual spine. It is composed, not giddy, eager without being naive, and pleasantly steady without being smug. Hope is realistic anticipation taking the form of determination—a determination not merely to survive but to “endure . . . well” to the end (D&C 121:8).

While weak hope leaves us at the mercy of our moods and events, “brightness of hope” produces illuminated individuals. Their luminosity is seen, and things are also seen by it! Such hope permits us to “press forward” even when dark clouds oppress (2 Nephi 31:20; see also v. 16; Hebrews 6:19; Ether 12:4; Colossians 1:21–23). Sometimes in the deepest darkness there is no external light—only an inner light to guide and to reassure.

Though anchored in grand and ultimate hope, some of our tactical hopes are another matter. We may hope for a pay raise, a special date, an electoral victory, or a bigger house—things which may or may not be realized. Faith in Father’s plan gives us endurance even amid the wreckage of such proximate hopes. Hope keeps us “anxiously engaged” in good causes even when these appear to be losing causes (D&C 58:27).

Hope helps us walk by faith

Hope helps us to walk by faith, not by sight (see 2 Corinthians 5:7). This can actually be safer. When unaided spiritually, natural sight often shrinks from the odds. It is immobilized by improbabilities. Mauled by his moods and intimidated by his fears, the natural man overreacts to, while hope overrides, the disappointments of the day.

Hope is particularly needed in the hand-to-hand combat required to put off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19). Giving up on God and on oneself constitutes simultaneous surrender to the natural man.

Daily hope is vital, since the “Winter Quarters” of our lives are not immedi-

ately adjacent to our promised land either. An arduous trek still awaits, but hope spurs weary disciples on.

Those with true hope often see their personal circumstances shaken, like kaleidoscopes, again and again. Yet with the “eye of faith,” they still see divine pattern and purpose (Alma 5:15).

By pressing forward we can stand on what was yesterday’s horizon, thereby drawing hope from our own experiences. Hence Paul described how “tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Romans 5:3–4). Therefore we sing, “We’ve proved him in days that are past” (*Hymns*, no. 19).

Hope feasts on the words of Christ, “written for our learning,” so that “having all these witnesses” through the “comfort of the scriptures [we] might have hope” (Romans 15:4; Jacob 4:6; see also 2 Nephi 31:20). We sing, too, of how “more holiness” involves having “more hope in his word” (“More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131).

Hope helps us bless others

Genuine hope is urgently needed in order to be more loving even as the love of many waxes cold; more merciful, even when misunderstood or misrepresented; more holy, even as the world ripens in iniquity; more courteous and patient in a coarsening and curt world; and more full of heartfelt hope, even when other men’s hearts fail them. Whatever our particular furrow, we are to “plow in hope,” without looking back or letting yesterday hold tomorrow hostage (1 Corinthians 9:10).

Hope can be contagious, so we are to be “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh . . . a reason of the hope that is in [us]” (1 Peter 3:15). If, said Brother Brigham, we do not impart knowledge to others and do good, then we “will become contracted in [our] views and feelings” (in *Journal of Dis-*

courses, 2:267). Despair is contraction at the end of its journey.

Genuine hope gives spiritual spunk, including to deserving parents drenched in honest sweat from being “anxiously engaged.” Just as the leaning Tower of Pisa is a persistent rebuke to architectural pessimism, so parental hope—by refusing to topple merely because of the gravity of the current family situation—is a repudiation of despair. Giving parents never give up hope!

Though otherwise “lively,” hope stands quietly with us at funerals. Our tears are just as wet, but not because of despair. Rather, they are tears of appreciation evoked by poignant separation. They will change, ere long, to tears of glorious anticipation. Yet the emptiness is so real and so restless that it initiates a retroactive inventory of what is now so painfully missing, doing so, however, while forecasting fullness and resplendent reunion!

Humble hope helps us to improve by being sufficiently free of ego to ask, “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). Submissive hope also readies us to “give away all [our] sins” because we have come to know Jesus, who alone can take them! (Alma 22:18).

Gospel hope keeps us from being muted by being either a naive Pollyanna or a despairing Cassandra. Voices of warning are meant to be heard, not just raised.

Being blessed with hope, let us, as disciples, reach out to all who, for whatever reason, have “moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Colossians 1:23). Let us reach to lift hands which hang hopelessly down.

Hope beckons us to the Savior

Hope beckons all of us to come home where a glow reflects the Light of the World, whose “brightness and glory defy all description” (Joseph Smith—History

1:17). Jesus waits “with open arms to receive” those who finally overcome by faith and hope (Mormon 6:17). His welcome will consist not of a brief, loving pat but instead of being “clasped in the arms of Jesus”! (Mormon 5:11).

These Primary children will soon sing about wishing “that [Jesus’] arms had been thrown around [them]” (“I Think When I Read That Sweet Story,” *Children’s Songbook*, p. 56). They and we can “hope, and even know” of such sacred things! (Alma 28:12).

Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which will immediately follow, must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the Primary children’s choir from the Kaysville Utah Region for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon. They will now sing in closing “Jesus Once Was a Little Child” and “I Think When I Read That Sweet Story of Old.” Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Jesus Once Was a Little Child” and “I Think When I Read That Sweet Story.”

Elder Gary J. Coleman offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 1, 1994. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

Good evening, brethren. President Howard W. Hunter, who presides at this conference, has asked me, Brother Monson, to conduct this session. We welcome you brethren this evening to this general priesthood session.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world. We acknowledge the approximately 2,500 elders viewing these proceedings at the Provo Missionary Training Center.

We note that Elders James E. Faust, Jack H. Goaslind, and LeGrand R. Curtis are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Joe J. Christensen and Sam K. Shimabukuro are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Elders Carlos H. Amado and Robert K. Dellenbach are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at this morning's solemn assembly Elders Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Andrew Wayne Peterson, and Cecil O. Samuel-

son were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Hartman Rector Jr. was given emeritus status.

Elders Albert Choules Jr., Lloyd P. George, Gerald E. Melchin, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, and Horacio A. Tenorio were released from their service as Seventies.

Elders Charles Didier, J. Ballard Washburn, and F. Burton Howard were sustained to succeed Elders Merlin R. Lybbert, Clinton L. Cutler, and Ronald E. Poelman as the general Sunday School presidency.

Sister Michaelene P. Grassli, Betty Jo N. Jepsen, and Ruth B. Wright were released as the general Primary presidency.

Sister Patricia P. Pinegar was released as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

Sisters Patricia Peterson Pinegar, Anne Goalen Wirthlin, and Susan Lillywhite Warner were called as the new general presidency of the Primary.

Sister Bonnie Dansie Parkin was called as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brothers Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ. Brother Hunter smiled when I told him the opening song. We shall begin with the choir singing "Awake, My Sons, Awake," following which Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Awake, My Sons, Awake."

Elder Angel Abrea offered the invocation.

President Monson

In the sweet spirit of this morning's solemn assembly and the session this afternoon, the choir will now favor us with "Secret Prayer." Following the

choir number, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "Secret Prayer."

Elder Richard G. Scott

Making the right choices

Present tonight are many young men who hold the priesthood of God.¹ Some of you look forward to being a missionary when you are older. Others are planning to go soon. Still others have completed missions and are seeking an eternal companion. I am sobered by the realization that some of you will not reach these worthy goals because of other choices you are making now.

I am grateful this is a private priesthood meeting, for I have felt impressed to treat sensitive yet important matters. While they apply to all present, I particularly want to talk with you young men. I will speak as though you and I were alone in a private interview and no one else can hear us. My purpose is to help you learn how to make the right choices. That will help you develop strong feelings of self-worth. You will have confidence to do right and overcome strong negative peer pressure and bad influences.

As a young boy I felt that some things that I heard discussed by others at school about private parts of the body were wrong. Yet I wasn't really sure how wrong or why they were wrong. You may have similar feelings. Since in tonight's setting you cannot ask me anything, I will use some of the confidential questions most frequently asked by youth I have met across the world. I will answer them by what I have learned from the scriptures and the prophets. You then will have clear standards from which to

make choices. I pray that as we talk, the Holy Ghost will let you feel the truth of what is said. I know that as you listen and think of how our interview applies to you, there will come impressions regarding what to do about it in your own life.

How can we resist peer pressure?

Question: Could you give us some help about resisting peer pressure? Why do some people do things that are wrong, then brag about how much fun they are having? When I don't participate, they make me feel stupid because I won't do it.

Answer: You can't please God without upsetting Satan, so you will get pressure from those he tempts to do wrong. Individuals who do wrong want you to join them because they feel more comfortable in what they are doing when others do it also. They may also want to take advantage of you.

It is natural to want to be accepted by peers, to be part of a group. Some even join gangs because of that desire to belong, but they lose their freedom, and some lose their lives.

One of the hardest things for you to recognize is how truly strong you already are and how others silently respect you. We have great confidence in you. You don't need to compromise your standards to be accepted by good friends. The more obedient you are, the more you stand for true principles, the more the Lord can help you overcome temptation.²

You can also help others because they will feel your strength. Let them know about your standards by consistently living them. Answer questions about your principles when you are asked, but avoid being preachy. I know from personal experience that works.

No one intends to make serious mistakes. They come when you compromise your standards to be more accepted by others. You be the strong one. You be the leader. Choose good friends and resist peer pressure together.

How can we resist bad thoughts?

Question: How do we keep bad thoughts from entering our minds, and what do we do when they come?

Answer: Some bad thoughts come by themselves. Others come because we invite them by what we look at and listen to.³ Talking about or looking at immodest pictures of a woman's body can stimulate powerful emotions. It will tempt you to watch improper videocassettes or movies. These things surround you, but you must not participate in them.

Work at keeping your thoughts clean by thinking of something good.⁴ The mind can think of only one thing at a time. Use that fact to crowd out ugly thoughts.⁵ Above all, don't feed thoughts by reading or watching things that are wrong. If you don't control your thoughts, Satan will keep tempting you until you eventually act them out.⁶

Why is the law of chastity so important?

Question: Why is the law of chastity so important? Why is sex before marriage wrong?

Answer: Fundamental to the great plan of happiness and central to the teachings of the Savior is the family. A new family begins when a man and woman make sacred marriage vows and are legally bound together to become husband and wife, father and mother.

The perfect beginning is through sealing in the temple.

With marriage they commit the best of themselves to be absolutely loyal to each other and to invite children to be nurtured and taught. The father assumes his role as provider and protector, the mother her role as the heart of the home, with her tender, loving, nurturing influence. Together they strive to instill in themselves and their children principles such as prayer, obedience, love, giving of oneself, and the quest for knowledge.

Within the enduring covenant of marriage, the Lord permits husband and wife the expression of the sacred procreative powers in all their loveliness and beauty within the bounds He has set.⁷ One purpose of this private, sacred, intimate experience is to provide the physical bodies for the spirits Father in Heaven wants to experience mortality. Another reason for these powerful and beautiful feelings of love is to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration of each other, and common purpose.

However, those intimate acts are forbidden by the Lord outside the enduring commitment of marriage because they undermine His purposes.⁸ Within the sacred covenant of marriage, such relationships are according to His plan. When experienced any other way, they are against His will. They cause serious emotional and spiritual harm. Even though participants do not realize that is happening now, they will later.

Sexual immorality creates a barrier to the influence of the Holy Spirit with all its uplifting, enlightening, and empowering capabilities. It causes powerful physical and emotional stimulation. In time, that creates an unquenchable appetite that drives the offender to ever more serious sin. It engenders selfishness and can produce aggressive acts such as brutality, abortion, sexual abuse,

and violent crime. Such stimulation can lead to acts of homosexuality, and they are evil and absolutely wrong.⁹

Sexual transgression would defile the priesthood you now hold, sap your spiritual strength, undermine your faith in Jesus Christ, and frustrate your ability to serve Him. Consistent, willing obedience increases your confidence and ability. It produces character that allows you to face difficult challenges and overcome them. It qualifies you to receive inspiration and power from the Lord.¹⁰

What are the limits of intimacy?

Question: They always tell us we shouldn't become sexually involved, but they never tell us the limits. What are they?

Answer: Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body.¹¹

Satan tempts one to believe that there are allowable levels of physical contact between consenting individuals who seek the powerful stimulation of emotions they produce, and if kept within bounds, no harm will result. As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that is absolutely false. Satan particularly seeks to tempt one who has lived a pure, clean life to experiment through magazines, video-cassettes, or movies with powerful images of a woman's body. He wants to stimulate appetite to cause experimentation that quickly results in intimacies and defilement. Powerful habits are formed which are difficult to break. Mental and emotional scars result.

When you are mature enough to plan seriously for marriage, keep your expressions of feelings to those that are comfortable in the presence of your parents.¹² To help you keep these sacred

commandments, make a covenant with the Lord that you will obey them. Decide what you will do and will not do. When temptation comes, do not change your standards. Do not abandon them when circumstances seem to justify an exception. That is Satan's way to hurt you by making it seem that sometimes God's law does not apply. There are no exceptions.

How far is too far before marriage?

Question: Before you are married, how far is too far to go if it is with your girlfriend?

Answer: Before marriage there can be no sexual contact with a girlfriend, fiancée, or anyone else, period.¹³ While a commandment, that standard is for your happiness. That's why the Church counsels you to go in groups and not to date while you are young. Later, as you prepare for marriage, remember that true love elevates, protects, respects, and enriches another. It motivates you to make sacrifices for the girl you love. Satan would promote counterfeit love, which is really lust. That is driven by hunger to satisfy personal appetite. Protect the one you love by controlling your emotions to the limits set by the Lord. You know how to be clean. We trust you to do it.

How does a person repent of sexual sin?

Question: How do you go about repenting after a sexual sin is committed? What sins should you tell the bishop?

Answer: All of the sexual transgressions we have discussed require sincere repentance with the participation of the bishop. Should you have done any of this, repent now. It is wrong to violate these commandments of the Lord. It is worse to do nothing about it. Sin is like cancer in the body. It will never heal itself. It will become worse unless cured through repentance. Your parents can

help strengthen you. Then you can become clean and pure by repentance under the guidance of the bishop. He may seem to be busy or unavailable. Tell him you are in trouble and need help. He will listen.

A youth in serious trouble said, "I have done things that I knew were bad. I have been taught they were ever since I can remember. I know repentance is a great gift; without it I would be lost. But I'm not ready to repent of my sins, yet I know when I am ready I can." How tragic. The thought of intentionally committing serious sin now and repenting later is perilously wrong. Never do that.¹⁴ Many start that journey of intentional transgression and never make it back. Premeditated sin has greater penalties and is harder to overcome. If there is sin, repent now—while you can.

Stay morally clean

I pray that as we have talked, you have had feelings to do better.¹⁵ You hold the priesthood of God. That is a sacred responsibility¹⁶ and also a singular privilege.¹⁷ You will be fortified in your determination to live righteously as you study the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. Listen to your parents, leaders, and the prophet we have sustained today. Have faith in the Savior. He will help you.¹⁸ Remember He said, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise."¹⁹

Please stay morally clean. The Lord will make that possible as you do your part with all your strength.²⁰ Jesus Christ lives, and He loves you. He will help you as you do your part. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), p. 64; see also "Discourse by President Wilford

Woodruff," *Millennial Star*, 21 Oct. 1889, p. 657.

2. See 1 Corinthians 10:13.
3. See H. Burke Peterson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, pp. 58–61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, pp. 42–44.
4. See *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), pp. 278, 445–46.
5. See Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, pp. 23–24; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, pp. 27–28.
6. See Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, p. 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, p. 47; see also Robert L. Simpson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1972, p. 144; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 112.
7. See Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, p. 9; or *Ensign*, May 1974, p. 7.
8. See Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, pp. 136–39; or *Ensign*, July 1972, pp. 111–13.
9. See Spencer W. Kimball, "President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, pp. 97–98.
10. See D&C 43:9, 15–16.
11. See Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, p. 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 8; in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, pp. 6–7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 6; "President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, p. 97.
12. See *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 283–84.
13. See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), pp. 264–65, 280–81.
14. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 70–72.
15. See D&C 64:33–34.
16. See D&C 84:35–39; see also Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), pp. 124–25.
17. See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 494.
18. See Moroni 10:32.

19. D&C 82:10.
20. See 3 Nephi 18:20.

President Monson

We have heard from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now speak to us, and he'll be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

Confidence in shooting free throws

I, like many of you, take delight in watching the extraordinary performance of outstanding athletes on the field of competition. It is always a thrill to see the fulfillment of thousands of hours of practice, dedication, and sacrifice manifest through an unusual play, a last-second touchdown pass, a game-winning goal, or pressure-filled free throws. It always amazes me to see a basketball player step up to the free throw line and consistently, shot after shot, pressure upon pressure, calmly put the ball through the hoop—all net. Last year Jeff Hornacek, after joining the Utah Jazz in midseason, hit thirty-three consecutive free throws—a Jazz season record. *He was shooting with great confidence.*

I am interested in free throw records because I believe I also set a free throw record in high school—unrecorded, but a record that I believe would stand even today. It was in a game between my alma mater, Preston High, and Malad High in Idaho. It was played in the old Malad High School gymnasium in 1954.

Early in the game I was fouled in the act of shooting and was awarded two foul shots. I calmly stepped to the free throw line, set my toe about one-eighth of an inch from the line, and did my best imitation of my then basketball idol, Bob Cousy, by bouncing the ball twice, spinning it in my hands, taking a deep breath, and shooting. It was a pretty good imita-

tion—until I released the ball. I missed both shots.

A few moments later I was again at the foul line going through the same established routine. To my despair I missed again—twice. As fortune would have it, we were into the game only six or seven minutes, and I was at the line missing my sixth and seventh foul shots. As I approached my ninth and tenth shots, I noticed that the basket, which was regulation size at the beginning of the game, was in some magical way beginning to shrink. Each time I came to the line, it got smaller and smaller.

My confidence wasn't bolstered much as I saw images of distress in the faces of my teammates and expressions of calm glee and a twinkle in the eyes of my opponents each time I came to the line. By my fifteenth miss, my arms and legs were frozen stiff, and I could see the basket getting so small that even a softball couldn't pass through it. When I approached the line to miss my eighteenth consecutive free throw, the basket seemed about the size of a golf hole, and I knew that even Bob Cousy would not stand a chance. *I was not shooting with much confidence.*

Thankfully the final buzzer sounded and my record ceased at eighteen consecutive misses—a record not easily achievable and one I doubt any of you sports enthusiasts have ever witnessed. As I left the court, my confidence was devastated, and ahead of me remained

the frightening task of getting ready to face the foul line again in upcoming games.

My challenge was not so much related to foul shooting as it was to confidence. I am fully aware that when Jeff Hornacek was establishing his record, each time he approached the line he was full of confidence, and the basket, in its magical way, was getting larger and larger. Confidence was the big difference.

Confidence in the presence of God

As recorded in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 45, the Lord tells Joseph Smith during his hour of deep despair in Liberty Jail, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven." What a wonderful promise for us bearers of the priesthood—confidence in the presence of God!

Each of us present in this great body of the priesthood has been called and ordained of God. We are His emissaries and have entered into a holy covenant with Him to honor and magnify the priesthood, and this becomes our most important and sacred assignment on earth. I repeat—our most important assignment on earth is to honor and magnify the priesthood. It is more important than hitting crucial free throws. It is more important than catching a touchdown pass or kicking goals. It is more important than being accepted by your peers. It is more important than closing on a vital business transaction.

Making the basket bigger or smaller

Every time we use the priesthood, whether by assignment or through voluntary acts of service, it is as though we are stepping up to the foul line. Every time the priesthood is tested by tempta-

tion or trial, it is as though we are stepping up to the foul line. The hits and the misses that have preceded the moment of testing have a great bearing on how we will perform the next shot. Our spiritual confidence is largely determined by our prior spiritual successes and, unfortunately, by our prior spiritual mishaps. Our prior choices will greatly influence how our spiritual basket will look, large or small, the next time we are at the line.

We cannot say we will sow a few wild oats in our youth or that we will just dabble a little around the fringes of sin. There are no fringes of sin. Every act, good or bad, has a consequence. Every good act improves our ability to do good and more firmly stand against sin or failure. Every transgression, regardless of how minor, makes us more susceptible to Satan's influence the next time he tempts us. Satan takes us an inch at a time, deceiving us as to the consequences of so-called minor sins until he captures us in major transgressions. Nephi describes this technique as one of pacifying, lulling, and flattering us away until Satan "grasps [us] with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance" (2 Nephi 28:22; see also v. 21). There are no fringes of sin. We are constantly shooting our foul shots, and the basket is either getting bigger or, as Satan would have it, smaller. Our confidence is either waxing strong in the Lord or waxing strong in Satan.

Nephi, David, and Joseph Smith see the basket as large

When Nephi and his brothers were asked to go back to Jerusalem for the plates of brass, Nephi, because of his past experiences and preparation, saw the basket as very large. He knew he could do it. He said, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that

they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7). On the other hand, Laman and Lemuel, who already had a history of complaining and neglecting their responsibilities, saw the basket as very small and thus rebelled. Laman and Lemuel did not have the confidence or the faith that comes from righteous preparation. They did not believe they could make the shot.

When David went to battle against Goliath, he was discouraged by Saul, who reminded him that he was just a child and was not able to go against this giant, Goliath. David replied, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth" (1 Samuel 17:34-35). David had made his previous foul shots, and he saw the basket as very large.

When Joseph Smith went into the grove of trees, when he began the translation of the Book of Mormon, and when he organized the Church with just six members, his confidence was strong in the Lord.

Wise choices increase our confidence

The Savior talked about teaching line upon line and precept upon precept (see 2 Nephi 28:30). This is also how we prepare ourselves to magnify our callings—act upon act and deed upon deed. Each good act makes the basket larger and prepares us to further magnify our callings. When you young Aaronic Priesthood bearers administer and pass the sacrament worthily and reverently,

the view of the basket becomes a little larger, as does your confidence in the Lord and your ability to act in righteousness. For those who have withstood so-called minor temptations, your ability to overcome Satan in the moments of major testing becomes easier. For those of you who have developed a relationship with your Heavenly Father and the Savior through scripture study and prayer, your basket is large and your confidence waxes strong.

I am acutely aware that each of us sees our own basket as a different size. Some may feel as though they are on a string of eighteen consecutive misses, and the basket they are now shooting at is very diminished. I have known men, young and old, whose previous decisions or actions have caused them to lose confidence in themselves and in the Lord. It was as though their arms and legs were frozen stiff, and the task of breaking the cycle of sin or failure seemed almost insurmountable. But a true understanding of the Savior's mission lets us know that through true repentance our baskets can be restored to regulation size. Every wise choice, every responsible exercising of the priesthood, and every act of service enhances our confidence in the Lord.

Brethren of the priesthood, let us hit our foul shots, *let us do our duty*—every single time we step to the line—that our confidence might wax strong in the presence of God, that the doctrine of the priesthood may distill upon our souls as the dews from heaven—for we are the priesthood of God. Of this I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

My dear brethren, it is wonderful and humbling to be with you tonight in this vast assembly of priesthood holders. I am especially grateful for the sol-

emn experience we had this morning, in which I learned again how the Lord is directing and guiding His church in these latter days.

Miracle of family's conversion

A few days ago my profession as a B-747 captain took me home on a flight from Dallas, Texas, to Frankfurt, Germany. It was a moonless night over the North Atlantic, and myriads of stars covered the sky. As I contemplated this awesome sight from the cockpit, my thoughts went to the many miracles I have seen in my life.

Forty-five years ago, shortly after the horrors of the Second World War, at age eight I was baptized in Zwickau, Sachsen, in eastern Germany. This came about because a white-haired, courageous, and caring lady shared the restored gospel of Jesus Christ with my grandmother and parents, and they did not hesitate to accept the challenge. How I love them for that! In 1952 my family had to leave that part of my homeland, expecting never to see it again. We went to Frankfurt, where I was ordained a deacon and taught by tough but loving leaders to appreciate the value of work and service.

At the same time, in the heart of western Germany, another marvelous lady, recently widowed, still in her thirties, was terrified by the difficulties of the future. She had two young daughters and felt left alone in a country without hope. Right then two young missionaries rang the doorbell and brought the message of light, truth, and hope.

I give thanks eternally to those diligent American missionaries and most of all to Sister Carmen Reich, who became my mother-in-law, for her faith, strength, and willingness to listen to the still, small voice. My life has been very different because of the miraculous insight of these great individuals.

Miracle of German reunification

In those years many Saints left Europe to go to Zion. But then the Brethren taught us that Zion could be

anywhere around the globe if we were willing to establish it. The Saints had faith and stayed, and Zion increased in beauty and holiness. Stakes were organized and strengthened. Nevertheless, Germany still had two completely different political systems divided by concrete-walled boundaries.

My eternal partner—my wife, Harriet—encouraged me never to lose hope that someday there would be one Germany again. How grateful I am for her, her love and partnership, and for our family.

In 1976, President Monson gave my country a blessing with promises far beyond logical or political reasoning. It was a prophetic promise which required modern-day miracles. And the miracles occurred.

In 1989 the Berlin Wall fell, and this week, four years ago, Germany was reunited. The borders were enlarged, and Zion was enabled to put on her beautiful garments. There are now two temples in Germany, five temples in Europe, and more to come. The kingdom of God is expanding rapidly into the eastern parts of Europe and even moving far beyond geographic or political boundaries of yesterday. Missionaries are now serving at places most of us have to look up in dictionaries or cannot find easily on maps.

I am grateful for the Saints in Europe, for their strong testimonies, which are visible in the conduct of their everyday lives. Their faith has given me comfort and security. Their examples have helped me to find and keep the right direction in days of challenge and questioning.

The gospel is the only valid basis

That dark night over the North Atlantic, safely directing our big jet to its destination, we had to be extremely careful and precise in creating the navigational basis by entering the geographic coordinates into the navigational refer-

ence system. It had to be true and valid because it was the foundation for all future decisions. In 1979 a flight started in New Zealand on wrong coordinates and crashed into Mount Erebus at the South Pole.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the *only true and valid basis* for our lives. If we enter it into our system—into “all [our] heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2)—we will know how to choose the right and to whom to listen.

On long-range flights the shortwave radio frequencies are often crowded, and static distorts the messages. The same is true for our lives. Everybody wants to get their message across. We have to train and condition ourselves to hear the still, small voice, never to be distracted or stop listening because of too much static on that sacred frequency. This can best be done by internalizing and acting according to the moral and ethical standards we receive from the scriptures and the living prophets.

From the Prophet Joseph Smith to President Howard W. Hunter, we are

receiving updated sacred guidance according to our needs and readiness. The general conference messages by our prophets, seers, and revelators are given to us by the Lord in his own time, in his own way, and for a very special purpose.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made the miracle of forgiveness and redemption possible. This is truly the Church of Jesus Christ; it proclaims a gospel of joy, hope, courage, truth, love, and miracles. This I bear humble witness of in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Bishop Richard C. Edgley, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, and Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Oh Say, What Is Truth?”

The choir and congregation sang
“Oh Say, What Is Truth?”

President Thomas S. Monson

My brother's keeper

President Hunter has invited me to be the next speaker, and I'm pleased to respond.

My dear brethren, I am confident that you, as I, have seen the newscasts on television and have heard them on radio, have read feature articles published by weekly and monthly magazines, and have observed the glaring headlines in daily newspapers. They all describe the fighting in Bosnia, tribal conflicts in Africa, and extensive flooding in Georgia and Florida. The parade of devastation, loss of homes, damage to farms, ruin of businesses, and, above all, frightful human suffering and death continues almost without interruption.

After expressions of sorrow, the shaking of one's head in incredible disbelief, and, yes, even the wringing of the hands in frustration, the question is asked, “When are *they* going to do something about this terrible suffering?”

Long years ago a similar question was posed and preserved in holy writ, even the Bible:

“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

“And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?”¹

This evening I felt to present to you a response to this question which repre-

sents a collective reply from Church members everywhere and from the Church itself. But first a brief background.

The worth of a human soul

In March of 1967, early in my service as a member of the Council of the Twelve, I was attending a conference of the Monument Park West Stake in Salt Lake City. My companion for the conference was a member of the General Church Welfare Committee, Paul C. Child. President Child was a student of the scriptures. He had been my stake president during my Aaronic Priesthood years. Now we were together as conference visitors.

When it was his opportunity to participate, President Child took in hand the Doctrine and Covenants and left the pulpit to stand among the priesthood brethren to whom he was directing his message. He turned to section 18 and began to read:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. . . .

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!"²

President Child then raised his eyes from the scriptures and asked the brethren, "What is the worth of a human soul?" He avoided calling on a bishop, a stake president, or a high counselor for a response. Instead he selected the president of an elders quorum, a brother who had been a bit drowsy and had missed the significance of the question. The startled man responded, "Brother Child, could you please repeat the question?"

The question was repeated: "What is the worth of a human soul?"

I knew President Child's style. I prayed fervently for that quorum president. He remained silent for what

seemed like an eternity and then declared, "Brother Child, the worth of a human soul is its capacity to become as God."

All present pondered that reply. Brother Child returned to the stand, leaned over to me, and said, "A profound reply; a profound reply!" He proceeded with his message, but I continued to reflect on that inspired response.

Another pioneer in Church welfare, Walter Stover, who died some months ago at the same age as President Ezra Taft Benson, was one who understood the worth of a human soul. At his funeral service this tribute was paid to Brother Stover: "He had the ability to see Christ in every face he encountered, and he acted accordingly. Legendary are his acts of compassionate help and his talent to lift heavenward every person whom he met. His guiding light was the Master's voice speaking, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . , ye have done it unto me.'"³

Church members' humanitarian aid

The publication *Times and Seasons*, in its March 1842 issue, proclaimed the following: "Respecting how much a man . . . shall give . . . we have no special instructions . . . ; he is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other [church], or in no church at all, wherever he finds them."⁴

Since the two special fast days in 1985, called for by the First Presidency, humanitarian efforts by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have reached into every corner of the globe. Millions of the earth's needy have been blessed as members of the Church have consecrated their means to provide life-sustaining food and clothing, establish immunization and infant feeding programs, teach basic literacy,

dig freshwater wells, foster village banks, create new jobs, sustain hospitals and orphanages, teach basic self-reliance, and act in many other ways to help Heavenly Father's children improve their lives both spiritually and temporally.

The scope of humanitarian aid given is dramatic:

- Total humanitarian cash donations: \$23,750,000
- Total value of assistance: \$72,480,000
- Countries served: 109
- Food distributed: 3,615 tons
- Medical equipment distributed: 243 tons

All of the foregoing is in addition to the conventional welfare program of the Church, fundamentally financed through regular fast-offering contributions.

The examples of humanitarian aid and on-the-scene testimonials are inspiring and heartwarming.

Helping Rwandan refugees

Following its colonial period, a series of tribal conflicts has decimated the population of Rwanda in Africa. In the spring of this year, open hostilities resumed, resulting in the deaths of more than half a million people. Refugees huddle in squalid and unhealthy camps within the borders of neighboring Zaire, Uganda, Tanzania, and Burundi.

Joining with the efforts of other agencies in the international community, this church has committed \$1.2 million in goods and cash for refugee relief. Most of the promised assistance has already been consigned or shipped through four helping agencies—even Catholic Relief Services, the International Committee of the Red Cross, C.A.R.E., and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Continuing efforts are planned to help stem the tide of pain among these children of our Heavenly Father.

Helping former Yugoslavians

In Yugoslavia, following the demise of the former government, the country disintegrated into ethnic factions. The resulting civil conflict has claimed thousands of lives and inflicted hardship, heartache, and suffering upon millions.

Working with seven different humanitarian agencies, the Church has provided, since 1991, food, clothing, blankets, hygiene kits, and medical supplies valued at \$850,000. This is in addition to personal contributions by our members in other European nations.

In May 1993 Danijela Curcic of Zagreb, Croatia, wrote this letter addressed to Church headquarters, expressing her gratitude for food shared by the Saints.

"Dear Charitable Persons,

"I would like to thank you for every good thing that you've done for the people in my country. This horrible civil war is a crime which doesn't spare anything and anybody. Uncounted numbers of refugees, thousands of dead children are about us everywhere. I respect with all my heart you dear friends because you showed you care. It's easier and doesn't hurt as much when you're aware of the fact that there are nice people who are willing to help you."

Helping flood victims in Georgia

Closer to home, but serviced by conventional welfare procedures, are the victims of the devastating south Georgia flood of 1994. Thirty-five thousand families were evacuated, five thousand people found temporary refuge in two of our chapels, and nine eighteen-wheel truckloads of food and supplies were provided by the Church, primarily to other than members of our church.

Our own Church spearhead unit, carrying emergency welfare supplies, was on site with everything requested just five hours after being activated by the Area President.

On the first weekend of the flood, 500 member volunteers assisted in the cleanup of 1,569 damaged houses. The next weekend, more than 5,500 volunteers arrived and helped—all from units of the Church from a wide area well beyond the stricken region.

Priesthood volunteers from the Jacksonville Florida West Stake worked all weekend cleaning up a house which had been nearly submerged by the flood. The owner, a retired nonmember named Davis, was overwhelmed by the help provided. When the work was completed, the brethren asked Mr. Davis if they could bless his house. They gathered together, and the bishop pronounced a blessing on the home and on the family. Tears ran down Mr. Davis's cheeks, and the Spirit was very strong. Each of the volunteers hugged him and told him how glad they were to have been of help. He said they had done more than they could ever know and that he didn't know how to thank them enough.

The response of the membership of the Church, and particularly the priesthood performance in such situations, touches the heart and is a marvel to behold. Thus it has ever been.

Elder Benson's mission to Europe

From an earlier period, following the carnage of World War II, Elder Ezra Taft Benson led Church response in providing food, medicine, and clothing—totaling two million in 1940s dollars and requiring 133 boxcars to transport it—to the cold and starving members in Europe. This desperately needed aid saved lives, rescued the dispirited, and brought a newness of hope and quickened prayers of thanksgiving and expressions of profound gratitude from one and all. "Charity never faileth."⁵

George Albert Smith gives his coat

During a drive to amass warm clothing to ship to suffering Saints, Elder

Harold B. Lee and Elder Marion G. Romney took President George Albert Smith to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City. They were impressed by the generous response of the membership of the Church to the clothing drive and the preparations for sending the goods overseas. They watched President Smith observing the workers as they packaged this great volume of donated clothing and shoes. They saw tears running down his face. After a few moments, President Smith removed a new overcoat that he had on and said, "Please ship this also."

The Brethren said to him, "No, President, no; don't send that; it's cold and you need your coat."

But President Smith would not take it back.

The Apostle Paul's admonition surely was fulfilled that day: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."⁶

Holland's miracle of the potatoes

Two weeks ago Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Elder Robert K. Dellenbach, and I attended a regional conference in Holland. While meeting with the Saints, I recalled the miracle of the potatoes which took place in that nation in November of 1947.

In the first week of November 1947, ten huge trucks moved across Holland. They headed east and contained a costly cargo—seventy-five tons of potatoes, a gift from the Dutch Church members to the Saints in Germany.

Many months earlier, in the spring of 1947, the members within the Netherlands Mission were asked to begin a welfare project of their own, now that they had received much needed welfare supplies from the members in America. The proposal was welcomed with enthusiasm. The priesthood went to work, and within a short time every quorum

had found a suitable piece of land for the project. The recommended crop: potatoes. At the various branches of the Church there was singing, speaking, and praying, at the end of which the potatoes were entrusted to the soil. Soon there came news of good prospects for the harvest, and cautious estimates were made as to how large the yield would be.

During the time the potatoes were growing, Walter Stover, president of the East German Mission, visited the Netherlands Mission in Holland. During his visit, with tears in his eyes, he told of the hunger of the Church members in Germany. They were in worse condition than the Saints in the Netherlands. Supplies had not yet reached the Saints in Germany as quickly as they had the Saints in Holland.

When Cornelius Zappey, the Netherlands Mission president, heard the condition of the German Saints, he couldn't help but have compassion toward them, knowing how they had suffered. The thought came; the action followed: "Let's give our potatoes to the members of the Church in Germany." I'm sure he worried, for the German armies and the Dutch armies had been in conflict with each other. The Dutch had been starving. Would they respond? A Dutch widow who had received a sack of the potatoes heard that the bulk of the potatoes was to be given to the members in Germany, and she stepped forward and said, "My potatoes must be with them." And this hungry widow returned her sack of potatoes.

What are the words of the Lord pertaining to such an act? "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury. . . . She of her want did cast in all that she had."⁷

Blessed is he that considereth the poor

It was President J. Reuben Clark Jr. who in 1936 declared: "The real long term objective of the Welfare Plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers, rescuing all that is finest down deep inside of them, and bringing to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit, which after all is the mission and purpose and reason for being of this Church."⁸

"Am I my brother's keeper?" This ageless question has been answered! From the psalm of David comes the precious promise:

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

"The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

"The Lord will strengthen him."⁹

Brethren, may the Lord strengthen each of us who holds the priesthood, that each may learn his duty as his brother's keeper and be found on the Lord's errand, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Genesis 4:8-9.
2. D&C 18:10, 15.
3. Matthew 25:40.
4. *Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, p. 732.
5. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
6. 1 Timothy 4:12.
7. Mark 12:43-44.
8. Quoted in *Providing in the Lord's Way: A Leader's Guide to Welfare* [welfare handbook, 1990], p. i.
9. Psalm 41:1-3.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren, as I have listened to the proceedings of the conference this day, I have thought of what a glorious organization this is—this Church of Jesus Christ, moving forward in these latter days under the leadership of a true prophet, whom we sustain and love.

Dropping the ball

Bishop Edgley has told you a basketball story. I think I'd like to tell you a baseball story. I was reminded of it while watching a program on the Public Broadcasting System one evening not long ago. It was a program on baseball, once the great American pastime.

I recognize that baseball has little interest for people in most nations of the world, but I speak of it to highlight a principle that has meaning for people everywhere.

The event of which I speak occurred in the World Series of 1912. It was an eight-game series because one of the games was called at midpoint because of darkness. Playing fields were not electrically lighted at that time. It was the last game and the score was tied 1-1. The Boston Red Sox were at bat, the New York Giants in the field. A Boston batter knocked a high-arching fly. Two New York players ran for it. Fred Snodgrass in center field signaled to his associate that he would take it. He came squarely under the ball, which fell into his glove. It went right through his hand and fell to the ground. A howl went up in the stands. The roaring fans couldn't believe it. Snodgrass had dropped the ball. He had caught hundreds of fly balls before. But now, at this crucial moment, he dropped the ball.

The New York Giants lost. The Boston Red Sox won the series.

Snodgrass came back the following season and played brilliant ball for nine more years. He lived to be eighty-six

years of age, dying in 1974. But after that one slip, for sixty-two years when he was introduced to anybody, the expected response was, "Oh, yes, you're the one who dropped the ball."

Running the wrong way

Some of you older men may remember the Rose Bowl football game of 1929, when a player named Roy Riegels recovered a fumble and ran almost the length of the field toward the goal of his opponent. He was tackled and brought down by one of his own team, preventing a touchdown. He had lost his sense of direction in a moment of stress. His mistake cost his team a victory. He was a great player. He lived to be eighty-four, but ever afterward he was remembered as the man who ran the wrong way.

This phenomenon is not peculiar to sports. It happens every day in life.

There is the student who thinks he is doing well enough and then, under the stress of the final exam, flunks out.

There is the driver who all of his life has had a flawless record and then, in a moment of carelessness, is involved in a tragic accident.

There is the trusted employee whose performance has been excellent, and then he succumbs to the temptation to steal a little from his employer. A mark is placed upon him which never seems to entirely disappear.

There is the life lived with decency—and then comes the destructive, ever-haunting, one-time moral letdown.

There is the outburst of anger that suddenly destroys a long-cherished relationship. There is the little sin that somehow grows and eventually leads to separation from the Church.

In all of these, someone dropped the ball. He had the self-confidence, possibly even the arrogance, to think

that he didn't really have to try, that he could make it with only half an effort. But the ball passed through his hands and hit the ground, and he gave away the game. Or he thinks he makes a smart catch of someone else's fumble and runs the wrong way, only to give victory to his opponents.

It all points up the need to be constantly alert. It points up the importance of unrelenting self-discipline. It indicates the necessity of constantly building our strength against temptation. It warns us against the misuse of our time, especially our idle time.

Story of young Eugene L. Roberts

At Brigham Young University we have had some great athletic coaches. We have them now and we have had them in the past. One of these of long ago was Eugene L. Roberts. He grew up in Provo and drifted aimlessly with the wrong kind of friends. Then something remarkable happened. I read you his own words. He wrote:

"Several years ago when Provo City was scarred with unsightly saloons and other questionable forms of amusement, I was standing one evening on the street, waiting for my gang to show up, when I noticed that the [Provo] tabernacle was lighted up and that a large crowd was moving in that direction. I had nothing to do so I drifted over there and went in. I thought I might find some of my gang, or at least some of the girls that I was interested in. Upon entering, I ran across three or four of the fellows and we placed ourselves under the gallery where there was a crowd of young ladies, who seemed to promise entertainment. We were not interested in what came from the pulpit. We knew that the people on the rostrum were all old fogies. They didn't know anything about life, and they certainly couldn't tell us anything, for we knew it all. So we settled down to have a good time. Right in the midst of

our disturbance there thundered from the pulpit the following [statement]:

"'You can't tell the character of an individual by the way he does his daily work. Watch him when his work is done. See where he goes. Note the companions he seeks, and the things he does when he may do as he pleases. Then you can tell his true character.'

"I looked up toward the rostrum," Roberts continued, "because I was struck with this powerful statement. I saw there a slim, dark-haired fierce-eyed fighting-man whom I knew and feared; but didn't have any particular love for."

As he continued, "[the speaker] went on to make a comparison. He said: 'Let us take the eagle, for example. This bird works as hard and as efficiently as any other animal or bird in doing its daily work. It provides for itself and its young by the sweat of its brow, so to speak; but when its daily work is over and the eagle has time of its own to do just as it pleases, note how it spends its recreational moments. It flies in the highest realms of heaven, spreads its wings and bathes in the upper air, for it loves the pure, clean atmosphere and the lofty heights.

"'On the other hand, let us consider the hog. This animal grunts and grubs and provides for its young just as well as the eagle; but when its working hours are over and it has some recreational moments, observe where it goes and what it does. The hog will seek out the muddiest hole in the pasture and will roll and soak itself in filth, for this is the thing it loves. People can be either eagles or hogs in their leisure time.'

"Now when I heard this short speech," said Gene Roberts, "I was dumbfounded. I turned to my companions abashed for I was ashamed to be caught listening. What was my surprise to find everyone of the gang with his attention fixed upon the speaker and his eyes containing a far-away expression.

"We went out of the tabernacle that evening rather quiet and we separated

from each other unusually early. I thought of that speech all the way home. I classified myself immediately as of the hog family. I thought of that speech for years. That night there was implanted within me the faintest beginnings of ambition to lift myself out of the hog group and to rise to that of the eagle. . . .

"There was instilled within me that same evening, the urge to help fill up the mud holes in the social pasture so that those people with hog tendencies would find it difficult to wallow in recreational filth. As a result of constant thinking about that speech, I was stirred to devote my whole life and my profession toward developing wholesome recreational activities for the young people, so that it would be natural and easy for them to indulge in the eagle-type of leisure.

"The man who made that speech which affected my life more than any other speech I ever heard, was President George H. Brimhall. May God bless him!" (Raymond Brimhall Holbrook and Esther Hamilton Holbrook, *The Tall Pine Tree: The Life and Work of George H. Brimhall* [n.p., 1988], pp. 111-13).

Choose to be eagles, not hogs

That simple story, told by a great teacher, turned around the life of a drifter and made of him an able and gifted leader. I repeat it tonight because I think that most of us are constantly faced with a choice of whether we wallow in the mire or fly to lofty heights.

What we do in our leisure time can make such a tremendous difference. Pity the poor man or boy of low purpose and weak ambition who, after a day of work, finishes his evening meal and then turns to the television screen for the rest of the evening to watch pornographic videotapes or sleazy late-night programs. Can you think of any picture which more nearly approaches President Brimhall's description of the hog that seeks the

mudhole in the pasture and wallows in the mire?

There is a better way, my brethren. Do you want to drop the ball in your lives? Do you wish to help Satan score? There is no surer way than to become engulfed in the tide of pornography that is sweeping over us. If we succumb to it, it destroys us, body and mind and soul.

On the other hand, the whole design of the gospel is to lead us onward and upward to greater achievement, even, eventually, to godhood. This great possibility was enunciated by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follet sermon and emphasized by President Lorenzo Snow. It is this grand and incomparable concept: *As God now is, man may become!* (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 342-62; *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, comp. Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984], p. 1).

Our enemies have criticized us for believing in this. Our reply is that this lofty concept in no way diminishes God the Eternal Father. He is the Almighty. He is the Creator and Governor of the universe. He is the greatest of all and will always be so. But just as any earthly father wishes for his sons and daughters every success in life, so I believe our Father in Heaven wishes for his children that they might approach him in stature and stand beside him resplendent in godly strength and wisdom.

Put on the whole armor of God

Today is a part of eternity. As Amulek in the Book of Mormon declared, "This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32).

Eternal vigilance is the price of eternal development. Occasionally we may stumble. I thank the Lord for the great principle of repentance and forgiveness. When we drop the ball, when we make a

mistake, there is held out to us the word of the Lord that he will forgive our sins and remember them no more against us. But somehow we are prone to remember them against ourselves.

For the priesthood of this church, it is so important that we walk the high road.

As Paul admonished:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world. . . .

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; . . .

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:10-12, 14, 16).

All of us live in the world. Of course we do. We cannot live a cloistered existence. But we can live in the world without partaking of the unseemly ways of the world.

Don't drop the ball

The pull gets ever stronger. The adversary is clever and subtle. He speaks in a seductive voice of fascinating and attractive things. We cannot afford to let down our guard. We cannot afford to drop the ball. We need not run the wrong way. The right way is simple. It means following the program of the Church, bringing into our lives the principles of the gospel, and never losing sight of what is expected of us as sons of God with a great inheritance and a marvelous and eternal potential.

Simple and tremendously challenging are the words of the Scout Oath: "On my honor I will do my best." If every one of us would make that effort,

the world would be much better, and we would be much happier. It is so often the very small and singularly inconsequential acts of our lives that eventually make so great a difference. I'm confident Brother Uchtdorf would agree that a giant airplane flying one degree off course will, unless it is corrected, simply fly in circles until its fuel is exhausted and it falls. The history of this church is replete with cases of men who started on the road to apostasy with small, seemingly unimportant decisions. Oliver Cowdery was one of them. Martin Harris was one of them. David Whitmer was one of them.

Thomas B. Marsh, the first President of the Quorum of the Twelve, sided with his wife in an argument over a little cream. He would not let the matter drop and carried it to the highest councils of the Church. He lost his place and never fully regained it. He dropped the ball at a crucial time and has been remembered ever since for what he did (in George A. Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:283-84).

The Lord is forgiving, but sometimes life is not forgiving.

In the world in which we walk, we must be careful. The temptations are tremendous. We all know about them. The little decisions can be so crucial and so everlastingly important in their consequences.

Live with goodness and consistency

We must strengthen one another, help one another, play the game together if we are to win the victory. Don't forget Fred Snodgrass. It should never have happened. He gave away the World Series. Don't forget Roy Riegels. He ran the wrong way and thought the crowd was cheering him on when they were bemoaning his mistake. Stay away from the mire in the pastures of life. Look upward to the heavens and draw strength therefrom. As holders of the priesthood, we must live by a greater

loyalty than other men. We must live with loyalty to God, in whose name we are authorized to speak and act.

Thank you, my brethren, for the goodness and consistency of your lives. This work is becoming as a city set upon a hill, whose light cannot be hid because so many of you are true and faithful. May the Lord bless you. May he grant unto you peace in your lives, that peace which comes with honesty and integrity and prayer. May he bless you with the love of your families, your wives, and your children. May he bless all of us with strength to live with consistency without stumbling as we walk the way of immortality and eternal life, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

President Howard W. Hunter

My dear brethren of the priesthood, I consider it a privilege to meet with you this evening in this general priesthood meeting. The priesthood is the greatest brotherhood on the earth. I feel great strength in seeing your faithfulness and feeling your love and sustaining vote. We are particularly grateful to have so many of our Aaronic Priesthood brethren here with their fathers or advisers.

Marriage is a sacred privilege and obligation

The subject of my address this evening will be more particularly directed to the husbands and fathers. All of you who hold the Aaronic Priesthood will soon arrive at the years of marriage and fatherhood. Therefore, what I say tonight has application to all present.

It will now be our privilege to listen to the counsel of our beloved prophet, President Howard W. Hunter, who will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his remarks, we remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend the broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which will follow, must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the combined men's chorus from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus for the inspiring music this evening.

Following President Hunter's address, the choir will conclude by singing "Beautiful Savior." The benediction will be offered by Elder Lowell D. Wood of the Seventy.

I wish to speak of the relationship that a man holding the priesthood should have with his wife and children. With a knowledge of the plan of salvation as a foundation, a man who holds the priesthood looks upon marriage as a sacred privilege and obligation. It is not good for man nor for woman to be alone. Man is not complete without woman. Neither can fill the measure of their creation without the other (see 1 Corinthians 11:11; Moses 3:18). Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God (see D&C 49:15-17). Only through the new and everlasting covenant of marriage can they realize the fulness of eternal blessings (see D&C 131:1-4; 132:15-19). As a matter of priesthood responsibility, a man, under normal circumstances, should not unduly postpone marriage. Brethren,

the Lord has spoken plainly on this matter. It is your sacred and solemn responsibility to follow his counsel and the words of his prophets.

The prophets of the past have spoken also of those who may not have opportunity to marry in this life. President Lorenzo Snow said:

"There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation, and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive" (*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, comp. Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984], p. 138).

I believe President Snow's statement to be true.

Show perfect moral fidelity

A man who holds the priesthood shows perfect moral fidelity to his wife and gives her no reason to doubt his faithfulness. A husband is to love his wife with all his heart and cleave unto her and none else (see D&C 42:22-26). President Spencer W. Kimball explained:

"The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes pre-eminent in the life of the husband or wife and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], p. 250).

The Lord forbids and his church condemns any and every intimate relationship outside of marriage. Infidelity on the part of a man breaks the heart of his wife

and loses her confidence and the confidence of his children (see Jacob 2:35).

Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one's character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed. One who does not control his thoughts and thus commits adultery in his heart, if he does not repent, shall not have the Spirit but shall deny the faith and shall fear (see D&C 42:23; 63:16).

Show reverence for motherhood

A man who holds the priesthood has reverence for motherhood. Mothers are given a sacred privilege to "bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of [the] Father continued, that he may be glorified" (D&C 132:63).

The First Presidency has said: "Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75], 6:178). The priesthood cannot work out its destiny, nor can God's purposes be fulfilled, without our helpmates. Mothers perform a labor the priesthood cannot do. For this gift of life, the priesthood should have love unbounded for the mothers of their children.

Honor your wife's unique and divinely appointed role as a mother in Israel and her special capacity to bear and nurture children. We are under divine commandment to multiply and replenish the earth and to bring up our children and grandchildren in light and truth (see Moses 2:28; D&C 93:40). You share, as a loving partner, the care of the children. Help her to manage and keep up your home. Help teach, train, and discipline your children.

You should express regularly to your wife and children your reverence and respect for her. Indeed, one of the greatest things a father can do for his children is to love their mother.

Regard the family as most important

A man who holds the priesthood regards the family as ordained of God. Your leadership of the family is your most important and sacred responsibility. The family is the most important unit in time and in eternity and, as such, transcends every other interest in life.

We reiterate what was stated by President David O. McKay: "No other success [in life] can compensate for failure in the home" (quoting J. E. McCulloch, *Home: the Savior of Civilization*, p. 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, p. 116) and President Harold B. Lee: "The most important of the Lord's work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 255). Effective family leadership, brethren, requires both quantity and quality time. The teaching and governance of the family must not be left to your wife alone, to society, to school, or even to the Church.

Accept wife as an equal partner

A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating thereto. Of necessity there must be in the Church and in the home a presiding officer (see D&C 107:21). By divine appointment, the responsibility to preside in the home rests upon the priesthood holder (see Moses 4:22). The Lord intended that the wife be a helpmeet for man (*meet* means equal)—that is, a companion equal and necessary in full partnership. Presiding

in righteousness necessitates a shared responsibility between husband and wife; together you act with knowledge and participation in all family matters. For a man to operate independently of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion.

Be tender in the intimate relationship

Keep yourselves above any domineering or unworthy behavior in the tender, intimate relationship between husband and wife. Because marriage is ordained of God, the intimate relationship between husbands and wives is good and honorable in the eyes of God. He has commanded that they be one flesh and that they multiply and replenish the earth (see Moses 2:28; 3:24). You are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it (see Ephesians 5:25-31).

Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the other's needs and desires. Any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled behavior in the intimate relationship between husband and wife is condemned by the Lord.

Be loving, not abusive

Any man who abuses or demeans his wife physically or spiritually is guilty of grievous sin and in need of sincere and serious repentance. Differences should be worked out in love and kindness and with a spirit of mutual reconciliation. A man should always speak to his wife lovingly and kindly, treating her with the utmost respect. Marriage is like a tender flower, brethren, and must be nourished constantly with expressions of love and affection.

You who hold the priesthood must not be abusive in your relationship with children. Seek always to employ the principles of priesthood government set forth in the revelations (see D&C 93:40; 121:34–36, 41–45).

President George Albert Smith wisely counseled: “We should not lose our tempers and abuse one another. . . . Nobody ever abused anybody else when he had the spirit of the Lord. It is always when we have some other spirit” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, p. 8).

No man who has been ordained to the priesthood of God can with impunity abuse his wife or child. Sexual abuse of children has long been a cause for excommunication from the Church.

We encourage you, brethren, to remember that priesthood is a righteous authority only. Earn the respect and confidence of your children through your loving relationship with them. A righteous father protects his children with his time and presence in their social, educational, and spiritual activities and responsibilities. Tender expressions of love and affection toward children are as much the responsibility of the father as the mother. Tell your children you love them.

Provide temporal support

You who hold the priesthood have the responsibility, unless disabled, to provide temporal support for your wife and children. No man can shift the burden of responsibility to another, not even to his wife. The Lord has commanded that women and children have claim on their husbands and fathers for their maintenance (see D&C 83; 1 Timothy 5:8). President Ezra Taft Benson has stated that when a husband encourages or insists that his wife work out of the home for their convenience, “not only will the family suffer in such instances, . . . but [his] own spiritual

growth and progression will be hampered” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, pp. 60–61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, p. 49).

We urge you to do all in your power to allow your wife to remain in the home, caring for the children while you provide for the family the best you can. We further emphasize that men who abandon their family and fail to meet their responsibility to care for those they have fathered may find their eligibility for a temple recommend and their standing in the Church in jeopardy. In cases of divorce or separation, men must demonstrate that they are meeting family support payments mandated by law and obligated by the principles of the Church in order to qualify for the blessings of the Lord.

Lead family in Church participation

A man who holds the priesthood leads his family in Church participation so they will know the gospel and be under the protection of the covenants and ordinances. If you are to enjoy the blessings of the Lord, you must set your own homes in order. Together with your wife, you determine the spiritual climate of your home. Your first obligation is to get your own spiritual life in order through regular scriptural study and daily prayer. Secure and honor your priesthood and temple covenants; encourage your family to do the same.

Teach the gospel to family members

Take seriously your responsibility to teach the gospel to your family through regular family home evening, family prayer, devotional and scripture reading time, and other teaching moments. Give special emphasis to preparation for missionary service and temple marriage. As patriarch in the home, exercise your priesthood through performing the

appropriate ordinances for your family and by giving blessings to your wife and children. Next to your own salvation, brethren, there is nothing so important to you as the salvation of your wife and children.

Brethren, I have spoken plainly to you regarding your responsibility as holders of the holy priesthood. If there are areas in your life where improvement may be needed, I encourage you to make this a matter of prayerful consideration.

I testify that this is what the Lord would have the brethren of the priesthood receive at this time. May you be blessed in your efforts to be righteous husbands and fathers, I pray as I bear solemn witness of the truthfulness of that which has been spoken this evening and do so in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder Lowell D. Wood offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 2, 1994. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session, with Jerold Ottley conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

President Howard W. Hunter, who presides at this conference, has asked me, Brother Hinckley, to conduct this session.

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah. This is the fourth general session of the 164th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle, with every seat occupied; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Robert D. Hales, Lynn A.

Mickelsen, and Stephen D. Nadauld are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Hugh W. Pinnock and Helvécio Martins are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these various facilities, who are broadcasting the conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

This magnificent Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ, opened these services by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now sing "Father in Heaven, We Do Believe," following which Elder Dean L. Larsen of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Father in Heaven, We Do Believe."

Elder Dean L. Larsen offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren and sisters, it becomes my responsibility to open this session in speaking to you.

I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit. I sense the tremendous responsibility of speaking to hundreds of thousands of Latter-day Saints, perhaps even millions, across the world.

I thank you for your gracious hospitality to us wherever we meet with you. It is truly a humbling experience to be the recipient of such generous kindness. You write letters of appreciation which bring encouragement. You are trying to live the gospel and rear your families in light and truth. You are truly Latter-day Saints, and I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to be one with you and to partake of your fellowship and your love.

A new generation of trees in Yellowstone

Sister Hinckley and I were recently involved in a regional conference in Rexburg, Idaho. We had not been to Yellowstone National Park for many years. We decided to drive to the conference and on Monday return home by way of Yellowstone.

In 1988 terrible forest fires raged there. Each day the news media brought us graphic reports of the intensity of the fires as they raced over thousands of acres, destroying millions of trees. The flames finally burned out, and people literally mourned over the desolate picture of countless lodgepole pines, their tops burned and the straight, scorched trunks standing like solemn grave markers in a crowded cemetery.

But when we visited there about a month ago, we saw something of captivating interest. The dead pines still stood, but between the burned trees new seedlings have sprung from the ground, millions of them.

Evidently when fire hit the treetops, the pinecones exploded, scattering seed to the ground. There is a new generation of trees now, young and beautiful and filled with promise. The old trees eventually will fall, and the new ones will grow tall to create a forest of great beauty and usefulness.

Children—the promise of the future

As we drove through the park, I thought of the wonders of nature, of the rhythm of our lives. We grow old, and I am among those who have done so. Our vitality and our powers slacken. But a new generation is at our feet. These are children. These too are sons and daughters of God whose time has come to take their place on earth. They are like the new growth in the park—young, tender, sensitive, beautiful, and full of promise.

As Tagore, the poet of India, once observed, "Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man" (in Charles L. Wallis, ed., *The Treasure Chest* [New York: Harper and Row, 1965], p. 49). Children are the promise of the future. They are the future itself.

Tragedy of suffering children

The tragedy is that so many children are born to lives of sorrow, of hunger, of fear and trouble and want. Children become the victims, in so many, many cases, of man's inhumanity to man. In recent months we have seen them on our television screens—the children of Somalia, their bodies bloated, their eyes staring with the stare of death. More recently we have seen them in Rwanda, the victims of raging cholera and vicious and unrelenting hunger. Uncounted numbers have died.

These were the promise of a new and better generation in these lands,

where disease, malnutrition, bullets, and neglect have mowed them down like tender plants before the sharp blade of the sickle.

Why are men so vicious as to bring about the causes that lead to such terrible fratricidal conflict? Great, I believe, will be their tribulation in the Day of Judgment, when they must stand before the Almighty accused of the suffering and destruction of these little ones.

I am grateful for kind and generous people of many faiths and persuasions across the world whose hearts reach out in sympathy, many of whom give freely of their substance, their time, even their presence to help those in such terrible distress. I am grateful that we as a church have done much of significance, as President Monson pointed out last night, in sending medicines, food and clothing, and blankets for warmth and shelter to those who suffer so terribly, and particularly to children who otherwise most certainly would die.

Ease the plight of suffering children

Why should they suffer so much in so many places? Surely God, our Eternal Father, must weep when he sees the abuse that is heaped upon his little ones, for I am satisfied they hold a special place in his grand design. That place was confirmed when his Son, the Savior of the world, walked the dusty roads of Palestine:

"And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

"But Jesus . . . said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke 18:15-17).

How great is our responsibility, how serious the responsibility of Christian

people and men and women of goodwill everywhere to reach out to ease the plight of suffering children, to lift them from the rut of despair in which they walk.

Of course such suffering is not new. Plagues of disease have in centuries past swept across continents. War has caused the deaths of millions who were totally innocent. Children have been bartered and traded; they have been used as tools by vicious masters; they have mined coal for long hours day after day in the dark and cold depths of the earth; they have worked in sweatshops and been exploited like cheap merchandise.

Surely after all of the history we have read, after all of the suffering of which we have been told, after all of the exploitation of which we are aware, we can do more than we are now doing to lift the blight that condemns millions of children to lives that know little of happiness, that are tragically brief, and that are filled with pain.

We need not travel halfway across the earth to find weeping children. Countless numbers of them cry out in fear and loneliness from the evil consequences of moral transgression, neglect, and abuse. I speak plainly, perhaps indelicately. But I know of no other way to make clear a matter about which I feel so strongly.

Fathers who abandon children

One major problem is the now common phenomenon of children bearing children, of children without fathers. Somehow there seems to be in the minds of many young men, and some not so young, the idea that there is no relationship between the begetting of a child and responsibility for its life thereafter. Every young man should realize that whenever a child is begotten outside the bonds of marriage, it has resulted from violation of a God-given commandment reaching at least as far back as Moses.

Further, let it be known clearly and understood without question that responsibility inevitably follows, and that this responsibility will continue throughout life. Though the mores of our contemporary society may have crumbled to a point where sexual transgression is glossed over or is regarded as acceptable, there will someday be accountability before the God of heaven for all that we do in violation of his commandments. I believe further that a sense of accountability must at some time bear upon every man who has fathered a child and then abandoned responsibility for its care. He must sometimes stop and wonder whatever became of the child he fathered, of the boy or girl who is flesh of his flesh and soul of his soul.

Burdens on single mothers and society

The burdens that fall upon a young woman who alone must rear her child are unbelievably heavy and consuming. They are likewise heavy upon society through taxes levied to meet the needs of such children and their mothers.

In the United States "in the six years between 1985 and 1990, estimated public outlays related to teenage child-bearing totalled more than \$120 billion. . . .

"Of [unmarried] teens who give birth, . . . 73 percent will be on welfare within four years [that is almost three out of every four].

"In 1991, federal and state expenditures for Aid to Families with Dependent Children . . . totalled \$20 billion plus administrative costs of \$2.6 billion" (*Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children* [New York: Carnegie Corporation, Apr. 1994], p. 21).

The obstacles facing children born and reared in such circumstances are formidable, to say the least.

Solutions to the problem

The answer is straightforward. It lies in adherence to the principles of the

gospel and the teaching of the Church. It lies in self-discipline.

Would that every youth might realize this and be governed accordingly. There would be so much less of heartache and heartbreak. Its importance cannot be overemphasized because the consequences are so serious and so everlasting.

I realize that notwithstanding all of the teaching that can be done, there will be those who will not heed and will go their willful way, only to discover to their shock and dismay that they are to become parents while they are scarcely older than children themselves.

Abortion is not the answer. This only compounds the problem. It is an evil and repulsive escape that will someday bring regret and remorse.

Marriage is the more honorable thing. This means facing up to responsibility. It means giving the child a name, with parents who together can nurture, protect, and love.

When marriage is not possible, experience has shown that adoption, difficult though this may be for the young mother, may afford a greater opportunity for the child to live a life of happiness. Wise and experienced professional counselors and prayerful bishops can assist in these circumstances.

Physical abuse

Then there is the terrible, inexcusable, and evil phenomenon of physical and sexual abuse.

It is unnecessary. It is unjustified. It is indefensible.

In terms of physical abuse, I have never accepted the principle of "spare the rod and spoil the child." I will be forever grateful for a father who never laid a hand in anger upon his children. Somehow he had the wonderful talent to let them know what was expected of them and to give them encouragement in achieving it.

I am persuaded that violent fathers produce violent sons. I am satisfied that such punishment in most instances does more damage than good. Children don't need beating. They need love and encouragement. They need fathers to whom they can look with respect rather than fear. Above all, they need example.

I recently read a biography of George H. Brimhall, who at one time served as president of Brigham Young University. Concerning him, someone said that he reared "his boys with a rod, but it [was] a fishing rod" (Raymond Brimhall Holbrook and Esther Hamilton Holbrook, *The Tall Pine Tree: The Life and Work of George H. Brimhall* [n.p., 1988], p. 62). That says it all.

Sexual abuse

And then there is the terrible, vicious practice of sexual abuse. It is beyond understanding. It is an affront to the decency that ought to exist in every man and woman. It is a violation of that which is sacred and divine. It is destructive in the lives of children. It is reprehensible and worthy of the most severe condemnation.

Shame on any man or woman who would sexually abuse a child. In doing so, the abuser not only does the most serious kind of injury. He or she also stands condemned before the Lord.

It was the Master himself who said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). How could he have spoken in stronger terms?

If there be any within the sound of my voice who may be guilty of such practice, I urge you with all of the capacity of which I am capable to stop it, to run from it, to get help, to plead with the Lord for forgiveness and make amends

to those whom you have offended. God will not be mocked concerning the abuse of his little ones.

The Savior's love for children

When the resurrected Lord appeared on this hemisphere and taught the people, the record states that as he spoke to them, "he wept, . . . and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. And when he had done this he wept again" (3 Nephi 17:21-22).

There is no more tender and beautiful picture in all of sacred writing than this simple language describing the love of the Savior for little children.

Rewards of being good parents

Of all the joys of life, none other equals that of happy parenthood. Of all the responsibilities with which we struggle, none other is so serious. To rear children in an atmosphere of love, security, and faith is the most rewarding of all challenges. The good result from such efforts becomes life's most satisfying compensation.

President Joseph F. Smith said on one occasion: "After all, to do well those things which God ordained to be the common lot of all man-kind, is the truest greatness. To be a successful father or a successful mother is greater than to be a successful general or a successful statesman. One is universal and eternal greatness, the other is ephemeral" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 285).

I am satisfied that no other experiences of life draw us nearer to heaven than those that exist between happy parents and happy children.

My plea—and I wish I were more eloquent in voicing it—is a plea to save the children. Too many of them walk with pain and fear, in loneliness and

despair. Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture. They need kindness and refreshment and affection. Every home, regardless of the cost of the house, can provide an environment of love which will be an environment of salvation.

A happy home

May I in conclusion read to you a letter that came the other day. It speaks of the kind of home I have in mind. The writer says:

"I thought I would write to you to let you know that life is good. I sit here looking out the window at the beautiful mountains. The apple tree in the backyard is full of almost-ripe fruit, two cooing doves that we have been feeding and watching all summer are eating at the bird feeder, and the weather has finally cooled down.

"My husband and I have been married for twenty-six years, have five wonderful children, two sons-in-law, and a peaceful, happy home. I marvel at the love of the Lord in our lives. It runs through our marriage and family like a thread. I have nothing to complain about, and most of my fasts are 'thankful' fasts.

"My husband is in the stake presidency, . . . and I teach the Gospel Doctrine class. We have always worked in the Church and always enjoyed it. We enjoy the gospel, and it is marvelous to watch our children growing up to do the same.

"And so, I just wanted you to know that there is much love, joy, contentment, fun, and gratitude in our life."

Is that picture too good to be true? The writer does not think so. Is it too idealistic? I think not. I know nothing of the size of the house or the yard. That is immaterial. It is the spirit in that home,

the extension of the love of a good man who holds the priesthood of God and a good woman whose heart is filled with true affection and gratitude, and of children born of a sound marriage who have been nurtured and reared in an environment of peace and faith and security.

You may not have a mountain to look at where you live. You may not have an apple tree in the backyard. You may not have birds that feed at your porch. But you can have one another as husband and wife, father and mother, and children who live together with love, respect, self-discipline—and prayer, if you please.

Save the children

The old forest burns and dies. But there is a new one at its roots—one filled with wondrous potential. It is a thing beautiful to look upon—and destined to grow. It is the handiwork of God, a part of his divine plan.

Save the children. Too many suffer and weep. God bless us to be mindful of them, to lift them and guide them as they walk in dangerous paths, to pray for them, to bless them, to love them, to keep them secure until they can run with strength of their own, I pray in the name of him who loves them so very much, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God So Loved the World."

President Hinckley

The Tabernacle Choir has just sung "God So Loved the World."

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

President Boyd K. Packer

When the funeral cortege traveled with the body of our beloved President Ezra Taft Benson to his final resting place at home in Idaho, every overpass was lined with people. There were along the way Scouts in uniform with flags. There were the elderly in camp chairs, even wheelchairs. Farmers left their equipment to stand in the field, and families dressed in their Sunday best paid their respects. Thousands of people expressed love for him, a spontaneous outpouring of love—all of which is now transferred to President Howard W. Hunter. His physical limitations actually enhance his capacity as prophet and seer. God bless him for the course that he has already set and the direction that he will yet give us.

Personal revelation

I speak to the youth of the Church, who now face “perilous times,” as the Apostle Paul prophesied would come in the last days.¹

In order to prepare you and protect you, I will tell you as plainly as I can what I have learned about personal revelation.

Dual beings

There are two parts to your nature—your temporal body born of mortal parents, and your immortal spirit within. You are a son or daughter of God.

Physically you can see with eyes and hear with ears and touch and feel and learn. Through your intellect you learn most of what you know about the world in which we live.

But if you learn by reason only, you will never understand the Spirit and how it works—regardless of how much you learn about other things.

The scriptures teach that “great men are not always wise.”² Spiritually you

may know *not*, and know *not* that you know *not* and be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”³

Your spirit learns in a different way than does your intellect.

For “there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding,”⁴ and the Spirit of Christ “giveth light to every man that cometh into the world.”⁵

I will use the words *see*, *hear*, and *feel* to teach about revelation, but I will use them as they are used in the scriptures.

The gift of the Holy Ghost

Following baptism, in the ordinance of confirmation, you received the *gift* of the Holy Ghost.

While the Holy Ghost may inspire all mankind, the gift carries the right to have it as a “constant companion.”⁶ It is “by the power of the Holy Ghost [that you] may know the truth of all things.”⁷

We are told that “angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost.”⁸ We are even told that when we speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, we “speak with the tongue [or in the same language] of angels.”⁹

Prayer

You have your agency, and inspiration does not—perhaps cannot—flow unless you ask for it, or someone asks for you.

No message in scripture is repeated more often than the invitation, even the command, to pray—to ask.

Prayer is so essential a part of revelation that without it the veil may remain closed to you. Learn to pray. Pray often. Pray in your mind, in your heart. Pray on your knees.

Begin where you are

You must begin where you are. Pray, even if you are like the prophet Alma when he was young and wayward, or if you are like Amulek, of the closed mind, who “knew concerning these things, yet . . . would not know.”¹⁰

Prayer is *your* personal key to heaven. The lock is on your side of the veil.¹¹

Study

But that is not all. To one who thought that revelation would flow without effort, the Lord said:

“You have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

“But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your *mind*; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall *feel* that it is right.”¹²

This burning in the bosom is not purely a physical sensation. It is more like a warm light shining within your being.

Describing the promptings from the Holy Ghost to one who has not had them is very difficult. Such promptings are personal and strictly private!¹³

Still, small voice

The Holy Ghost speaks with a voice that you *feel* more than you *hear*. It is described as a “still small voice.”¹⁴ And while we speak of “listening” to the whisperings of the Spirit, most often one describes a spiritual prompting by saying, “I had a *feeling* . . .”

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that

by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; . . . those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus.”¹⁵

Revelation comes as words we *feel* more than *hear*. Nephi told his wayward brothers, who were visited by an angel, “Ye were past *feeling*, that ye could not *feel* his words.”¹⁶

The scriptures are full of such expressions as “The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened,”¹⁷ or “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart,”¹⁸ or “I did enlighten thy mind,”¹⁹ or “Speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts.”²⁰ There are hundreds of verses which teach of revelation.

President Marion G. Romney, quoting the prophet Enos, said, “While I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind.”²¹ Enos then related what the Lord put into his mind.

“This,” President Romney said, “is a very common means of revelation. It comes into one’s mind in words and sentences. With this medium of revelation I am personally well acquainted.”²²

We do not seek for spectacular experiences. President Spencer W. Kimball spoke of the many who “have no ear for spiritual messages . . . when they come in common dress. . . . Expecting the spectacular, one may not be fully alerted to the constant flow of revealed communication.”²³

Prompting

This voice of the Spirit speaks gently, prompting you what to do or what to say, or it may caution or warn you.

Ignore or disobey these promptings, and the Spirit will leave you. It is your choice—your agency.

Faith

The flow of revelation depends on your faith. You exercise faith by causing, or by making, your mind accept or believe as truth that which you cannot, by reason alone, prove for certainty.²⁴

The first exercising of your faith should be your acceptance of Christ and His atonement.

As you test gospel principles by believing without knowing, the Spirit will begin to teach you. Gradually your faith will be replaced with knowledge.

You will be able to discern, or to see, with spiritual eyes.

Be believing and your faith will be constantly replenished, your knowledge of the truth increased, and your testimony of the Redeemer, of the Resurrection, of the Restoration will be as "a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life."²⁵ You may then receive guidance on practical decisions in everyday life.

Word of Wisdom

Your body is the instrument of your mind. In your emotions, the spirit and the body come closest to being one. What you learn spiritually depends, to a degree, on how you treat your body. That is why the Word of Wisdom²⁶ is so important.

The habit-forming substances prohibited by that revelation—tea, coffee, liquor, tobacco—interfere with the delicate feelings of spiritual communication, just as other addictive drugs will do.

Do not ignore the Word of Wisdom, for that may cost you the "great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures"²⁷ promised to those who keep it. And good health is an added blessing.

Music

Make wholesome music of all kinds a part of your life.

Then learn what *sacred* music has to do with revelation. The Lord said, "My

soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads."²⁸

Secular music may be inspiring in a classical or popular sense, but it will not prepare your mind to be instructed by the Spirit as will sacred music.

The Apostle Paul counseled the Ephesians to "be filled with the Spirit; *speaking to yourselves* in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody *in your heart* to the Lord."²⁹

Reverence

Prelude music, reverently played, is nourishment for the spirit. It invites inspiration. That is a time to, as the poet said, "go to your bosom . . . and ask your heart what it doth know."³⁰ Do not ever disturb prelude music for others, for reverence is essential to revelation. "Be still," He said, "and know that I am God."³¹

Now a warning! Some music is spiritually very destructive. You young people know what kind that is. The tempo, the sounds, and the lifestyle of those who perform it repel the Spirit. It is far more dangerous than you may suppose, for it can smother your spiritual senses.

Temptation

Now, young people, pay attention! Before I say another word about personal revelation, I must tell you so that you cannot possibly misunderstand: "There are many spirits which are false spirits."³² There can be counterfeit revelations, promptings from the devil, temptations! As long as you live, in one way or another the adversary will try to lead you astray.

"For after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him."³³

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that "nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God."³⁴

The seventh chapter of Moroni in the Book of Mormon tells you how to test spiritual promptings. Read it carefully—over and over.

By trial, and some error, you will learn to heed these promptings.

If ever you receive a prompting to do something that makes you *feel* uneasy, something you know in your *mind* to be wrong and contrary to the principles of righteousness, do not respond to it!

The Church

The Lord reveals His will through dreams and visions, visitations, through angels, through His own voice, and through the voice of His servants.³⁵ "Whether by mine own voice," He said, "or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."³⁶

The Lord's house is a house of order. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one [else], to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves."³⁷

You may receive revelation individually, as a parent for your family, or for those for whom you are responsible as a leader or teacher, having been properly called and set apart.

If you become critical and harbor negative feelings, the Spirit will withdraw. Only when you repent will the Spirit return. My experience is that the channels of inspiration always follow that order. You are safe following your leaders.

The Comforter

Now do not suppose that you will be spared from sorrow, disappointment,

failure, fear. These come to all. They are essential to our testing.

When sore trials come, you will learn why the Holy Ghost is called the Comforter.

You must face life "led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [you] should do,"³⁸ just as Nephi did.

You may not yet have a certain witness that Jesus is the Christ. Exercise your faith and trust in those who do.

I have that certain witness. It came to me in my youth. During those early periods of doubt, I leaned on the testimony of a seminary teacher. Although I did not know, somehow I *knew* that he *knew*.

The Lord said:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."³⁹

I bear witness of the power of the Spirit and thank God that this incomparable gift is given to you, our youth, to guide you as you move forward to a happy life, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 3:1.
2. Job 32:9.
3. 2 Timothy 3:7.
4. Job 32:8.
5. D&C 84:46.
6. D&C 121:46.
7. Moroni 10:5; see also 2 Nephi 32:5.
8. 2 Nephi 32:3.
9. 2 Nephi 31:13; 32:2.
10. Alma 10:6.
11. See Revelation 3:20.

12. D&C 9:7–8; italics added.
13. See 1 Nephi 14:28–30; 2 Nephi 32:7; Alma 12:9–11.
14. D&C 85:6.
15. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 151.
16. 1 Nephi 17:45; italics added.
17. D&C 110:1.
18. D&C 8:2.
19. D&C 6:15.
20. D&C 100:5.
21. Enos 1:10.
22. In Conference Report, Apr. 1964, p. 124; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, p. 506.
23. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), p. 457.
24. See Alma 32:27–28, 38.
25. D&C 63:23; see also John 4:14; Jeremiah 2:13.
26. See D&C 89.
27. D&C 89:19.
28. D&C 25:12; italics added.
29. Ephesians 5:18–19; italics added.
30. William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, act 2, scene 2, lines 136–37.
31. Psalm 46:10.
32. D&C 50:2; see also v. 3.
33. Moroni 7:17.
34. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 205.
35. See D&C 43:25.
36. D&C 1:38.
37. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 21.
38. 1 Nephi 4:6.
39. John 14:15–18.

The choir sang “Come, O Thou King of Kings.”

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us. The Tabernacle Choir then sang “Come, O Thou King of Kings.”

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” We shall then hear from Elder L. Aldin Porter, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang
“I Know That My Redeemer Lives.”

Elder L. Aldin Porter

“I have warned you, and forewarn you”

A few years ago I was in a Salt Lake hospital emergency room with my sons and a neighbor boy—the result of a backyard touch football game.

While we waited in the emergency room for the doctor to put one of the participants back together, we saw a young lady brought into the hospital. She may have been seventeen—tall, willowy, well dressed, and having a wild reaction to an overdose of drugs. As we watched, she collapsed, and I thought, There is no way this child can survive this experience. I wondered how she had come to this sad situation in her life.

Had she not heard the words of the prophets? Had she heard them and laughed as if they were the warnings of men out of touch with the realities of a modern world? Had one of us been negligent in our opportunities to teach her? Had her parents known the truth but not been willing or able to help her understand?

While waiting in that hospital thinking, pondering, and praying for her, I recalled a principle the Lord teaches us in the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is found in the fourth verse:

“Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and

designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation."

Consider carefully the principle: "I have warned you, and forewarn you, . . . by revelation."

How do we respond to prophets?

We in this church stand before the world, in all humility and sincerity, and declare that Joseph Smith Jr. was raised up by the Lord Jesus Christ and appointed to be the mortal instrument through which the doctrines, powers, keys, priesthood, and ordinances were restored to the earth. Since that day there has been a continual flow of revelation through those who have followed as the Lord's appointed apostles and prophets.

Yesterday we sustained Howard W. Hunter as the President of the Church and as the prophet, seer, and revelator. I wonder if we have any concept of the importance of that event. It is worth some pondering and some praying. But let me point out that President Hunter has sat as one of those men who hold this sacred revelatory power for thirty-five years. He whom the Lord has called and we have sustained is not a novice in the principles, process, and practice of receiving divine direction.

There is a question that each of us must deal with in a most solemn and serious way if our lives are to be what the Father of us all would have them be: "What is our response when the living prophets declare the mind and the will of the Lord?" This is the test of mankind in every dispensation.

The prophets will not lead us astray

I sat in this tabernacle some years ago as President Joseph Fielding Smith stood at this pulpit. It was the general

priesthood meeting of April 1972, the last general conference before President Smith passed away. He said: "There is one thing which we should have exceedingly clear in our minds. Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord."¹

There came to me that evening a witness of the Spirit that he spoke the truth. I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and assurance that the Lord loved us and would not leave us without direction.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. drew a very important distinction concerning revelation from the Lord:

"Some of the General Authorities have had assigned to them a special calling; they possess a special gift; they are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators, which gives them a special spiritual endowment in connection with their teaching of the people. They have the right, the power, and authority to declare the mind and will of God to his people, subject to the over-all power and authority of the President of the Church."

President Clark continues: "Others of the General Authorities are not given this special spiritual endowment and authority covering their teaching; they have a resulting limitation, and the resulting limitation upon their power and authority in teaching applies to every other officer and member of the Church, for none of them is spiritually endowed as a prophet, seer, and revelator."²

I emphasize that the rest of us do not have that specific power and authority. The Seventy have an endowment that is uniquely theirs; temple presidents and matrons, stake presidents and bishops, as well as fathers and mothers have an endowment that is uniquely theirs; but none of us has the power, authority,

or responsibility that is given to the First Presidency and the Twelve.

Only the prophets declare doctrine

You may wonder why I stress this point so strongly. It is because a misunderstanding here can cause us deep pain and can be the means of misleading many others. Those who claim similar powers often declare that they are doing it with purity of heart and with total sincerity.

One's intentions may be of the purest kind. The sincerity may be total and complete. Nevertheless, pure intentions and heartfelt sincerity do not give members of the Church authority to declare doctrine which is not sustained by the living prophets. While we are members of the Church, we are not authorized to *publicly declare* our speculations as doctrine nor to extend doctrinal positions to other conclusions based upon the reasoning of men and women, even by the brightest and most well-read among us.

The prophets are called not only to receive the doctrine and direct the ordinances through the keys they hold. They are also responsible to keep the saving doctrine pure so that people can hear and feel that doctrine in its sure and certain form.

Criticizing prophets leads to apostasy

Occasionally we have those who become a law unto themselves in these matters. Sadly, their pride leads them down a road which President Spencer W. Kimball warned us about:

"Apostasy usually begins with question and doubt and criticism. . . .

"They who garnish the sepulchres of the dead prophets begin now by stoning the living ones. They return to the pronouncements of the dead leaders and interpret them to be incompatible with present programs. They convince themselves that there are discrepancies between the practices of the deceased

and the leaders of the present. . . . They allege love for the gospel and the Church but charge that leaders are a little 'off the beam'! . . . Next they say that while the gospel and the Church are divine, the leaders are fallen. Up to this time it may be a passive thing, but now it becomes an active resistance, and frequently the blooming apostate begins to air his views and to crusade. . . . He now begins to expect persecution and adopts a martyr complex, and when finally excommunication comes he associates himself with other apostates to develop and strengthen cults. At this stage he is likely to claim revelation for himself, revelations from the Lord directing him in his interpretations and his actions. These manifestations are superior to anything from living leaders, he claims."³

Almost without exception, as one finds himself or herself walking the road President Kimball just outlined, there will be priesthood leaders who will counsel and advise and even admonish the person. Many heed the counsel, but some do not.

Counseling comes not just for our own benefit but for the blessing of those who might be misled by something we might say or do. I have been deeply grateful to my brethren that they have cared enough to speak to me, on occasion, in plain words.

How to become receptive to counsel

Surrounded as we are by worldly influences, how can we maintain a sweetness of spirit and a humility that will make us receptive to such counsel? I fear that we have become so enamored with recreation, with fame and fortune, with videos, with television, and with what money can buy that we have little time for eternal things. We cannot take the time to obtain a knowledge of the doctrines of eternity, for that requires sacrifice, effort, and struggle. Furthermore, we have learned to live in a world

of clamor and noise and haste and hurry to the extent that we have often become immune to the Spirit of the Lord and the "peaceable things of the kingdom."⁴

How do we prepare ourselves to be in harmony with the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve?

On one occasion during the Savior's mortal ministry, he was challenged by those who were opposing him. They wondered how a person could speak with such certainty without the education of the world.

"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

"If any man will *do* his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."⁵

We must learn the will of our Father in Heaven by earnest study. Next, we must act upon it. Study alone is not sufficient; we must act upon the words of revelation before we know of a surety of the truthfulness of the doctrines. On the day the Church was organized in 1830, the Lord gave a wonderful promise to those *who labor in the vineyard*:

"For, behold, I will bless all those *who labor in my vineyard* with a mighty blessing, and *they shall believe on his [Joseph Smith's] words*, which are given him through me by the Comforter, which manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world, yea, for the remission of sins unto the contrite heart."⁶

If we will follow, with diligence, the counsel and instruction that is the united voice of these Brethren, we will know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether they speak of themselves.

We need listening ears, not greater prophets

In all solemnity and soberness—with a clear understanding of the consequences of a testimony borne in this setting—may I state that God has made known to me in an unmistakable way

that he has called and he sustains those who are the living prophets, seers, and revelators. The Lord God of Israel will direct them, and they will not lead us astray. When you see any document, any address, any letter, any instruction that is issued by the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, it should be recognized for what it surely is—the mind and the will of the Lord to his people in this day.

We do not need greater prophets. We need listening ears. We need hearts that are sufficiently pure that we can *feel* their words. We need souls that will commit to the keeping of our covenants.

My prayer is that each of us may have that watershed experience of life of having the Spirit carry with power—even fire—to our souls the assurance that we are being directed by His appointed servants. I pray that there will enter our hearts the peace that comes from knowing by a power beyond all human ability to transmit that God is aware of us and has raised up servants in our day to lead us under the power and inspiration of his close attention.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1972, p. 99; or *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 88.
2. "When Are Church Leaders' Words Entitled to Claim of Scripture?" *Church News*, 31 July 1954, pp. 9-10
3. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), p. 462.
4. D&C 36:2.
5. John 7:16-17; italics added.
6. D&C 21:9; italics added.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Three weeks ago I was assigned to host an open house at the Orlando Florida Temple for leaders representing the clergy, press, government, education, and business. Before I escorted these prominent guests through the temple, I explained to them the position and basic doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I wanted them to know why the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith, so they could understand the divine purpose and the eternal significance of the temple. My message this morning is to remind Church members of what we have and to invite nonmembers to understand the need for the restoration of the gospel.

The Savior's ministry and church

The mortal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was comparatively brief. He lived only thirty-three years, and His ministry was only three years. But in those three years He taught the human family everything that is necessary to receive all of the blessings our Father in Heaven has in store for His children. He concluded His mortal ministry with the single most compassionate and significant service in the history of the world: the Atonement.

One of the most important accomplishments of the Savior was the establishment of His church upon the earth. Paul taught that Christ "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

When Jesus called His twelve Apostles, He laid His hands upon them, ordained them, and conferred upon them the authority to act in His name and

govern His church. Peter is commonly understood to have become the chief Apostle, or the President of the Church, after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

The Apostasy

Early Christians endured the challenges of persecution and hardship. Peter and his brethren had a difficult time holding the Church together and keeping the doctrine pure. They traveled extensively and wrote to one another about the problems they were facing, but information moved so slowly and the Church and its teachings were so new that heading off false teachings before they became firmly entrenched was difficult.

The New Testament indicates that the early Apostles worked hard to preserve the church that Jesus Christ left to their care and keeping, but they knew their efforts would ultimately be in vain. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Saints, who were anxiously anticipating the second coming of Christ, that "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He also warned Timothy that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; . . . And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

And Peter presupposed the falling away, or the Apostasy, when he spoke of "the times of refreshing" that would come before God would again send Jesus Christ, who "before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21).

Eventually, with the known exception of John the Beloved, Peter and his

fellow Apostles were martyred. The Apostle John and members of the Church struggled for survival in the face of horrifying oppression. To their everlasting credit, Christianity did survive and was truly a prominent force by the end of the second century A.D. Many valiant Saints were instrumental in helping Christianity to endure.

Despite the significance of the ministries of these Saints, they did not hold the same apostolic authority that Peter and the other Apostles had received through ordination under the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When that authority was lost, men began looking to other sources for doctrinal understanding. As a result, many plain and precious truths were lost.

Corruption of the Savior's doctrine

History tells us, for example, of a great council held in A.D. 325 in Nicaea. By this time Christianity had emerged from the dank dungeons of Rome to become the state religion of the Roman Empire, but the church still had problems—chiefly the inability of Christians to agree among themselves on basic points of doctrine. To resolve differences, Emperor Constantine called together a group of Christian bishops to establish once and for all the official doctrines of the church.

Consensus did not come easily. Opinions on such basic subjects as the nature of God were diverse and deeply felt, and debate was spirited. Decisions were not made by inspiration or revelation but by majority vote, and some disagreeing factions split off and formed new churches. Similar doctrinal councils were held later in A.D. 451, 787, and 1545 with similarly divisive results.

The beautiful simplicity of Christ's gospel was under attack from an enemy that was even more destructive than the scourges and the crosses of early Rome: the philosophical meanderings of un-

inspired men. The doctrine became based more on popular opinion than on revelation. This period of time was called the Dark Ages. They were dark largely because the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ had been lost.

The Reformation

Then in 1517 the Spirit moved Martin Luther, a German priest who was disturbed at how far the church had strayed from the gospel as taught by Christ. His work led to a reformation, a movement that was taken up by such other visionaries as John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, John Wesley, and John Smith.

I believe these reformers were inspired to create a religious climate in which God could restore lost truths and priesthood authority. Similarly, God inspired the earlier explorers and colonizers of America and the framers of the Constitution of the United States to develop a land and governing principles to which the gospel could be restored.

Joseph Smith searches for truth

By 1820 the world was ready for the "restitution of all things" spoken of by Peter and "all [God's] holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

At this time religious excitement was sweeping across the countryside in upstate New York. Ministers from different denominations vied zealously for the loyalty of the faithful in villages and towns, including Palmyra, the home of the family of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith.

The Smith family followed this religious excitement, and members of the family were "proselyted" to various faiths. Mother Smith and three of the children—Hyrum, Samuel, and Sophronia—joined one church (see Joseph Smith—History 1:7), while Father Smith and his eldest son, Alvin, affiliated with another.

When fourteen-year-old Joseph Jr. considered which church to join, he investigated each denomination carefully, listening to the respective ministers and trying to sort out the truth. He knew there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5), but which was the one he did not know.

"In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions," Joseph Smith Jr. wrote later, "I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?" (Joseph Smith—History 1:10.)

Young Joseph looked for answers to his questions in the scriptures. While reading in the Bible, he came upon a simple, direct admonition in the epistle of James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

Joseph reflected: "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know" (Joseph Smith—History 1:12).

The First Vision

With the simple faith of youth and motivated by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Joseph decided to go into a grove of trees near his home and put the promise in James to the test.

On a beautiful, clear spring morning, Joseph retired to the woods. He paused when he arrived at a quiet, secluded spot. He looked around to make sure he was alone. Then he knelt and began to pray. No sooner had he done so than an overwhelming feeling of

darkness swept over him, as if some evil power was trying to dissuade him. Rather than surrender, Joseph intensified his pleas to God—and God Himself responded.

Reading from Joseph's account:

"I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . .

"When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

I testify that those Beings were God, our Heavenly Father, and His resurrected Son, Jesus Christ, in one of the most supernal spiritual manifestations of all time!

They told Joseph he should join none of the existing churches.

Their mission accomplished, the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, departed, leaving young Joseph physically drained but spiritually enriched with exciting restored truth. He knew with certainty that God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, are real, for he had seen them. He knew they are two separate, distinct individuals. He knew that no church on the face of the earth had the authority of the priesthood to act in the name of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the most important lesson young Joseph learned in the Sacred Grove is this significant eternal truth: the heavens are *not* sealed. God does communicate with mortals. He loves us today just as much as He loved those who lived anciently. What comfort that sweet assurance provides in a world filled with confusion and discouragement! What *peace* and *security* come to the heart that understands that God in

heaven knows us and cares about us, individually and collectively, and that He communicates with us, either directly or through His living prophets, according to our needs.

The Restoration

My dear friends, I testify to you that this is true and that the Father and the Son appeared in wondrous vision to young Joseph as a step in the restoring of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. Through subsequent, equally miraculous experiences, Joseph Smith was God's instrument in—

- Translating from ancient records a book of scripture, the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

- Restoring priesthood authority.

- Restoring sealing keys to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers.

- Establishing the restored church of Jesus Christ in these latter days with the fulness of the gospel as taught in the meridian of time by the Savior and His Apostles.

- Fulfilling biblical prophecy.

- Preparing for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

During the Orlando temple tours I explained to our guests who were not of our faith that I understood if they found this message a bit overwhelming. I taught my new friends in Orlando, as I teach here this morning, that either the gospel has been restored, or it has not. Either the Savior's original church and its doctrine were lost, or they were not. Either Joseph Smith had that remarkable vision, or he did not. The Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ, or it is not. Either the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored to earth through God's chosen latter-day prophet, or it was not.

The truth really is not any more complicated than that. Either these things happened just as I have testified,

or they did not. As a latter-day Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, my testimony, and the testimony of millions of faithful members of the Church the world over, is that what I have told you this morning is true. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been restored to the earth through Joseph Smith and is administered today by a living prophet. These things I know!

A certain way to know the truth

This information is valuable to each of us only if we know for ourselves that it is true. Thankfully we have a simple but certain way to know. It requires some effort and sincere prayer. But it is worth it!

In the last chapter of the Book of Mormon, an ancient prophet named Moroni gave a significant promise to those who would one day read this sacred book of scripture. His promise applies to every sincere seeker of truth. He wrote:

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:4-5).

Moroni urges us to go directly to the Source of Truth for answers to our questions. If we seek Him humbly and sincerely, He will help us discern truth from error. As the Savior Himself assured His disciples, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Brothers and sisters, we know the truth. Because we do, we are expected to share it with all of our Heavenly Father's

children. To our dear friends of the Church, please do not let pass this opportunity to receive personal revelation from God. Consider what I have said. Weigh it carefully. Measure it against the things you believe. Hold fast to all that is true, and add to that the fulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Take into account what you have felt as you have listened. You can know if these things are true by asking God. Listen for His answer; then respond to what you feel.

If you will do so, I believe you will come to know as I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God's true church upon the earth. May God bless you, my dear friends, with the peace and joy the gospel gives, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Come, We That Love the Lord."

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Come, We That Love the Lord."

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker, after which the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

Widows in Berlin

Many years ago I attended a large gathering of Church members in the city of Berlin, Germany. A spirit of quiet reverence permeated the gathering as an organ prelude of hymns was played. I gazed at those who sat before me. There were mothers and fathers and relatively few children. The majority of those who sat on crowded benches were women about middle age—and alone. Suddenly it dawned on me that perhaps these were widows, having lost their husbands during World War II. My curiosity demanded an answer to my unexpressed thought, so I asked the conducting officer to take a sort of standing roll call. When he asked all those who were widows to please arise, it seemed that half the vast throng stood. Their faces reflected the grim effect of war's cruelty. Their hopes had been shattered, their lives altered, and their future had in a way been taken from

them. Behind each countenance was a personal travail of tears. I addressed my remarks to them and to all who have loved, then lost, those most dear.

Faith and sacrifices of a German widow

Frederick W. Babbel, who accompanied Elder Ezra Taft Benson on his postwar visit to Europe to assist the struggling Saints, recounts in his book *On Wings of Faith* one heartrending account. A woman, even the mother of four small children, had been newly widowed. Her husband, young and handsome, whom she loved more than life itself, had been killed during the final days of the frightful battles in their homeland of East Prussia. She and her children were forced to flee to West Germany, a distance of a thousand miles. The weather was mild as they began their long and difficult trek on foot. Constantly being faced with dangers from panicky refugees and marauding

troops was difficult enough, but then came the cold of winter, with its accompanying snow and ice. Her resources were meager; now they were gone. All she had was her strong faith in God and in the gospel as revealed to the latter-day prophet Joseph Smith.

And then one morning the unthinkable happened. She awakened with a chill in her heart. The tiny form of her three-year-old daughter was cold and still, and she realized that death had claimed her. With great effort the mother prepared a shallow grave and buried her precious child.

Death, however, was to be her companion again and again on the journey. Her seven-year-old perished, and then her five-year-old. Her despair was all-consuming. Finally, as she was reaching the end of her travel, the baby died in her arms. She had lost her husband and all her children. She had given up all her earthly goods, her home, and even her homeland.

From the depths of her despair, she knelt and prayed more fervently than she had ever prayed in her life: "Dear Heavenly Father, I do not know how I can go on. I have nothing left—except my faith in thee. I feel amidst the desolation of my soul an overwhelming gratitude for the atoning sacrifice of thy Son, Jesus Christ. I know that because he suffered and died, I shall live again with my family; that because he broke the chains of death, I shall see my children again in the flesh and will have the joy of raising them. Though I do not at this moment wish to live, I will do so, that we may be reunited as a family and return, together, to thee." This prayer, this testimony sustained her until finally she reached Karlsruhe, her destination.

"Where can I turn for peace?"

Though perhaps not so cruel and dramatic, yet equally poignant, are the lives described in the obituaries of our

day and time when the uninvited enemy called death enters the stage of our mortal existence and snatches from our grasp a loving husband or precious wife and, frequently in the young exuberance of life, our children and grandchildren. Death shows no mercy. Death is no respecter of persons, but in its insidious way it visits all. At times it is after long-suffering and is a blessing, while in other instances those in the prime of life are taken by its grasp.

As of old, the heartbroken frequently and silently repeat the ancient question: "Is there no balm in Gilead?"¹ "Why me; why now?" The words of a beautiful hymn provide a partial answer:

Where can I turn for peace? Where
is my solace
When other sources cease to make
me whole?
When with a wounded heart, anger,
or malice,
I draw myself apart, Searching my
soul? . . .

He answers privately, Reaches my
reaching
In my Gethsemane, Savior and
Friend.
Gentle the peace he finds for my be-
seeching.
Constant he is and kind, Love with-
out end.²

Widows in the scriptures

The plight of the widow is a recurring theme through holy writ. Our hearts go out to the widow at Zarephath. Gone was her husband. Consumed was her scant supply of food. Starvation and death awaited. But then came God's prophet with the seemingly brazen command that the widow woman should feed him. Her response is particularly touching: "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I

am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.”³

The reassuring words of Elijah penetrated her very being:

“Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

“For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail. . . .

“And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah. . . .

“And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail.”⁴

Like the widow at Zarephath was the widow of Nain. The New Testament of our Lord records a moving and soul-stirring account of the Master’s tender regard for the grieving widow:

“And it came to pass . . . that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

“Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

“And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

“And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

“And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”⁵

Care for widows and orphans

What power, what tenderness, what compassion did our Master and Exemplar demonstrate. We too can bless if we will but follow his noble example. Opportunities are everywhere. Needed are eyes to see the pitiable plight, ears to hear the silent pleadings of a broken

heart, yes, and a soul filled with compassion, that we might communicate not only eye to eye or voice to ear but in the majestic style of the Savior, even heart to heart.

The word *widow* appears to have had a most significant meaning to our Lord. He cautioned his disciples to beware the example of the scribes, who feigned righteousness by their long apparel and their lengthy prayers, but who devoured the houses of widows.⁶

To the Nephites came the direct warning, “I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against . . . those that oppress . . . the widow.”⁷

And to the Prophet Joseph Smith he directed, “The storehouse shall be kept by the consecrations of the church; and widows and orphans shall be provided for, as also the poor.”⁸

The widow’s home is generally not large or ornate. Frequently it is a modest one in size and humble in appearance. Often it is tucked away at the top of the stairs or the back of the hallway and consists of but one room. To such homes he sends you and me.

There may exist an actual need for food, clothing, even shelter. Such can be supplied. Almost always there remains the hope for that special hyacinth to feed the soul.

Go, gladden the lonely, the dreary;
Go, comfort the weeping, the weary;
Go, scatter kind deeds on your way;
Oh, make the world brighter today!⁹

Let us remember that after the funeral flowers fade, the well-wishes of friends become memories, and the prayers offered and words spoken dim in the corridors of the mind. Those who grieve frequently find themselves alone. Missed is the laughter of children, the commotion of teenagers, and the tender, loving concern of a departed companion. The clock ticks more loudly, time

passes more slowly, and four walls do indeed a prison make.

Hopefully all of us may again hear the echo of words spoken by the Master, inspiring us to good deeds: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . , ye have done it unto me."¹⁰

The late Elder Richard L. Evans left for our contemplation and action this admonition:

"We who are [young] should never become so blindly absorbed in our own pursuits as to forget that there are still with us those who will live in loneliness unless we let them share our lives as once they let us share theirs. . . .

"We cannot bring them back the morning hours of youth. But we can help them live in the warm glow of a sunset made more beautiful by our thoughtfulness, by our provision, and by our active and unfeigned love. Life in its fullness is a loving ministry of service from generation to generation. God grant that those who belong to us may never be left in loneliness."¹¹

A semitrailer filled with fresh fruit

Long years ago a severe drought struck the Salt Lake Valley. The commodities at the storehouse on Welfare Square had not been of their usual quality, nor were they found in abundance. Many products were missing, especially fresh fruit. As I was a young bishop, worrying about the needs of the many widows in my ward, my prayer one evening is especially sacred to me. I pleaded for these widows, who were among the finest women I knew in mortality and whose needs were simple and conservative, because they had no resources on which they might rely.

The next morning I received a call from a ward member, a proprietor of a produce business situated in our ward. "Bishop," he said, "I would like to send a semitrailer filled with oranges, grapefruit, and bananas to the bishops' store-

house to be given to those in need. Could you make arrangements?" Could I make arrangements! The storehouse was alerted, and then each bishop was telephoned and the entire shipment distributed. Bishop Jesse M. Drury, that beloved welfare pioneer and storekeeper, said he had never witnessed a day like it before. He described the occasion with one word: "Wonderful!"

The wife of that generous businessman is today a widow. I know the decision her husband and she made has brought her sweet memories and comforting peace to her soul.

Gratitude to those who care for widows

I express my sincere appreciation to one and all who are mindful of the widow. To the thoughtful neighbors who invite a widow to dinner and to that royal army of noble women, the visiting teachers of the Relief Society, I add, may God bless you for your kindness and your love unfeigned toward her who reaches out and touches vanished hands and listens to voices forever stilled. The words of the Prophet Joseph Smith describe their mission: "I attended by request, the Female Relief Society, whose object is the relief of the poor, the destitute, the widow and the orphan, and for the exercise of all benevolent purposes."¹²

Thank you to thoughtful and caring bishops who ensure that no widow's cupboard is empty, no house unwarmed, no life unblessed. I admire the ward leaders who invite the widows to all social activities, often providing a young Aaronic Priesthood lad to be a special escort for the occasion.

A widow contributes to the missionary fund

Frequently the need of the widow is not one of food or shelter but of feeling a part of ongoing events. President

Bryan Richards of Salt Lake City, now serving as a mission president, brought to my office a sweet widow whose husband had passed away during a full-time mission they were serving. President Richards explained that her financial resources were adequate and that she desired to contribute to the Church's General Missionary Fund the proceeds of two insurance policies on the life of her departed husband. I could not restrain my tears when she meekly advised me, "This is what I wish to do. It is what my missionary-minded husband would like."

The gift was received and entered as a most substantial donation to missionary service. I saw the receipt made in her name, but I believe in my heart it was also recorded in heaven. I invited her and President Richards to follow me to the unoccupied First Presidency Council room in the Church Administration Building. The room is beautiful and peaceful. I asked this sweet widow to sit in the chair usually occupied by our church President. I felt he would not mind, for I knew his heart. As she sat ever so humbly in the large leather chair, she gripped each armrest with a hand and declared, "This is one of the happiest days of my life." It was also such for President Richards and for me.

Children caring for widowed parents

I never travel to work along busy Seventh East in Salt Lake City but what I see in my mind's eye a thoughtful daughter, afflicted with arthritis and carrying in her hand a plate of warm food to her aged mother, who lived across the busy thoroughfare. She has now gone home to that mother who preceded her in passing. But her lesson was not lost on her daughters, who delight their widowed father by cleaning his house each week, inviting him to dinners in their homes, and sharing with him the laughter of good times together, leaving

in that widower's heart a prayer of gratitude for his daughters, the light of his life. Fathers experience loneliness as well as mothers.

Nell at Maytime Manor

One evening at Christmastime my wife and I visited a nursing home in Salt Lake City. We looked in vain for a ninety-five-year-old widow whose memory had become clouded and who could not speak a word. An attendant led us in our search, and we found Nell in the dining room. She had eaten her meal; she was sitting silently, staring into space. She did not show us any sign of recognition. As I reached to take her hand, she withdrew it. I noticed that she held firmly to a Christmas greeting card. The attendant smiled and said, "I don't know who sent that card, but she will not lay it aside. She doesn't speak, but pats the card and holds it to her lips and kisses it." I recognized the card. It was one my wife, Frances, had sent to Nell the week before. We left Maytime Manor more filled with the Christmas spirit than when we entered. We kept to ourselves the mystery of that special card and the life it had gladdened and the heart it had touched. Heaven was nearby.

Pure religion and undefiled before God

We need not wait for Christmas; we need not postpone till Thanksgiving Day our response to the Savior's tender admonition, "Go, and do thou likewise."¹³

As we follow in his footsteps, as we ponder his thoughts and his deeds, as we keep his commandments, we will be blessed. The grieving widow, the fatherless child, and the lonely of heart everywhere will be gladdened, comforted, and sustained through our service, and we will experience a deeper understanding of the words recorded in the Epistle of James: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To

visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."¹⁴

May the peace promised by the Savior be the gift of one and all this Sabbath day and always is my fervent and humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jeremiah 8:22.
2. "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" *Hymns*, no. 129.
3. 1 Kings 17:12.
4. 1 Kings 17:13-16.
5. Luke 7:11-15.
6. See Luke 20:46-47.
7. 3 Nephi 24:5.

8. D&C 83:6.

9. *Deseret Sunday School Songs* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1909), no. 197.

10. Matthew 25:40.

11. Richard L. Evans, *Thoughts for One Hundred Days* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1966), p. 222.

12. *History of the Church*, 4:567.

13. Luke 10:37.

14. James 1:27.

The choir sang "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings."

Elder Neil L. Andersen offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 2, 1994. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

President Howard W. Hunter, who presides at this conference, has asked me, Brother Monson, to conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We note that Elders Jeffrey R. Holland, Ronald E. Poelman, and Durrel A. Woolsey are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; and Elders Loren C. Dunn and Ben B. Banks are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and to many friends everywhere, who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and accompanied by Richard Elliott, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service by singing "In Hymns of Praise." The invocation will then be offered by Elder James M. Paramore of the Seventy.

The choir sang "In Hymns of Praise."

Elder James M. Paramore offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Paramore.

The choir will now sing "Dedication." Elder James E. Faust of the Council of Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Dedication."

Elder James E. Faust

The keys that never rust

A few months ago my beloved Ruth, Elder Holland and his sweet Patty, and I accompanied a group into the fascinating old city of Jerusalem to look for the door with the name of Hyde carved on it. The enchanting smells of the open containers of spices and the sounds of men selling their wares were exhilarating. As we entered St. Saviour's Monastery, looking for the door, we entered into old passageways surrounded by stone walls. We were told that some parts of the walls went back to the time of the Crusaders. On one wall hung an assortment of ancient rusted keys. Some of these keys were huge. All were larger than the keys we use today. Many of them were very ornate. Many of the doors the keys were made to open no longer exist, or if they do, the keys and the locks would be too rusty to open them.

Today I speak of keys other than those of metal. The keys I speak of never rust. These are the keys of life and salvation in the kingdom of God. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "I will give you a key that will never rust, if you will stay with the majority of the Twelve Apostles, and the records of the Church, you will never be led astray."¹

The Prophet also stated: "The Priesthood is everlasting. The Savior, Moses, and Elias, gave the keys to Peter, James, and John, on the mount, when they were transfigured before him."² Peter, James, and John conferred the keys of the kingdom of God upon the Prophet Joseph and ordained him to be an Apostle and a special witness of the name of the Savior and to bear the keys of his ministry.³ Keys that pertain to the gathering of Israel, the dispensation of Abraham, and, indispensably, the sealing power were conferred upon the Prophet by Moses, Elias, and Elijah in 1836.⁴

Joseph Smith gave keys to the Twelve

Prior to the martyrdom, no doubt with a sense of foreboding, the Prophet Joseph prepared for his death. President Joseph Fielding Smith states:

"The Prophet declared that he knew not why, but the Lord commanded him to endow the Twelve with these keys and priesthood, and after it was done, he rejoiced very much, saying in substance, 'Now, if they kill me, you have all the keys and all the ordinances and you can confer them upon others, and the powers of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom as fast as you will be able to build it up, and upon your shoulders will the responsibility of leading this people rest.'"⁵

After learning of the deaths of the Prophet Joseph and the Patriarch Hyrum, Wilford Woodruff reports his meeting with Brigham Young, who was then the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as follows: "I met Brigham Young in the streets of Boston, he having just returned, opposite to Sister Voce's house. We reached out our hands, but neither of us was able to speak a word. . . . After we had done weeping we began to converse. . . . In the course of the conversation, he [Brigham Young] smote his hand upon his thigh and said, 'Thank God, the keys of the kingdom are here.'"⁶

Choosing the successor to the President

When Brigham Young returned to Nauvoo, Sidney Rigdon, who had been a Counselor to Joseph Smith, challenged the leadership of Brigham Young and the Apostles. Said Brigham Young to the Saints in meeting assembled, "If the people want President Rigdon to lead them they may have him; but I say unto you that the Quorum of the Twelve have the keys of the kingdom of God in all the

world." He continued: "I know where the keys of the kingdom are, and where they will eternally be. You cannot call a man to be a prophet; you cannot take Elder Rigdon and place him above the Twelve; if so, he must be ordained by them."⁷

Brigham Young, as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve, subsequently became the President of the Church, following the Prophet Joseph Smith. So it was with President Howard W. Hunter following the death of President Ezra Taft Benson. As President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

"There is no mystery about the choosing of the successor to the President of the Church. The Lord settled this a long time ago, and the *senior apostle automatically becomes the presiding officer of the Church*, and he is so sustained by the Council of the Twelve which becomes the presiding body of the Church when there is no First Presidency. The president is *not elected*, but he has to be *sustained* both by his brethren of the Council and by the members of the Church."⁸

Howard W. Hunter becomes President

On June 5, 1994, the Quorum of the Twelve, of which President Hunter was then President, collectively holding all of the keys of the kingdom, convened in the Salt Lake Temple. President Howard W. Hunter was then ordained and set apart by the Twelve, with President Gordon B. Hinckley as voice for the Twelve. President Hunter thus became the President and legal administrator of the Church and the only man authorized to dispense, oversee, and exercise all of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. He also became the successor to the keys held by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith, Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, and Ezra Taft Benson.

The keys given by the Savior to Peter, James, and John, and given by them to the Prophet Joseph, have not rusted. They will open all spiritual doors of the dispensation of the fulness of times. They are now exercised by President Howard W. Hunter, his Counselors in the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve, who serve under the direction of the First Presidency.

Keys to remain until the Second Coming

How long will these keys last? President Wilford Woodruff stated:

"When the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of God, the keys of the Melchisedec Priesthood, of the apostleship, and sealed them upon the head of Joseph Smith, He sealed them upon his head to stay here upon the earth until the coming of the Son of Man. . . . They were with him to the day of his death. They then rested upon the head of another man. . . . He held those keys to the hour of his death. They then fell by turn, or in the providence of God, upon Wilford Woodruff.

"I say to the Latter-day Saints the keys of the kingdom of God are here, and they are going to stay here, too, until the coming of the Son of Man. Let all Israel understand that. They may not rest upon my head but a short time, but they will then rest on the head of another apostle, and another after him, and so continue until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven to 'reward every man according to the deeds done in the body.'"⁹

There is only one head of this church, and he is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the head of all. Under him stands President Howard W. Hunter, the man whom the Lord has selected to stand at the head of the Church, with his Counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. All other organizations in the Church are subordinate to those who have these keys.

Importance of spiritual keys

Why are these spiritual keys so important? These spiritual keys hold "the right to enjoy the blessing of communication with the heavens, and the privilege and authority to administer in the ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to preach the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."¹⁰ Keys of the ministering of angels are the right of the Aaronic Priesthood.¹¹ The higher Melchizedek Priesthood "holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God."¹² To be efficacious and valid, every act in the Church must be performed under the authority of the keys at the appropriate time and place and in the proper manner and order. The authority and power to direct all of the labors of the kingdom of God on earth constitute the keys of the priesthood. Those who possess them have the right to preside over and direct the affairs of the Church in their jurisdiction.

Why is it so necessary to follow those who have the keys of the priesthood? That principle has guided this church and its people since the beginning, and it is a principle of revelation. Among the members of the Church have been the living oracles of God, who have held the keys to direct this holy work. Without prophets, seers, and revelators, the Church and the kingdom of God cannot grow and prosper.

Story of the Vaudois

Valdesius, a citizen of Lyons, France, recognized the need for apostolic direction in the year 1170. A rich man, he abandoned his wealth so that he could live the simple life of a follower of Christ's Apostles. He worked primarily among the poor in and around Lyons and had parts of the Bible translated into their language. He and his followers traveled two by two, teaching the simple

truths of the Bible. Some crossed the high mountains of the Alps to live in the Piedmont Valleys of Italy.¹³

This valiant band, who came to be known as Valdensians or Vaudois, were viewed by their contemporaries as dangerous dissenters. Over the centuries they were "burned at the stake, buried alive, stoned, . . . hanged, herded into . . . disease-laden dungeons, [and] pursued . . . over rocks and crags and icy mountains."¹⁴ Yet they clung on tenaciously, turning back whole armies of tyrants to preserve their precious heritage of faith in the early Apostles, who held the keys that never rust.

In 1655 their overlord, the Duke of Savoy, issued an edict that they were to renounce or be massacred. The ensuing slaughter at last awakened the conscience of some of their neighbors, one of whom was John Milton, the great English poet. Repulsed by this evil deed, he penned his sonnet "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont":

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered
Saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine moun-
tains cold.¹⁵

In 1850, Elder Lorenzo Snow of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ascended a very high mountain near LaTour to visit the Vaudois of the Piedmont. He and his two companions stood on a bold projecting rock, where he proclaimed that Joseph Smith had seen the Father and the Son and had restored the gospel in its fulness and completeness. He testified that the keys of the holy apostleship had been restored. He further testified that there were indeed living Apostles and prophets upon the earth. Many believed his startling message and joined the Church. Moved by his experience with the Vaudois living in the Alpine mountain valleys, President Snow cited the stirring words:

For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
 Our God, our fathers' God;
 Thou hast made thy children mighty
 By the touch of the mountain sod.¹⁶

John Daniel Malan was the first of the Vaudois to be baptized on October 27, 1850, followed by the families of the Cardons, Stalles, Beuses, Pons, Malans, Gaudins, Chatelains, and many others. Some were in the first handcart companies to come to the Salt Lake Valley in the early 1850s. These families intermarried into other well-known families in the western United States, including the Larsons, Maughans, Crocketts, Miners, Budgees, Thatchers, Steeds, and Parkinsons.¹⁷ Drawing from their roots in the Vaudois mountain sod, many of their descendants tended the vineyards of the newly restored church and today are making singular contributions to the worldwide church, believing, as did their forebears, that Apostles hold the keys that never rust.

Following the prophet brings strength

I strongly counsel all who have membership in this church to follow the teachings and counsel of those who now have the keys as prophets, seers, and revelators. They are the ones who will inspire us to deal with the vicissitudes of our time. I plead with all not to try to selectively invoke gospel principles or scripture to wrongly justify spiritual disobedience or to separate themselves from the responsibilities of covenants and ordinances contrary to the counsel of those who have the prophetic voice in the Church. The scriptures and doctrines of the Church are not, as Peter warned, "of any private interpretation."¹⁸

Great temporal and spiritual strength flows from following those who have the keys of the kingdom of God in our time. Personal strength and power result

from obedience to eternal principles taught by the living legates of the Lord. May the Spirit of God rest upon us as we follow the living oracles.

As we conclude this historic conference, I am pleased to testify to the world of a very significant matter. As a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I verify that among those who hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth, there is complete unity and love and respect for each other. We totally sustain and uphold President Howard W. Hunter, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and President Thomas S. Monson as the First Presidency. This feeling of complete unity and support for the First Presidency was expressed last Thursday in the Salt Lake Temple in a proclamation by President Boyd K. Packer on behalf of the Twelve. This was joined in by President Rex D. Pinegar, representing the Seventies, and Bishop Merrill J. Bateman for the Presiding Bishopric. All of the General Authorities then voted to fully sustain the expressions of President Packer of full support for the First Presidency and for each other. In this unity, the gates of hell will not prevail against us. I so testify and witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Quoted in "Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Young Woman's Journal*, Dec. 1906, p. 543; see also Don L. Searle, "A Disciple in Deed," *Ensign*, June 1994, p. 15.
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 158; see also Matthew 17:1-3.
3. See D&C 27:12-13.
4. See D&C 110.
5. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 1:259.
6. "The Keys of the Kingdom," *Millennial Star*, 2 Sept. 1889, p. 546.

7. *History of the Church*, 7:233.
8. *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:156.
9. *Millennial Star*, 2 Sept. 1889, p. 547.
10. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), p. 142.
11. See D&C 13; 107:20.
12. D&C 84:19.
13. See Giorgio Tourn, *The Waldensians: The First 800 Years*, trans. Camillo P. Merlino (Torino: Claudiana, 1980), pp. 3-4.
14. Archibald F. Bennett, "The Vaudois Revisited," *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1948, p. 12.
15. Lines 1-2.
16. "For the Strength of the Hills," *Hymns*, no. 35. Original text was a poem titled "Hymn of the Vaudois Mountaineers in Times of Persecution."
17. Archibald F. Bennett, "The Vaudois of the Alpine Valleys and Their Contribution to Utah and Latter-day Saint History" (student paper, Brigham Young University, 1960), pp. 8-9, 16; in Historical Department, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Salt Lake City.
18. 2 Peter 1:20.

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, also a member of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, who was sustained yesterday as the new general president of the Primary.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful for the opportunity to join with you during this general conference in sustaining President Howard W. Hunter as the fourteenth President of the Church in this dispensation. He is a man without guile. I sustain him with all of my heart and pray that I might serve faithfully under his inspired leadership, and also his marvelous Counselors.

Extend deep roots into the gospel soil

Recently on the island of Molokai in the Hawaiian Islands, Sister Wirthlin and I passed by two very large trees that the wind had blown down and uprooted. These huge trees had extremely shallow roots. I wondered if they would have survived the winds and storms if their roots had been deeper. Relatively mild gusts of wind blow some trees down. Graceful palm trees, for example, are lovely to look at but will not stand up in

a heavy wind because they are not well anchored. Contrast this with giant oak trees that have deep root systems that can extend two-and-one-half times their height. Such trees rarely are blown down regardless of how violent the storms may be.

Faithful members of the Church should be like oak trees and should extend deep roots into the fertile soil of the fundamental principles of the gospel. We should understand and live by the simple, basic truths and not complicate them. Our foundations should be solid and deep-rooted so we can withstand the winds of temptation, false doctrine, adversity, and the onslaught of the adversary without being swayed or uprooted. Members whose roots are only at the surface of the gospel need to sink them deeper until they reach the bedrock below the soft topsoil.

Spiritual nourishment is just as important as a balanced diet to keep

us strong and healthy. We nourish ourselves spiritually by partaking of the sacrament weekly, reading the scriptures daily, praying daily in personal and family prayer, and performing temple work regularly. Our spiritual strengths are like batteries; they need to be charged and frequently recharged.

Reality of God the Father

I wish to review with you a few core principles of the gospel into which our spiritual roots should sink deeply. Most important is the reality of our Heavenly Father; his Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost.

Our Heavenly Father is the father of our spirits and of the entire human race; we are his offspring, his sons and daughters. We have inherited divine characteristics from him. Because of his love for his children, he provided a plan for us to progress and reach our highest potential and return to his presence. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself."¹

Reality of Jesus Christ, our Savior

Jesus Christ is infinitely more than a great teacher and philosopher. He is the Firstborn Son of God, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. He accepted the Father's great plan of happiness, saying, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."² The Father's plan gave us our agency to choose right or wrong, good or evil so we can learn, develop, and progress. As part of the plan, Jesus offered to atone for the sins of all mankind and bear the suffering for those sins, satisfying the law of justice if the sinners repent. Otherwise they

have to suffer and pay the penalty for their transgressions.

He also offered his mortal life, was crucified, and became the first to be resurrected, making possible the literal resurrection of all of our Father's children. He created this earth under his Father's direction as a place for us to live in mortality and prove whether we would be obedient and "do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command."³ He also created innumerable other worlds. He is our Mediator with the Father and our Exemplar in all things. His loving kindness toward us is beyond our comprehension. He stands at the head of his church, which bears his name, and directs it through his prophets.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Rock of our salvation. He said in the Sermon on the Mount:

"Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell."⁴

To the Saints in this dispensation, he said, "Do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail."⁵

Reality of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. As the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not

a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit.”⁶ He is a witness and testifier of the truth of the gospel. He is a revelator and teacher who conveys information to our spirits with far more certainty than is possible by our natural senses. He can guide us in every choice and decision and never will deceive or mislead us. He is a comforter who brings peace to our souls in times of need.

Reality of Satan

Just as real is one who would prevent us from becoming rooted to God and his truths. Two of his names are Lucifer and Satan. He is the adversary of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and of everything that is good. He rejected the Father’s plan in the premortal life, saying, “Send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.”⁷ The Father then said:

“Because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

“And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice.”⁸

From that time forward, Satan has led the forces of evil in a battle for the souls of men in his attempt to frustrate the plan of salvation.

Distinguishing between good and evil

We learn from the Book of Mormon prophet Moroni that “all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and en-

ticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually.

“But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, . . . to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God. . . .

“ . . . The Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; . . . every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; . . .

“But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God . . . is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.”⁹

The sins of corruption, dishonesty, strife, contention, and other evils in this world are not here by chance. They are evidences of the relentless campaign of Satan and those who follow him. He uses every tool and device available to him to deceive, confuse, and mislead. He has many followers who do anything for money without regard for the effects of their misdeeds.

Importance of moral purity

Another core principle is moral purity. One of the most pervasive deceptions in recent years is the notion that immorality is normal and acceptable and has no negative consequences. In truth, immorality is the underlying cause of much suffering and many other problems that are prevalent today, including rampant disease, abortion, broken families, families without fathers, and mothers who themselves are children. President Ezra Taft Benson said, “The plaguing sin of this generation is sexual immorality.”¹⁰ The Lord said, “Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery, . . . nor do anything like unto it.”¹¹ That means we are to avoid abnormal sexual

behavior, including fornication, homosexual behavior, child molestation, or any other perversion of God's plan of happiness.

The Word of Wisdom

A gospel principle that provides spiritual and physical strength is the Word of Wisdom. For many years after the Prophet Joseph Smith received this revelation in 1833, people deceived themselves into believing they could ignore or violate this law of health with impunity. I believe the Lord inspired President Heber J. Grant to emphasize it frequently and forcefully to counter the media that was becoming increasingly sophisticated and persuasive during his time. Today medical science has proven that tobacco and other such addictive substances are poisons that are harmful to the human body.

Missionary service

We can reach out to others in missionary service in response to the Savior's injunction to "go . . . into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."¹² The Lord used a harvest analogy when he instructed the early Saints to proclaim the gospel. He said, "Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God."¹³ That is our sacred privilege and obligation.

The field is still white and all ready to harvest. Church members remain a small percentage of the world's population. "For there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it."¹⁴ In proclaiming the gospel

we need to be sensitive to the feelings of others, remembering that "we claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may."¹⁵

Missionaries labor diligently to teach and baptize those who accept the gospel. In the process their own testimonies become deeply rooted. Missionary service provides the finest foundation possible for young people as they move into adulthood. The deep roots they sink into the gospel will sustain them for a lifetime and for all eternity. The Church needs more missionaries, many more, including couples, to fulfill its charge to proclaim the gospel "unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people."¹⁶

Teach pure doctrine

God has revealed everything necessary for our salvation. We should teach and dwell on the things that have been revealed and avoid delving into so-called mysteries. My counsel to teachers in the Church, whether they instruct in wards and stakes, Church institutions of higher learning, institutes of religion, seminaries, or even as parents in their homes, is to base their teachings on the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets.

We should follow Paul's counsel to the Ephesians: "Be no more . . . tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."¹⁷ The winds of false doctrine that are blowing today both outside and a few within the Church are far more dangerous to the ultimate salvation of mankind than are earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, and other natural disasters. These winds can uproot people if their roots are not firmly anchored to the Rock of our salvation, which is the teachings and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Be firmly rooted in gospel principles

We as a people are to live our religion and its principles and follow the leadership of our prophet, seer, and revelator regardless of what the world does. We should strive always to be obedient to our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and should keep in mind these words of the Savior: "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise."¹⁸

The Lord has reserved this land as the place for the restoration of his church. For this land to achieve its full potential, its citizens must remain rooted firmly in the principles that made it great. The enemies of God are attacking the core foundations of this land. The Lord's law for this land is declared in the Book of Mormon, where we read that this land is a "land of promise" that "the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people. . . . And whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off."¹⁹ The only power strong enough to withstand a fulness of iniquity is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we understand and live the fundamental principles, we will develop unshakable testimonies and convictions of their truth that will keep us from ever being swayed or uprooted.

Our Heavenly Father has endowed us with hearts of courage and faith, with strong wills, and with the ability to understand and to see clearly the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. He mercifully has clothed each member with the gift of the Holy Ghost, which gives us insight and personal power.

Even though the tasks of life become heavy, and although sorrow thrusts a drooping burden upon us, the light that emanates from our Savior beckons us on, undismayed. A righteous self-discipline can and will rule our lives.

The Church will never compromise

In closing I should like to state this: Our church does not and will not in any way compromise its position, and never at any time or place does it falter, hesitate, or show any reluctance to bear unwavering testimony to the divinity of Jesus Christ. Let us not forget the two giant trees we observed in Molokai whose roots were not strong or deep enough for the trees to withstand the heavy winds that destroyed them.

I bear testimony that we can find peace, security, and joy and happiness in the principles of the gospel. I know our Heavenly Father lives and that his Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. They know and love each one of us. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. We are led by a prophet today, President Howard W. Hunter. I bear this testimony humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 354.
2. Moses 4:2.
3. Abraham 3:25.
4. Matthew 7:24–27.
5. D&C 6:34.
6. D&C 130:22.
7. Moses 4:1.
8. Moses 4:3–4.
9. Moroni 7:12–13, 16–17.
10. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), p. 277.
11. D&C 59:6.
12. Mark 16:15.
13. D&C 6:3.
14. D&C 123:12.
15. Articles of Faith 1:11.
16. D&C 42:58.
17. Ephesians 4:14.
18. D&C 82:10.
19. Ether 2:7, 9.

Sister Patricia P. Pinegar

President Hunter, President Hinckley, President Monson, thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony and my feelings of joy, gratitude, and responsibility for being called to serve the Primary children of the Church.

Redwoods hold each other up

I have appreciated what Elder Wirthlin has taught us. I have also had an experience similar to his.

Several years ago while my husband, Ed, and I were serving in the England London South Mission, there was an unexpected storm. All night the winds raged. When morning came we ventured from the mission home to see the damage. It was devastating. Many trees throughout our garden, the neighborhood, and all of southern England had been uprooted. It was amazing to see the fallen trees with their gigantic root systems, still intact, jutting into the air. I came to the conclusion that because of the "easiness of the way" (Alma 37:46)—rain is plentiful in England—the trees had no need to sink their roots deep into the earth to get the nourishment they needed. Their roots were not strong enough or deep enough to withstand the hurricane-force winds.

On the other hand, the giant redwood trees that grow in northern California also have a very shallow root system. But when they are surrounded by other redwood trees, the strongest, fiercest wind cannot blow them over. The roots of the giant redwood trees intertwine and strengthen each other. When a storm comes, they actually hold each other up.

May I share with you some personal examples and thank those people who have been as the giant redwoods in my life, those who have been an example of caring and teaching, those who have intertwined their roots in mine and

helped me stand firm as they taught me through their words and their lives.

Gratitude to family

I feel deep gratitude to my mother, who allowed me to be responsible and didn't always fix my mistakes. To my father, who is soon to be eighty-nine years old and is living with us, thank you, Dad. Thank you for teaching me as the scriptures counsel, "only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; . . . reproof betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love" (D&C 121:41, 43).

The strongest intertwining roots in my life are those of my companion and sweetheart, Ed, who is supernally righteous. He has taught and encouraged me, exemplifying President Hunter's prayer "that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness" (quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4).

To my children, who are a part of my roots, who are a brightness of hope in my life—thank you for helping me stand tall with gladness because you are trying.

I am a happy grandmother. Thirteen of our seventeen grandchildren are Primary and pre-Primary age. They will help teach me about Primary and children. They can be my hands-on training. Could there be a better calling for a grandmother than to love and strengthen children?

Gratitude to auxiliary leaders

May I offer a sincere expression of gratitude to you, my brothers and sisters, who have strengthened me by forgiving me when I have disappointed you.

There are many others in my life who have encouraged me and allowed

me to connect with their strengths. My deep gratitude to President Janette C. Hales, the Young Women presidency, board, and staff who have shared their wisdom and insights, who have more than loved and supported me these last two years. To Michaelene Grassli, Betty Jo Jepsen, Ruth Wright, and the Primary board, thank you for your devotion and untiring efforts to encourage all members of the Church to focus on what is best for the children.

Gratitude to Saints

When I was ten or eleven years old, I became the Primary organist in the ward in Hawaii where I grew up. That is one of my most vivid Primary memories. I remember being very nervous. I remember making many mistakes. But I remember even more clearly that the Primary leaders cared more about me than about the mistakes I made.

I thank the community of Saints, the ward family of Saints, who, throughout my life, have provided "safe places"—places where I was able to be taught, to have experiences, to practice, and to eventually better understand and live the principles of the gospel.

Teach the children

One day as Ed and I were maneuvering the streets of England, he turned to me with tears in his eyes, and he said, "Look." I turned and saw a child on the side of the road. And then he said, "Who will teach the children?" That thought will not leave my mind or my heart. Who will teach the children? Who will teach the child who asks, "Will Heavenly Father really answer my prayer?" Who will teach Kate when at five years of age she asks, "Why do we need Jesus?" Who will teach the children? Please, will you? Will you? Will you help teach the children?

Since my call I've knelt and asked, "Father, what do you want the children to be taught?"

Teach and show the children that Heavenly Father loves them and has confidence in them because they are his children.

Teach and show them that they do need Jesus, our Savior, our guide. Help them understand and accept his love and trust him and follow him. Teach them that our prophet, President Howard W. Hunter, has said, "We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, 'What would Jesus do?' and then be more courageous to act upon the answer." He also said, "We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him" ("He Invites Us to Follow Him," *Ensign*, Sept. 1994, p. 5).

Teach the children that at eight years of age, when they are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost, they will be responsible for their choices. Teach them that they will be tempted, but as they listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost, he will help them with their choices.

We can teach the children these gospel truths and all of the truths of the plan of happiness that Heavenly Father wants his children to understand and live. Family home evening can be one of those safe and loving places where the Spirit is felt. With eight children in our home, I also have vivid memories that family home evening wasn't always easy. Remember other opportunities for teaching: family prayer, family scripture study (don't give up!), in the classroom, in the hall, in the neighborhood.

Stand by children in life's storms

And please, will each one of you be as the stalwart and dependable redwood trees, connecting and intertwining your

roots of testimony, of faith, of love, of kindness and patience with every child? Their roots are not deep enough for them to stand alone in the storms of life. They need us—every one of us—parents, teachers, leaders, youth, brothers, sisters. They need you.

And now I look to the future. How grateful I am for the principle of presidency, and for Sister Anne Wirthlin and Sister Susan Warner. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). We will stand together in unity as we support our priesthood leaders and help parents teach and strengthen children.

To the Primary children of the world, I want you to know that there are many people you don't even know who love you and care about you, who want you to be safe, be happy, and feel peace. I love you and would want you to feel "encircled about . . . in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15) and my love. Listen carefully to every good thing you hear about Heavenly Father and Jesus our Savior and then try your very best to follow him by doing what he wants you to do.

All of us can be like the giant redwood trees and support and strengthen each other, especially the children, that when storms arise we can actually hold each other up. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, general Primary president. I might say, Sister Pinegar, that for many years President Howard W. Hunter was the member of the Twelve who was an adviser to the Primary. You have a friend in court, and as Elder LeGrand Richards often said, one friend in court is better than a hundred friends in the courtyard.

Yesterday we thanked Sister Grassli and her counselors as they were released, and we of course have sustained a new Primary presidency. We should really take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the husbands of the sisters who serve in the auxiliary organizations. Without your support, brethren, your dear wives could not do nearly the work that they do. You are as silent redwood trees, sustaining each one of your companions, and we're very grateful to you.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." And then Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

It's been a blessing to be here and listen to the instruction we've received. It's a special privilege to welcome these men and to bid farewell for a time to those who will be leaving us. We're grateful for the valiant service these men have rendered.

President Hunter, I love you and sustain you with all my heart and soul,

as do all the Seventy. We declare to all our testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ and of your calling as His prophet at this time.

"What we need is home teachers"

I first met President Howard W. Hunter in 1967 when I reported to his

office to be set apart for a new calling. We discussed my new assignment for a moment; then he surprised me by saying something like, "Brother Pinegar, we don't need anyone to serve in that calling. Do you know what we need?" I sat there not knowing how to respond. I was wondering if I was mistaken about my call. In his pleasant way, he said if we were to stop the next one hundred members of the Church who passed in front of the Church Administration Building, almost all of them would be able and willing to serve in that same calling. "What we need," he said, "is home teachers. That is the great need in the Church today."

Then with a smile he said, "All right, Brother Pinegar, I'll set you apart anyway." As he placed his hands on my head, I was uncertain what Elder Hunter would say. I thought he might set me apart as a home teacher. In a kind, reassuring manner he gave me a blessing that I would be able to fulfill my calling. I promised myself that I would be a better home teacher.

President Hunter's reference to home teachers that day is in harmony with his focus now on the simple messages of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The great work of the Lord is primarily accomplished through small, kind acts that exemplify the basic teachings of His gospel. Obedience in doing the simple things has always been the means of obtaining the blessings of the Lord.

Naaman—obedience in simple things

Remember the story of Naaman, a captain for the king of Syria—"a great man with his master . . . because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: . . . a mighty man in valour, but . . . a leper" (2 Kings 5:1).

At the direction of his king, Naaman went to Elisha the prophet to be healed of his dreaded affliction.

"So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

"But Naaman was wroth . . . and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. . . .

"And his servants came near . . . and said, . . . if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

"Then went [Naaman] down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (vv. 9–11, 13–14).

Are we not sometimes like Naaman, looking for big or important things to do and bypassing simple things which could change our lives and heal us of our afflictions?

The power of small, simple acts

At a Brigham Young University fireside, President Hunter said, "If you feel that . . . what you do this year or in the years to come does not make you very famous, take heart. Most of the best people who ever lived weren't very famous either" ("No Less Serviceable," in *Brigham Young University 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: Brigham Young University, 1991], p. 6).

On another occasion he said that "the achievement of true greatness is a long-term process. . . . It seems that it always requires regular, consistent, small, and sometimes ordinary and

mundane steps over a long period of time" ("What Is True Greatness?" in *Brigham Young University 1986-87 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: Brigham Young University, 1987], p. 115).

The Lord has said, "Out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33).

President David O. McKay also spoke of the power of small and simple acts:

"There is no one great thing that we can do to obtain eternal life, and it seems to me that the great lesson to be learned in the world today is to apply in the little acts and duties of life the glorious principles of the Gospel. Let us not think that because some of the things named this afternoon may seem small and trivial, that they are unimportant. Life, after all, is made up of little things. Our life, our being, physically, is made up here of little heart beats. Let that little heart stop beating, and life in this world ceases.

"The great sun is a mighty force in the universe, but we receive the blessings of his rays because they come to us as little beams, which, taken in the aggregate, fill the whole world with sunlight. The dark night is made pleasant by the glimmer of what seem to be little stars; and so the true Christian life is made up of little Christ-like acts performed this hour, this minute, in the home, in the quorum, in the organization, in the town, wherever our life and acts may be cast" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1914, pp. 87-88).

Simple teachings make a strong foundation

Focusing our attention on teaching and living the simple messages of the Savior in our homes will strengthen our families, perfect the society in which we live, and improve ourselves. It will enable us to successfully combat the erosion of the family, which President

Hunter has said is the greatest challenge in the world today. *Our first line of defense in a world of spiritual and moral decay is and will continue to be the family.*

Christlike qualities instilled early in one's life establish values that lead us to make correct choices and actions. It has been said, "Children are like wet cement; whatever falls on them makes an impression" (Haim G. Ginott).

As a teenage boy I began working for a contractor pouring concrete foundations for homes. I learned that concrete was made of a mixture of very simple elements which of themselves were not stable enough for a foundation. But mixed together in proper sequence and proportions, tiny grains of sand, small pebbles, water, and cement powder form a unique substance of unusual strength and durability. For a few hours after the concrete is mixed, it can be poured into any desired form. At first, before it is completely hardened, even a tiny bird hopping across its soft surface will leave an imprint. Later, however, it becomes so firm an elephant could walk over it without leaving any tracks.

Just as a few simple elements combined in a proper way form a sturdy foundation for a house, so do the simple teachings of the gospel bond together to make a strong foundation for our lives.

In contrast, we must be aware that there are small things that can destroy rather than build or strengthen us. Tiny grains of salt sprinkled on concrete can actually cause it to break up and crumble if they are not removed. Similarly, small steps taken in the wrong direction, ignored or uncorrected, will weaken and destroy our lives. Big problems grow out of thinking that little things don't matter.

Family home evening—a simple thing

Like Naaman, we have been counseled by our prophets to do simple things that do matter. We have received simple

instructions which we can all follow to strengthen our families, to heal our spiritual afflictions, and to become followers of Jesus Christ in thought and action. Parents have been counseled to set aside one night each week to teach fundamental gospel principles to their children.

The First Presidency has stated:

"No Church organization can supplant the parents in discharging this obligation. The best the Church can do is to give every aid possible so that the parents will be left without excuse in discharging this most sacred and vital work of building a solid foundation in the home" (*Family Home Evening: Love Makes Our House a Home* [manual, 1974], p. 2).

As we faithfully hold quality family home evenings, we "will gain strength to withstand the temptations of the world and will receive many blessings which will help qualify [us] to enjoy [our] families through eternity in the Celestial Kingdom" (First Presidency, *Family Home Evening: Strengthening Families* [manual, 1978], p. 2).

If the prophet bid us do some great thing for so great a blessing, would we do it? Holding regular family home evening is such a small thing we can do to obtain these great blessings.

Daily family prayer—a simple thing

Another simple thing we all can do to draw us closer to the Savior and to bring us His guidance is to have daily family prayer. The Savior himself taught, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21).

Praying together, seeking to know the will of our Father in Heaven, and desiring strength to do His will draws Him near to us. This practice unifies family members in a common direction and purpose. How simple the Lord has

made it for us! All we have to do is sincerely ask in faith in his name, and He will hear and answer our prayers. Yet if the prophet bid us do some great thing for such blessings, would we do it? Holding regular family prayer is such a simple thing to do to receive these great blessings.

Book of Mormon study—a simple thing

President Ezra Taft Benson promised that we can keep our children close to us and to the Lord and that we will receive "blessing[s] hitherto unknown" if we will faithfully read the Book of Mormon together and "abide by its precepts" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 100; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 78). He said that in the Book of Mormon we will "find great power, great comfort, and great protection" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, p. 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 7).

As we read of the Lord, hear His words, and learn His teachings, we will receive the peaceful spirit of truth and faith in our homes and in our hearts. We will learn what Jesus would have us do, what he would have us say.

If the prophet had bid us do some great thing to receive these blessings, would we do it? Reading the Book of Mormon each day is a simple requirement for receiving such great blessings.

Do the simple things

In the Book of Mormon the prophet Nephi tells his people why many of the children of Israel perished in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. Because of their iniquity, the Lord "sent fiery flying serpents among them; and after they were bitten he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished" (1 Nephi 17:41).

Brothers and sisters, we must not fail to do the simple and easy things that the gospel requires and thereby deny ourselves and our families the great blessings that the Lord has promised.

In general conference just last April, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve asked: "Given the gravity of current conditions, would parents be willing to give up just one outside thing, giving that time and talent instead to the family?" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, p. 121; or *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 90).

Charles Francis Adams, grandson of the second president of the United States, was a successful lawyer, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, and the U.S. ambassador to Britain. Amidst his responsibilities he had little time to spare. He did, however, keep a diary. One day he wrote, "Went fishing with my son today—a day wasted!"

On that same date, Charles's son, Brooks Adams, had printed in his own diary, "Went fishing with my father today—the most wonderful day of my life" (quoted in Scott Walker, *Daily Guide-*

posts: 1994 [Carmel, N.Y.: Guideposts, 1993], p. 67).

President Hunter has said, "Frequently it is the commonplace tasks that have the greatest positive effect on the lives of others" ("What Is True Greatness?" p. 115).

I pray that we will heed the counsel of our prophet and have the faith to follow the Savior by doing the simple things His gospel requires. For if the Lord's prophet had bid us do some great thing to receive the Lord's great blessings, who among us would not do it? In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Rex D. Pinegar, for that wonderful sermon. Elder Pinegar is a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Lance B. Wickman, who was sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Lance B. Wickman

Leaving for Vietnam

I shall never forget one night almost three decades ago. My bride, Patricia, and I had been married for two years. We lived in a small duplex on Oahu's north shore. I was an army infantry officer, a platoon leader, assigned to a unit at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Our brigade had been ordered to war in Vietnam. My plane was scheduled for departure after midnight, and a good Latter-day Saint friend had agreed to take me to the airfield at 11:00 P.M.

All through that long evening, Pat and I sat on the sofa in our tiny living room with our fingers intertwined, watching the hands of the clock approach the fateful hour and listening to

the soft lapping of the surf against the shore. The ticking of the clock seemed a metronome of mortality in painful contrast to the muffled rushing of the eternal sea. At last the hour of parting arrived. Inside the doorway to our little home, I clutched my bride to my bosom and kissed her one last time, and then I was gone. As I closed the door, I wondered if I had seen my sweetheart for the last time in mortality. It was truly night.

My friend and I drove silently in the darkness through the sugarcane and pineapple fields of Oahu. My heart felt as though it would break. Then as we passed Schofield, an unseen infantry unit on night maneuvers fired a flare. Its brilliance momentarily lit the inky

darkness and seemed to ignite a spiritual flame in the blackness that invested my soul. My thoughts were drawn away from this saddest of days to the very happiest: back to that beautiful December day when Pat and I had entered the holy temple and there were sealed to each other, not just for this life only but for all eternity. I thought of the eternal covenants we had made. Like the sunrise, it dawned on me that no matter what happened in the uncertain future just ahead, Pat would always be mine. When I reached the air base, I telephoned her. In the spirit of a renewed hope and peace born of faith and understanding, we talked and laughed softly before once more bidding each other good-bye. It was only midnight, but for me the sun was already rising.

"Stand ye in holy places"

On another day in another place, however, the sun was setting on the mortal ministry of the Messiah as he departed the temple at Jerusalem for the last time. Climbing atop the Mount of Olives with his disciples, the Savior prophesied the cataclysmic events that would precede the destruction of Jerusalem and his second coming. He then issued this portentous admonition to his disciples, ancient and modern: "Then you shall *stand in the holy place*; whoso readeth let him understand" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:12; italics added; see also Matthew 24:15). Latter-day revelations provide understanding. They teach that in our day, amidst strife and catastrophe and pestilence, there are two kingdoms locked in grim struggle for the souls of men—Zion and Babylon. More than once they repeat the injunction to "stand in holy places" for a refuge from these storms of latter-day life (D&C 45:32; see also D&C 87:8; 101:16–23). Prominent among such holy places, and key to all the others, is the temple of the Lord.

The words *Zion* and *temple* belong in the same sentence together. In August 1833, as Saints attempted against much persecution to establish a geographic Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, the Prophet Joseph Smith was counseled in revelation to build a house unto the Lord "for the salvation of Zion" (D&C 97:12). The temple is the key to salvation, it said, because it is a place of thanksgiving, a place of instruction, and a place of understanding in all things (see D&C 97:12–14). Then comes this glorious promise: "Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it *shall see God*. . . . Therefore, . . . let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn" (D&C 97:16, 21; italics added). For Zion, the pure in heart, the temple holds the key that unlocks holy places—places of rejoicing—while those in Babylon's byways are condemned to mourn.

The temple helps us through difficulty

I was to bid my dear wife good-bye twice more during the tumultuous years of the Vietnam War. In a later year we would stand together and say farewell as a five-year-old son slipped from this world across the veiled threshold into the next; and later still we would welcome a handicapped daughter into mortality. Life has brought us its challenges, as it does to all. But through the years I have come to appreciate the wisdom of a dear friend, a patriarch and temple sealer. "Lance," he said, "the joy I receive is more than just being in the temple. *The temple is in me!* And when I leave the temple, its peace goes with me."

So it can be for every righteous soul. When we visit the temple as often as distance and individual circumstance permit, *the temple will be in us*. Then,

despite the buffetings of life, we will always be in a holy place. The house of the Lord beckons to all who would be numbered with Zion: "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths" (Isaiah 2:3).

Peace in the San Diego temple

The day of the San Diego California Temple dedication attended by our stake, I came into the celestial room a few minutes early, accompanied by my daughter and one of my sons. My dear Pat was directing the choir. As though joined by angels, they rehearsed these magnificent words from a beloved Latter-day Saint hymn—a hymn we sang only moments ago:

High on the mountain top
A banner is unfurled.
Ye nations, now look up;
It waves to all the world.
In Deseret's sweet, peaceful land,
On Zion's mount behold it stand!
["High on the Mountain Top," *Hymns*, no. 5]

Pat's eyes met mine. For a brief moment I was transported back across the years, past the challenges and the heart-aches to that wonderful day when together we had entered the house of the Lord. I drew my children close. In that instant a wonderful, celestial feeling swelled my breast. I *knew* I was in a holy place. I felt a peace as I had on that dark night so many years ago—and again I rejoiced. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

The Spirit of Elijah

Within the past year, four of our beloved General Authorities have concluded their mission in mortality. The passing of President Ezra Taft Benson and Elders Marvin J. Ashton, Sterling W. Sill, and Clinton L. Cutler has prompted a great outpouring of love to their families. Their departure has also underscored a scriptural explanation of activities on the other side of the veil: "The faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel . . . in the great world of the spirits of the dead."¹

President Spencer W. Kimball taught that "our great part in this aspect of missionary work is to perform on this earth the ordinances required for those who accept the gospel over there."²

These thoughts, coupled with the fact that next month marks the one hun-

dredth anniversary of the Genealogical Society of Utah, highlight the great importance and influence of "the spirit of Elijah."³ Happily, the date of this centennial closely coincides with the birthday of President Howard W. Hunter, who once presided over that society and who now beckons us to the house of the Lord.

Baptism is essential to enter the kingdom of God

Basic to all Christian understanding is the timeless statement made by Jesus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."⁴

Following His crucifixion, Jesus ministered in the spirit world, setting in motion missionary work among those who had died without hearing the gospel.⁵ Baptism for these souls would logically be expected. Yet only one verse

in the New Testament refers directly to that need: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"⁶

Those questions of the Apostle Paul, without latter-day revelation, would remain an enigma. With latter-day revelation they become clear. Clarification began when the Prophet Joseph Smith was tutored by the angel Moroni,⁷ who said:

"I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

"And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn⁸ to their fathers.

"If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted."⁹

Joseph compared Moroni's teaching to a similar prophecy by Malachi—that Elijah would come again.¹⁰ We know that Elijah did return—at least twice—after Malachi's promise. At Christ's transfiguration, Elijah appeared on the mount to Peter, James, and John.¹¹ At the Kirtland Temple, April 3, 1836, Elijah appeared to the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery and said, "The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands."¹²

The Prophet Joseph Smith was chosen to reestablish the Church, to receive and administer priesthood authority, and to restore plain and precious truths lost to human knowledge.¹³ One such doctrine was that of salvation for the dead—a pivotal part of the promised "restitution of all things."¹⁴

Several years ago Elder Howard W. Hunter said: "Does it seem reasonable that persons who have lived upon the earth and died without the opportunity of baptism should be deprived throughout eternity? Is there anything unreasonable about the living performing the

baptisms for the dead? Perhaps the greatest example of vicarious work for the dead is the Master himself. He gave his life as a vicarious atonement, that all who die shall live again and have life everlasting. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves. In a similar way we can perform ordinances for those who did not have the opportunity to do them in lifetime."

Elder Hunter added: "Not only may baptisms be performed for the dead, but endowments; also sealings, by which wives become eternal companions to husbands and their children sealed to them as a family. The sealing of family units can be continued until the family of God is made perfect. This is the great work of the dispensation of the fulness of times. . . . The uniting and redemption of the family of God was the divine plan before the foundations of the earth were laid."¹⁵

President Hunter's classic statement emphasizes the importance of temple work for our own families and helps us to understand the Old Testament prophecy that "saviours shall come up on mount Zion."¹⁶ This exalting service for others unseen is one of the most noble acts of human kindness.

Temple work—ancient and modern

From the days of Adam to the meridian of time, temple ordinances were performed for the living only. Ordinances for the dead had to await the Atonement and postmortal ministry of the Savior.¹⁷

There was no provision for baptism for the dead when the Kirtland Temple was designed. Yet it served an important preparatory purpose. One week after its dedication, the Lord came personally to the temple to accept it.¹⁸ Then, under His direction, Moses, Elias, and Elijah restored specific keys of priesthood authority.¹⁹

Five years later the Saints were in Nauvoo, Illinois. There the Lord again commanded them to build a temple—this time with additional facilities—because, He said, “a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead—For this ordinance belongeth to my house.”²⁰

Then, to make certain that there could be no misunderstanding, He issued a solemn word of warning: “If you do *not* these [baptisms for the dead] ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord.”²¹

Though the Nauvoo Temple was destroyed by fire, it served its sacred purposes.²²

Genealogical records for use in temples

Throughout the world, members of the Church faithfully prepare family records for use in our many temples. When ordinances are performed there, further documentation is required because the Lord said:

“When any of you are baptized for your dead, let there be a recorder, and let him be eye-witness of your baptisms; . . .

“That in all your recordings it may be recorded in heaven; whatsoever you bind on earth, may be bound in heaven; whatsoever you loose on earth, may be loosed in heaven.”²³

This weighty doctrine pressed itself upon the Prophet’s mind.²⁴ His thoughts resonated with those of previous prophets. Joseph wrote, “John the Revelator was contemplating this very subject in relation to the dead, when he declared, . . . *I saw the dead . . . stand before God; and the books were opened; . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books.*”²⁵

Then the Prophet Joseph added, “Whatsoever you do not record on earth shall not be recorded in heaven; for out of the books shall your dead be judged.”²⁶

Elijah and keys of priesthood authority

In 1844, Joseph Smith asked, “What is this office and work of Elijah?” The Prophet promptly answered his own question:

“It is one of the greatest and most important subjects that God has revealed. . . .

“ . . . This is the spirit of Elijah, that we redeem our dead, and connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven. . . . This is the power of Elijah and the keys of the kingdom of Jehovah.”²⁷

Some among us still have neither perceived the Spirit of Elijah nor its power. Yet we are bound by this warning:

“These are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over. . . . For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, [for] they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect.”²⁸

Joseph Smith’s responsibility was to “lay the foundation”²⁹ for this great work. Important details were to be revealed later. At April conference 1894, President Wilford Woodruff announced this revelation: “We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents, and run this chain through as far as you can get it. . . . This is the will of the Lord to his people.”³⁰

One hundredth anniversary of the Genealogical Society of Utah

That revelation in April led to the organization of the Genealogical Society of Utah the following November 13, 1894. Its objectives were “to establish and maintain a Genealogical Library . . . ; to teach members how to compile acceptable family records and to trace

their pedigrees; and to foster temple ordinances.³¹ Events of that historic year established family history research and temple service as *one work* in the Church.

In the century since then, much has been accomplished. More and more people are becoming excited about discovering their roots, and the Church is doing its best to help them. The Church adopted the term *family history* to encourage this activity among *all* its members, especially those who might be intimidated by the word *genealogy*. In addition, 2,150 busy and productive family history centers have been established throughout the world. For example, the FamilySearch® Center in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building has served hundreds of thousands of visitors, at least two-thirds of whom have found something in the computer file about their ancestors.

More than 300,000 copies of the Church's computer program Personal Ancestral File™ are used in libraries and homes by many hundreds of thousands of people. Our FamilySearch program is used by millions of genealogical researchers throughout the world, most of whom are not members of our church. TempleReady™ allows convenient and almost immediate clearance by personal computer of names for temple ordinances that formerly required much time and labor.

Sister Nelson, our family, and I have submitted our own ancestral names to the temple and have performed ordinances for them. Because we are fortunate to live near a temple, we like to meet there early in the morning. Usually in less than an hour, the initiatory work is accomplished, our youth are taken directly to school, their mothers return home, and their fathers get to work—on time! When we do endowments or sealings, available adults prefer to meet early in the evening to share that choice experience. Following that, we gather at

home to update our records and enjoy some of Sister Nelson's homemade goodies.

We are also doing temple work for ancestors of a Russian convert to the Church who is not able to travel to a temple. While our son was serving his mission in Russia, this devoted convert entrusted records of his relatives to our son, along with a plea that their temple work be done. When our children and grandchildren go to the temple to perform those ordinances, our son's help is needed for pronunciation of names, but not for the perception of joy among all participants.

Service in the temple together is a sublime activity for a family. It provides its own sustaining motivation and verification of the truth of this unique work.

Rights of personal choice, accountability, and privacy

For whom will such temple work be efficacious? Principles of agency pertain on both sides of the veil. There, in postmortal realms, personal choice and accountability will be of paramount importance.³² Not all will accept these ordinances. Not all who would choose to do so may be worthy to receive them. Scriptures indicate that individual faith,³³ repentance,³⁴ and obedience³⁵ will be required to consummate this vicarious work.

Here, on this side of the veil, there are limitations of available time and temples. This means that choosing to identify and perform ordinances for *our own kindred* should receive our highest priority. The Spirit of Elijah will inspire individual members of the Church to link their generations rather than submit lists of people or popular personalities to whom they are unrelated.³⁶

Now, we are mindful of those not of our faith who are concerned about or even offended by the practice of temple ordinances for the dead. To them we

say, our Heavenly Father directed the restoration of keys of priesthood authority and surely intended no offense to any of His children. Quite to the contrary. He intended to bless them. This doctrine and its ordinances are laden with love and are intended to perpetuate the sweetest of all relationships—in families forever.

Nevertheless, the Church is sensitive to these concerns. The First Presidency has asked that, as far as possible, individual rights of privacy be protected. In 1972, they wrote, "Persons submitting names for other than direct ancestors [should] have obtained approval from the closest living relative of the deceased before submitting records of persons born within the last ninety-five years."³⁷ In addition, reminders of rights of precedence and privacy appear *each* time our computer programs are used.

Meanwhile, as a gesture of generosity and goodwill, leaders of the Church continue to make its family history facilities available to interested individuals, regardless of religious affiliation and without admission fees! All patrons, in turn, are invited to make valuable additions to the world's ever-expanding pool of genealogical information.

Opportunities to serve

In a recent statement, President Howard W. Hunter included these remarks: "Let us be a temple-attending and a temple-loving people. Let us hasten to the temple . . . not only for our kindred dead, but let us also go for the personal blessing of temple worship."³⁸

President Hunter's invitation reminds us that we can provide names and ordinances for ancestors for whom information is readily available, and, where possible, we can regularly attend the temple. What and how much we do should depend upon personal circumstances and abilities, direction from Church leaders, and guidance from the

Spirit. Throughout our lives, each of us can do something significant.

I would add that the daily building of happy memories in our families is an important part of making family history pleasant. Each day on earth can bring a little bit of heaven.

Many travel the highways of life without a companion. They too are needed by their families on both sides of the veil. Others may never be able to attend a temple during their mortal lifetime. To the faithful, comfort comes from the knowledge that no blessings will be withheld from any who love the Lord and strive earnestly to keep His commandments.³⁹ We will be judged by our deeds *and* the desires of our hearts—in the Lord's merciful way and time.⁴⁰

No mortal mind could have conceived this divine work. It is evidence of the restoration of the gospel in its fulness and is sparked by the Spirit of Elijah. "Let us, therefore, as a church and a people . . . offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple . . . a book containing the records of our dead . . . worthy of all acceptance."⁴¹ Then we shall bless and be blessed as saviors upon mount Zion, I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. D&C 138:57.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Things of Eternity—Stand We in Jeopardy?" *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, p. 3.
3. 2 Kings 2:15.
4. John 3:5. See also Mark 16:16; D&C 5:16; Moses 6:59. Jesus himself was baptized "to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15; 2 Nephi 31:5–6).
5. See 1 Peter 4:6; D&C 138:10–37.
6. 1 Corinthians 15:29; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 179.
7. Especially from 1823 through 1827; see Joseph Smith—History 1:27–59.

8. Later Joseph Smith said that "the word *turn* here should be translated *bind*, or *seal*" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 330).
9. D&C 2:1-3.
10. See Malachi 4:5-6.
11. See Matthew 17:3. Moses held the keys of the gathering of Israel and the gathering of the ten tribes. Elijah held the keys of the sealing power. These are the keys that they conferred upon Peter, James, and John upon the mount. Reference to the sealing power is also indicated in Matthew 16:18-19; see also D&C 128:10; 138:45-48.
12. D&C 110:16.
13. See 1 Nephi 13:26, 28-29, 32, 34-35, 40.
14. Acts 3:21.
15. In Conference Report, Oct. 1971, p. 54; or *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, pp. 71-72.
16. Obadiah 1:21.
17. See D&C 138:18-37.
18. See D&C 110:1-4, 7.
19. See D&C 110:7-16; D&C 2:1-3 and comments in note 11.
20. D&C 124:29-30.
21. D&C 124:32; italics added.
22. On 8 November 1841 the baptismal font "was dedicated by Brigham Young. It was first used two weeks later when Elders Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and John Taylor performed forty baptisms for the dead" (*Church History in the Fulness of Times* [Church Educational System manual, 1989], p. 252). "According to temple records, 5,615 Saints were endowed before going west"—and likewise blessed on their heavenly trek (*Church History in the Fulness of Times*, pp. 303-4).
23. D&C 127:6-7.
24. See D&C 128:1.
25. D&C 128:6.
26. D&C 128:8.
27. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 337-38.
28. D&C 128:15; see also v. 18.
29. D&C 1:30; 21:2; 124:118.
30. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 3:256-57; see also *Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, 17 Apr. 1894, p. 1.
31. Archibald F. Bennett, "The Genealogical Society of Utah," *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1935, p. 225.
32. President Ezra Taft Benson and his Counselors issued this statement: "In considering ordinances for the deceased, we need not attempt to determine individual worthiness, whether an ordinance will be accepted, or the probable feelings of other deceased individuals affected by the proposed ordinance. . . . These determinations must, of necessity, be made beyond the veil" (First Presidency letter, 8 Dec. 1988).
33. See Alma 19:13; Ether 3:14; Moses 5:9.
34. See D&C 138:58.
35. See D&C 138:58.
36. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "*We are not going to do the temple work for everybody because it does not pertain to them. We are going to do the temple work for those who are entitled, through their faith and their repentance, to enter into the celestial kingdom. . . . I do not know whether one man is worthy and another is not. The Lord has given us the privilege of doing the work for all of our kindred*" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-55], 2:191).
37. *Records Submission Manual*, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973), p. 16.
38. Quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5.
39. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-55), 2:76; Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979-81), 3:188.
40. See 2 Nephi 9:41; Alma 41:3; D&C 137:9.
41. D&C 128:24.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy and Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve.

It will now be our privilege to listen to our beloved prophet, President Howard W. Hunter, who will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his address, we express appreciation to the Primary Children's Choir from the Kaysville Utah Region, the Mormon Youth Chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir, and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters—oh, especially the interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square.

We're not unmindful of the fact that we have had in attendance many of our distinguished visitors who represent government, education, and business. We're grateful you're here.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference and to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of the conference in many countries.

It has been a wonderful conference. We almost hate to see it come to a close. But what better close than to hear from President Hunter. Following his remarks the Tabernacle Choir will sing "We Have Partaken of Thy Love." We could say the same for President Hunter. President Hunter, we have partaken of your love. The benediction then will be offered by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Seventy.

President Howard W. Hunter

Study and obey conference messages

My dear brothers and sisters, we now come to the conclusion of another wonderful conference of the Church. We have experienced a marvelous outpouring of the Spirit. I commend to you the wise and inspired counsel you have received from the General Authorities and general auxiliary officers of the Church. My humble prayer is that while their instruction is fresh in our minds, each of us will resolve to incorporate it into our lives.

I want you to know how much I love and appreciate my devoted Counselors, President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson. They are men

of wisdom, experience, and understanding. I love and sustain my Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, with whom I served for over thirty-four years. To members of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric, I express my love and gratitude for their sacrifice and service to the Church throughout the earth. Similarly I pay tribute to the general auxiliary officers.

As I have pondered the messages of the conference, I have asked myself this question: How can I help others partake of the goodness and blessings of our Heavenly Father? The answer lies in following the direction received from those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators, and others of the General

Authorities. Let us study their words, spoken under the spirit of inspiration, and refer to them often. The Lord has revealed his will to the Saints in this conference.

Follow the Son of God

I bear solemn and grateful witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. Certainly he is the center of our worship and the key to our happiness. Let us follow the Son of God in all ways and all walks of life. Let us make him our exemplar and our guide.

We are at a time in the history of the world and the growth of the Church when we must think more of holy things and act more like the Savior would expect his disciples to act. We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" and then act more courageously upon the answer. We must be about his work as he was about his Father's. We should make every effort to become like Christ, the one perfect and sinless example this world has ever seen.

Focus on the temple

And we again emphasize the personal blessings of temple worship and the sanctity and safety that are provided within those hallowed walls. It is the house of the Lord, a place of revelation and of peace. As we attend the temple, we learn more richly and deeply the purpose of life and the significance of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us make the temple, with temple worship and temple covenants and temple marriage, our ultimate earthly goal and the supreme mortal experience.

Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord.

Let us prepare every missionary to go to the temple worthily and to make that experience an even greater highlight than receiving the mission call. Let us plan for and teach and plead with our children to marry in the house of the Lord. Let us reaffirm more vigorously than we ever have in the past that it does matter where you marry and by what authority you are pronounced man and wife.

All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot return to God's presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants.

May you let the meaning and beauty and peace of the temple come into your everyday life more directly in order that the millennial day may come, that promised time when "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more . . . [but shall] walk in the light of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:4-5).

Share the gospel

Again and again during his mortal ministry, our Lord issued a call that was both an invitation and a challenge. To Peter and Andrew, Christ said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). We are in the work of saving souls, of inviting people to come unto Christ, of bringing them into the waters of baptism so that they may continue to progress along the path that leads to eternal life. This world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel provides the only way the world will ever know peace. As followers of Jesus Christ, we seek to enlarge the circle of love and

understanding among the people of the earth.

Earlier prophets have taught that every able, worthy young man should serve a full-time mission. I emphasize this need today. We also have great need for our able, mature couples to serve in the mission field. Jesus told his disciples, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2).

Prophetic blessing

And now, my beloved brothers and sisters, through the power and authority of the priesthood vested in me and by virtue of the calling which I now hold, I invoke my blessings upon you. I bless you in your efforts to live a more Christ-

like life. I bless you with an increased desire to be worthy of a temple recommend and to attend the temple as frequently as circumstances allow. I bless you to receive the peace of our Heavenly Father in your homes and to be guided in teaching your families to follow the Master.

I again testify that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true. I feel very deeply my dependence on the Lord for the guidance and direction of his kingdom. I thank you again for your sustaining vote and your faith and prayers in behalf of myself and my Brethren, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "We Have Partaken of Thy Love."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Primary choir from the Kaysville Utah Region. Vanja Y. Watkins conducted the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

At the general priesthood session a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus provided the music. Donald Ripplinger and Robert C. Bowden conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

INDEX

A

Authorities and Officers, The Sustaining of Church	3
Authorities Present, General	1
Authorities Present, Other	2

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell	84
The Savior's ministry and church; The Apostasy; Corruption of the Savior's doctrine; The Reformation; Joseph Smith searches for truth; The First Vision; The Restoration; A certain way to know the truth	

C

Costa, Elder Claudio R. M.	33
Learning the true meaning of success; Sacrifices to go to the São Paulo Temple; A truly successful man; Scriptural teachings about success; Gratitude for General Authorities	

E

Edgley, Bishop Richard C.	53
Confidence in shooting free throws; Confidence in the presence of God; Making the basket bigger or smaller; Nephi, David, and Joseph Smith see the basket as large; Wise choices increase our confidence	

F

Faust, Elder James E.	94
The keys that never rust; Joseph Smith gave keys to the Twelve; Choosing the successor to the President; Howard W. Hunter becomes President; Keys to remain until the Second Coming; Importance of spiritual keys; Story of the Vaudois; Following the prophet brings strength	

G

General Authorities Present	1
General Priesthood Session	48
Grassli, Sister Michaelene P.	13
Love and protect children; Discerning truth from error; Teach children of Jesus and his gospel; Help children practice discerning; I feel my Savior's love	

H

- Haight, Elder David B.** 16
Solemn assemblies; Sustaining leaders—a solemn covenant; Succession in the Presidency; False claims of apostolic authority; President Hunter is truly Christlike; Service as bishop and stake president; Special witness of Jesus Christ
- Hales, Elder Robert D.** 24
Our personal testimonies; What is a testimony? The prophets' testimonies; How Joseph Smith gained a testimony; How other prophets gained testimonies; How David O. McKay gained a testimony; How to gain a sure testimony; The fruits of a testimony
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session)** 62
Dropping the ball; Running the wrong way; Story of young Eugene L. Roberts; Choose to be eagles, not hogs; Put on the whole armor of God; Don't drop the ball; Live with goodness and consistency
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session)** 71
A new generation of trees in Yellowstone; Children—the promise of the future; Tragedy of suffering children; Ease the plight of suffering children; Fathers who abandon children; Burdens on single mothers and society; Solutions to the problem; Physical abuse; Sexual abuse; The Savior's love for children; Rewards of being good parents; A happy home; Save the children
- Holland, Elder Jeffrey R.** 39
A special witness of Jesus Christ; Gratitude to family; Prophetic calling of President Hunter; Strength from Church members; Debbie, Tanya, and Liza Avila; Avila sisters go to the temple; Doing the best things in the worst times
- Hunter, President Howard W. (priesthood session)** 66
Marriage is a sacred privilege and obligation; Show perfect moral fidelity; Show reverence for motherhood; Regard the family as most important; Accept wife as an equal partner; Be tender in the intimate relationship; Be loving, not abusive; Provide temporal support; Lead family in Church participation; Teach the gospel to family members
- Hunter, President Howard W. (Saturday morning session)** 6
Accepting the call; Revelations on governing the Church; Follow the Savior's example; Attend the temple; Preserve and protect the family
- Hunter, President Howard W. (Sunday afternoon session)** 117
Study and obey conference messages; Follow the Son of God; Focus on the temple; Share the gospel; Prophetic blessing

L

- Ladd, Elder W. Don** 36
 A rising tide of evil; Strengthen ourselves and our families; Build a personal ark; Build a relationship with Christ

M

- Mason, Elder James O.** 37
 The dawning of a brighter day in Africa; Steady growth of the Church in Africa; Missionary couples needed in Africa; The truth of God goes forth
- Maxwell, Elder Neal A.** 44
 Increasing despair and hopelessness; Consequences of lack of hope; Ultimate hope is in Christ; Relation of faith, hope, and charity; Hope strengthens and illuminates us; Hope helps us walk by faith; Hope helps us bless others; Hope beckons us to the Savior
- Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session)** 57
 My brother's keeper; The worth of a human soul; Church members' humanitarian aid; Helping Rwandan refugees; Helping former Yugoslavians; Helping flood victims in Georgia; Elder Benson's mission to Europe; George Albert Smith gives his coat; Holland's miracle of the potatoes; Blessed is he that considereth the poor
- Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session)** 88
 Widows in Berlin; Faith and sacrifices of a German widow; "Where can I turn for peace?" Widows in the scriptures; Care for widows and orphans; A semitrailer filled with fresh fruit; Gratitude to those who care for widows; A widow contributes to the missionary fund; Children caring for widowed parents; Nell at Maytime Manor; Pure religion and undefiled before God

- Music, Summary of Conference** 119

N

- Nelson, Elder Russell M.** 111
 The Spirit of Elijah; Baptism is essential to enter the kingdom of God; Temple work—ancient and modern; Genealogical records for use in temples; Elijah and keys of priesthood authority; One hundredth anniversary of the Genealogical Society of Utah; Rights of personal choice, accountability, and privacy; Opportunities to serve

O

- Oaks, Elder Dallin H.** 9
 Hymns invite the Spirit; Hymns bring peace and calm; Hymns used to learn and worship; Hymns in temple meetings; All should participate in singing; Guidelines for worshiping through music; Singing with deaf members; Make better use of hymns

P

- Packer, President Boyd K.** 76
 Personal revelation; Dual beings; The gift of the Holy Ghost; Prayer; Begin where you are; Study; Still, small voice; Prompting; Faith; Word of Wisdom; Music; Reverence; Temptation; The Church; The Comforter
- Perry, Elder L. Tom** 20
 Sustaining Church leaders; The President is a seer; The President is a prophet; Father's experience with Joseph F. Smith; A prophet teaches and guides; A prophet keeps the doctrine pure; The good spirit of President Hunter; Follow President Hunter, our prophet
- Pinegar, Elder Rex D.** 105
 "What we need is home teachers"; Naaman—obedience in simple things; The power of small, simple acts; Simple teachings make a strong foundation; Family home evening—a simple thing; Daily family prayer—a simple thing; Book of Mormon study—a simple thing; Do the simple things
- Pinegar, Sister Patricia P.** 103
 Redwoods hold each other up; Gratitude to family; Gratitude to auxiliary leaders; Gratitude to Saints; Teach the children; Stand by children in life's storms
- Porter, Elder L. Aldin** 80
 "I have warned you, and forewarn you"; How do we respond to prophets? The prophets will not lead us astray; Only the prophets declare doctrine; Criticizing prophets leads to apostasy; How to become receptive to counsel; We need listening ears, not greater prophets

- Priesthood Session, General** 48

R

- Rector, Elder Hartman, Jr.** 31
 Receiving emeritus status; Story of conversion; Repent of sins; Endure to the end; Love and serve others

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	23
Saturday Morning Session	2
Scott, Elder Richard G.	49
Making the right choices; How can we resist peer pressure? How can we resist bad thoughts? Why is the law of chastity so important? What are the limits of intimacy? How far is too far before marriage? How does a person repent of sexual sin? Stay morally clean	
Solemn Assembly	2
Summary of Conference Music	119
Sunday Afternoon Session	93
Sunday Morning Session	70
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers, The	3

T

Tenorio, Elder Horacio A.	28
Satan's efforts to corrupt youth; Parental responsibilities; Make our homes fortresses; Establish a security system; Father's interviews; Interviewing a young grandson	

U

Uchtdorf, Elder Dieter F.	55
Miracle of family's conversion; Miracle of German reunification; The gospel is the only valid basis	

W

Wickman, Elder Lance B.	109
Leaving for Vietnam; "Stand ye in holy places"; The temple helps us through difficulty; Peace in the San Diego temple	
Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	98
Extend deep roots into the gospel soil; Reality of God the Father; Reality of Jesus Christ, our Savior; Reality of the Holy Ghost; Reality of Satan; Distinguishing between good and evil; Importance of moral purity; The Word of Wisdom; Missionary service; Teach pure doctrine; Be firmly rooted in gospel principles; The Church will never compromise	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS



4 02940 92000

9400

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-fifth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 1 and 2, 1995

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-fifth
Annual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
April 1 and 2, 1995

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

© 1995 by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

Report of the 165th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 165th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 1995, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 1 and 2, 1995. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 1, 1995, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Council of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*¹ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goaslind, John H. Groberg, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Hans B. Ringger, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Earl C. Tingey, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, Claudio R. M. Costa, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Julio E. Dávila, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, In Sang Han, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, Helvécio Martins, James O. Mason, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Bruce D. Porter, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, F. David Stanley, Kwok

¹Elder Ronald E. Poelman was excused.

Yuen Tai, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, J Ballard Washburn, Lance B. Wickman, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Merrill J. Bateman, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

Solemn Assembly

The first session of the 165th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 1995, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music for the session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful April morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the solemn assembly session of the 165th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Carlos E. Asay and L. Lionel Kendrick are seated on the stand, and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Yoshihiko Kikuchi and Dallas N. Archibald are in attendance. We welcome also the many others who are receiving the conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except Elder Ronald E. Poelman, who is ill.

We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We note with sadness the passing of President Howard W. Hunter, fourteenth President of the Church, who passed away on Friday, March 3, 1995, at the age of eighty-seven after having served as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ for a period of over thirty-five years. During the last nine months he served as God's prophet on the earth and as President of the Church. We pay our honor and respect to this great deceased leader, whom we love, whose ministry blessed the lives of thousands.

The music for this session of the conference will be provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" and will now favor us with "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder W. Eugene Hansen, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy. President Thomas S. Monson will then present the General Authorities and general presidencies of the Church for the sustaining vote of this solemn assembly.

The chorus sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder W. Eugene Hansen offered the invocation.

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

President Hinckley has requested that I now handle the business of the solemn assembly for which we are met. This is an occasion of great significance for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We shall vote by quorums and groups. Wherever you are, you are invited to stand when requested and express by your uplifted hand whether you choose to sustain those whose names will be presented. Those who are standing when appropriately called upon would be the ones who would be given the privilege to vote.

The General Authorities assigned to the Assembly Hall on Temple Square or the Joseph Smith Memorial Building will observe the voting in those gatherings. In stake centers, a member of the stake presidency will observe the voting. Should there be any negative votes, we ask that we be so advised. We shall now proceed with the business of this solemn assembly.

First Presidency

The First Presidency will please arise. It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Those in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor. Those in

favor may manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed. The First Presidency will please be seated. We invite Elder Eyring to now take his place with the Council of the Twelve.

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will please arise. It is proposed that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency. All in favor, please

manifest it. Any opposed. You may be seated.

Seventy and Presiding Bishopric

The members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric will please arise. It is proposed that the members of the Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed. You may be seated.

Patriarchs, high priests, and elders

The following will please arise whenever you may be participating. All ordained patriarchs and all members of high priests and elders quorums, please arise. It is proposed that Gordon Bitner Hinckley be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon. All in favor, please manifest it. Thank you. Any opposed may manifest it. Please be seated.

Priests, teachers, and deacons

Will all of the Aaronic Priesthood please arise—that is, all ordained priests, teachers, and deacons. It is proposed that Gordon Bitner Hinckley be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon.

All in favor may please indicate by the uplifted hand. Thank you. Any opposed may so indicate. You may be seated.

Relief Society sisters

Will all members of the Relief Society—that is, all women eighteen years of age and older—please arise. It is proposed that Gordon Bitner Hinckley be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Thank you. Any opposed may so indicate it. You may be seated.

Young women

Will the young women—that is, all young women ages twelve to eighteen—please arise. It is proposed that Gordon Bitner Hinckley be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Thank you. Any opposed may so indicate it. You may be seated.

Entire Church membership

Now, will the entire congregation, including all of those who have stood previously, now arise. It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate so by the uplifted hand. Thank you. Any opposed may so

indicate. Thank you. You all may be seated.

We shall now remain seated as we sustain other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church.

It is proposed that we sustain as the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy Elders Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen.

As further members of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Loren C. Dunn, Gene R. Cook, William R. Bradford, John H. Groberg, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Dean L. Larsen, Robert E. Wells, James M. Paramore, Hugh W. Pinnock, F. Enzo Busche, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Ronald E. Poelman, F. Burton Howard, Ted E. Brewerton, Jack H. Goaslind, Angel Abrea, John K. Carmack, J. Richard Clarke, Hans B. Ringers, Marlin K. Jensen, Earl C. Tingey, Alexander B. Morrison, L. Lionel Kendrick, Harold G. Hillam, Carlos H. Amado, Ben B. Banks, Spencer J. Condie, Robert K. Dellenbach, Glenn L. Pace, F. Melvin Hammond, Kenneth Johnson, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Neil L. Andersen, D. Todd Christofferson, Cree-L Kofford, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Andrew Wayne Peterson, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., John B. Dickson, Jay E. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, and W. Craig Zwick.

As members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Helvécio Martins, J Ballard Washburn, Durrel A. Woolsey, W. Mack Lawrence, Rulon G. Craven, Joseph C. Muren, Graham W. Doxey, Jorge A.

Rojas, Julio E. Dávila, In Sang Han, Stephen D. Nadauld, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, John E. Fowler, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, V. Dallas Merrell, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Lowell D. Wood, Claudio R. M. Costa, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Lance B. Wickman, and Bruce D. Porter.

As the Presiding Bishopric: Bishops Merrill J. Bateman, Presiding Bishop; H. David Burton, First Counselor; and Richard C. Edgley, Second Counselor.

All in favor, please manifest it. If there be any contrary, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

President Hinckley, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Tabernacle has been unanimous in favor of the proposals made. We invite the newly called members of the Seventy to now take their places on the stand. Please come forward, Brethren.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your expressions of faith and confidence. Needless to say, we are overwhelmed by the feeling of love which has been expressed here.

It will now be our privilege to listen to President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

President Boyd K. Packer

The line of unbroken authority

Ten months ago President Ezra Taft Benson passed away, and without a pause the brief and memorable adminis-

tration of President Howard W. Hunter began. God bless the memory of this great prophet. Again, now, without the slightest pause, the order of things confirmed in the revelations was imple-

mented with all of our participation, and the Church moves forward on course.

This practice of raising hands to sustain one who has been called to lead or to teach in the Church is a matter of sacred importance. The voting to sustain takes place in meetings, and the sustaining of the First Presidency, now broadcast to the Church across the world, conforms to a revelation from the Lord: "I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by . . . one who has authority, and *it is known to the church* that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11; italics added).

Speaking for the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who "agreeable to the institution of heaven" are "to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:33), we affirm to you that in sustaining President Gordon B. Hinckley and his counselors, our First Presidency, the Twelve *is* one. For in raising our hands to sustain the President of the Church, we continue the line of unbroken authority from the beginning of the Restoration.

The Twelve bridge the line of authority

Some suppose that the keys of presidency pass from one man to another much like a baton in a relay. Some believe that the Prophet Joseph Smith secretly or privately conferred the keys of presidency upon a successor.

But that is not the order of things. President Ezra Taft Benson did not ordain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Church, nor did President Howard W. Hunter ordain Gordon B. Hinckley as President of the Church.

The Twelve bridge the line of authority from one administration to another and keep the line unbroken.

Shortly before the Martyrdom, in a meeting attended by nine members of the Twelve, the Prophet Joseph Smith prophetically said:

"Brethren, the Lord bids me hasten the work in which we are engaged. Some important scene is near to take place. It may be that my enemies will kill me. And in case they should, and the keys and power which rest on me *not* be imparted to you, they will be lost from the earth. But if I can only succeed in placing them upon your heads, then let me fall a victim to murderous hands if God will suffer it, and I can go with all pleasure and satisfaction, knowing that my work is done, and the foundation laid on which the kingdom of God is to be reared in this dispensation of the fulness of times. Upon the shoulders of the Twelve must the responsibility of leading this church henceforth rest until you shall appoint others to succeed you" (Draft Declaration of the Twelve Apostles, reporting March 1844 meeting of the Twelve, Brigham Young papers, LDS Church Archives).

Individually and collectively the Twelve hold the keys and have confirmed the authority to exercise all of the keys upon the senior Apostle, the one man who is to preside over the Church.

The Lord has provided a system in which there is no aspiring, no maneuvering for position or power, not even a hint of soliciting for votes or cultivating influence. The system does not allow it, nor would the Lord permit it. It does not work the way man usually works, and so it should be. The Lord reminded the prophet Isaiah, "My ways [are] higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

Sustaining the prophet

The raising of the hands has been a custom since ancient times, symbolized when Moses was confronted by the

Amalekite robbers, the destroyers of the wilderness:

"Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

"So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

"But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

"And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Exodus 17:9-13).

The wicked who now oppose the work of the Lord, while different from, are no less terrible than the plundering Amalekites. The sustaining of the prophet is still an essential ongoing part of the safety of this people. Should age and infirmity cause his hands to grow heavy, they are held up by his counselors at his side. Both are prophets, seers, and revelators, as is each member of the Quorum of the Twelve.

"We are living Apostles of the Lord"

In 1976 following a conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, President Spencer W. Kimball invited us to a small church to see the statues of Christ and the Twelve Apostles by Bertel Thorvaldsen. The *Christus* stands in an alcove beyond the altar. Standing in order along the sides of the chapel are the statues of the Twelve, with Paul replacing Judas Iscariot.

President Kimball told the elderly caretaker that at the very time Thorvaldsen was creating those beautiful statues in Denmark, a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ was taking place in America with apostles and prophets receiving authority from those who held it anciently.

Gathering those present closer to him, he said to the caretaker, "We are living Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ," and pointing to Elder Pinegar he said, "Here is a Seventy like those spoken of in the New Testament."

We were standing near the statue of Peter, whom the sculptor depicted holding keys in his hand, symbolic of the keys of the kingdom. President Kimball said, "We hold the real keys, as Peter did, and we use them every day."

Then came an experience I will never forget. President Kimball, this gentle prophet, turned to President Johan H. Benthin, of the Copenhagen Stake, and in a commanding voice said, "I want you to tell every prelate in Denmark that they do *not* hold the keys! *I hold the keys!*"

There came to me that witness known to Latter-day Saints but difficult to describe to one who has not experienced it—a light, a power coursing through one's very soul—and I knew that, in very fact, here stood the living prophet who held the keys.

Apostles bring unity of the faith

The Lord revealed why "he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets." It is "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The ministry of the Apostles—the Presidency and the Twelve—therefore is to bring us to a unity of the faith.

As it has been since the beginning, the adversary would divide us, break us up, and, if he can, destroy us. But the Lord said, "Lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, . . . taking the *shield of faith* wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (D&C 27:15, 17; italics added).

The ministry of the prophets and apostles leads them ever and always to the home and the family. That shield of faith is not produced in a factory but at home in a cottage industry.

The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, linked to their generations, and assured of exaltation in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

The shield of faith is made at home

Lest parents and children be "tossed to and fro" and misled by "cunning craftiness" of men who "lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14), our Father's plan requires that, like the generation of life itself, the shield of faith is to be made and fitted in the family. No two can be exactly alike. Each must be handcrafted to individual specifications.

The plan designed by the Father contemplates that man and woman, husband and wife, working together, fit each child individually with a shield of faith made to buckle on so firmly that it can neither be pulled off nor penetrated by those fiery darts.

It takes the steady strength of a father to hammer out the metal of it and the tender hands of a mother to polish and fit it on. Sometimes one parent is left to do it alone. It is difficult, but it can be done.

In the Church we can teach about the materials from which a shield of faith

is made: reverence, courage, chastity, repentance, forgiveness, compassion. In church we can learn how to assemble and fit them together. But the actual making of and fitting on of the shield of faith belongs in the family circle. Otherwise it may loosen and come off in a crisis.

The prophets and apostles know full well that the perilous times Paul prophesied for the last days are now upon us: "Men [are] lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection" (2 Timothy 3:2-3).

Knowing it would be so, the Lord warned that "inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes . . . , that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . , the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

"For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion. . . .

"And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:25-26, 28).

This shield of faith is not manufactured on an assembly line, only hand-made in a cottage industry. Therefore our leaders press members to understand that what is most worth doing must be done at home. Some still do not see that too many out-of-home activities, however well intended, leave too little time to make and fit on the shield of faith at home.

God's plan for happy families

Although our thoughts are centered in this sacred and solemn assembly on the noble titles High Priest, President, Apostle, Prophet, Seer, Revelator, the heavens are not offended if we at once speak of father, mother, child, brother, sister, family—even dad, mom, grandma, grandpa, baby.

If you are reverent and prayerful and obedient, the day will come when there will be revealed to you why the God of heaven has commanded us to address him as *Father*, and the Lord of the Universe as *Son*. Then you will have discovered the pearl of great price spoken of in the scriptures and willingly go and sell all that you have that you might obtain it.

The great plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16) revealed to prophets is the plan for a happy family. It is the love story between husband and wife, parents and children, that renews itself through the ages.

And so now with an unbroken line of priesthood authority, an unbroken line of priesthood power, we move confidently

forward in unity and faith, led by Christ the Redeemer, whose church this is, and His earthly prophet, through whom He will speak. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Sweet Is the Work."

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Sweet Is the Work."

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy will now address us.

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach

Book of Mormon translation a miracle

My dear brothers and sisters, do we realize the profound miracle that is the translation of the Book of Mormon? A miracle is "an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., p. 742). Consistent with that definition, the translation of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith is indeed a modern-day miracle.

The current process of translation

The Book of Mormon is presently in print in over eighty languages and is now being translated or prepared for publication in many, many more. Consider the Church's current process of translating the Book of Mormon from English into another language. The Church contracts capable, experienced member translators who are fluent in English as well as their native tongue and

who possess integrity and high moral character so that the spirit of inspiration will guide their work. Just as in Joseph Smith's day, the ability to translate holy writ today is a spiritual gift from God.

Unlike Joseph's day, however, many of our modern translators utilize computers and word processors, lexicons and encyclopedias to help and guide them in their sacred assignment. The modern work is extensive, and each step must be critically analyzed by Church translation experts. Yet even with the most competent member translators and advanced technology available, the entire process, from beginning to publication, requires approximately four years.

Conditions in which Joseph translated

Now contrast the translation of the Book of Mormon by young Joseph Smith. Joseph was raised on a farm in upstate New York and was only twenty-three years of age at the time he completed his

translation of this sacred record from "reformed Egyptian" to English (Mormon 9:32).

He had little financially and was busy supporting his wife and family. Of necessity he planted and harvested crops, chopped wood, hauled water, and cared for animals.

The conditions under which Joseph translated were less than ideal. His life was threatened, and mobs tried to rob him of the plates, requiring him to hide the ancient records and often move them from place to place (see Joseph Smith—History 1:60). Joseph had no telephone, no dictating equipment, fax, word processor, or copy machine—not even electric light.

Translated by the gift and power of God

Joseph had little formal education, perhaps no more than three years of elementary school. Prior to translating, Joseph had not enrolled in a university. There were no literary magazines or academic periodicals delivered to his doorstep. He never visited South America or the Middle East. He belonged to no professional societies, had performed no extensive research projects, nor did he have learned colleagues with whom to discuss the ancient text of the plates. He may have studied basic reading, writing, and arithmetic and perhaps a little American history. We know he read the Bible in English, but by the standards of the world, Joseph was neither a scholar nor a theologian, much less a professional translator of holy scriptures.

What skills did Joseph possess to aid in his translation? Oliver Cowdery, who was the principal scribe for the Book of Mormon, said of Joseph's source of translating power that "the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . translated [the Book of Mormon] by the gift and power of God, by the [assistance or] means of the Urim and Thummim" ("Last Days of Oliver Cowdery," *Deseret News*, 13 Apr. 1859, p. 48).

Typically a literary work undergoes extensive revisions and editions before a final, finely tuned draft is completed. For example, Abraham Lincoln rewrote his Gettysburg Address five different times, each version varying slightly from the other (see *World Book Encyclopedia*, 22 vols. [Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1992], 8:176–77).

In preparing for this conference address, I had the glorious experience of quietly examining several pages of Joseph's original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, which is safely protected in the Church archives. I was overwhelmed at the purity of the transcription, which had only a very few insignificant corrections, such as a misspelled word. Joseph's original manuscript is so perfect it could have come from only one source—divine revelation.

Miraculous pace of the translation

On Joseph's shoulders rested not only the translation of the Book of Mormon but also the restoration and reestablishment of the Church of Jesus Christ. Even as Joseph translated, he received many revelations and visitations from heavenly messengers who gave him additional important assignments, such as the restoration of the priesthood and the revelation on baptism (see Joseph Smith—History 1:68–74). Joseph's many responsibilities often interrupted the translation process, sometimes for several months. Yet once Joseph was free to dedicate his entire effort to translation, the work surged forward and he translated eight to ten pages a day, completing the preponderance of the Book of Mormon translation in approximately sixty-three working days (see John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, "The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information" [Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986], pp. 14–27).

Oliver, reflecting on this miraculous event, testified, "Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated . . . the history, or record, called 'The book of Mormon' " (*Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, p. 14).

Magnitude of the Prophet's work

Joseph was the first person in over 1,400 years to read the words of the Savior as written by Nephi, Alma, Mormon, Moroni, and the other prophets of the Book of Mormon. His ability to translate was nothing short of a "marvelous work and a wonder" (2 Nephi 25:17).

Joseph's original English translation, except for a few minor grammatical and textual emendations, remains the text that we use today and is the standard for all other language translations of the Book of Mormon throughout the world (see *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 1:185–86). As Nephi of old prophesied, his "words shall [whisper] forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto [his] people" (2 Nephi 29:2).

Could any one of us today produce such a work? Could a thousand of the world's best theologians and scholars of ancient languages or antiquities write a similar book of such supernal, transcendent value?

No other person with such limited education and facility as Joseph has single-handedly translated in such a short period of time from ancient writings over five hundred pages of scriptural text. That translation now has seventy-three million books in distribution.

Joseph's translation of this ancient, sacred scripture has withstood the scrutiny of many skeptics. The Book of Mormon stands as a miraculous work for the world to examine. This divine spark from

heaven, over 165 years ago, has ignited a flame that is dawning a new day. No wonder "the Spirit of God like a fire is burning!" (*Hymns*, no. 2). All over the world people are seeking the witness of Jesus Christ as found in the Book of Mormon. They come from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. As was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name" (D&C 122:1). And why are they seeking after the name of Joseph Smith? Because the Book of Mormon testifies of the divinity and atonement of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Because Joseph is the prophet of the Restoration.

With deep appreciation for the miracle that transpired through the translation of the Book of Mormon, we sing:

Praise to the man who communed
with Jehovah!

Jesus anointed that Prophet and
Seer.

Blessed to open the last dispensa-
tion. . . .

Millions shall know "Brother Jo-
seph" again.

["Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27]

Evidence that Joseph is a prophet

I testify that the translation miracle of the Book of Mormon clearly evidences that Joseph is a prophet of God, called to "lay the foundation of [Christ's] church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). The Book of Mormon is the "keystone of our religion" and will bring us "nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 194). May we appreciate this miraculous translation, and may it be our desire to come to know and follow the Savior

through his teachings in the Book of Mormon, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Do What Is Right," fol-

lowing which we shall hear from Elder J Ballard Washburn of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Bishop Merrill J. Bateman, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

The chorus and congregation sang "Do What Is Right."

Elder J Ballard Washburn

Dear brothers and sisters, it's my honor and privilege to join with you in expressing our love and support for President Hinckley, President Monson, President Faust, President Packer, and the Twelve. I am happy to say that I love you. I am grateful to be one with you in the work of the kingdom.

Going to the temple as families

Recently after a stake conference, I was talking with a family with teenage children. I said to them, "You must live righteously so that someday you can go to the temple with your parents." A sixteen-year-old daughter responded, "Oh, we go to the temple with our parents almost every week. We go and do baptisms for our family file names." I thought, *What a wonderful thing, for families to go to the temple together.*

When Jesus was twelve years old, his parents took him to the temple. I think it is more than coincidental that our sons and daughters can go to the temple with us when they are twelve years old. Joseph and Mary did not say, "Bishop, will you take our son to the temple?" They took him.

Our efforts as parents, wards, and stakes should be to help our youth live worthily to go to the temple *now*. The goal is the same for young women as for young men: *be temple worthy now*. When the bishop interviews the youth

each year, he will include a worthiness interview.

What a wonderful goal for priesthood leaders and young women leaders to help parents inspire every young woman and every young man to go to the temple every year. What a great blessing for parents to be in the temple with their children, ages twelve and over, at least once a year where circumstances allow.

The Holy Ghost leads to the temple

One thing that will help us more than anything else to want to be in the temple is to have the Holy Ghost with us.

Two important things are necessary to have the Holy Ghost: first, we must live worthy of it; and second, we must ask for it.

"Ask the Father in my name, in faith believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient unto the children of men."¹

If we will ask in faith, we will receive the Holy Ghost, and it will lead us to the temple.

Go to the temple worthily

Let me give a word of caution here. We cannot go to His holy house unworthily without bringing upon ourselves

the judgments of God. For God will not be mocked.

When couples who have not fully repented of past sins go to the temple to be married, they are starting their marriages on very shaky ground. I believe this is one of the main causes of divorce in temple marriages. If a man who is *dishonest* in his personal life, as it pertains to his wife and children or his business dealings, goes to the temple, he is heaping damnation upon his own soul and is in great need of repentance.

President Hunter said, "It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church *worthy* to enter the temple."² If our young men or young women on their way to the mission field go to the temple unworthily, it is a great mistake. We must prepare them for the temple *first*, and then they will be prepared for missions. President Hunter said, "Let us prepare every missionary to go to the temple *worthily* and to make that experience an even greater highlight than receiving the mission call."³

The new and everlasting covenant

The greatest blessings of eternity come to us through the temple. God's greatest gift, eternal life, can come only to a man and woman together. And every worthy person will someday have this blessing. In Doctrine and Covenants 131 we read:

"In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

"And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

"And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

"He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase" (vv. 1-4).

Thus we see that in marriage, a husband and wife enter into an order of the priesthood called the new and everlasting

covenant of marriage. This covenant includes a willingness to have children and to teach them the gospel. Many problems of the world today are brought about when parents do not accept the responsibilities of this covenant. It is contradictory to this covenant to prevent the birth of children if the parents are in good health.

Thirty-five years ago when I first started practicing medicine, it was a rare thing for a married woman to seek advice about how she could keep from having babies. When I finished practicing medicine, it was a rare thing, except for some faithful Latter-day Saint women, for a married woman to want to have more than one or two children, and some did not want *any* children. We in the Church must not be caught up in the false doctrines of the world that would cause us to break sacred temple covenants.

Keeping temple covenants at home

We go to the temple to make covenants, but we go home to keep the covenants that we have made. The home is the testing ground. The home is the place where we learn to be more Christlike. The home is the place where we learn to overcome selfishness and give ourselves in service to others.

I hope you will not think it simplistic to suggest that it is the "little things" like family prayer and family home evening that are important; little things like a father helping his children say their nightly prayers and telling them a bedtime story instead of watching TV; little things like making time in the family schedule for reading the scriptures; little things like a husband being big enough to say, "Sweetheart, I'm sorry. I should not have said that. I'm going to do better." Or a mother saying to a child, "I'm sorry I became angry. Please forgive me." Yes, it is the little things that we do each day and each week that make the difference.

By keeping the temple covenants, all of God's children may be exalted. I say again that *we go to the temple to make the covenants, but we go home to keep those covenants.*

Gratitude for homes and temples

The story is told of Elder Boyd K. Packer: After traveling all over the world and seeing many exotic places, he was asked where he would go if he could go anywhere in the world he wanted. He replied, "I would go home." I feel the same way. If I were asked that same question, I would say, "I would go home and sit in a big rocking chair and take a couple of grandbabies in my arms and hope that a little of the heavenly dust they still have on them would rub off on me." I'm grateful for homes where we can go to learn how to love, how to share, how to be Christlike.

I am grateful for temples where we can go to be sealed together as families for eternity. I am grateful for temples where we can go to pray and to worship,

where we can call down the blessings of heaven upon our families. I am grateful for temples where we can go as families to strengthen the eternal bonds that will make us forever families, where we can go to do the great redemptive work for our forefathers, who cannot do it for themselves, even as Jesus did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. I am grateful that God in his eternal wisdom has made these blessings available to all of his children. Some, however, have to wait until the hereafter to enjoy these blessings. But all who live worthily will have every blessing. I testify that Jesus loved to go to the temple. Part of becoming more Christlike is learning to love to go to the temple. I pray that we may become eternal families, that we may have eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 18:18.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, p. 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, p. 8; italics added.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, p. 118; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, p. 88; italics added.

Bishop Merrill J. Bateman

Brothers and sisters, I express deep appreciation for the marvelous impact that President Howard W. Hunter had on Church members in his short period as prophet. From Hawaii to West Africa, I have seen members responding to his challenge for us to be more Christlike and a temple-worshipping people.

Today I sustain President Gordon B. Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of the Church. As I watched the press conference that announced the new First Presidency, the Holy Spirit bore witness to me of his prophetic calling and the preparation that had preceded it. I also felt then and feel today the same confirmation regarding President Thomas S. Monson and

President James E. Faust as his counselors, and President Boyd K. Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve. And today I felt the Spirit with regard to Elder Henry B. Eyring. The Lord's way of preparing prophets is a marvelous work and a wonder.

Lessons taught by death

A short time ago I attended the funeral of a friend's son. Earlier in the week, the young man was traveling home late at night with friends when the driver of another car fell asleep. The second car crossed the median and smashed head-on into the first. The accident occurred with such swiftness that few,

if any, brake marks showed on the highway and both cars were demolished. The accident took three lives, including my friend's seventeen-year-old son.

In reflecting on the accident, I have thought about the lessons taught by death—particularly the death of a loved one. The first lesson is that life is short whether one dies at seventeen or at eighty. To a seventeen-year-old, eighty years seems like an eternity. But to a seventy-year-old, eighty years is not a long probationary period.

Second, death reminds us that there is a spirit in man. As we viewed the remains of our young friend, it was obvious that more than blood had left his body. The light of his spirit no longer animated his facial expression or twinkled in his eyes. He too had given up the ghost but at a tender, young age.

Another lesson taught by death concerns the importance of eternal families. Just as there are parents to greet a newborn on earth, the scriptures teach that caring family members greet the spirits in paradise and assist them in the adjustments to a new life (see Genesis 25:8; 35:29; 49:33). While I was standing before the casket, the thought came that separation was not only a shock for the parents but also for the young man as he suddenly found himself on the other side of the veil. I suspect that he would like to tell his parents once more how much he loves them. Brothers and sisters, heaven exists only if families are eternal.

A fourth lesson, and perhaps the most important, concerns the purpose of life. To be meaningful, life must be more than the ephemeral pleasures of youth. There must be a plan. Death, even if accidental, must be part of the plan. Developing faith in and coming to know one's Maker is at the core of the plan. Having hope with regard to one's eternal destiny and experiencing joy must also be part of life's purpose.

Atonement heals grief, sorrow, and sin

Death teaches that we do not experience a fulness of joy in mortality and that everlasting joy can be achieved only with the assistance of the Master (see D&C 93:33–34). Just as the lame man at the pool of Bethesda needed someone stronger than himself to be healed (see John 5:1–9), so we are dependent on the miracles of Christ's atonement if our souls are to be made whole from grief, sorrow, and sin. If grieving parents and loved ones have faith in the Savior and his plan, death's sting is softened as Jesus bears the believers' grief and comforts them through the Holy Spirit. Through Christ, broken hearts are mended and peace replaces anxiety and sorrow. Last week I received a letter from the boy's parents telling me of the peace they have found through their faith in Christ. They know that they will see their son again and be with him in the eternities. As Isaiah stated concerning the Savior, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . . And with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4–5).

The prophet Alma also spoke of Christ's healing power as he taught the Gideonites. Referring to Christ, Alma stated that he would "go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him . . . their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, . . . that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people" (Alma 7:11–12). Whatever the source of pain, Jesus understands and can heal the spirit as well as the body.

The Savior, as a member of the Godhead, knows each of us personally. Isaiah and the prophet Abinadi said that when Christ would "make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed" (Isaiah 53:10; compare Mosiah 15:10).

Abinadi explains that "his seed" are the righteous, those who follow the prophets (see Mosiah 15:11). In the garden and on the cross, Jesus saw each of us and not only bore our sins but also experienced our deepest feelings so he would know how to comfort and strengthen us.

The power to heal from within

As part of his redeeming power, Jesus can remove the sting of death or restore the spiritual health of a struggling soul. The scriptures are filled with examples, but a young Korean sister indelibly taught me this lesson. In early 1994, while attending a stake conference in Seoul, Korea, I met Kim Young Hee, a young woman in her twenties. I noticed her beautiful countenance as she sat in a wheelchair on the stand waiting to speak. When her turn came, a brother pushed her chair to the front of the stand but off to the side of the pulpit so she could see and be seen. He gave her a microphone, and she told us her story.

As a young woman, she was healthy, had an excellent job, and was content with life. She was not a Christian. In 1987 she was in a terrible car accident that left her paralyzed from the waist down. Following her recovery in a hospital, she returned to her parents' home wondering what life held for her. She was despondent and empty. One day a knock came at the door. Her mother answered, and two American women asked to share a message about Jesus Christ. The mother was hesitant, but the daughter heard their voices and invited them in. They were missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Kim Young Hee accepted the invitation to receive the missionary lessons. She read the Book of Mormon, prayed about its truthfulness, attended church, and received a witness of the divinity of the Restoration. She was baptized.

As she bore her testimony in stake conference, she said: "I know that Heavenly Father does not look on the outward appearance but on the heart. I also know that the true miracle is the healing within, the change of heart, the loss of pride. Although my physical body may not be healed in mortality, my spirit has felt the healing power of the Holy Ghost. And in the Resurrection a fully restored, perfect physical body will again house my spirit, and I will receive a fulness of joy."

As I listened, the Spirit bore witness of the great miracles of the Atonement and the Savior's power to mend broken hearts, to heal from within. The Savior's parable of the ten lepers took on new meaning. Luke describes Jesus meeting ten lepers. Upon seeing the Savior, they cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Jesus responded, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." As they went their way, they were cleansed. One returned, fell on his face at the Master's feet, and gave thanks. Jesus said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" And then the Lord said to the one who returned, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (see Luke 17:12-19). In becoming a whole person, the grateful leper was healed inside as well as on the outside. That day nine lepers were healed skin deep, but only one had the faith to be made whole. The tenth leper and Sister Hee were changed eternally by their faith in the Savior and the healing power of his atonement.

The Atonement is intimate and infinite

The Savior's atonement in the garden and on the cross is intimate as well as infinite—infinite in that it spans the eternities, intimate in that the Savior felt each person's pains, sufferings, and sicknesses. Consequently he knows how

to carry our sorrows and relieve our burdens that we might be healed from within, be made whole persons, and receive everlasting joy in his kingdom. May our faith in the Father and the Son help each of us to become whole. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Elder J Ballard Washburn of the Seventy, followed by Bishop Merrill J. Bateman, the Presiding Bishop of the Church.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Expression of love for prophets

President Hinckley, President Monson, President Faust, as we raised our hands in the law of common consent during the solemn assembly, we gave our consecration, our love, and our devotion to our prophet, and we sustain the First Presidency. "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days" (*Hymns*, no. 19).

Twice in the space of a year we have lost prophets who are very dear to us, President Ezra Taft Benson and President Howard W. Hunter. These two great prophets of God brought truth and light and joy into our lives. They conveyed to us the word of God. They taught us about the importance of family, studying the Book of Mormon, and living our lives in such a way that we would draw closer to God. They taught us the importance of being kind to one another, obeying the commandments, and how to receive a fulness of joy and merit eternal life. They have pleaded with us to live more Christlike lives, to emulate the Savior in all we do, and to qualify ourselves to be worthy of the saving and exalting blessings available only in the holy temples of the Lord. They gave us words of encouragement and wise counsel to bring more happiness and peace into our lives and into the world. We love them for their obedience and for their concern for us.

Today I join you in sustaining President Gordon B. Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We live in a world of turmoil where we find sadness and destruction in every corner, much of which is brought about by man's failure to listen to the words of the true prophets of God. How different would the lives have been of those who lived in all dispensations if they had listened to the prophet Moses and followed the Ten Commandments?

There has always been a desperate need for the steady and reassuring voice of a living prophet of God—one who will speak the mind and will of God in showing the way to spiritual safety and personal peace and happiness.

The Lord protects Jehoshaphat's people

Our loving Heavenly Father has given the world prophets from the days of Adam. The prophets of old taught well the importance of listening to the voice of prophets. The story of Jehoshaphat found in 2 Chronicles 20 is an example. King Jehoshaphat had several great armies coming to battle with him in an attempt to possess his land. Understandably he was seized with dreadful fear, so he proclaimed a fast throughout all his kingdom and gathered the people of Judah together to plead for guidance from the Lord. Jehoshaphat

humbly and earnestly prayed, "O our God, . . . we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (v. 12).

Then came the answer of the Lord through the prophet Jahaziel: "Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, *Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.* . . .

"Fear not, nor be dismayed; . . . for the Lord will be with you" (vv. 15, 17; italics added).

Jehoshaphat and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell in thankful prayer before the Lord.

Jehoshaphat then gave very important counsel that we today would do well to obey. Indeed, just as the people of Judah, our lives may depend upon it—even our eternal lives: "*Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper*" (v. 20; italics added).

As promised, the Lord protected the good people of Judah. As Jehoshaphat's forces looked on, those armies which came to battle against them fought so fiercely among themselves that they completely destroyed one another before they ever reached the people of Judah. Listen to a prophet's voice and obey. There is safety in following the living prophet.

Prophets speak plainly and boldly

A characteristic of prophets throughout the ages is that, regardless of the consequences, they have had the strength to speak the words of God with plainness and boldness. As Nephi made an end to his record, he taught:

"And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do

good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth them to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal.

"And it speaketh harshly against sin, according to the *plainness of the truth*; wherefore, no man will be angry at the words which I [the prophet] have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil.

"*I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus*, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell" (2 Nephi 33:4–6; italics added).

Micaiah speaks plainly to Ahab

Another account of Jehoshaphat illustrates how prophets speak directly and plainly the word of God and let the consequence follow. Ahab, the king of Israel, invited Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to join with him in battle against Syria. Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to inquire of the Lord to see if it would be wise to go against the Syrians.

After four hundred of Ahab's so-called prophets told Ahab only what he wanted to hear—that he would be victorious over Syria—Jehoshaphat asked if he didn't have any other prophets. Ahab replied, "There is yet one man, Micaiah . . . : *but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil*" (1 Kings 22:8; italics added).

Jehoshaphat convinced Ahab to seek the word of the prophet Micaiah. The messenger who was sent to bring Micaiah before the kings cautioned Micaiah to tell Ahab only what he wanted to hear. "*And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak*" (1 Kings 22:14; italics added). Micaiah told Ahab that Israel would not return victorious and that Ahab would be killed.

Against the counsel of the prophet, Ahab went to battle and lost his life, and Israel was defeated.

Micaiah, as all prophets before him and all who have followed, spoke the word of God with plainness and truth and let the consequence follow.

Restoration of prophetic authority

"We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth" (Articles of Faith 1:6).

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that it was necessary for the Church of Jesus Christ to be restored in this dispensation and that "all the keys and powers of priesthood held by the prophets of former dispensations must be conferred upon God's chosen representatives on the earth" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56], 1:168).

The prophet Wilford Woodruff said: "This is the last dispensation. He [the Lord] has raised up men and women to carry on his work, and . . . many of us have been held in the spirit world from the organization of this world, until the generation in which we live" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:284).

Joseph Smith, the Lord's chosen prophet to usher in the Restoration, recorded the following visions received in the Kirtland Temple in 1836:

"After this vision closed," the scriptures tell us, "the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

"After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.

"After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us;

for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

"Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

"To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—

"Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors" (D&C 110:11-16).

With the restoration of the priesthood in 1829, there was a restoration of prophets in this dispensation. Living prophets are leading this church today. The greatest security of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints comes from learning to listen to and obey the words and commandments that the Lord has given through living prophets. I would hope that the world would understand the importance of having a living prophet on earth today.

Come, listen to a prophet's voice

The scriptures tell us that prophets receive commandments "walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (D&C 21:4-5).

We sing a hymn that reminds us:

Come, listen to a prophet's voice,
And hear the word of God. . . .
We've found the way the prophets
went
Who lived in days of yore.
Another prophet now is sent
This knowledge to restore.
["Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice,"
Hymns, no. 21]

Another hymn teaches:

We listen to a prophet's voice and
hear the Savior too.

With love he bids us do the work the
Lord would have us do.

The Savior calls his chosen seer to
preach the word of God,

That men might learn to find the
path marked by the iron rod. . . .

Rejoice! The prophet has confirmed
that by Him we are known.

Attend, ye earth! The prophet speaks;
come listen and obey.

He is the man who holds the keys of
priesthood pow'r today.

[“We Listen to a Prophet’s Voice,”
Hymns, no. 22]

Prophets are prepared by the Lord

In my own lifetime, through association with prophets, I have observed how they are prepared by the Lord. By the time they become the prophet, their greatest concern is for the goodness and obedience of the members of the Church. They express the love and gratitude they have for faithful Saints and for all who give of their goodness and service in the world in lifting and strengthening others. Their purpose is to bring us the will of the Lord for our times. I give my testimony that the prophets of this day have the qualities of the prophets of old and the other prophets of this dispensation.

Each of these prophets has humbly and prayerfully sought to know and follow God’s will in his personal ministry. Each has been determined to declare to Heavenly Father, as did an obedient Jesus Christ before him, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Blessings of heeding prophets

The desire of the prophets is to assist our Father in Heaven and his Son, Jesus Christ, in bringing about the great objectives of the plan of salvation, or, as

one ancient prophet called it, “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8).

If we listen to the prophets of this day, poverty will be replaced with loving care for the poor and needy. Many serious and deadly health problems will be avoided through compliance with the Word of Wisdom and the laws of sexual purity. Payment of tithing will bless us, and we will have sufficient for our needs. If we follow the counsel given by the prophets, we can have a life in mortality where we do not bring upon ourselves unnecessary pain and self-destruction. This does not mean we will not have challenges. We will. This does not mean we will not be tested. We will, for this is part of our purpose on earth. But if we will listen to the counsel of our prophet, we will become stronger and be able to withstand the tests of mortality. We will have hope and joy. All the words of counsel from the prophets of all generations have been given so that we may be strengthened and then be able to lift and strengthen others.

President Hinckley is our prophet today

We declare with soberness, and yet with the authority of God in us vested, that we have a prophet today. The President of the Church, as a prophet, is God’s representative on earth and is appointed to lead His church. This has been true in the past as recorded in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, with the restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

He who holds all the priesthood keys authorizing the saving blessings is the living prophet. The Lord has declared, “There is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred” (D&C 132:7). I testify that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the *one* in whom those keys are currently vested.

He is our prophet today. He was prepared and foreordained before the foundation of the world. For over a half century he has been taught and tutored by apostles and prophets with whom he has served. He is wise. He is caring. He speaks for the Lord. His is the voice to which we should now respond. Our spiritual safety lies in turning to the clear voice of our living prophet. If we listen to his voice and obey his counsel, we will be able to live as Christ would have us live and endure to the end so that one day we, along with our families, will return back into the presence of our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

I humbly add my testimony to the testimonies of all who have sustained

the prophet this day in this solemn assembly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Living water to quench spiritual thirst

Early in his mortal ministry, the Savior and his disciples passed through Samaria while traveling from Judea to Galilee. Weary, hungry, and thirsty from their journey, they stopped at Jacob's well in the city of Sychar. While the disciples went in search of food, the Savior remained at the well. He requested a drink from a Samaritan woman who had come to draw water. Because the Jews and Samaritans were divided by rancor and did not often speak to one another, the woman responded to the Savior's request with a question: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?"¹

In the New Testament the Savior used this simple encounter at the well to teach powerful, eternal truths. Though weary and thirsty, the Master Teacher took this opportunity to testify of his divine role as the Redeemer of the world and to proclaim authoritatively his true

identity as the long-promised Messiah. He patiently yet thoughtfully answered the woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."²

Intrigued but skeptical, and seeing that Jesus had no container with which to draw water, the woman queried further, "From whence then hast thou that living water?"³ In a powerful promise, Jesus then declared himself to be the source of living water, the wellspring of life everlasting. He said:

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."⁴

Missing entirely the spiritual meaning in the Lord's message, the woman, thinking only of satisfying her physical

thirst and of her convenience, demanded, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."⁵

Live the gospel to be happy

In commenting on the conversation between the Savior and the woman, Bishop Robert L. Simpson taught:

"Throughout history men have always been looking for the easy way. [Some] have devoted their lives to finding the 'fountain of youth,' a miracle water which would bring everlasting life. Today [many] are still seeking . . . some magic 'fountain' that [will] bring forth success, fulfillment, and happiness. But most of this searching is in vain. . . . It is only this 'living water,' the gospel of Jesus Christ, that can and will bring a happy, a successful, and an everlasting life to the children of men."⁶

The Savior's promise to that woman extends to all of our Heavenly Father's children. By living the gospel of Jesus Christ we develop within ourselves a living spring that will quench eternally our thirst for happiness, peace, and everlasting life. The Lord explains clearly in the Doctrine and Covenants that only faithful obedience can tap the well of living water that refreshes and enlivens our souls: "But unto him that *keepeth my commandments* I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life."⁷

Many Samaritans believe

When the woman said she knew the Messiah would come, Jesus said, "I that speak unto thee am he."⁸ He demonstrated his power of prophetic discernment by telling the woman personal details about her life that only one with divine insight could have known. Astonished, the Samaritan woman left her water pot and hurried off to tell others of her interview with the Lord, saying,

"Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"⁹ While she gathered those of her city who would listen, Jesus taught his now-turned disciples that he already had "meat to eat that ye know not of."¹⁰ To his puzzled disciples who were carrying the food they had acquired, he explained, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."¹¹

When the crowd of curious Samaritans arrived to see and hear the man who had proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, "they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days."¹² The scriptures tell us that many believed the Savior's teachings. As they listened, their initial curiosity matured into testimony. They declared, "We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."¹³

Latter days a time of spiritual thirst

These latter days are a time of great spiritual thirst. Many in the world are searching, often intensely, for a source of refreshment that will quench their yearning for meaning and direction in their lives. They crave a cool, satisfying drink of insight and knowledge that will soothe their parched souls. Their spirits cry out for life-sustaining experiences of peace and calm to nourish and enliven their withering hearts.

Indeed "there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it."¹⁴ Let us work with all our heart, might, mind, and strength to show our thirsty brothers and sisters where they may find the living water of the gospel, that they may come to drink of the water that springs "up unto everlasting life."

Jesus is the only source of living water

The Lord provides the living water that can quench the burning thirst of those whose lives are parched by a drought of truth. He expects us to supply to them the fulness of the gospel by giving them the scriptures and the words of the prophets and to bear personal testimony as to the truth of the restored gospel to alleviate their thirst. When they drink from the cup of gospel knowledge, their thirst is satisfied as they come to understand our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness.

As at Jacob's well, so today the Lord Jesus Christ is the only source of living water. It will quench the thirst of those suffering from the drought of divine truth that so afflicts the world. The words of the Lord to ancient Israel spoken by the prophet Jeremiah describe the condition of many of God's children in our own day: "My people . . . have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out . . . broken cisterns, that can hold no water."¹⁵ Too many of our Heavenly Father's children spend their precious lives carving out broken cisterns of worldly gain that cannot hold the living water that satisfies fully their natural thirst for everlasting truth.

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Savior, now returned to Jerusalem, extended this timeless, universal invitation: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."¹⁶

Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined living water as "the words of eternal life, the message of salvation, the truths about God and his kingdom; it is the doctrines of the gospel." He went on to explain, "Where there are prophets of God, there will be found rivers of living water, wells filled with eternal truths, springs bubbling forth their life-giving draughts that save from spiritual death."¹⁷

Prophets refresh us with living water

The Lord has declared that "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."¹⁸ We are blessed to live in a day when prophets and apostles live on the earth. Through them we are refreshed continually by an abundant stream of eternal truth that, if obeyed, brings the living water of the Lord into our lives. Echoing those Samaritans who listened to the Savior at Jacob's well, we too can say with faith and with firm conviction, "We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."¹⁹

We miss hearing the voice of President Howard W. Hunter. Surely it was the love, hope, and compassion of Jesus Christ that we heard in President Hunter's simple eloquence. He raised us to new heights of understanding and urged us to renew our commitment to keep sacred covenants. He reminded us that "Christ's supreme sacrifice can find full fruition in our lives only as we accept the invitation to follow him."²⁰ When President Hunter asked us to "treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness,"²¹ his personal example of these Christlike virtues taught us with a persuasive power that transcended even his unforgettable spoken words. He encouraged us to drink more often and more deeply of the living water to bring spiritual enrichment into our lives.

Drink living water at the temple

President Howard W. Hunter said: "It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommendation, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it." He wanted every one of us to

be strengthened by the "sanctity and safety which is provided within [the] hallowed and consecrated walls" of the house of the Lord.²² What better way to become more closely acquainted with the Savior and to strengthen our commitment to be more like him than to visit frequently his holy house and drink deeply of the living waters that are there. President Hunter wanted us to qualify ourselves through righteous living for the blessings of beauty, revelation, and peace that can be enjoyed in our temples; hence, his oft-repeated invitation "to establish the temple . . . as the great symbol of [our] membership" in the Lord's church.²³

President Hinckley, the Lord's anointed

Today we have sustained President Hunter's successor. I rejoice with you in the opportunity we have had in this solemn assembly to sustain President Gordon B. Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and as spokesman for our Lord Jesus Christ here on the earth. He is the Lord's anointed. He holds all priesthood keys and is authorized to exercise them in leading and directing the kingdom of God. President Hinckley is a faithful servant of the Lord, whose heart and voice we know well. We have come to love him through his thirty-seven-year ministry as a General Authority of the Church. Nearly thirty-four years ago he was ordained an Apostle, a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the longest-serving General Authority now living. When President Hinckley was called to the Twelve, the Church had 1,900,000 members and 336 stakes compared with 9,000,000 members and more than 2,000 stakes today.

Born of a noble father and a saintly mother, President Hinckley learned as a young boy the truths of the restored gospel from his faithful parents. He

came to respect deeply and value highly his pioneer heritage. He served valiantly as a young missionary in England. Throughout his adult life he has worked tirelessly to build the kingdom. He has served under eight Presidents of the Church, including fourteen years as a counselor to the last three: Presidents Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, and Howard W. Hunter.

President Hinckley's preparation for his current service has been lifelong. As President Boyd K. Packer reminded us recently, "No man comes to be the President of this church except he has been apprenticed for a lifetime."²⁴ From the scriptures we learn that those who serve as prophets were "prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God."²⁵

I bear my witness that President Hinckley has been foreordained, raised up, prepared, and called of God "to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life."²⁶ I have been well acquainted with him since my early youth and have observed firsthand that the fabric of his noble character contains not a single shoddy thread. From the living water of the Lord and his restored gospel, President Hinckley has drunk deeply throughout his entire lifetime. Because of his righteous obedience, streams of living water have flowed and will continue to flow from him²⁷ to quench the thirst of a spiritually parched world.

I am grateful today to sustain President Thomas S. Monson and President James E. Faust as counselors in the First Presidency. They too have been tried and tested in the service of God and all humankind over many years. They are valiant and faithful. These three presiding high priests of the First Presidency merit our loyalty and devotion. We can sustain and follow them with absolute trust and confidence.

Bring living water to all who thirst

As one who also stands as a special witness, I join my testimony with those believing Samaritans of long ago. Brothers and sisters, to you and to all the world I testify in all soberness that this same Jesus of Nazareth who spoke with the woman at Jacob's well "is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."²⁸ He lives today. He is our Redeemer and our Advocate with the Father. He stands at the head of this church that bears his name. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stand as his duly authorized and ordained servants, charged with the sacred and solemn responsibility to guide his church in these latter days. Our responsibility "is to do the will of him that sent [us]"²⁹ and bring that living water to all who thirst for it. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 4:9.
2. John 4:10.
3. John 4:11.
4. John 4:13-14.
5. John 4:15.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1968, p. 96.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 63:23; italics added.
8. John 4:26.
9. John 4:29.
10. John 4:32.
11. John 4:34.
12. John 4:40.
13. John 4:42.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
15. Jeremiah 2:13.
16. John 7:37.
17. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-73), 1:151-52.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
19. John 4:42.
20. "He Invites Us to Follow Him," *Ensign*, Sept. 1994, p. 2.
21. *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4.

22. *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5.

23. *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5.

24. "President Howard W. Hunter—He Endured to the End," *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, p. 30.

25. Alma 13:3.

26. 3 Nephi 5:13.

27. See John 7:38; Doctrine and Covenants 63:23.

28. John 4:42.

29. John 4:34.

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We are mindful of the effort many of you have made to be here this morning. Some of you were in line long before sunrise. This Tabernacle, which once seemed so large, has become very small in terms of those who desire to attend. We need a much larger place of assembly, although we would never be able to build a place large enough to accommodate the full needs of this vital, growing church.

Thank you, my beloved brethren and sisters, for your vote of confidence this morning. We are overwhelmed by the meaning of this. I'll speak further of that in other sessions.

We appreciate the kindness of owners of television and radio stations and cable systems and all who have made it possible for us to reach out across the world.

This wonderful Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "More Holiness Give Me." The benediction will then be offered by Elder V. Dallas Merrell of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder V. Dallas Merrell offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 165th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 1995, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Springville Utah Region, with Brother James Kasen conducting and Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the meeting, President Faust made the following remarks.

President James E. Faust

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who was sustained this morning in the solemn assembly as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presides at this conference and has asked that I conduct this session.

We welcome you to the second general session of the 165th Annual General Conference of the Church. We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, J. Richard Clarke, and Dennis

B. Neuenschwander are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders John K. Carmack and W. Mack Lawrence are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Springville Utah Region, under the direction of Brother James Kasen, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days." The invocation will be offered by Elder Ted E. Brewerton of the Seventy.

The choir sang "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days."

Elder Ted E. Brewerton offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "Hope of Israel," following which Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will read the auditors' report. Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, will then present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1994.

The choir sang "Hope of Israel."

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1994

Ted E. Davis

The Church Audit Committee is independent of all Church officers, employees, operations, and departments, including the Church Auditing Department, and reports directly to the First

Presidency. We have access to all records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibility. We have reviewed the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over receipts and expenditures of funds and that safeguard assets of the Church and its controlled

organizations, including budgeting, accounting and reporting, and the auditing systems and reports, for the year ended December 31, 1994.

Expenditures of Church funds for the year were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under the direction of the Appropriations and Budget Committees.

The Church Auditing Department is currently conducting an audit of the financial activities of the Church and its affiliated companies for the year ended December 31, 1994, in compliance with recognized professional auditing standards. It also performs financial audits, operational audits, and audits of computerized information systems for all Church operations worldwide. Its staff consists of certified public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors. The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church operations and departments and reports its findings directly to the First Presidency.

Incorporated businesses owned or controlled by the Church maintain their own accounting and reporting systems in compliance with accepted business practice and are audited by the Church Auditing Department and/or independent public accounting firms. Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education are audited by independent public accounting firms.

The Church Auditing Department has established audit procedures for audits of local ecclesiastical units and also monitors local unit audit results and local unit expenditures.

The Church Audit Committee, based on its review of financial and control policies and procedures and its review of all audit reports issued in 1994 and responses thereto, is of the opinion that in all material respects, Church funds received and expended during the year ended December 31, 1994, have been controlled and accounted for in accordance with established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee
Ted E. Davis, chairman
Donald D. Salmon
James B. Jacobson

The Church Statistical Report for 1994

F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 1994. The statistics are based on 1994 reports available prior to this conference.

Church units

Stakes 2,008

Districts 709
Missions 303
Wards and branches 21,774
Nations and territories with
organized wards or branches 156

Church membership

Total membership 9,024,569
Eight-year-old children of
record baptized during 1994 . . . 72,538
Converts baptized during 1994 . . 300,730

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries 47,311

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

President Ezra Taft Benson, thirteenth President of the Church, at age ninety-four, on May 30, 1994; *President Howard W. Hunter*, fourteenth President of the Church, at age eighty-seven, on March 3, 1995; *Elder Clinton L. Cutler*, a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy;

Elder Sterling W. Sill, an emeritus General Authority; *Eudora Widtsoe Durham*, widow of Elder G. Homer Durham, a former member of the Presidency of the Seventy; *Weston Eugene Hamilton*, a member of the General Church Finance Committee; *Oakley S. Evans*, a former president of the Tabernacle Choir.

President Faust

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Answers to life's questions

Life's most challenging questions seem to be those that begin with the word *why*. "Why is life so hard?" "Why is there so much sorrow, hate, and unhappiness in the world?" "Why does death take the young?" And "Why must the innocent suffer?" We all have wrestled with such questions from time to time as we struggle with the vicissitudes of mortality. I particularly want to talk to the younger members of God's family about why I believe the only satisfying answers to such questions come from the comforting perspective of faith in our Heavenly Father and his eternal plan for our happiness.

The prophet Alma called the plan "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8). It is known more commonly as the plan of salvation. It is beautiful in its simplicity to all who seek prayerfully to know and understand the true meaning and purpose of life.

The plan of redemption

Through prophets past and present, God has revealed the doctrines of his "great plan of happiness." It consists of infinite, eternal, absolute, unchanging

principles. From Alma we learn that "God gave unto them commandments, *after having made known . . . the plan of redemption*" (Alma 12:32; italics added). The plan teaches that all who have or will live on earth are the spirit children of heavenly parents. We lived with them before coming to this earth to receive our bodies of flesh and bone.

"If Adam [and Eve] had not transgressed [they] would not have fallen, but [they] would have remained in the garden of Eden. . . .

"And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy. . . .

"Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:22–23, 25).

After the Fall, God instructed Adam to cleave unto his wife, Eve (see Genesis 2:24; Moses 3:24; D&C 42:22). "God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28), a commandment that has never been rescinded.

Our Father's plan provides for redemption from the Fall through the atonement of Jesus Christ. As the Only Begotten Son of God and the only sin-

less person to live on this earth, he made a perfect atonement for all mankind. It applies to everyone unconditionally as it pertains to the resurrection from temporal, or physical, death, for all shall rise from the dead with immortal bodies as a result of the Atonement. However, the Atonement is conditional as it pertains to each person's individual sins. It touches everyone to the degree that he or she has faith in Jesus Christ, repents, and obeys the gospel. Exaltation and eternal life with God are reserved for those who keep the commandments.

The role of mortality in God's plan

Mortality, then, is the time to test our ability to understand our Heavenly Father's plan and, of course, our willingness to be obedient. Obedience is essential to obtain exaltation and eternal life. King Benjamin explained that "the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe [in] Christ . . . , the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy" (Mosiah 3:13).

He also taught his people: "Consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41).

Learn doctrines and commandments

What a wonderful, warm, and reassuring thing it is to know that the primary objective of the very God of heaven is "the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39), or, in other words, our eternal happiness and joy. Sometimes I wonder if we really appreciate

what that means and how it should affect our lives. We must give adequate attention to the doctrines of happiness—real happiness, infinite and eternal. They should be the objective of everything we teach in the Church and of everything we do.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "We cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them, and we cannot expect to know all, or more than we now know unless we comply with or keep those we have already received" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 256).

We must understand the basic doctrines and receive the saving ordinances that are essential for our eternal exaltation and happiness. Our present mortal state places a veil of forgetfulness over our minds, allowing us to prove ourselves able to "do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command" (Abraham 3:25). But even though our present long-range view of eternity is limited, the Lord has not left us without direction. He has provided scriptures and apostles and prophets through whom he has revealed his plan for our exaltation and eternal life. And we have the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to guide us.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "in obedience there is joy and peace unspotted, unalloyed; and as God has designed our happiness . . . he never has—He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed, and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of his law and ordinances" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 256–57).

The role of agency in God's plan

Critical to our knowledge of the plan of happiness is an understanding of the

great governing principle of agency. A person does not have to spend much time in the schoolroom of mortality to realize that Heavenly Father's plan does not provide for blissful happiness at every step along our mortal journey. Life is filled with harsh realities that tug at the heart and tear away at the soul.

One cannot look at suffering, regardless of its causes or origins, without feeling pain and compassion. I can understand why someone who lacks an eternal perspective might see the horrifying news footage of starving children and man's inhumanity to man and shake a fist at the heavens and cry, "If there is a God, how could he allow such things to happen?"

The answer is not easy, but it isn't that complicated either. God has put his plan in motion. It proceeds through natural laws that are, in fact, God's laws. Since they are his, he is bound by them, as are we. I recognize that for purposes we mortals may not understand, the Lord can control the elements. For the most part, however, he does not cause but he allows nature to run its course. In this imperfect world, bad things sometimes happen. The earth's rocky underpinnings occasionally shift and move, resulting in earthquakes. Certain weather patterns cause hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and drought.

Much adversity is man-made. Men's hearts turn cold, and the spirit of Satan controls their actions. In foreseeing the day of suffering in our time, the Savior said, "The love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound" (D&C 45:27). Violence, immorality, and other evils run rampant on the earth. Much adversity has its origin in the principle of agency.

We tend to think of agency as a personal matter. If we ask someone to define "moral agency," the answer will probably be something like this: "Moral agency means I am free to make choices for myself." Often overlooked is the fact

that choices have consequences; we forget also that agency offers the same privilege of choice to others. At times we will be affected adversely by the way other people choose to exercise their agency. Our Heavenly Father feels so strongly about protecting our agency that he allows his children to exercise it, either for good or for evil.

Living the plan brings joy and peace

The plan of happiness is available to all of his children. If the world would embrace and live it, peace, joy, and plenty would abound on the earth. Much of the suffering we know today would be eliminated if people throughout the world would understand and live the gospel.

We mortals have a limited view of life from the eternal perspective. But if we know and understand Heavenly Father's plan, we realize that dealing with adversity is one of the chief ways we are tested. Our faith in our Heavenly Father and his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, is the source of inner strength. Through faith we can find peace, comfort, and the courage to endure. As we trust in God and his plan for our happiness with all our hearts and lean not unto our own understanding (see Proverbs 3:5), hope is born. Hope grows out of faith and gives meaning and purpose to all we do. It can give us comfort in the face of adversity, strength in times of trial, and peace when we have reason for doubt or anguish.

Make decisions based on God's plan

By focusing on and living the principles of Heavenly Father's plan for our eternal happiness, we can separate ourselves from the wickedness of the world. If we are anchored to the correct understanding of who we are, why we are here on this earth, and where we can go after this mortal life, Satan cannot threaten our happiness through any form of temptation. If we are determined to live by

Heavenly Father's plan, we will use our God-given moral agency to make decisions based on revealed truth, not on the opinions of others or on the current thinking of the world.

For example, we are moving into an era when the information superhighway will have the capacity to cut a wide path right into our homes. With fiber-optic computer technology, it can link homes to an incredible assortment of messages and influences. This highway will be the conduit of information that will have the power to change our culture and, thus, our very lives. As we consider the importance of nourishing our intellects with the promising potential of superhighway resources, we must be ever cautious about the choices of programs and the impact of media in our lives. Those who understand our Heavenly Father's eternal plan for the joy and happiness of his children will be better prepared to make good choices as the information superhighway rolls across the world. The computer, television, satellite, microchip, and even the telephone, all can bless and enhance our lives—or can make them miserable.

This is why making life's decisions based on our Heavenly Father's plan is so important. If we truly believe that we are his children and are here on earth to learn to live, by faith, the teachings and the commandments of God and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, we will make the choices that will qualify us to one day return to live in their presence.

Obey commandments to find happiness

Understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ and following him as our Savior and our Redeemer will influence every aspect of our lives, including all of our individual choices. Those who live according to Heavenly Father's eternal plan will not want to absorb any information that is illicit or untoward, nor will they destroy their spiritual sensitivity through immoral

acts or the consumption of any harmful substances. Neither will they search for doctrinal loopholes to find reasons to challenge the ordained leadership of the Church nor tamper with the simple truths of the gospel. They will not attempt to justify any lifestyle that is contrary to the plan of happiness. If they do any of these things, they will never find the inner peace and joy that living the gospel brings. All of our Father's children can seek prayerfully to know who they are and can find real happiness if they obey God's commandments and endure to the end. Elder Howard W. Hunter said:

"There is nothing sad or gloomy about a person who accepts the truths of the gospel and incorporates these principles in his daily living. God wants all of his children to be joyous and glad, and we can have this blessing if we are willing to keep his commandments and live by his word in all that we do" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1961, p. 108).

Answers are found in the gospel

When the plan of our Heavenly Father is understood, the answers to life's questions are found in the gospel of Christ. May we learn to accept with faith the doctrines and teachings of the gospel and accept the plan of salvation with believing hearts and minds. Always know, brothers and sisters, that the leaders of the Church understand and accept the gospel plan and will defend it at all times and in all places.

My testimony coincides with the testimony of the beloved Apostle John: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). May we search for the doctrines and commandments of the great plan of happiness; and when we learn them, may we embrace them willingly. By doing so we will find lasting joy, happiness, and peace. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth,

give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

I leave you my testimony that the Lord's promise of peace comes from knowing and living the principles of our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness. May his peace and joy be with all of us I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have listened to Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Henry B. Eyring, who was sustained this morning as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Sister Aileen H. Clyde, second counselor in the general Relief Society presidency.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Becoming more humble

Many years ago I went on assignment to Brazil. As part of the trip I was to travel by car from São Paulo to a conference in a city about two hours distant. A member of the Quorum of the Twelve was going to preside at that conference. I hoped to ride in the car with him so that I might learn. But he suggested that I make the trip in another car with missionaries. He said, "Teach them while you travel."

When I climbed into the front seat of the car, I learned that two young lady missionaries, companions, were going to that city for a transfer. After we had become acquainted, I leaned back over the seat and asked, "What would you like to know about?" Both of them, eagerly and almost in chorus, said, "Tell us how we can become more humble."

You might have struggled with that as I did. I only remember the green hills of Brazil going by as I tried—and the feeling at the end that I failed. If only I could have that chance again on this beautiful day. I have learned some things about their question since President Hinckley invited me to meet with him yesterday afternoon and issued the call to this sacred office. I think I could help them a little more now.

"Always remember him"

First, I would have realized that they already had the first lesson in their hearts. The fact that they even asked meant that they had gone beyond being overwhelmed by their doubts about themselves to hope that if they would just submit, if they could just learn what to do, they could be better. If I had the chance again, I would have told them that. And then I would have given them just this one bit of counsel—counsel about what to do. I would have said just this: "Always remember him" (Moroni 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77, 79).

I would have tried to help them do that by taking them in their minds to a garden where they would hear the Savior of the world's words: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

And then I would have taken them forward in time to that glorious day reported in the Book of Mormon when the resurrected Lord appeared to the people in the Americas and said, "And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which

I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11).

I know from the softness I heard in their voices and saw in their eyes that those missionaries would have then, and perhaps always, remembered him. And from his perfect example they would have felt their hearts breaking and received the answer to their pleading, "Tell us how we can become more humble."

The humble proclaim the gospel

When we drove away from them in the city of our destination, they were standing waiting for a bus. I looked back. There they stood alone. I wish I had known what I learned last night so that I could have read to them while they were in the car these words from the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the twenty-third verse:

"That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers."

And then starting at the twenty-sixth verse:

"And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed;

"And inasmuch as they sinned they might be chastened, that they might repent;

"And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time" (vv. 26–28).

They would have known the Savior spoke of them. And then in their humility they would have found that they were given power to proclaim his name.

Blessings of remembering the Savior

Over the last hours I have come to understand other blessings from "always remembering him." I thought of a family in Albuquerque, New Mexico, I met years ago: a father, mother, and two teenage daughters who belonged to no

church but read the Bible together every day. They pondered the Savior's life and his words. When we found them they had decided that Christ would have a church and that they should find it. They knew that it would have prophets and apostles at its foundation because that is what Christ had left in his church in the meridian of time. They knew that the resurrected Lord had appeared to his Apostles.

And so when we testified that God the Father and his Son, the Savior of the world, came to a boy prophet, Joseph Smith, that seemed right to them. When they heard us testify that Peter, James, and John appeared and restored the priesthood, they knew that would have to have happened. And the Holy Spirit, which they also recognized, told them it was true. I realized sometime last night or early this morning that they recognized the truth—that this is the Church of Jesus Christ—in large part because they had always remembered him. Every day they had gathered to read about him and his words, and so they remembered him. And after they were baptized they were ready to follow the living prophet because they knew the Savior always speaks to his prophets to bless his people.

I will keep my covenant

I will keep my covenant to take his name upon me and always remember him. And I will go wherever I am sent to teach of him and offer the ordinances by which we take his name upon us and promise that we will always remember him and keep his commandments.

And if they accept that invitation, they will know what I know: God, our Father, lives. His Son, Jesus the Christ, did the will of the Father and atoned for all of our sins. Because of him we will be resurrected. Because of his atonement we may be exalted. The Lord sent heavenly messengers to confer keys on his prophet Joseph Smith. The Lord has called his prophet today, Gordon B.

Hinckley. The Savior will speak to us and all the world through him.

And if those who hear will take the Savior's name upon them and always remember him and keep his command-

ments, they will finally come to him and he will take them home to his Father and our Father, where we may live forever in families. I testify that is true, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Sister Aileen H. Clyde

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee"

"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 54:10; see also 3 Nephi 22:10).

Such scriptural language overwhelms my reasoning and floods me again with the reality of God's love and of our importance to him. Did he speak to our intelligences in that way in the long-ago council when we understood enough to choose to follow Christ? It was surely then, before our mortal experience, that we began with our part of building the covenant relationship with the Savior which is vital to our eternal lives. I believe we chose to be guided then, as we need to be guided now, by his loving care for our divine and unique identities. Our decision then was of the greatest import. Now, when we face crossroads and dilemmas, we can look again to that same source for courage to move forward on our journey.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

Seek God's light and forsake the world

Of the many blessings that have come to me through my knowledge of Christ's gospel, I am most grateful for the doctrine that teaches us that our lives here have eternal meaning and are for the glory of God. We are central in

his great work. He teaches that as we receive his light, we can reflect that light in the world.

There is a constant struggle to balance our knowledge of light against the error and fear that are among the hallmarks of our world. Today we see temptations of old in new ways. They can be magnified and multicolored by technology which gives them avenues everywhere. These portrayals are aimed at the young, the naive, and the vulnerable—indeed they are aimed at each one of us. All manner of violence is depicted in arcade games, and we even see horrifying violent acts in our own neighborhoods. Amid the danger, our love waxes cold, and we may seek a defense in the very weapons that threaten us. Worse yet, we may be turned by fear to looking for protection *from* one another rather than keeping our promise to be a light and a protection *for* one another.

The Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 16 brings clarity to distinctions that Christ's disciples need to understand:

"Break not my commandments for to save your lives; for whosoever will save his life in this world, shall lose it in the world to come.

"And whosoever will lose his life in this world, for my sake, shall find it in the world to come.

"Therefore, forsake the world, and save your souls" (vv. 27–29).

We must depend on the light of Christ to understand this teaching, but we cannot allow our fears to separate us from the possession of our souls. Hear

what is recorded in the 101st section of Doctrine and Covenants:

"Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full.

"Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the soul, and for the life of the soul.

"And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life" (vv. 36-38).

"I the Lord . . . will hold thine hand"

It is a response of the soul when we sense and accept the loving promises that Christ extends to us. Listen to Isaiah's description of what our Lord has already done for us:

"Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein" (Isaiah 42:5).

Then Isaiah records the Lord's soul-nourishing tenderness and the loving-kindness of his assurances:

"I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles. . . .

"Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

"Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth" (Isaiah 42:6, 9-10).

The book of Alma teaches that the song He has asked us to sing is a song of redeeming love (see Alma 5:26).

The Lord's command to love

Later, when the Savior was asked in Palestine to designate the first and great commandment, he unhesitatingly said:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . .

"And the second [commandment] is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

These statements are both clear and comprehensive. They suggest the *beginning* of how we can engage ourselves in his covenant. And surely, since he knows us, he would not have required anything we cannot do.

The love Christ commands requires a mighty change and great humility. It requires us to forsake pride and to be stripped of envy. It requires that we neither mock our sisters and brothers nor persecute *anyone*. Christ knew that for us to find any of those characteristics in ourselves would be onerous and would demand our great effort just to look. He said, "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee" (Matthew 18:8).

He was not suggesting our mutilation but rather showing his awareness of how painful clearing ourselves of such offenses could be. When we have made the changes that only we can make, then, by the atoning blood of Christ, we may receive the forgiveness that only he can bring. The reciprocal nature of those actions suggests the high trust and respect the Lord has for our abilities. Anyone who has had experience with the Lord's love knows of the sure courage that comes when we keep our part of that trust and honor him by seeking his Spirit and by living the best we can. We hear again:

"My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed" (Isaiah 54:10; 3 Nephi 22:10) and "Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires" (3 Nephi 22:11; see also Isaiah 54:11). Such scriptural language rivets my attention.

Covenants provide foundation

In the midst of a troubling world, the foundations I rely on come by my covenants with the Lord. They are indeed like sapphires and are treasures beyond price. Through them I have an eternal link to my loved ones and to God. They are the restored principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which are available to righteous women and men alike through the power of the holy priesthood of God. They include baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the sacrament, and temple covenants. These are the ways given to us and freely chosen by us to vouchsafe our eternal lives.

"And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7).

We are, then, because of his great love and because of our desire to be guided by his light, part of the family of Christ. Because of our covenants, we

have protection from loneliness and alienation. Because of our relationship with him, we can reflect light and tenderness to one another and we can possess our own souls eternally.

I testify of the great blessing it is to know these things. I am humbly grateful for scriptural testaments and for my knowledge that Christ is alive and heads his church. I know he can be alive in each of us as we keep his commandments, and I say this humbly in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Henry B. Eyring, a new member of the Quorum of the Twelve, followed by Sister Aileen H. Clyde, second counselor in the general Relief Society presidency.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder Eduardo Ayala

Isolated members in Peru keep the faith

Due to the nature of our calling as General Authorities, we are assigned to visit various nations, places, or groups. In some of these, there are risks and dangers. The varying circumstances under which these areas function frequently prevent us from reaching the places we have been assigned to visit.

On one occasion I received the assignment to visit a stake located in the beautiful mountains of the Peruvian highlands. This unit of the Church had not been visited by a General Authority for

more than two years because of the dangers involved in traveling there. After obtaining proper authorization and with the help of the mission president, we commenced the five-hour trip that took us to the beautiful Mantaro River Valley.

When we arrived at the stake center, the president and his counselors were waiting for us. Upon seeing us, their faces lit up with happiness and we joined in a strong, brotherly embrace. Some three years previous, two of our beloved missionaries had been killed in this city. After embracing the president close to my heart, trying to communicate to him all

my love, I asked, "Have you suffered greatly during this time in which we haven't been able to come?" He answered with his eyes filled with tears, "Yes, we have suffered greatly, but we have kept the faith." This simple phrase touched our hearts, and we could feel that the hand of the Lord had been with them in the difficult circumstances they had experienced as a people and as members of the Church.

During our meeting with them, we learned many things, one of which was how to keep the faith in areas such as these, far from large cities and far from the headquarters of the Church. In the things that we learned, we were able to distinguish at least five principles which aided them to overcome their difficulties.

They trusted in the Lord

First, they never stopped trusting in the Lord, and they placed all of their faith in him. This was the foundation for their assurance. They trusted in the fact that he would protect and guide them. The Lord has said, "If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me" (Moroni 7:33).

Occasionally in the midst of our desperation we seek other ways, other guides. But those who counsel us are not always prepared to help because they do not understand our spiritual needs. They are not prepared to give us the counsel and the revelation that we need in trying circumstances.

We have the great example of the sons of Mosiah, who endured so much adversity and so many trials. Because of the trust they had in the Lord, "the Lord did visit them with his Spirit and said unto them: Be comforted. And they were comforted. . . . Yet ye shall be patient in long-suffering and afflictions, that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instru-

ment of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls" (Alma 17:10-11).

They prayed faithfully

Second, they remained faithful in prayer. Each member, whether adult, child, or adolescent, faithfully followed this holy practice each day, praying individually and as families with all of their faith. As we know, prayer is the means by which we communicate with our Heavenly Father. He listens to us because we are his children and he loves us, and he is anxious to bless us when we keep the commandments.

As the Savior instructed the Nephites, he taught them, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21). No one could have given them greater assurance that they would be heard by the Father than his own Son.

They studied the scriptures

Third, they never stopped studying the scriptures. In the scriptures they found faith to overcome fear, solutions to their problems, divine comfort from the Master, the loving counsel of the Father, and especially the assurance of being guided in righteousness toward eternal life. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). They lived this commandment even in the midst of all their difficulties. One of the Saints there said, "We have never been as close to the Lord as when we were reading the scriptures."

They implemented priesthood programs

Fourth, they implemented priesthood programs. Due to the fatal incident that had taken place there, it was necessary to remove full-time missionaries. In

order to make up for the help that was lost, it became necessary to organize the returned missionaries so that they could teach the gospel to those who wanted to hear it. References came in from member families. Home teaching increased. Nobody was overlooked. Just as they said, they had kept the faith.

They humbled themselves

Fifth, they humbled themselves before the Lord. They purified their lives; they repented; they tried to live together as Saints, sharing much of what they had, fasting when problems arose or when they were threatened.

These simple yet powerful principles enabled them to sustain themselves, to be preserved, to remain faithful and active as members of the Church in that area.

Courage to keep the faith

What wonderful teachings we are able to find in these distant and isolated villages, where frequently it is difficult to sustain a religion or to live the principles of the gospel. We would imagine that it is also difficult to sustain life there and to keep the faith. Only their confidence in God and their faith in Jesus Christ sustain them, move them, and purify them.

Keeping the faith must also be a challenge for those who are alone in the Church, for those whose families are not converted, for those who have lost a companion, a spouse, or a child. Great courage is needed in order to continue onward, but we always have comfort from on high.

Our pioneers did not complain; they did not deny the faith or turn back. It is difficult to conceive of the great loneliness of the people of the Church during those first years when they were a small group, the only Church members on all the face of the earth. They were

persecuted, humiliated, rejected, and some were killed. The faith which they developed in the Lord, in the face of so much adversity, made them strong and humble at the same time. It must have been very difficult to keep the faith when there was so much opposition, so much loneliness, so much anguish. It was a glorious time, a time of martyrs, a time in which to lay the foundation of a courageous and inspiring religion such as ours.

President Kimball said regarding this theme: "Suffering can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering, and self-mastery. The sufferings of our Savior were part of his education" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 98).

How grateful we are for those who, with their simple example, allow us to follow without fainting, seeking to return to our Father. Perhaps isolation makes small and distant towns and villages stronger and more pure.

Prophets' loving influence

At the close of the conference in that stake, I assured the members that God loved them, that the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles were mindful of them, and that this was the reason we were there—to give them our testimony of the fact that they were part of the Church, that we had not forgotten them, and that we prayed for them. There was gratitude in their hearts, and again they smiled as humble members who had been comforted by the Spirit of the Lord.

As he gave the closing prayer in one of the conference sessions, a worthy elderly man, nearly eighty years of age, expressed well the ways in which they remember the prophets. In his prayer he said, "Heavenly Father, we give thee thanks for having sent one of thy servants here to the Mantaro Valley, where thy beloved servant, President Kimball, knelt down and blessed this land that

it would feed us and always provide us a livelihood."

How fortunate and privileged we are to be today in the presence of the prophets of God and to receive their loving influence. Due to the worldwide growth of the Church, a large number of our good members have never had the privilege to be near one of these wonderful leaders at any time during their lives. But I testify to you that they love the General Authorities, that they are following their teachings, and that they await humbly and patiently the day in which they can be at the feet of the prophets.

Let us keep the faith

The conditions of peoples and of nations change due to progress in the world; nevertheless, in many such places, be it in the frosty mountain heights, in the warm valleys, at the rivers' edges, or in the desert places, wherever members of our church are found, there will always be those who live these basic principles, and by so doing they bless the rest of the people. Let us face our earthly challenges courageously in spite of where we live or whatever difficult circumstances we may be called to endure. Let us keep the faith.

We are fortunate this day to be able to sustain a new prophet and his counselors, whom we love and support. In the coming days, in nearly all the nations of the earth, even in the most remote towns and villages, our members will also have the privilege of raising their hands joyfully to sustain them as we have done today.

Someday our journey here on the earth will end, and we will return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. I pray that on that day we may have the same courage and give the same testimony given by the Apostle Paul to Timothy: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

May the Lord bless us to continue being valiant, humble, and faithful. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy.

Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., who was sustained as a Seventy at October conference, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.

Seeing ourselves as Jesus sees us

As I express my appreciation for the privilege of being with you in this historic conference and for the opportunity to sustain our beloved prophet and his associates, I must also express gratitude—first, to the Lord for the opportunity to serve in this holy calling; and second, to all who have nurtured, tutored, and supported me. My family, particularly my wife, Sharon, has always been willing to provide what I have needed. Many

friends and colleagues, both in and out of the Church, have tried to understand what this assignment means to me and have been most thoughtful and encouraging. The Brethren have been particularly patient and kind, and I will ever be grateful to those who have lovingly helped me through these many weeks of self-evaluation and adjustment.

During this recent process of self-examination, I confess I have wondered what others might think about this appointment which has come to me. I have

reflected on the words of the poet Robert Burns, which I modernize with no disrespect intended: "Oh, what . . . a gift to give us, to see ourselves as others see us" ("To a Louse"). If it is of interest and of importance to recognize how we are viewed by others, particularly those about whom we care the most, then what a gift it must be to understand how the Savior sees us.

Become like the Savior

And how are we to know how we are perceived by Jesus Christ? By how closely we conform to the standards that he has established for us and by the purity of the intents of our hearts. He is the one who has provided the perfect pattern and the perfect standard for all mankind not only by all that he is and did but with his compellingly clear question and invitation: "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27). To do as he asks and to be what we should assures us of his approval. But to do otherwise invites his disappointment.

He who not only knows us best but loves us most has provided through the grandeur of his atonement all that we need to compensate for our failings, mistakes, sins, and disappointments if only we accept his invitation to come to him by way of the narrow gate and the strait path identified by his prophets (see 2 Nephi 31) and obtain the blessings made available to all who seek them through his authorized agents.

For those of us who love the Savior and strive to please him, President Gordon B. Hinckley in an earlier day has reminded us:

"As his followers, we cannot do a mean or shoddy or ungracious thing without tarnishing his image. Nor can we do a good and gracious and generous act without burnishing more brightly the symbol of him whose name we have taken upon ourselves" (*Be Thou an Ex-*

ample [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981], p. 90).

Minister to the many and to the one

In his parable of the good Samaritan, the Son of God clarified his expectations for all people who would want to be like him (see Luke 10:30-37). Not only did he model and teach the attitudes and actions that he expects and requires from each of us, but he also provides the ordinances and covenants whereby we, through his duly appointed servants, might obtain all the blessings he has promised, both proximate and timeless.

With his magnificent compassion and power, the Savior was able to miraculously feed the multitudes of thousands when conditions required it (see Luke 9:10-17), but he was also willing to take the time to provide "living water" with its guidance to eternal life to the solitary sinner of professedly low status (see John 4:7-26). He graciously preached the gospel to large congregations but also was inclined to take time for a seemingly insignificant Nathanael and his individual questions (see John 1:45-51).

Be involved in the Savior's ministry

He who under the direction of the Father had created the world and literally could do it all himself involves others in his ministry. At the time of his crucifixion he asked his beloved John to care for his mother, Mary, as if she were John's own mother (see John 19:25-27). During our time, Jesus Christ himself, together with his Father, appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and yet Moroni was given the privilege and honor to be his agent in bringing forth the Book of Mormon. This is the Savior's church, and yet he has called President Gordon B. Hinckley to preside over us during our day. I certify with gratitude, but also with some hopefully appropriate trepidation, that the Lord has called you and

me to represent him in various important ways and duties, whether they seem large or small to us.

As we strive to better understand how Jesus sees us and contemplate our own attempts to live as the Redeemer would have us live, let us remember his instructing observations and their uni-

versal applications in literally all that we do: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15) and "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Children of the covenant

The title of my message is the scriptural phrase "children of the covenant."¹ In introducing this topic I will reflect on recent events as a colleague of President Howard W. Hunter and as a father and on earlier experiences as a doctor of medicine.

These past weeks have been challenging for Sister Nelson and me. Not only have we bid farewell to our beloved President Hunter, but thirty-three days earlier we suffered the demise of our precious daughter Emily. A mother of five young children, Emily had just celebrated her thirty-seventh birthday when called to the other side.

President Hunter influenced Emily's life in a real way. She welcomed his invitation for all adult members of the Church to hold a temple recommend. She and her husband, Bradley Wittwer, regarded their regular time in the temple as a sacred privilege. They viewed "the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants."² She strived to emulate the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Even though illness brought intense suffering to President Hunter and Emily, an angry word never fell from their lips. Instead they chose to endure with loving faith. When well-meaning friends and family expressed concern for Emily, she cheerfully replied, "Don't worry; I'll

be OK!" Even when she concluded a telephone call, she did not close with the customary "good-bye." She would say, "I love you!"

When President Boyd K. Packer and I last visited President Hunter, he beckoned for Sister Hunter, reached for her hand, and said with a smile, "I feel better when you are near me."

My tears of sorrow have flowed along with wishes that I could have done more for our daughter and for our President. If I had the power of resurrection, I would have been tempted to bring them back. Though one of the ordained Apostles, each of whom is entrusted with all the keys of the kingdom of God, I do not hold keys of the Resurrection. Jesus Christ holds those keys and will use them for Emily, for President Hunter, and for all people in the Lord's own time.³

Emily and President Hunter had no fear of death. They had made and honored sacred covenants with the Lord, and they knew that his covenants to them will be kept with equal fidelity.⁴ They lived nobly as "children of the covenant."

Identification and indoctrination

Years ago as a young medical student I saw many patients afflicted with diseases that are now preventable. Today it is possible to immunize individuals against conditions that once were disabling—even deadly. One medical method by which acquired immunity is

conferred is inoculation. The term *inoculate* is fascinating. It comes from two Latin roots: *in*, meaning "within"; and *oculus*, meaning "an eye." The verb *to inoculate*, therefore, literally means "to put an eye within"—to monitor against harm.

An affliction like polio can cripple or destroy the body. An affliction like sin can cripple or destroy the spirit. The ravages of polio can now be prevented by immunization, but the ravages of sin require other means of prevention. Doctors cannot immunize against iniquity. Spiritual protection comes only from the Lord⁵—and in his own way. Jesus chooses not to inoculate, but to indoctrinate. His method employs no vaccine; it utilizes the teaching of divine doctrine—a governing "eye within"—to protect the eternal spirits of his children.

In so teaching, Jesus often established his own identity,⁶ then the identity of his followers. I quote his words to the people of ancient America. He said, "I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God."⁷

"All the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after . . . have testified of me.

"And behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

"The Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant."⁸

A giant step toward spiritual immunity is taken when we understand the expression "children of the covenant." To what covenant did the Savior refer? "The covenant which he made with Abraham."⁹ The Lord added, "I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people; and I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time."¹⁰

The Abrahamic covenant

The covenant that the Lord first made with Abraham¹¹ and reaffirmed with Isaac¹² and Jacob¹³ is of transcendent significance. It contained several promises:

- Abraham's posterity would be numerous, entitled to eternal increase and to bear the priesthood;
- He would become a father of many nations;
- Christ and kings would come through Abraham's lineage;
- Certain lands would be inherited;
- All nations of the earth would be blessed by his seed;
- That covenant would be everlasting—even through "a thousand generations."¹⁴

Some of these promises have been accomplished; others have yet to be. I quote from a prophecy given nearly 600 years B.C.: "Our father hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled in the latter days; which covenant the Lord made to our father Abraham."¹⁵

Precisely as promised, the Master appeared in these latter days to renew the Abrahamic covenant. To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord declared: "Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, . . . my servant Joseph. . . . This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham."¹⁶

We are also children of the covenant. We have received, as did they of old, the holy priesthood and the everlasting gospel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are our ancestors. We are of Israel. We have the right to receive the gospel, blessings of the priesthood, and eternal life. Nations of the earth will be blessed by our efforts and by the labors of our posterity. The literal seed of Abraham and those who are gathered into his family by adoption receive these

promised blessings—predicated upon acceptance of the Lord and obedience to his commandments.

Elijah the prophet came to plant a knowledge of these promises made to the fathers.¹⁷ Later the Book of Mormon came forth as a sign that the Lord had commenced to gather children of the covenant.¹⁸ This book, written for our day, states:

“Then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel . . . is already beginning to be fulfilled. . . .

“ . . . For behold, the Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel.”¹⁹

The new and everlasting covenant

Indeed the Lord has not forgotten us. And to ensure that we do not forget him, children of the covenant receive his doctrine and claim it by covenant. Brigham Young said: “All Latter-day Saints enter the new and everlasting covenant when they enter this Church. . . . They enter the new and everlasting covenant to sustain the Kingdom of God and no other kingdom.”²⁰

At baptism we covenant to serve the Lord and keep his commandments. When we partake of the sacrament, we renew those covenants. We may receive covenants of the priesthood²¹ and the crowning blessings of the endowment, the doctrine, and the covenants unique to the holy temple.

The new and everlasting covenant of the gospel allows us to qualify for marriage in the temple and be blessed to “come forth in the first resurrection” and “inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, . . . to [our] exaltation and glory in all things.”²²

Children born to parents thus married are natural heirs to the blessings of the priesthood. They are born *in the*

covenant. Hence, “they require no rite of adoption or sealing to insure them place in the posterity of promise.”²³

Rewards for obedience to the commandments are almost beyond mortal comprehension. Here children of the covenant become a strain of sin-resistant souls. And hereafter President Hunter, Emily, other children of the covenant, and “each generation would be linked to the one which went on before [in] the divine family of God.”²⁴ Great comfort comes from the knowledge that our loved ones are secured to us through the covenants.

Unity among children of the covenant

Latter-day Saints understand the word of the Lord, who declared, “I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.”²⁵

“This great unity is the hallmark of the true church of Christ,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley. “It is felt among our people throughout the world.” President Hinckley continued, “We pray for one another that we may go on in unity and strength.”²⁶

Throughout the world, however, strident voices are engaged in divisive disputation and name-calling. Often demeaning nicknames are added to—or even substituted for—given names. Unfortunately, terms of derision obscure the true identity of children of the covenant.

In contrast, God employs names that unify and sanctify. When we embrace the gospel and are baptized, we are born again and take upon ourselves the sacred name of Jesus Christ.²⁷ We are adopted as his sons and daughters and are known as brothers and sisters. He is the Father of our new life. We become joint heirs to promises given by the Lord to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their posterity.²⁸

A peculiar people

Peter used uplifting terms in a prophecy regarding our day. He identified members of the Church as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."²⁹ The adjectives *chosen*, *royal*, and *holy* we recognize as elevating. But what about *peculiar*? A modern dictionary defines *peculiar* as "unusual," "eccentric," or "strange."³⁰ What kind of compliment is that?

But the term *peculiar* as used in the scriptures is quite different. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term from which *peculiar* was translated is *segullah*, which means "valued property" or "treasure."³¹ In the New Testament, the Greek term from which *peculiar* was translated is *peripotesis*, which means "possession" or "an obtaining."³²

Thus we see that the scriptural term *peculiar* signifies "valued treasure," "made" or "selected by God."³³ For us to be identified by servants of the Lord as his *peculiar* people is a compliment of the highest order.

Becoming spiritually protected

When we know who we are and what God expects of us—when his "law [is] written in [our] hearts"³⁴—we are spiritually protected. We become better people. When the Nephites were truly righteous, they avoided divisive nicknames and "there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. . . . There were no . . . Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God."³⁵

That lesson from history suggests that we also delete from our personal vocabularies names that segregate and hyphens that separate. Paul taught that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither

male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."³⁶

He invites us "to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . all are alike unto God."³⁷

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been restored in these latter days to fulfill ancient promises of the Lord. It is part of the "restitution of all things."³⁸ Committed children of the covenant remain steadfast, even in the midst of adversity. We shall "be chastened and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son."³⁹ Yet we are strengthened by this promise of the Lord:

"Ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God—

"Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things. . . .

"Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the Gentiles, and through this priesthood, a savior unto my people Israel."⁴⁰

With that doctrine implanted deeply within our souls, the sting of death is soothed and spiritual protection is provided. Children of the covenant will be blessed—here and hereafter—I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 20:26.
2. Howard W. Hunter, quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5.
3. See *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941), pp. 397–98; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 1:128.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
5. Rules of agency and accountability still apply, however. Choice and accountability are divine gifts nearly as precious

as life itself. "Even the children of the covenant will be rejected except they make good their title by godly works" (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916], p. 540). Children of the covenant are to honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy (see Exodus 31:12–13, 16–17; Ezekiel 20:20) and obey all of God's commandments.

6. For examples, see 3 Nephi 9:15; 11:10; 20:31; Ether 3:14; Doctrine and Covenants 6:21; 10:57; 11:28; 14:9; 19:24; 35:2; 36:8; 43:34; 49:28; 51:20; 52:44.
7. 3 Nephi 20:31; italics added.
8. 3 Nephi 20:24–26; italics added.
9. 3 Nephi 20:27.
10. 3 Nephi 20:29; italics added. See also 1 Peter 5:6; 3 Nephi 5:25; Mormon 5:12; Doctrine and Covenants 93:19.
11. See Genesis 17:1–10; 22:15–18; Galatians 3:28–29; Abraham 2:9–11.
12. See Genesis 26:1–5, 24.
13. See Genesis 28:1–4, 10–14; 35:9–13; 48:3–4.
14. 1 Chronicles 16:15. See also Genesis 17:1–10, 19; Leviticus 26:42; Acts 3:25; LDS Bible Dictionary, "Abraham, Covenant of," p. 602.
15. 1 Nephi 15:18; italics added. Other prophecies convey similar meaning. Among them are the following:

"Many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed—

"And at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their

Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved" (1 Nephi 15:13–14).

"Then will I gather them in from the four quarters of the earth; and then will I fulfil the covenant which the Father hath made unto all the people of the house of Israel" (3 Nephi 16:5).

"And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them.

"And I will show unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you; but I will remember my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fulness of my gospel" (3 Nephi 16:11–12).

"Thou shalt preach the fulness of my gospel, which I have sent forth in these last days, the covenant which I have sent forth to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel" (D&C 39:11).

16. Doctrine and Covenants 132:30–31. The Lord also told the Prophet Joseph Smith: "As I said unto Abraham concerning the kindreds of the earth, even so I say unto my servant Joseph: In thee and in thy seed shall the kindred of the earth be blessed" (D&C 124:58).

17. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3.

18. See 3 Nephi 29:1–9.

19. 3 Nephi 29:1, 3. As part of that promise, certain lands were to be inherited. While most descendants of Israel received their inheritance in the Near East, the choice land of the Americas was reserved for Joseph (see Ether 13:8). It was to be the repository of the plates from which the Book of Mormon would be translated. It was also destined to become world headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From there the restored gospel would go forth to bless all nations of the earth—according to the promise. Devout men, women, and chil-

dren are being gathered in our day, turning to the truths of salvation that they have not heard before.

The Book of Mormon has many prophecies pertaining to the old and new cities of Jerusalem. For example, "Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people be fulfilled; and then shall Jerusalem be inhabited again with my people, and it shall be the land of their inheritance" (3 Nephi 20:46).

"And that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven, and the holy sanctuary of the Lord.

"Behold, Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake concerning a New Jerusalem upon this land.

"And he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come—after it should be destroyed it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord; wherefore, it could not be a new Jerusalem for it had been in a time of old; but it should be built up again, and become a holy city of the Lord; and it should be built unto the house of Israel—

"And that a New Jerusalem should be built up upon this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph, for which things there has been a type" (Ether 13:3-6).

20. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 160.

21. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:39-40.

22. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.

23. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), p. 446.

24. Joseph Fielding Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, p. 10.

25. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27. "Christ and his people will ever be one" ("Now Let Us Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 3).

26. In Conference Report, Oct. 1983, p. 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 5.

27. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.

28. See Galatians 3:29; Doctrine and Covenants 86:8-11.

29. 1 Peter 2:9. Moses also employed the term when he said, "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a *peculiar* people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deuteronomy 14:2; italics added).

30. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980), p. 965.

31. See LDS Bible Dictionary, "Peculiar," p. 748; "Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary," *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1983), p. 82, word 5,459.

32. Forms of the Greek suffix *poiesis* are seen in words currently in use in the English language. For example, doctors and druggists use a book known as a "pharmacopoeia," which refers to possession or obtaining of pharmaceutical agents. The English word *onomatopoeia* refers to a sound like its referent, such as "buzz," "crack," or "twang." The term used for the making of blood in the body is known as *hematopoiesis*.

33. *Peculiar* is used in only seven verses of the Bible. In the Old Testament it is used five times (see Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 14:2; 26:18; Psalm 135:4; Ecclesiastes 2:8). In each instance it has been translated from the Hebrew term that means "valued treasure." In the New Testament, *peculiar* is used two times (see Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). In each instance it has been translated from a Greek term that signifies "possession," or "those selected by God as His own people."

34. Romans 2:15; see also Jeremiah 31:33; Mosiah 13:11.

35. 4 Nephi 1:15, 17.

36. Galatians 3:28; see also Colossians 3:11. Speaking of correct names, we are reminded of a proclamation given by the Lord: "Thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Je-

sus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (D&C 115:4). He did *not* say, "Thus shall my church be *named*." He said, "Thus shall my church be *called*." Members have been cautioned by the Brethren, who wrote: "We feel that some may be misled by the too frequent use of the term 'Mormon Church' " (*Member-Missionary Class, Instructor's Guide* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982], p. 2).

37. 2 Nephi 26:33. Additional scripture declares that God "made the world and all things therein, . . . and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:24, 26).

The commandment to love our neighbors without discrimination is certain. But it must not be misunderstood. It applies generally. Selection of a *marriage partner*, on the other hand, involves *specific* and not *general* criteria. After all, one person can be married to only *one* individual.

The probabilities of a successful marriage are known to be much greater if both the husband and wife are united in their religion, language, culture, and ethnic background. Thus, in choosing an eternal companion, wisdom is needed. It's better not to fly in the face of constant head winds. Occasional squalls provide challenge enough. Once marriage vows are taken, absolute fidelity is essential—to the Lord and to one's companion.

38. Acts 3:21.

39. Doctrine and Covenants 101:4.

40. Doctrine and Covenants 86:9–11.

President Faust

We have just heard from Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr. of the Seventy, followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder David B. Haight

Foreordination of President Hinckley

My brothers and sisters, this has been a historic and blessed day. As I have witnessed the inspired manner in which President Gordon B. Hinckley fulfilled his calling as a counselor to Presidents Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, and Howard W. Hunter—during their periods of declining health—I rejoice with you in sustaining him as God's anointed prophet.

With all the inspiration and love that I possess, I testify that Gordon B. Hinckley was foreordained to become the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to be the mouthpiece of God on the earth at this time, and to

lead God's people as prophet, seer, and revelator.

President Hinckley's calling Thomas S. Monson to continue in his effective administration in the First Presidency, now as First Counselor, and James E. Faust as Second Counselor is inspired.

President Monson has demonstrated an unusual ability to lead and inspire others—whether members of this church or other non-Church organizations—in their desire to serve the Master. As a newly called Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles twenty-five years ago, my assignments were chaired by then Elder Thomas S. Monson. He was my kind but effective teacher, schooling me in a more clear understanding of the

worldwide mission of the Church and the duties and blessings available to a newly called servant of God. He was most effective and kind to me.

President James E. Faust has impressed me not only with his abilities, experience, and knowledge of this divine work, but as a valued friend and adviser sitting next to me in our council meetings for these many years. He is gifted with an abundance of wisdom and uncommon spiritual direction and discernment that will be a blessing to the Church.

These words of the prophet Alma are most appropriate at this time:

"And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; . . . therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling" (Alma 13:3).

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was." The Prophet Joseph continued, "I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 365).

President Gordon B. Hinckley now wears the mantle given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was foreordained to this high and holy calling in premortal councils.

God prepares his servants

Those of us who sit at the feet of President Hinckley, President Monson, and President Faust marvel at their wisdom, understanding, and protection of sacred matters. God's hand directs this work. He prepares His servants. He

knows their hearts. He knows the end from the beginning and raises up those servants who will carry out His designs.

These are able, humble leaders, called by God to preside over His earthly kingdom in these last days. They are true and faithful servants, tested and refined by extreme circumstances. They are teachers and preachers of righteousness, examples to the world of goodness and obedience to God's commandments. We all would do well—for ourselves and our posterity—to heed their counsel.

An early Apostle, Elder Orson Hyde, said: "It is invariably the case, that when an individual is ordained and appointed to lead the people, he has passed through tribulations and trials, and has proven himself before God, and before His people, that he is worthy of the [position] which he holds. . . . Some one that understands the Spirit and counsel of the Almighty . . . is the [one] that will lead the Church" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:123).

No man better understands the Church, nor is better known to the members of the Church, than President Gordon B. Hinckley.

Heed the prophet's words

On April 6, 1830—the date of the organization of Christ's restored church (165 years ago this week)—Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were sustained as the presiding officers of the Church. Called of God, Joseph was designated by revelation to be a seer, translator, prophet, and apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God the Father and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (see D&C 20:1–2; 21:1). The Lord instructed the small group of faithful Saints:

"Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

"... Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good, and his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard" (D&C 21:4-5, 7).

This revelation given to the Prophet Joseph is relevant for each prophet and President of the Church, as well as the members of the Church, for all of us to heed.

President Hinckley's preparation

I testify that President Gordon B. Hinckley has been carefully prepared for this divine calling from before the foundations of the earth in heavenly councils.

He was born into a family of faith, devoted people, devoted to the precious truths of salvation as contained in the holy scriptures and the revelations received by the Prophet Joseph Smith. His parents set lofty examples and taught him how to work and to finish a task, which inspired him to attain a good education and a desire to serve mankind.

He accepted the challenges of missionary work and gained the blessings of sharing the gospel with others when called as a missionary to England.

New talents were developed as he assisted his mission president in London in developing Church publicity for the media and for the members of the Church and for the world. That interest has continued throughout his years and continues on, of course, to the present day.

His responsibilities in the Church missionary program added new methods and opportunities to proclaim gospel principles, and he was instrumental in expanding missionary work, particularly throughout the vast, teeming Orient, in a most remarkable way.

He has participated in the dedication and rededication of more temples than any other presiding officer in the

Church. That is not only indicative of his love for temple work, but it reflects the necessity for us to be actively involved in the work of redeeming our deceased ancestors.

President Hinckley's marriage to his sweetheart, Marjorie Pay, added spiritual strength and increased desire to advance our Lord's work. She has been a most inspiring companion for nearly fifty-eight years.

A man for all the world

President Hinckley is not only a man for all seasons—but for all the world!

He has usually been our spokesman in meeting representatives of governments and major worldwide organizations who come to pay their respects and honor to the Church.

At a recent civic dinner honoring President Hinckley, the master of ceremonies said of him: "It is understandable that [members of the Church] worldwide always express their affection for you. All of us [here] hope the honor, tribute and love expressed this evening . . . from [those of] diverse churches and creeds will imbue you and yours with special fond memories to help comfort and inspire you for a lifetime" (Nick S. Vidalakakis, annual dinner of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, 21 Feb. 1995).

The brief but inspired administration of President Howard W. Hunter has come to a close. He loved the Lord and His work—and we know that the Lord loved him. President Hunter taught us how to be more gentle, more kind, more caring, and more worthy in our pursuit to become more Christlike.

And we now begin a new era of Church administration under President Gordon B. Hinckley—beloved by all—our fifteenth President since the restoration of the Church in 1830.

In the prescribed manner we have accepted and sustained him. Through

him, as has been done through prophets of old, revelation will be made available to us to meet the challenges of a modern society and advance the mission of the Church throughout the world.

And these revelations will be made available as appropriate, as we have seen demonstrated here this day by the calling of Henry B. Eyring to be a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, to be an Apostle of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

This work is true. It will move forward to carry out all the divine plans of our Heavenly Father. I bear you this witness on this sacred day in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which immediately follows, must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the wonderful Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Springville Utah Region for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon.

The choir will now sing in closing "We Ever Pray for Thee." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder David E. Sorensen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Elder David E. Sorensen offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 165th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 1, 1995. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a men's choir from the Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake University, and Orem institutes. Duane Huff directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood meeting. These services are being relayed by

closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

We acknowledge the approximately 1,990 elders viewing these proceedings at the Provo Missionary Training Center.

We note that Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Hans B. Ringger, and Rulon G. Craven are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Marlin K. Jensen and Joseph C. Muren are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Elders F. Melvin Hammond and Cree-L Kofford are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at this morning's solemn assembly Elder Henry B. Eyring was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elders John B. Dickson, Jay E. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, and W. Craig Zwick were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. And Elder Bruce D. Porter was called as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

We've had wonderful music during these conference sessions. This morning we had the Mormon Youth Chorus, who inspired us. This afternoon we had about three hundred Aaronic Priesthood boys. You wouldn't find anywhere in the world a better looking group of boys than those wonderful young men. They'll make a group of missionaries that'll turn the world around.

This evening we have a chorus furnished by combined institute groups from the Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake University, and Orem institutes, under the direction of Brother Duane Huff, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ. I don't know how else you can bring har-

mony among Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake, and Orem except with something like this.

We shall now begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!" following which Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy, who is serving as president of the Australia Sydney North Mission, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!"

Elder Glenn L. Pace offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now favor us with "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy." Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

The choir sang "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Days never to be forgotten

It is a privilege and a thrill to be with you tonight in this priesthood meeting, standing before such a remarkable audience. It is impossible for me to express adequately my gratitude for the priesthood we bear, especially in such moments of the Church's history as this general conference represents. In such days as these are, you and I see history firsthand, and with arm raised to the square we do in solemn assembly participate in the making of such history. As Oliver Cowdery once said of such restoration privileges, "These were days

never to be forgotten" (Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote).

We miss President Howard W. Hunter at this conference, but we do find joy in knowing that he now sits with the noble and great ones of all eternity. And I with others in this conference bear personal witness, as a witness, of the divine calling of President Gordon B. Hinckley to this holy office and sacred assignment for which he has been so long and so well prepared. And by *preparation* we mean not only the many experiences which he has had in the Church from his youth, but also mean that doctrine Alma taught, that such a

man is "called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God," a calling predicated at least in part upon demonstrated "faith and good works" before President Hinckley ever came to this earth (see Alma 13:1-3).

I include in that testimony and expression of love my appreciation for the callings that have newly come to President Thomas S. Monson, President James E. Faust, and President Boyd K. Packer as well. I welcome to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles Elder Henry B. Eyring. I look forward to being his seatmate and companion for many years to come.

Guiding the rising generation

In this spirit of memorable moments in the ongoing destiny of the Church, I wish to speak rather directly to the young men gathered tonight, bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood. I wish to impress upon you some sense of history, something of what it has meant, something of what it may yet mean to belong to the true and living church of God and hold the significant offices in its priesthood that you now hold and will yet hold.

So much that we do in this church is directed toward you, those whom the Book of Mormon calls "the rising generation" (Mosiah 26:1; Alma 5:49). We who have already walked that portion of life's path that you are now on try to call back to you something of what we have learned. We shout encouragement. We try to warn of pitfalls or perils along the way. Where possible we try to walk with you and keep you close to our side.

Believe it or not, we too were young once, though I know that strains the very limits of your imagination. Equally unfathomable is the fact that your parents were once young also, and so were your bishops and your quorum advisers. But as the years have gone by we have learned many lessons beyond those of

youth—that, for example, Noah's wife was *not* named Joan of Arc, and, so far as we know, Pontius Pilate flew no commercial aircraft of any kind. Why do you think we now try so hard and worry so much and want the very best for you? It is because we have been your age and you have never been ours, and we have learned some things you do not yet know.

When you are young, not all of life's questions and difficulties have arisen yet, but they will arise, and unfortunately for your generation they will arise at a younger and younger age. The gospel of Jesus Christ marks the only sure and safe path. So older men, seasoned men—men passing on to you the legacy of history—continue to call out to youth.

Youth, gain testimonies and be faithful

This call from one generation to another is one of the reasons we hold priesthood meetings with dads seated next to sons, and priesthood leaders at the side of those whose fathers may be absent. It was in a stake priesthood meeting with a format very much like this one that the then twelve-year-old Gordon B. Hinckley stood in the back of the old Salt Lake Tenth Ward building—his first such stake priesthood meeting as a newly ordained deacon—feeling just a bit lonely and a little out of place.

But upon hearing the men of that stake sing W. W. Phelps's stirring memorial tribute "Praise to the Man," this young boy, who would one day be a prophet himself, had it borne upon his soul that Joseph Smith *was indeed* a prophet of God, that he had in truth "communed with Jehovah," that "millions shall know 'Brother Joseph' again" (*Hymns*, no. 27). Yes, some part of the preparation for this morning's solemn assembly began when a twelve-year-old deacon heard faithful, experienced, older men sing the hymns of Zion in a priesthood meeting.

Now very few twelve-year-olds will live to become the President of the Church, nor do we need to in order to prove our faithfulness. But let us never forget that "in every place a man now stands, a boy once used to be," and all of you young men have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to be just as faithful in gaining a testimony and standing for the truth as did the men we have sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators down through the dispensations. Indeed this is one of those things history calls out to us—that the future may be daunting, but you young men are more than equal to the task.

Rudger Clawson proves faithful

The name Rudger Clawson will, unfortunately, be unfamiliar to many of you. For forty-five years Brother Clawson was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and for twenty-two of those years served as the president of that quorum. But long before any of those responsibilities came to him, he had a chance to prove his faithfulness and demonstrate in his youth just how willing he was to defend his beliefs, even at the peril of his life.

As a young man Brother Clawson had been called on a mission to the southern states. At that time in America's history, well over one hundred years ago, malicious mobs were still in existence, outlaws who threatened the safety of members of the Church and others. Elder Clawson and his missionary companion, Elder Joseph Standing, were traveling on foot to a missionary conference when, nearing their destination, they were suddenly confronted by twelve armed and angry men on horseback.

With cocked rifles and revolvers shoved in their faces, the two elders were repeatedly struck and occasionally knocked to the ground as they were led away from their prescribed path and

forced to walk deep into the nearby woods. Elder Joseph Standing, knowing what might lie in store for them, made a bold move and seized a pistol within his reach. Instantly one of the assailants turned his gun on young Standing and fired. Another mobber, pointing to Elder Clawson, said, "Shoot that man." In response every weapon in the circle was turned on him.

It seemed to this young elder that his fate was to be the same as that of his fallen brother. He said: "I . . . at once realized there was no avenue of escape. My time had come. . . . My turn to follow Joseph Standing was at hand." He folded his arms, looked his assailants in the face, and said, "Shoot."

Whether stunned by this young elder's courage or now fearfully aware of what they had already done to his companion, we cannot know, but someone in that fateful moment shouted, "Don't shoot," and one by one the guns were lowered. Terribly shaken but driven by loyalty to his missionary companion, Elder Clawson continued to defy the mob. Never certain that he might not yet be shot, young Rudger, often working and walking with his back to the mob, was able to carry the body of his slain companion to a safe haven where he performed the last act of kindness for his fallen friend. There he gently washed the bloody stains from the missionary's body and prepared it for the long train ride home (in David S. Hoopes and Roy Hoopes, *The Making of a Mormon Apostle: The Story of Rudger Clawson* [New York: Madison Books, 1990], pp. 23–31).

I tell that story with some concern, hoping no one will dwell on the death of a young missionary or think gospel living brought only trials or tragedies in those early years. But I do share it for an ever younger and ever newer generation in the Church who may not know the gifts that earlier men and women—including young men and women—have

given us in what our new film states simply in another single word—*Legacy*.

Tom Yates proves faithful

Fortunately we do not, for the most part, face any such physical threats now. No, for the most part our courage will be more quiet, less dramatic, but in every way as crucial and as demanding. May I use one example drawn from contemporary history, an example demonstrating faith and loyalty more like that which you and I will be called on to exhibit. In doing so I pay tribute to faithful fathers who serve as the standard of strength for their growing and less-experienced sons.

Some years ago, long after he had returned from his mission, Bishop J. Richard Yates, now of the Durham Third Ward in the Durham North Carolina Stake, was out on the family farm in Idaho, helping his father milk the cows and do some of the evening chores. Because of limited family circumstances, Richard's father, Tom Yates, had not been able to go on a mission in his youth. But that disappointment only strengthened Brother Yates's vow that what he had not been able to afford, his sons would certainly realize—a full-time mission for the Lord—whatever the sacrifice involved.

In those days in rural Idaho it was customary to give a young man a heifer calf as soon as he was old enough to take care of it. The idea was that the young man would raise the animal, keep some of the offspring, and sell others to help pay for the feed. Fathers wisely understood that this was a way to teach their sons responsibility as they earned money for their missions.

Young Richard did well with that gift of a first calf and, over time, expanded the herd to eight. Along the way he invested some of the income from the milk he sold to buy a litter of pigs. He had

nearly sixty of those when his call finally arrived. It was the family's plan that they would sell future litters of the pigs to supplement income from the sale of the dairy milk to cover the costs of Richard's missionary labors.

That evening out in the barn, long after a wonderful twenty-four months were safely concluded, this young man heard something of which he had known absolutely nothing while on his mission. His father said that sometime within the first month after Richard had left, the local veterinarian, a close family friend and tireless worker in that farming community, had come to vaccinate the pigs against a local threat of cholera. But in an unfortunate professional error, the vet gave the animals the live vaccine but failed to give adequate antiserum. The results were that the entire herd of pigs came down with the disease; within a few weeks most of the animals were dead, and the remaining few had to be destroyed.

With the pigs dead, obviously milk sales would not be enough to keep Richard on his mission, so his father planned to sell one by one the family's dairy herd to cover the costs. But beginning with the second month and virtually every month for twenty-three thereafter, as his parents prepared to send him the money for his mission, either one of their cows suddenly died or else one of his did. Thus the herd decreased at twice the rate they expected. It seemed an unbelievable stretch of misfortune.

During that difficult time a large note became due at the local bank. With all else that had happened and the inordinate financial problems they were facing, Brother Yates simply did not have the money to repay it. There was every likelihood they would now lose their entire farm. After much prayer and concern, but with never a word to their missionary son, Brother Yates went to face the president of the bank, a man not

of our faith who was perceived in the community to be somewhat stern and quite aloof.

After he had heard the explanation of this considerable misfortune, the banker sat for a moment, looking into the face of a man who, in his own quiet and humble way, was standing up to trouble and opposition and fear as faithfully as had Rudger Clawson and Joseph Standing. In that situation I suppose Brother Yates could not say much more to his banker than "Shoot."

Quietly the bank president leaned forward and asked just one question. "Tom," he said, "are you paying your tithing?" Not at all certain as to how the answer would be received, Brother Yates answered softly but without hesitation, "Yes, sir, I am." The banker then said, "You keep paying your tithing, and you keep your son on his mission. I'll take care of the note. I know you will repay me when you can."

No paperwork or signatures were exchanged. No threats or warnings were uttered. Two good and honorable men simply stood and shook hands. An agreement had been made, and that agreement was kept.

Bishop Yates says he remembers hearing this heretofore unknown story with considerable emotion that evening, asking his father—the note to the bank long since repaid—if all that worry and fear and sacrifice had been worth it just to try to live the gospel and keep a son on a mission. "Yes, Son," he said, "it was worth all of that and a lot more if the Lord ever asks it of me," and he continued with his evening chores.

Physically, Tom Yates was a slight man—under five feet eight inches tall

and weighing less than 150 pounds. His body was stunted somewhat from a near-fatal case of polio contracted in his infancy. But Richard says he does not ever remember thinking of his father's physical stature one way or the other. To this son he was simply a spiritual giant, always larger than life, leaving his children a legacy of devotion and courage longer than all eternity.

Our priesthood legacy

To such fathers of our families and fathers of our faith, to those who have lived lives of integrity whatever the cost, to generations in this and every dispensation who've faced fear and trials and, yes, death unflinchingly, I express gratitude from the bottom of my heart. I commend you young men for what must be your determination to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. I shoulder with you the responsibility placed on each one of us who bears the priesthood of God. I plead for each of us to remember that in the work of the Lord we must often turn our cheek but we must never turn our coat. I pledge with you my own determination to be true and faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose church this is, even as I praise with you that legacy of loyalty given to us by those who have gone before, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland.

Elder Monte J. Brough of the Presidency of the Seventy will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Helvécio Martins of the Seventy.

Elder Monte J. Brough

Search for identity

Have you ever had the experience, as you left your home for a youth activity, to hear your mother say, "Now, Son, remember who you are"? Did you wonder each time, Why does she always say that? And by the way, who am I?

Others have also asked this very important question:

"Moses said unto God, Who am I?"¹

"Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God?"²

Among the magnificent and abundant teachings of President Howard W. Hunter is this assertion: "The greatest search of our time is the search for personal identity and for human dignity."³ This search for personal identity is essentially a search for role models that can become instructive in the conduct of our lifestyles. With only a few exceptions, a young person cannot find adequate role models among those in athletics, entertainment, or commercial music. Not only do these public figures fail to provide positive examples, but they are often the exact inverse of the type of role models that are acceptable to most of us. Access to these contemporary icons is expensive and unproductive. We are almost always disappointed when we come to witness the shallow and murky standards by which the public heaps its praise. No wonder the public areas of so many cities and towns are crowded with young people who are possessed with these same shallow and murky standards of personal behavior.

Family role models

Yet there is an abundance of role models who can be found much closer and who can have much deeper influence on each one of us. Most of us, with relatively little effort and much less cost,

can provide for our families a veritable list of important role models. This list can be created from a modest search into the lives of our ancestors. Let me give you a few examples:

A few years ago, as a birthday gift, I went to the FamilySearch® system and retrieved my wife's entire recorded family pedigree. That was a serious mistake. The computer revealed that my wife is a descendant of European royalty. It has been hard to live with her ever since. Maybe now, through this knowledge of her family history, I am more inclined to treat her as our family queen. But the biggest problem, of course, is that my children share in this royal ancestry, which, sadly, makes me the only "commoner" in my family.

Manasseh Byrd Kearl

Manasseh Byrd Kearl, born in 1870 and raised near Bear Lake in northern Utah, tells a wonderful story that might be instructional to his descendants, of whom I am one. Let me read from his journal:

"That fall father bought some cattle for John Dickens, a very large herd. Dickens had a large ranch on Bear River. . . I remember Jimmie was down north buying cattle and he sent father that he needed more money. So father toled me to take some money to him. Mother sewed six hundred dollars in my under clothes, and father put me on a horse and said, 'Now Byrdie my boy, don't you get off this horse till you find your brother Jimmie, and keep your mouth shut, and if any one asks you questions don't reply or tell them where you are going, and do not give this money to any one but Jimmie, no matter what any one tells you.' Well, when I got to Dingle-Dell, I was toled Jimmie was in Montpelier. So to Montpelier I went to Joe Richs, a friend of father's, he toled me

that Jimmie had gone home. Brother Rich wanted me to go in the house and get something to eat. I toled him no, that father toled me not to get off this horse till I found Jim, and here I stayed. I turned around and headed for home. When I got to Bears Valley, . . . I could hardly walk. Mr. Potter tried to get me to stop and rest, but I could not stay. At last I got home. Jimmie took me off the horse and carried me into the house. Mother cried to think I had been in the saddle while the horse went over eighty miles."⁴

Gustave Henriod

Let us consider also the eloquent language of Gustave Henriod:

"You, my kind reader, will never know the sports and vicissitudes, joys and fears, gladness and disappointment, grief and delight, cravings and satisfactions, hope and despair, anxiety and contentment, pains and pleasures, all of which are familiar associates, or rather were in the year 1853 between Omaha and Salt Lake City. Yoking up half wild oxen every morning, staking down the tent every night, picking up buffalo chips to cook the food, loading and unloading boxes and bedding mornings and evenings, in the saddle or on foot guarding the stock every night and driving loose cattle in the day, digging trenches around the tents to keep from being drowned by the torrents, singing the songs of Zion, mending a broken wagon, . . . washing your clothes—everybody forgot a clothes line."⁵

Hannah Cornaby

Another important quality to emulate is humor in the face of challenge. Hannah Cornaby, another member of the 1853 migration, wrote:

"It was three years, to a day, from that memorable first of June . . . , when our oxen having arrived, we left Keokuk.

I wish I could afford a page to a description of our starting. The oxen were wild, and getting them yoked was the most laughable sight I had ever witnessed; everybody giving orders, and nobody knowing how to carry them out. If the men had not been saints, there would doubtless have been much profane language used; but the oxen, not understanding 'English,' did just as well without it. But it did seem so truly comical to witness the bewildered look of some innocent brother, who, after having labored an hour or more to get [an ox] secured to one end of the yoke, would hold the other end aloft, trying to persuade [the other ox] to come under, only to see [the first] careering across the country, the yoke lashing the air, and he not even giving a hint as to when he intended to stop."⁶

John Davies

Of course there were political and social conflicts in the lives of some of our ancestors, but even these become instructional in the ways they dealt with their circumstances. John Davies was a loyalist during the American Revolutionary War. He had been instrumental in the establishment of the Church of England in America, which became known as the First Episcopal Society of Litchfield. These early immigrants had been taught that next to religion, loyalty was the cardinal virtue. They honestly considered that none but the infidel and traitor would venture to speak of revolution from the motherland. Some argued that any attempt to independence was rank ingratitude. They considered the king to be the head not only of their state but also of their religion.

John Davies recounts the challenge of building the first church in Litchfield, Connecticut, only to have it seriously damaged by soldiers of the Revolution. His cattle were run off by revolutionists and much of his property severely damaged because of significant persecution

of those who had remained loyal to the king. Listen to this about John Davies:

"After the close of the war a man who had taken an active part in driving off a number of cattle from his farm, and had committed other acts of plunder, having become destitute, applied for relief in his extremity to Mr. Davies, who not only pardoned him for the wrongs he had done, but liberally relieved his wants."⁷

Tamma Miner

Tamma Miner's first husband, Albert, died in January of 1848 when their youngest child was not yet two years old and their oldest only fifteen years of age. Tamma's father, Edmond, was murdered by a mob at Nauvoo, Illinois, when Tamma was thirty-two and expecting her ninth child. Her daughter Melissa died during the persecution era at seven months; her son Orson died of a fever at seventeen; and another daughter, Sylvia, died at age two. Tamma, with her five remaining boys and two girls, started the journey to Salt Lake City across the Plains on June 10, 1850. Tamma's writings include this wonderful declaration:

"I have passed through all the hardships and drivings and burnings and mobbings and threatenings and have been with the Saints in all their persecutions from Huron county to Kirtland and from Kirtland to Missouri back to Illinois and then across the desert. I write this that my children may have a little idea of what their parents passed through. I hope my children will appreciate these lines for I do feel highly honored to be numbered with the Latter-day Saints."⁸

These are a few great examples of role models which are available to all of us as we learn of our own family history.

Genealogy helps us know our identity

Recently we met with an executive of a large entertainment corporation.

Among her many fine credentials, this corporate leader is of Jewish ethnicity. She obviously enjoyed a tour of our Family History Library and a demonstration of the Church's commitment to the gathering and preserving of vital records from all over the world. As our meeting ended, she asked me a question: "Why is your church so interested in genealogy?"

I responded, "Let me answer you by asking you the same question: Why are Jews interested in their genealogy?"

She answered, a little surprised by my query: "Why? It is of ultimate and profound importance. It is how we obtain and maintain our identity. It is how I know who I am. The history and lives of our ancestors are the glue that holds the entire Jewish community together." She concluded, "How else would you know who you are?"

I responded to her, "That is also one of the reasons why our church is interested in genealogy."

We are sons and heirs of God

My brethren of the priesthood, how do we now answer this centuries-old question: Who am I?

First of all, we are sons of God created in His image. We are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our connection and identification with the Church has been maintained by many of our members for more than a century and a half. Without question, the environment of our homes and families is the single greatest influence on our identity as individuals. This was true of our parents' families and their parents' families before them. We need not look beyond our own family to find wonderful role models whose high standards are more than adequate in our search for our own personal identity. As Elder Russell M. Nelson taught us this afternoon, we are children of the covenant.

For our own families comes this magnificent promise:

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord unto you, with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers—

"For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God—

"Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began."⁹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Exodus 3:11.
2. 2 Samuel 7:18.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1967, p. 115; or *Improvement Era*, June 1967, p. 101.
4. Personal journal of Manasseh Byrd Kearl, copy in possession of author.
5. In *Our Pioneer Heritage*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958-77), 11:320.
6. *Autobiography and Poems* (Salt Lake City, J. C. Graham and Co., 1881), p. 32.
7. In Henry Eugene Davies, *Davies Memoir*, (n.p., 1895), pp. 21-22.
8. In *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 2:323.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 86:8-10.

Elder Helvécio Martins

The revelation on priesthood

June 8, 1978, is no doubt an unforgettable day. On this day priesthood and temple blessings were extended to all worthy male members of the Church. Memorable indeed, its impact affected the lives of uncountable multitudes—of millions who had full knowledge of its meaning and of many others who have not yet arrived, perhaps, to the knowledge of the full extension of its effects.

On that date the First Presidency announced to the whole world a new and special revelation of the Lord, which was preceded by many prayers and much supplication for his divine direction.

What great changes that revelation promoted in the lives of so many children of our Father in Heaven, and among them my humble family in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

It seemed unbelievable. It was an unexpected event, never before dreamed of by those whom the Father in his perfect wisdom preserved until this day when they would be best prepared to respond to the serious requirements of this

truly honorable stewardship, which is the priesthood.

Home teacher—no greater calling

In spite of the relative knowledge acquired throughout the six years of membership in the true church, my first calling as a priesthood holder was not to serve as a General Authority, or a mission president, or a bishop, or a member of two stake presidencies. It was not to serve as an executive secretary in the stake and in the ward. My first assignment and calling was that of serving as a home teacher. This calling preceded all the others. It is interestingly significant to think of it.

Since then I have considered this to be a most important and wonderful calling. In previous callings I have always been released, but this first stewardship has been kept untouched.

"There is no greater Church calling than that of a home teacher," taught President Ezra Taft Benson. "There is no greater Church service rendered to our Father in Heaven's children than the ser-

vice rendered by a humble, dedicated, committed home teacher" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 61; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 50).

Home teachers feed the Lord's sheep

After his resurrection and before ascending to heaven, Jesus asked Simon Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my [sheep]" (John 21:15). The question was repeated two more times, and Peter answered in the same manner; and the Lord replied, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:16, 17).

This is the work or the stewardship of the home teacher: to feed, to nourish and quench the thirst of the sheep who are assigned to him as a shepherd.

Nothing has been represented to have higher priority or more urgency in my ecclesiastical life, followed by the lives of my children, than the dedicated, loyal, and devoted fulfillment of this stewardship.

It is worth noting the way the Lord prepares our spirit and mind, without our realizing it, to obtain this high level of understanding.

Our first home teachers

When we were still visiting the Church as investigators, in the second week we received a phone call from the branch president, Brother Antonio Landelino Barros, who asked if it were possible for him to come visit us the following night. At the assigned hour President Barros arrived, accompanied by two men, all formally dressed. Before the family gathered in the living room, President Barros asked permission to offer a prayer. His words were a simple but inspiring supplication to the Lord, asking for the guidance of his Spirit and for special blessings on the family for

us to understand the purpose of that visit and to benefit from it thereafter.

Briefly, President Barros presented a discussion on the home teaching program and introduced his companions, Brothers Nelson Bezerra dos Santos and Alfredo Orlando Torres Lima, as our home teachers and from then on our first and most direct contact with the Church.

What a great experience! What a great opportunity and privilege to serve! Those brothers were around our family during the whole time we lived in the branch area.

President Marion G. Romney taught that the home teachers "carry the heavy and glorious responsibility of representing the Lord Jesus Christ in looking after the welfare of each member" ("The Responsibilities of Home Teachers," *Ensign*, Mar. 1973, pp. 12-13).

Every Sunday those brothers received our family when we arrived at the chapel. They sat next to us during meetings. They taught us the hymns. They taught us about the standards of the kingdom. They called to inform us about the passing away of President Joseph Fielding Smith and later about the calling of the new prophet, President Harold B. Lee.

They were interested in the well-being and the progress of our family and our eventual needs. After our baptism, postponed for two months, and even after we had moved to the Tijuca Ward, these dedicated home teachers and President Barros took turns during the following three months, approximately, in regular phone calls to know if our family was well adjusted in the new ward, if everything was all right, if any help was needed.

In spite of the change of residence, the home teachers did not feel totally released of their duties of taking care of and giving attention to our family.

Even being sure we had new shepherds, they continued as our brothers in Christ.

What a magnificent attitude! They no longer had the assignment, but they kept the Christian interest. What an extraordinary bond was established. Almost twenty-three years have passed since then. Many other home teacher companions have succeeded those first ones. Their names, with few exceptions, are vaguely remembered, but the names and images of those first servants are forever in our memories since they served as true shepherds.

"The most worthy calling in life . . . is that in which man can serve best his fellow man," taught President David O. McKay ("The Noblest Calling in Life," *Instructor*, Mar. 1961, pp. 73-74).

Guardians of the flock

Those brothers were, in fact, guardians, keepers, and very supportive. It is also worth mentioning that they fulfilled their stewardship with happy countenances, which reflected a happy state of spirit.

It seemed as if it were an honor and a privilege for them to serve so. They seemed to understand the duties of the eldest and youngest alike, as taught by the Apostle Peter:

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Peter 5:2).

The example of those dedicated brothers served as the foundation for the future conduct of a new priesthood holder. As I recall these experiences, myself being a home teacher now, I have a pattern very close to the model of Jesus Christ to follow.

Ever since then I have devoted myself with all my might, with my best efforts, to the care of assigned families, and

some of my most significant experiences as a priesthood holder have been as a home teacher.

Watchmen on the tower

During the regional representatives' seminar held on April 3, 1969, President Harold B. Lee taught that "priesthood visitors are to be watchmen on the tower" (p. 78; transcript on microfilm in LDS Church Archives).

The Lord desires to gather "his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings" (D&C 29:2); and the home teachers, and by extension the visiting teachers, have a role of high relevance for the fulfilling of the desire of the Lord.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught, "[Home teaching is] a program so vital that, if faithfully followed, it will help to spiritually renew the Church and exalt its individual members and families" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 59; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 48).

I pray that as priesthood holders we may develop a more perfect understanding of this sacred stewardship.

God lives, as does his Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. The Lord speaks today through his prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, whom we love and follow.

I bear this testimony in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Monte J. Brough and Elder Helvécio Martins.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." President James E. Faust will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

President James E. Faust

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, it is very humbling to feel the great strength gathered here and in the many buildings across the world. As we gather tonight, we praise the name of President Howard W. Hunter for his life and his ministry and for all that we have learned from him. God bless his memory.

Brethren, I confess to you that I am not very comfortable in the calling I have received. I earnestly desire, with all humility, your faith and prayers. If I did not have the absolute conviction that "a man must be called of God"¹ to any office in the Church, I could not serve for one hour in this calling. I express my profound appreciation to President Gordon B. Hinckley for the honor and the trust he has shown to me in calling me to be his second counselor. He has my total loyalty and support.

As I expressed in the press conference on Monday, March 13, 1995, I have had the great privilege of associating in various Church assignments with President Gordon B. Hinckley for forty years. I know his heart. I know his soul. I know of his faith. I know of his dedication. I know of his great capacity. I know of his love of the Lord and God's holy work. I have a great personal affection and regard for him. I also know that he has been foreordained and marvelously prepared to be the President of this church in our day and time.

My association with President Thomas S. Monson has also been long and blessed. We have worked closely together for decades in several capacities. His mind and memory are unique, his faith simple and absolute. President Monson is a big man, but the biggest part of him is his great heart. He has tremendous talent. I feel very humbled to serve with President Hinckley and President Monson. I have profound respect and

admiration for President Packer, each member of the Twelve, and all of the General Authorities. And I welcome Brother Eyring into the choice fellowship of the sacred apostleship.

The Lord's shepherds

Tonight I would like to speak to the priesthood of God in their capacity as the Lord's shepherds. Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated: "Anyone serving in any capacity in the Church in which he is responsible for the spiritual or temporal well-being of any of the Lord's children is a shepherd to those sheep. The Lord holds his shepherds accountable for the safety [meaning the salvation] of his sheep."² The bearers of the priesthood have this great responsibility, whether it is father, grandfather, home teacher, elders quorum president, bishop, stake president, or other Church calling.

Initially I speak to the worthy young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. When I was a very small boy, my father found a lamb all alone out in the desert. The herd of sheep to which its mother belonged had moved on, and somehow the lamb got separated from its mother, and the shepherd must not have known that it was lost. Because it could not survive alone in the desert, my father picked it up and brought it home. To have left the lamb there would have meant certain death, either by falling prey to the coyotes or by starvation because it was so young that it still needed milk. Some shepherds call these lambs "bummers." My father gave the lamb to me, and I became its shepherd.

For several weeks I warmed cow's milk in a baby's bottle and fed the lamb. We became fast friends. I called him Nigh—why, I don't remember. It began to grow. My lamb and I would play on the lawn. Sometimes we would lie together on the grass and I would lay my

head on its soft, woolly side and look up at the blue sky and the white billowing clouds. I did not lock my lamb up during the day. It would not run away. It soon learned to eat grass. I could call my lamb from anywhere in the yard by just imitating as best I could the bleating sound of a sheep: *Baa. Baa.*

One night there came a terrible storm. I forgot to put my lamb in the barn that night as I should have done. I went to bed. My little friend was frightened in the storm, and I could hear it bleating. I knew that I should help my pet, but I wanted to stay safe, warm, and dry in my bed. I didn't get up as I should have done. The next morning I went out to find my lamb dead. A dog had also heard its bleating cry and killed it. My heart was broken. I had not been a good shepherd or steward of that which my father had entrusted to me. My father said, "Son, couldn't I trust you to take care of just one lamb?" My father's remark hurt me more than losing my woolly friend. I resolved that day, as a little boy, that I would try never again to neglect my stewardship as a shepherd if I were ever placed in that position again.

Not too many years thereafter I was called as a junior companion to a home teacher. There were times when it was so cold or stormy and I wanted to stay home and be comfortable, but in my mind's ear I could hear my little lamb bleating, and I knew I needed to be a good shepherd and go with my senior companion. In all those many years, whenever I have had a desire to shirk my duties, there would come to me a remembrance of how sorry I was that night so many years ago when I had not been a good shepherd. I have not always done everything I should have, but I have tried.

Duties of husbands and fathers

I should like to speak for a few minutes about the constitutional duties of

the Lord's shepherds. By that I mean those responsibilities which are contained in the revelations given by the Lord himself. There is no greater responsibility than that of being a husband and a father, from which there is no release. The Lord said, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else."³ The Lord further says to the fathers of this church, "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth."⁴

"And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

"And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy."⁵

Duties of home teachers

Another great responsibility is that of the home teacher:

"The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking."⁶

A further commandment is to "see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."⁷ They are to "warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ."⁸

Duties of local priesthood leaders

The priesthood quorum presidents and their counselors are also shepherds of the sheepfold and bear the responsibility to lovingly care for the members of their quorums. The bishops of the Church are some of the watchmen on the tower. Said Paul to Timothy regarding the bishops of the Church:

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

"(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)"⁹

Of the Aaronic Priesthood the Lord has said, "The bishopric is the presidency of this priesthood, and holds the keys or authority of the same."¹⁰ Bishops, our young men are experiencing the storms of life. There are vicious wolves prowling to devour them. Many of them are like my little lamb, crying out for help. We plead with you bishops to do all you can to keep them safe.

The stake president is also a constitutional officer of the Church, for he presides over the stake, which the Lord has said "may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth."¹¹ The stakes are "the curtains or the strength of Zion."¹² They are to be spiritual centers of righteousness, strength, and protection.

Duties of the Presiding Bishopric

The Presiding Bishopric, each of whom is an ordained bishop, have the responsibility for directing the temporal affairs of the Church as assigned by the First Presidency. In this great worldwide Church the responsibility of the Presiding Bishopric is heavy and great.

Duties of the Seventy

The Lord said of the Seventy:

"The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—

thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling. . . .

"The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews."¹³

Duties of the Twelve

The Twelve Apostles are the "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling."¹⁴ The Lord said they are "being sent out, holding the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ."¹⁵ The Twelve are the legates of the Lord.

Duties of the First Presidency

The First Presidency have the ultimate responsibility for the affairs of the kingdom of God on the earth. Of them the Lord has said:

"Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church. . . .

"And the Presidency of the council of the High Priesthood shall have power to call other high priests, even twelve, to assist as counselors; and thus the Presidency of the High Priesthood and its counselors shall have power to decide upon testimony according to the laws of the church."¹⁶

Duties of the President of the Church

Of the President of the Church, the Lord has said that he is the "President of the High Priesthood of the Church; or, in other words, the Presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the

Church.”¹⁷ He is “to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses . . . , to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.”¹⁸

The President of the Church directs the use of all of the keys and authority of the priesthood and is the only person who can exercise all of them, even though all of the ordained Apostles hold these keys, some of which are in latent form.

Brethren, I have been a member of the First Presidency for only a few days. It seems as though before I had this calling I had limited vision, but I have now put on glasses that allow me to see more clearly, in a small way, the magnitude of the responsibility of the President of the Church. I am afraid I am like the aristocrat who wore a monocle in one eye. Of him it was said, “He could see more than he could comprehend.” The men who see most clearly the big picture are these giants of the Lord, President Hinckley and President Monson, who have served many years faithfully as counselors to the previous Presidents of the Church.

Let us be united

Now brethren, in conclusion, in a church as vast and far-reaching as ours, there must be order. We must have, in addition to the scriptures and modern revelations, guidelines and procedures for the Church to move forward around the world in an orderly manner. There are some elements of bureaucracy which cannot help but occasionally produce some irritation and perhaps frustration. We ask you to look beyond any irritations or inconvenience in Church administration. We ask you to focus and concentrate on the simple, sublime, spiritually nourishing, and saving principles of the gospel. We ask you to stand steady. We ask you to be faithful in your stewardships as the shepherding priesthood

authority of the Church. Let us be true to our callings and the holy priesthood we bear. Let us be united in supporting and sustaining those in authority over us.

“Feed my sheep”

Brethren, after more than sixty years I can still hear in my mind the bleating, frightened cry of the lamb of my boyhood that I did not shepherd as I should have. I can also remember the loving rebuke of my father: “Son, couldn’t I trust you to take care of just one lamb?” If we are not good shepherds, I wonder how we will feel in the eternities.

“Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

“He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

“He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”¹⁹

That we may do so, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:5.
2. *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 710.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 42:22.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28–29.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–54.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 20:55.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 20:59.
9. 1 Timothy 3:1–5.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 107:15.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 101:21.

13. Doctrine and Covenants 107:25, 34.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 107:35.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 107:22, 79.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 107:65–66.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 107:91–92; see also 21:1.
19. John 21:15–17.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor.

President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, you are an inspiring sight to behold. It is gratifying to realize that in thousands of chapels throughout the world, holders of the priesthood of God are receiving this broadcast by way of satellite transmission. Your nationalities vary and your languages are many, but a common thread binds us together. We have been entrusted to bear the priesthood and to act in the name of God. We are the recipients of a sacred trust. Much is expected of us.

With moist eyes and tender hearts we have said farewell to that gentle giant of a man, even a prophet of God, President Howard W. Hunter. We have sustained this day President Gordon B. Hinckley as the President of the Church and the prophet, seer, and revelator of God. I know that President Hinckley has been called of our Heavenly Father as the prophet and that he will lead us along those pathways the Savior has outlined. The work will go forward, and the people will be blessed. It is an honor and distinct privilege to serve with President Gordon B. Hinckley and with President James E. Faust in the First Presidency of the Church.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations"

Long years ago a divine command was given by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as He said to His beloved eleven disciples: "Go ye therefore, and teach all

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."¹ Mark records that "they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them."²

This sacred charge has not been rescinded. Rather, it has been reemphasized. The Prophet Joseph Smith set forth the purpose of the Church when he declared, "It is the bringing of men and women to a knowledge of the eternal truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of the world, and that only through belief in Him, and faith which manifests itself in good works, can men and nations enjoy peace."

Does the world in which we live stand in need of the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Almost everywhere one looks there appears an erosion not only of the environment but, even more seriously, an erosion of spirituality and of compliance with eternal commandments. One sees a blatant disregard for the precious souls of mankind.

It is almost as though the faces of many have been turned away from Him—even the Lord—who solemnly declared, "The worth of souls is great in the sight of God."³ The gentle words "Come, follow me"⁴ fall on many with stopped

ears and closed hearts. Such seem to be attuned to another voice.

Participate in priesthood service

Do you, with me, remember the story from childhood days of that persuasive musician, the Pied Piper of Hamelin? You will recall that he entered Hamelin and offered, for a specified sum of money, to rid the town of the vermin with which it was plagued. When the contract was agreed upon, he played his pipe and the rats came swarming from the buildings and followed him to the river, where they drowned. When the town leaders refused to pay him for his services, he returned to play his pipe and led the precious children away from the safety of their families and their homes, never to return.

Are there Pied Pipers even today? Are they playing alluring music to lead, to their own destruction, those who listen and follow? These “pipers” pipe the tunes of *pride* and *pleasure*, of *selfishness* and *greed* and leave in their wake confused minds, troubled hearts, empty lives, and destroyed dreams.

The deep yearning of countless numbers is expressed in the plea of one who spoke to Philip of old: “How can I [find my way], except some man should guide me?”⁵

Brethren of the priesthood, the world is in need of your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. The harvest truly is great. Let there be no mistake about it; the missionary opportunity of a lifetime is yours. The blessings of eternity await you. Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service.

To those of you who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, I say, *prepare for your full-time missions*. You will become a part of that valiant missionary army of the Lord which now numbers 50,000 strong.

How might you best respond? May I suggest a formula that will ensure your success as missionaries:

1. Prepare with purpose;
2. Teach with testimony;
3. Labor with love.

Prepare with purpose

First, prepare with purpose. Remember the qualifying statement of the Master: “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind.”⁶ Missionary work is difficult. It taxes one’s energies; it strains one’s capacity; it demands one’s best effort—frequently a second effort. No other labor requires longer hours or greater devotion or such sacrifice and fervent prayer.

President John Taylor summed up the requirements: “The kind of men we want as bearers of this Gospel message are men who have faith in God; men who have faith in their religion; men who honor their priesthood; men in whom the people who know them have faith and in whom God has confidence. . . . We want men full of the Holy Ghost and the power of God. . . . Men who bear the words of life among the nations, ought to be men of honor, integrity, virtue and purity; and this being the command of God to us, we shall try and carry it out.”⁷

Teach with testimony

Second, teach with testimony. Peter and John, those converted fishermen who became Apostles, were warned not to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Their answer was firm: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”⁸

Paul the Apostle, that sterling testifier of truth, was speaking to all of us—members and missionaries alike—when he counseled his beloved friend Timothy,

"Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."⁹

Elder Delbert L. Stapley, who served as a member of the Council of the Twelve a number of years ago, quoted Paul in his epistle to the Romans: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation."¹⁰ Then Elder Stapley added: "If we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, then we should not be ashamed to live it. And if we are not ashamed to live it, then we should not be ashamed to share it."

Labor with love

Third, labor with love. There is no substitute for love. Often this love is kindled in youth by a mother, expanded by a father, and kept vibrant through service to God. Remember the Lord's counsel: "And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work."¹¹

Well might each of us ask himself: *Today have I increased in faith, in hope, in charity, in love?* When our lives comply with God's standard and we labor with love to bring souls unto Him, those within our sphere of influence will never speak the lament, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."¹²

Meeting missionaries in a clothing store

Young missionaries always have an idea as to where they would *love* to serve. Usually it's a faraway place with a strange-sounding name.

One day I was in the men's suit department of a large store when I encountered two missionaries with their mothers. It isn't difficult to spot missionaries or their mothers. The two elders were conversing, and one said to the other, "Where are you going on your mission?"

Came the reply, "I'm going to Austria."

The first missionary responded, "You lucky dog, going to Austria! Those beautiful Austrian Alps, that wonderful music, those delightful people! I wish I were going there."

"Where are you going?" said the missionary assigned to Austria.

"California," came the answer. "You know, less than two hours away by plane. We go there every year for a vacation."

I could see by the expression on the mothers' faces and the near tears of one of the missionaries that it was time for me to intervene. "Did you say California?" I asked. "Why, I once supervised that area. You have an inspired call, Elder. Do you realize what you will have in California to help you? You'll have chapels and stake centers that dot the land, and they'll be filled with Latter-day Saints who can be inspired to be fellow missionaries with you in sharing the gospel. You are a very fortunate missionary to be going there." I glanced at the other mother, who said, "Brother Monson, say something about Austria, quick!" I did so.

Young men, wherever you are called will be right for you, and you will learn to love your mission.

All can participate in missionary work

Brethren, all of us can participate, as may our wives and children, in bringing souls to Christ through cooperative effort with the stake and full-time missionaries. One highly successful and rewarding way is through the conducting of open house events in our buildings. You bishops of wards and presidents of stakes have had a video presentation provided you, featuring Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. It is an excellent tool to be used in a missionary open house. Use it. The membership of the Church will grow and the Spirit of the Lord will be among us as we do so.

Prepare with purpose. Teach with testimony. Labor with love. I testify to

the truth of this formula and, indeed, this divine work of the Lord.

Conversion of Yvonne Ramirez

Many years ago I boarded a plane in San Francisco en route to Los Angeles. As I sat down, the seat next to mine was empty. Soon, however, there occupied that seat a most lovely young lady. As the plane became airborne, I noticed that she was reading a book. As one is wont to do, I glanced at the title: *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*. I mustered up my courage and said to her, "Excuse me. You must be a Mormon."

She replied, "Oh, no. Why do you ask?"

I said, "Well, you're reading a book written by LeGrand Richards, a very prominent leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

She responded, "Is that right? A friend gave this book to me, but I don't know much about it. However, it has aroused my curiosity."

I wondered silently, *Should I be forward and say more about the Church?* The words of the Apostle Peter crossed my mind: "Be ready always to give an answer to every [one] that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."¹³ I decided that now was the time for me to share my testimony with her. I told her that it had been my privilege years before to assist Elder Richards in printing that book. I mentioned the great missionary spirit of this man and told her of the many thousands of people who had embraced the truth after reading that which he had prepared. Then it was my privilege, during the remainder of the flight, to answer her questions relative to the Church—intelligent questions which came from the heart, which I perceived was a heart seeking truth. I asked if I might have an opportunity to have the missionaries call upon her. I asked if she would like to attend one

of our wards in San Francisco, where she lived. Her answers were affirmative. She gave me her name—Yvonne Ramirez—and indicated that she was a flight attendant on her way to an assignment.

Upon returning home I wrote to the mission president and the stake president, advising them of my conversation and that I had written to her and sent along some suggested reading. Incidentally, young men, I recommended that rather than sending two elders to this pretty off-duty flight attendant and her pretty roommate, two lady missionaries be assigned to call.

Several months passed by. Then I received a telephone call from the stake president, who asked, "Brother Monson, do you remember sitting next to a flight attendant on a trip from San Francisco to Los Angeles earlier this fall?" I answered affirmatively. He continued, "I thought you would like to know that Yvonne Ramirez has just become the most recently baptized and confirmed member of the Church. She would like to speak with you."

A sweet voice came on the line: "Brother Monson, thank you for sharing with me your testimony. I am the happiest person in all the world."

As tears filled my eyes and gratitude to God enlarged my soul, I thanked her and commended her on her search for truth and, having found it, her decision to enter those waters which cleanse and purify and provide entrance to eternal life.

I sat silently for a few minutes after replacing the telephone receiver. The words of our Savior coursed through my mind: "And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."¹⁴

Such is the promise to all of us when we pursue our missionary opportunities

and follow the counsel and obey the commandments of Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior and our King. He lives. I so testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Matthew 28:19–20.
2. Mark 16:20.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
4. Luke 18:22.
5. Acts 8:31.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
7. In *Journal of Discourses*, 21:375.
8. Acts 4:19–20.
9. 1 Timothy 4:12.
10. Romans 1:16.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 4:5.
12. Jeremiah 8:20.
13. 1 Peter 3:15.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson, for your inspiring words.

We remind you brethren that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend the broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which follows, must be in their seats by 9:15 A.M. daylight saving time. Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you—in fact we admonish you—to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening, or you'll enjoy only the second half of the conference in the morning.

We express appreciation to the combined institute men's choir from the Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake University, and Orem institutes for the beautiful music this evening.

Following my remarks the choir will conclude by singing "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" I wonder who organized this program to think I was going to stir up conflict! The benediction will then be offered by Elder F. David Stanley of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Gratitude for sustaining vote

Thank you, brethren, for the effort you have made to come to this great worldwide priesthood meeting. Wherever you may be, we thank you and commend you for your faith, for your loyalty to this the work of the Lord, for the efforts you make in your daily living to be worthy of the sacred priesthood which you bear.

This morning we all participated in a solemn assembly. That is just what the name indicates. It is a gathering of the membership where every individual stands equal with every other in exercising with soberness and in solemnity his or her right to sustain or not to sustain

those who, under the procedures that arise out of the revelations, have been chosen to lead.

The procedure of sustaining is much more than a ritualistic raising of the hand. It is a commitment to uphold, to support, to assist those who have been selected.

Concerning the First Presidency the Lord has said, "Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church" (D&C 107:22).

I emphasize those words "upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church."

Your uplifted hands in the solemn assembly this morning became an expression of your willingness and desire to uphold us, your brethren and your servants, with your confidence, faith, and prayer. I am deeply grateful for that expression. I thank you, each of you. I assure you, as you already know, that in the processes of the Lord there is no aspiring for office. As the Lord said to his disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16). This office is not one to be sought after. The right to select rests with the Lord. He is the master of life and death. His is the power to call. His is the power to take away. His is the power to retain. It is all in His hands.

I do not know why in His grand scheme one such as I would find a place. But having this mantle come upon me, I now rededicate whatever I have of strength or time or talent or life to the work of my Master in the service of my brethren and sisters. Again I thank you, my beloved brethren, for your actions this day. The burden of my prayer is that I will be worthy. I hope that I may be remembered in your prayers.

Releasing of regional representatives

Now in the ongoing of this work, administrative changes sometimes occur. The doctrine remains constant. But from time to time there are organizational and administrative changes made under provisions set forth in the revelations.

For instance, twenty-eight years ago the First Presidency was inspired to call men to serve as regional representatives of the Twelve. At the time that was a new calling in the Church. The Presidency stated that this was necessary because of "the ever-increasing growth of the Church," which made "evident a greater need to train our stake and ward leaders in the programs of the Church that they

in turn might train the membership in their responsibilities before the Lord."

At that time there were 69 regional representatives. Today there are 284. The organization has become somewhat unwieldy.

More recently the Presidency were inspired to call men from the Seventy to serve in Area Presidencies. As the work grows across the world, it has become necessary to decentralize administrative authority to keep General Authorities closer to the people. We now have such Area Presidencies well established and effectively functioning.

It is now felt desirable to tighten up the organization administered by the Area Presidencies. Accordingly, we announce the release—the honorable release—of all regional representatives effective August 15 of this year. To these devoted and able brethren we express our deep appreciation for the tremendous work you have accomplished, for your loyalty, faithfulness, and devotion in advancing the cause of our Father in Heaven. I cannot say enough of good concerning these men. They have sacrificed their time and their resources. They have gone wherever they have been asked to go, whenever they have been asked to go. They have greatly assisted stake presidents and bishops with wise counsel and direction, with skillful training and instruction. We thank them one and all and pray that through the years to come the Lord will bless them with the satisfying assurance that each of them made a significant contribution to the work and that their labors have been accepted by Him.

The new office of area authority

Now we announce the call of a new local officer to be known as an area authority. These will be high priests chosen from among past and present experienced Church leaders. They will con-

tinue with their current employment, reside in their own homes, and serve on a Church-service basis. The term of their call will be flexible, generally for a period of approximately six years. They will be closely tied to the Area Presidencies. They will be fewer in number than have been the regional representatives. We are guided in setting up this new corps of area officers, as were our Brethren before us in the calling of regional representatives, by the provision contained in the revelation on priesthood, section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants. After directions to the Twelve and the Seventy, the revelation states:

"Whereas other officers of the church, who belong not unto the Twelve, neither to the Seventy, are not under the responsibility to travel among all nations, but are to travel as their circumstances shall allow, notwithstanding they may hold as high and responsible offices in the church" (v. 98).

Now, I repeat that these changes will not be effective until August 15 of this year.

Growth of the Church

Now, brethren, a few words on a related matter. The Church is becoming a very large and complex organization. We now have members in more than 150 nations. There are nine million of us, and we are growing at the approximate rate of a million each three and a half years. In addition to such regular programs as sacrament meeting, home teaching, and meetings of the priesthood quorums and auxiliaries, all of which are designed to meet the needs of the living membership of the Church, we are carrying forward an enormous program involving such undertakings as the world's largest archive of genealogical and family history data; the operation of the largest private university in the nation, if not in the world, with a related seminary and institute program embracing hundreds of

thousands of students; the staffing and management of the largest missionary organization of which I am aware, with the number now approaching 50,000; the carrying forward of a building program of unprecedented proportions; the operation of a very large and efficient publishing facility; and the training and motivation of the largest organization of noncompensated ecclesiastical officers to be found in any institution of which I know. I hesitate to use superlatives, but I think they fit in this case.

Concern for the individual

We are becoming a great global society. But our interest and concern must always be with the individual. Every member of this church is an individual man or woman, boy or girl. Our great responsibility is to see that each is "remembered and nourished by the good word of God" (Moroni 6:4), that each has opportunity for growth and expression and training in the work and ways of the Lord, that none lacks the necessities of life, that the needs of the poor are met, that each member shall have encouragement, training, and opportunity to move forward on the road of immortality and eternal life. This, I submit, is the inspired genius of this the Lord's work. The organization can grow and multiply in numbers, as it surely will. This gospel must be carried to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. There can never be in the foreseeable future a standing still or a failure to reach out, to move forward, to build, to enlarge Zion across the world. But with all of this there must continue to be an intimate pastoral relationship of every member with a wise and caring bishop or branch president. These are the shepherds of the flock whose responsibility it is to look after the people in relatively small numbers so that none is forgotten, overlooked, or neglected.

Jesus was the true shepherd, who reached out to those in distress, one at a time, bestowing an individual blessing upon them.

President Lee told us on more than one occasion to survey large fields and cultivate small ones. He was saying that we must know the big picture and then assiduously work on the particular niche assigned to each of us, and that in doing so we concentrate on the needs of the individual.

Dedicate all efforts to the individual

This work is concerned with people, each a son or daughter of God. In describing its achievements we speak in terms of numbers, but all of our efforts must be dedicated to the development of the individual.

For instance, President Hunter urged us to greater temple activity. This sacred work concerns the entire human family, past and present. But it is accomplished on an individual basis, with those who have received their own ordinances standing individually as proxy for another.

Likewise missionary service is a personal labor, with the missionary teaching and bearing witness to the investigator, who must search and pray alone in the quiet of his own soul if he or she is to gain a knowledge of the truth.

The gaining of a strong and secure testimony is the privilege and opportunity of every individual member of the Church. The Master said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

Service in behalf of others, study, and prayer lead to faith in this work and then to knowledge of its truth. This has always been a personal pursuit, as it must always be in the future.

We speak frequently of Wilford Woodruff's conversion of the United Brethren in England when some 1,800 were baptized into the Church. But let

us not forget that each of them had to walk the lonely road of repentance, of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and of acceptance of the fact that the ancient gospel had come again to earth in this the promised dispensation of the fulness of times.

Choose the right

The decisions we make, individually and personally, become the fabric of our lives. That fabric will be beautiful or ugly according to the threads of which it is woven. I wish to say particularly to the young men who are here that you cannot indulge in any unbecoming behavior without injury to the beauty of the fabric of your lives. Immoral acts of any kind will introduce an ugly thread. Dishonesty of any kind will create a blemish. Foul and profane language will rob the pattern of its beauty.

"Choose the right when a choice is placed before you" is the call to each of us ("Choose the Right," *Hymns*, no. 239).

Testimony and charge

Now in conclusion, may I say that I glory in the wonderful, courageous, victorious past of this great work. I marvel at the present when you and I stand as watchmen upon the towers. I envision the future with hope, assurance, and certain faith.

God, our Eternal Father, lives. This is His work, designed to assist Him in "bring[ing] to pass the immortality and eternal life" of His sons and daughters of all generations of time (Moses 1:39).

Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah, who came to earth in the most humble of circumstances, who walked the dusty roads of Palestine teaching and healing, who died upon Golgotha's cruel cross and was resurrected the third day. This is His church. It carries His name. We are His servants, each of us. The priesthood which we bear is His priest-

hood, and we exercise it in His name. It was bestowed upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by those who held it anciently, having received it from the Lord Himself.

The gospel is the way of peace, of progress, of safety, of salvation, of exaltation. This, the last and final dispensation, was ushered in by the glorious appearance of the Father and the Son to the boy Joseph Smith. You and I, my brethren, have received this holy priesthood through the laying on of hands by those in authority. We must live worthy

of it. We must safeguard it. We must honor it. We must use it in righteousness for the blessing of others. God help us to be true to the great and sacred trust which has been given to each of us, I humbly pray, as I leave my blessing with you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

Elder F. David Stanley offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 165th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 2, 1995. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 165th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Tabernacle is filled to capacity, with overflow gatherings in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Russell M. Nelson, Charles Didier, and John E. Fowler are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Gene R. Cook and John B. Dickson are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, tele-

vision, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these facilities, who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled from far and wide to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley, with Richard Elliott at the organ, opened these services by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." They will now sing "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee," following which Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy, who comes from England, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Kenneth Johnson offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

The inextinguishable light of mercy

Not long ago I read a lengthy report concerning the violence and bloodshed that continue to stalk the land of what was once Yugoslavia. The killing and maiming seem to go on despite the efforts put forth to bring peace. The account of a sniper taking deadly aim and snuffing out the life of a small child brought sorrow to my soul. I silently asked, *Where to be found is that divine attribute of mercy?*

The cruelty of war seems to bring forth hatred toward others and disregard for human life. It has ever been so. Yet in such degradation at times there shines forth the inextinguishable light of mercy.

During the television documentaries shown throughout the fiftieth anniversary of the D-Day invasion of Normandy, the terrible toll in human life was graphically illustrated, and gripping firsthand experiences of soldiers who were there were shared. I particularly remember the comments of an American infantryman who said that after a day of ferocious fighting he glanced up from his shallow foxhole to see an enemy soldier with his gun barrel leveled at the American's heart. Said the infantryman: "I felt I was soon to cross over that bridge of death which leads to eternity. Incredibly my enemy, in broken English, said to me, 'Soldier, for you this war is over!' He took me prisoner and thus saved my life. Such mercy I shall remember forever."

Richard Kirkland's errand of mercy

At an earlier time and in a different conflict—namely the American Civil War—a historically documented account illustrates courage coupled with mercy.

From December 11 to 13, 1862, the Union forces attacked Marye's Heights, a large hill overlooking Fredericksburg, Virginia, where 6,000 Rebels awaited

them. The Southern troops were in secure defensive positions behind a stone wall that meandered along the foot of the hill. In addition, they stood four deep on a sunken road behind the wall, out of sight of Union forces.

The Union troops—over 40,000 strong—launched a series of suicidal attacks across open ground. They were mowed down by a scythe of shot; none got closer than forty yards from the stone wall.

Soon the ground in front of the Confederate positions was littered with hundreds, then thousands of fallen Union soldiers in their blue uniforms—over 12,000 before sunset. Crying for help, the wounded lay in the bitter cold throughout that terrible night.

The next day, a Sunday, dawned cold and foggy. As the morning fog lifted, the agonized cries of the wounded could still be heard. Finally a young Confederate soldier, a nineteen-year-old sergeant, had had all he could take. The young man's name was Richard Rowland Kirkland. To his commanding officer, Kirkland exclaimed, "All night and all day I have heard those poor people crying for water, and I can stand it no longer. I . . . ask permission to go and give them water."

His request was initially denied on the grounds that it was too dangerous. Finally, however, permission was granted, and soon thousands of amazed men on both sides saw the young soldier, with several canteens draped around his neck, climb over the wall and walk to the nearest wounded Union soldier. He raised the stricken man's head, gently gave him a drink, and covered him with his own overcoat. Then he moved to the next of the wounded—and the next and the next. As Kirkland's purpose became clear, fresh cries of "Water, water, for God's sake, water!" arose all over the field.

The Union soldiers were at first too surprised to shoot. Soon they began to cheer the young Southerner as they saw what he was doing. For more than an hour and a half, Sergeant Kirkland continued his work of mercy.

Tragically, Richard Kirkland was himself killed a few months later at the battle of Chicamauga. His last words to his companions were, "Save yourselves, and tell my pa I died right."

Kirkland's Christlike compassion made his name synonymous with mercy for a post-Civil War generation, both North and South. He became known by soldiers on both sides of the conflict as "the angel of Marye's Heights." His loving errand of mercy is commemorated by a bronze monument which stands today in front of the stone wall at Fredericksburg. It depicts Sergeant Kirkland lifting the head of a wounded Union soldier to give him a drink of refreshing water. A tablet to Kirkland's honor hangs in the Episcopal church in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. With simple eloquence it captures the essence of the young soldier's mission of mercy. It reads: "A hero of benevolence, at the risk of his own life, he gave his enemy drink at Fredericksburg."¹

The words of William Shakespeare describe Kirkland's deed:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from
heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice
blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him
that takes: . . .
It is an attribute to God himself.²

The greatest act of mercy

Two brilliant and faith-filled counselors to President David O. McKay spoke to us everlasting counsel concerning the greatest act of mercy ever known

to man. President Stephen L. Richards said, "The Savior himself declared that he came to fulfill the law, not to do away with it, but with the law he brought the principle of mercy to temper its enforcement, and to bring hope and encouragement to [the] offenders for forgiveness through [mercy and] repentance."³

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. testified:

"You know, I believe that the Lord will help us. I believe if we go to him, he will give us wisdom, if we are living righteously. I believe he will answer our prayers. I believe that our Heavenly Father wants to save every one of his children. I do not think he intends to shut any of us off because of some slight transgression, some slight failure to observe some rule or regulation. There are the great elementals that we must observe, but he is not going to be captious about the lesser things.

"I believe that his juridical concept of his dealings with his children could be expressed in this way: I believe that in his justice and mercy he will give us the maximum reward for our acts, give us all that he can give, and in the reverse, I believe that he will impose upon us the minimum penalty which it is possible for him to impose."⁴

"I often think that one of the most beautiful things in the Christ's life was his words on the cross, when, suffering under the agony of a death that is said to have been the most painful that the ancients could devise, death on the cross, after he had been unjustly, illegally, contrary to all the rules of mercy, condemned and then crucified, when he had been nailed to the cross and was about to give up his life, he said to his Father in heaven, as those who were within hearing testify: ' . . . Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' (Luke 23:34.)"⁵

In the Book of Mormon, Alma describes beautifully the foregoing with

these words: "The plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also."⁶

The need for mercy

From the springboard of such knowledge we ask ourselves, *Why, then, do we see on every side those instances where people decline to forgive one another and show forth the cleansing act of mercy and forgiveness? What blocks the way for such healing balm to cleanse human wounds? Is it stubbornness? Could it be pride? Maybe hatred has yet to melt and disappear.* "Blame keeps wounds open. . . . Only forgiveness heals!"⁷

Recently I read where an elderly man disclosed at the funeral of his brother, with whom he had shared, from early manhood, a small one-room cabin near Canisteo, New York, that following a quarrel they had divided the room in half with a chalk line and neither had crossed the line nor spoken a word to the other since that day—sixty-two years before! What a human tragedy—all for the want of mercy and forgiveness.

At times the need for mercy can be found close to home and in simple settings. We have a four-year-old grandson named Jeffrey. One day his fifteen-year-old brother, Alan, had just completed, on the family computer, a most difficult and rather ingenious design of an entire city. When Alan slipped out of the room for just a moment, little Jeffrey approached the computer and accidentally erased the program. Upon his return, Alan was furious when he observed what his brother had done. Sensing that his doom was at hand, Jeffrey raised his finger and, pointing it toward Alan, declared from his heart and soul, "Remem-

ber, Alan, Jesus said, 'Don't hurt little boys.'" Alan began to laugh; anger subsided; mercy prevailed.

There are those among us who torture themselves through their inability to show mercy and to forgive others some supposed offense or slight, however small it may be. At times the statement is made, "I never can forgive [this person or that person]." Such an attitude is destructive to an individual's well-being. It can canker the soul and ruin one's life. In other instances an individual can forgive another but cannot forgive himself. Such a situation is even more destructive.

Forgiving ourselves

Early in my ministry as a member of the Council of the Twelve, I took to President Hugh B. Brown the experience of a fine person who could not serve in a ward position because he could not show mercy to himself. He could forgive others but not himself; mercy was seemingly beyond his grasp. President Brown suggested that I visit with that individual and counsel him along these lines:

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men."⁸

Then from Isaiah and the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."⁹

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."¹⁰

With a pensive expression on his face, President Brown added, "Tell that man that he should not persist in remembering that which the Lord has said He is willing to forget." Such counsel will help to cleanse the soul and renew the spirit of any who apply it.

The Prophet Joseph urged: "Be merciful and you shall find mercy. Seek to help save souls, not to destroy them: for verily you know, that 'there is more joy in heaven, over one sinner that repents, than there is over ninety and nine just persons [who] need no repentance.'" ¹¹

Correct small mistakes before they fester

At times a small mistake can fester and bring distress and heartache to him or her who harbors and dwells on the matter, leaving it uncorrected. All of us are subject to such an experience. Let me share with you an example with a beautiful ending. I recently received a note, with a key enclosed, which read:

"Dear President Monson, Thirteen years ago this summer my husband and I stayed at the Hotel Utah. As a memento of our vacation, I took this hotel key and have felt bad about it ever since. I know that the Church owns the former Hotel Utah, and so I am returning this key to you—to the Church—in an effort to set this right. I am so sorry for having taken the key. Please, please, forgive me."

I thought to myself, *What honesty; what a sweet spirit the writer must possess.* I replied as follows:

"Dear Sister, Thank you for your thoughtful note and for the Hotel Utah key which you returned. My heart was touched by your sincerity. Though the key itself weighed very little, apparently this has been a heavy burden for you to carry for such a long time. Though the key was of very little worth, its return is of far greater value. I am honored to accept the key and know that you are certainly forgiven. Please accept the enclosed gift with my warmest wishes."

The key was returned to her, mounted on an attractive plaque.

Should you or I have erred or spoken harshly to another, it is good to take steps to straighten out the matter and to move onward with our lives. "He [who]

cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven; for every one has need to be forgiven."¹²

Jesus forgives an adulteress

One of the most touching examples of mercy and forgiveness is the well-remembered experience in the life of Jesus when he "went unto the mount of Olives.

"And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

"They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

"Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

"This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

"And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are . . . thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."¹³

The sands of time quickly erased what the Savior had written, but forever will be remembered the mercy He showed.

Blessed are the merciful

I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me,
Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me.
I tremble to know that for me he was crucified,
That for me, a sinner, he suffered, he bled and died. . . .

I think of his hands pierced and bleeding to pay the debt!
Such mercy, such love, and devotion can I forget?
No, no, I will praise and adore at the mercy seat,
Until at the glorified throne I kneel at his feet.¹⁴

This same Jesus, "seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

"And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, . . .

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."¹⁵

My sincere and humble prayer this Sabbath day is that each of us may be the provider and the recipient of mercy—the divine gift. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *The Battle Fredericksburg*, Eastern Acorn Press, 1990; "He Gave His Enemy Drink," *CWT Illustrated*, Oct.

1962, pp. 38–39. Information on Richard Kirkland provided by staff of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

2. *The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1, lines 184–95.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1954, p. 11.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1953, p. 84.
5. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, Oct. 1955, p. 24.
6. Alma 42:15.
7. From *O Pioneers!* videocassette; Hallmark Hall of Fame adaptation of the novel by Willa Cather, 1991.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
9. Isaiah 1:18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
11. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 77.
12. George Herbert, quoted in Frank S. Mead, ed., *12,000 Religious Quotations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1989), p. 147.
13. John 8:1–11.
14. "I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, no. 193.
15. Matthew 5:1–2, 7.

The choir sang "Come unto Him."

President Hinckley

President Monson has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Come unto Him."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President James E. Faust

Humbled and grateful to serve

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, in responding at this pulpit as the newest member of the First Presidency of this church, I recall the words of Solomon, who said, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in."¹ Like Solomon, I pray that God will give me an understanding heart. We miss our beloved friend and associate, President Howard W. Hunter, beyond expression. We honor and praise his name. His memory will be blessed to us forever.

President Hinckley has honored me beyond my ability to express in asking me to serve as his second counselor. I don't think that even my mother ever dreamed that her son would sit in these chairs. As I explained last night in general priesthood meeting, my long association with President Gordon B. Hinckley has blessed me over most of my adult life. As you know, he is a man of remarkable gifts and talents. All these long years he has been teaching, guiding, and blessing all of us. Over the years we have seen him grow in strength as the Lord has time and time again called and magnified him. He has had increasingly burdensome responsibilities in many callings, including as a counselor to three Presidents of the Church. He has magnified each calling he has received with great inspiration, intelligence, and energy in a remarkable way. His ministry has blessed the work of God throughout the world.

I also feel privileged to have worked so closely with President Thomas S. Monson ever since he was the newest Apostle. President Monson has been blessed with a great mind and capacity. He has always been an outstanding leader as a boy and a man. Great responsibilities came upon him very early in life to school him. He is a man of great, simple faith. His outgoing and car-

ing heart has blessed the people of this church tremendously over the many years of his ministry.

The Church's rich cultural diversity

Today I would like to speak to the members of the Church worldwide. I hope we can all overcome any differences of culture, race, and language. Since the early days of the Church, the General Authorities and missionaries have traveled over much of the earth to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and to establish the Church with keys and authority in many lands. An impressive and enjoyable part of our ministry has been to worship with the wonderful people of many cultures and ethnic groups. It has been soul satisfying to feel of their spiritual strength and their love and to love them in return.

Now the curtains are opening up to more and more of the nonindustrialized nations. In some of these countries a large percentage of the population is poor. Many of them have much less opportunity than others to acquire the comforts of life and even some of the necessities. We have seen men and women working to exhaustion from sunrise to sundown for a pittance. Yet their ready smiles and cheerful countenances indicated that they had found some happiness with their lot in life.

Some might say, "Where is the justice in the fact that some of God's children have so much of health and this world's goods and others so very little?" So many of those who have in abundance seem unappreciative of what they have. But we have also seen the generosity of members of this church who have great concern for those worldwide who lack the necessities of life. They generously contribute to help the poor in many countries, even though we have no mem-

bers there. Humanitarian help has been given in 114 countries since 1985.²

I have learned to admire, respect, and love the good people from every race, culture, and nation that I have been privileged to visit. In my experience, no race or class seems superior to any other in spirituality and faithfulness. Those who seem less caring spiritually are those individuals—regardless of race, culture, or nationality—spoken of by the Savior in the parable of the sower who are “choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”³

Look to the divinity within

One of this nation’s leading pollsters, Richard Wirthlin, has identified through polls an expression of the basic needs of people in the United States. These needs are self-esteem, peace of mind, and personal contentment. I believe these are needs of God’s children everywhere. How can these needs be satisfied? I suggest that behind each of these is the requirement to establish one’s own personal identity as the offspring of God. All three needs, regardless of ethnic background, culture, or country, can be met if we look to the divinity that is within us. As the Savior himself has said, “And the Spirit giveth light to every man [and woman] that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man [and woman] through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.”⁴

President David O. McKay said:

“Generally there is in man a divinity which strives to push him onward and upward. We believe that this power within him is the spirit that comes from God. Man lived before he came to this earth, and he is here now to strive to perfect the spirit within. At sometime in his life, every man is conscious of a desire to come in touch with the Infinite. His spirit reaches out for God. This sense of

feeling is universal, and all men ought to be, in deepest truth, engaged in the same great work—the search for and the development of spiritual peace and freedom.”⁵

Satisfy basic needs through obedience

As the humble servants of God—the General Authorities, the missionaries, and others—travel throughout the world, we are compelled to ask: What can we do for the peoples of the earth? What can we give that no one else can? What can justify the great expenditure of effort, time, and means to “go . . . into all the world,”⁶ as the Savior commanded. We cannot change the economy of countries. We do not seek to change governments. The answer is simple. We can offer the hope promised by the Savior: “Peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”⁷

Lives are changed as the servants of God teach God’s children everywhere to accept and keep the commandments of God. Anyone, regardless of culture or economic circumstance, can go to the depths of his spiritual wells and drink of that water. He who partakes of this water, as the Savior said, “shall never thirst; but [it] shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”⁸ The basic needs of mankind identified by Dr. Wirthlin—self-esteem, peace of mind, and personal contentment—can be fully satisfied by faithful obedience to the commandments of God. This is true of any person in any country or culture.

Seek a unity of the faith

Though many lack the necessities of life, I take comfort in the words of Nephi: “But they were . . . one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.”⁹

As we move into more and more countries in the world, we find a rich cul-

tural diversity in the Church. Yet everywhere there can be a "unity of the faith."¹⁰ Each group brings special gifts and talents to the table of the Lord. We can all learn much of value from each other. But each of us should also voluntarily seek to enjoy all of the unifying and saving covenants, ordinances, and doctrines of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the great diversity of peoples, cultures, and circumstances, we remember that all are equal before the Lord, for as Paul taught:

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."¹¹

Spiritual and doctrinal unity

We do not lose our identity in becoming members of this church. We become heirs to the kingdom of God, having joined the body of Christ and spiritually set aside some of our personal differences to unite in a greater spiritual cause. We say to all who have joined the Church, "Keep all that is noble, good, and uplifting in your culture and personal identity." However, under the authority and power of the keys of the priesthood, all differences yield as we seek to become heirs to the kingdom of God, unite in following those who have the keys of the priesthood, and seek the divinity within us. All are welcomed and appreciated. But there is only one celestial kingdom of God.

Our real strength is not so much in our diversity but in our spiritual and doctrinal unity. For instance, the baptismal prayer and baptism by immersion in water are the same all over the world.

The sacramental prayers are the same everywhere. We sing the same hymns in praise to God in every country.

The high moral standards of this church apply to all members in every country. Honesty and integrity are taught and expected everywhere. Chastity before marriage and absolute fidelity to wife or husband after marriage are required of members of the Church everywhere. Members who violate these high standards of moral conduct place their Church membership in question anywhere in the world.

The requirements for temple attendance do not change from place to place. Where a temple is available, priesthood authority gives no greater or lesser blessings in one place than another. Temple worship is a perfect example of our unity as Church members. All of us answer the same questions of worthiness to enter the temple. All the men dress alike. All the women dress alike. We leave the cares of the world behind us as we enter the temple. Everyone receives the same blessings. All make the same covenants. All are equal before the Lord. Yet within our spiritual unity there is wide room for everyone's individuality and expression. In that setting, all are heirs to the kingdom of God. President Hunter said it well: "The key to a unified church is a unified soul, one that is at peace with itself and not given to inner conflicts and tensions."¹²

Diverse people united by the Spirit

The spiritual richness of our meetings seems to have little to do with the buildings or country in which we meet. Many years ago we went to Manaus, Brazil, a city far upstream on the Amazon River, surrounded by jungle, to meet with the missionaries and the handful of Saints who were then in that area. We met in a very humble home with no glass panes in the windows. The weather was excessively hot. The children sat on the

floor. The mission president, President Helio da Rocha Camargo, conducted the meeting and called on a faithful brother to give the opening prayer. The humble man responded, "I will be happy to pray, but may I also bear my testimony?" A sister was asked to lead the singing. She responded, "I would love to lead the singing, but please let me also bear my testimony."

And so it was all through the meeting with those who participated in any way. All felt impelled to bear their profound witness of the Savior and his mission and of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All who were there reached deep down in their souls to their spiritual taproots, remembering the Savior's words that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."¹³ This they did more as heirs to the kingdom of God than as Brazilian members of the Church.

The multiplicity of languages and cultures is both an opportunity and a challenge for members of the Church. Having everyone hear the gospel in their own tongue requires great effort and resources. The Spirit, however, is a higher form of communication than language. We have been in many meetings where the words were completely unintelligible, but the Spirit bore powerful witness of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. Even with language differences, hopefully no minority group would ever feel so unwelcome in the "body of Christ"¹⁴ that they would wish to worship exclusively in their own ethnic culture. We hope that those in any dominant culture would reach out to them in the brotherhood and sisterhood of the gospel so that we can establish fully a community of Saints where everyone will feel needed and wanted.

Recovering the sacred within us

Spiritual peace is not to be found in race or culture or nationality but rather

through our commitment to God and to the covenants and ordinances of the gospel. Each of us, regardless of our nationality, needs to reach down into the innermost recesses of our souls to find the divinity that is deep within us and to earnestly petition the Lord for an endowment of special wisdom and inspiration. Only when we so profoundly reach the depths of our beings can we discover our true identity, our self-worth, and our purpose in life. Only as we seek to be purged of selfishness and of concern for recognition and wealth can we find some sweet relief from the anxieties, hurts, pains, miseries, and concerns of this world. In this manner, as President J. Reuben Clark said, we can bring "to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit."¹⁵ God can not only help us find a sublime and everlasting joy and contentment, but He will change us so that we can become heirs of the kingdom of God.

This is really the recovery of the sacred within us. We have the authority in our beings to respond to challenges of life any way we choose. Thus we gain mastery in any circumstance. As the Savior said to the diseased woman, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."¹⁶

Mine is the certain knowledge that Jesus is our divine Savior, Redeemer, and the Son of God the Father. I know of his reality by a sure perception so sacred I cannot give utterance to it. I know and testify with an absolute awareness that Joseph Smith restored the keys of the fulness of times and that every President of the Church has held these keys, as does President Gordon B. Hinckley today, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Kings 3:7.
2. "Helping Hearts and Hands Span the Globe," *Church News*, 11 Feb. 1995, pp. 8-10.
3. Luke 8:14.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.

5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1963, p. 7; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1963, p. 1057.
6. Mark 16:15.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
8. John 4:14.
9. 4 Nephi 1:17.
10. Ephesians 4:13.
11. Galatians 3:26–29.
12. *That We Might Have Joy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994), p. 50.
13. Matthew 18:20.
14. 1 Corinthians 10:16; see also v. 17.
15. As cited in *Providing in the Lord's Way: A Leader's Guide to Welfare* (welfare handbook, 1990), p. i.
16. Matthew 9:22.

The choir sang "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." We shall then hear from Elder Joe J. Christensen, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Joe J. Christensen

Barbara and I have been blessed with six children. Some years ago, when we had taken all of them to visit with their grandparents, my father said, "Joe, I think you and Barbara have started something you can't stop."

At this Easter season we declare to all the world that Jesus is the Christ and that through his holy priesthood and its sealing power, marriages and families need never stop—need never come to an end.

Today I would like to speak to all of you about our marriages. Here are eight practical suggestions that, hopefully, may be of value in strengthening our marriages, now and in the future.

Remember the importance of marriage

1. Remember the central importance of your marriage. Listen to these words from Elder Bruce R. McConkie on the importance of marriage in our Father in Heaven's "great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8):

"From the moment of birth into mortality to the time we are married in the temple, everything we have in the whole gospel system is to prepare and qualify us to enter that holy order of matrimony which makes us husband and wife in this life and in the world to come. . . .

"There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units" ("Salvation Is a Family Affair," *Improvement Era*, June 1970, pp. 43–44).

Pray for the success of your marriage

2. Pray for the success of your marriage. Years ago, when it was common for a General Authority to tour a mission and interview all the missionaries, Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was visiting with an elder who was just about to finish his mission.

"When you get released, Elder, what are your plans?"

"Oh, I plan to go back to college." And then with a smile he added, "Then I hope to fall in love and get married."

Elder Kimball shared this wise counsel: "Well, don't just pray to marry the one you love. *Instead, pray to love the one you marry.*"

We should pray to become more kind, courteous, humble, patient, forgiving, and, *especially*, less selfish.

In order to recognize our personal problems or weaknesses which hinder us from being better marriage partners, we should come to the Lord in prayer and reap the benefits of this powerful Book of Mormon promise: "If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness . . . ; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

And so the need to pray. Many Church leaders and marriage counselors indicate that they have not seen one marriage in serious trouble where the couple was still praying together daily. When problems arise and marriages are threatened, praying together as a couple may be the most important remedy.

Listen to your spouse

3. Listen. Make the time to listen to your spouse; even schedule it regularly. Visit with each other and assess how you are doing as a marriage partner.

Brother Brent Barlow posed a question to a group of priesthood brethren: "How many of you would like to receive a revelation?" Every hand went up. He then suggested that they all go home and ask their wives how they could be better husbands. He added, "I followed my own advice, and had a very informative discussion with [my wife] Susan for more than an hour that afternoon!" ("To Build a Better Marriage," *Ensign*, Sept. 1992, p. 17). A conversation like that could be a revelation for any of us.

Have any of you brethren ever had your wife say something like I heard recently: "Joe, are you listening?" She wasn't the only one who wondered if I was listening. Some time ago I was taking a nap and our little granddaughter Allison came and lifted up one of my eyelids and said, "Grandpa, are you in there?" We should be "in there" and responsive to our mate.

Avoid ceaseless pinpricking

4. Avoid "ceaseless pinpricking." Don't be too critical of each other's faults. Recognize that none of us is perfect. We all have a long way to go to become as Christlike as our leaders have urged us to become.

"Ceaseless pinpricking," as President Kimball called it, can deflate almost any marriage ("Marriage and Divorce," *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977], p. 148). Generally each of us is painfully aware of our weaknesses, and we don't need frequent reminders. Few people have ever changed for the better as a result of constant criticism or nagging. If we are not careful, some of what we offer as *constructive* criticism is actually *destructive*.

At times it is better to leave some things unsaid. As a newlywed, Sister Lola Walters read in a magazine that in order to strengthen a marriage, couples should have regular, candid sharing sessions in which they would list any mannerisms they found to be annoying. She wrote:

"We were to name five things we found annoying, and I started off. . . . I told him that I didn't like the way he ate grapefruit. He peeled it and ate it like an orange! Nobody else I knew ate grapefruit like that. Could a girl be expected to spend a lifetime, and even eternity, watching her husband eat grapefruit like an orange? . . .

"After I finished [with my five], it was his turn to tell the things he disliked about me. [He] said, 'Well, to tell the truth, I can't think of anything I don't like about you, Honey.'

"Gasp.

"I quickly turned my back, because I didn't know how to explain the tears that had filled my eyes and were running down my face."

Sister Walters concluded, "Whenever I hear of married couples being incompatible, I always wonder if they are suffering from what I now call the Grapefruit Syndrome" ("The Grapefruit Syndrome," *Ensign*, Apr. 1993, p. 13).

Yes, at times, it is better to leave some things unsaid.

Keep your courtship alive

5. Keep your courtship alive. Make time to do things together—just the two of you. As important as it is to be with the children as a family, you need regular weekly time alone together. Scheduling it will let your children know that you feel that your marriage is so important that you need to nurture it. That takes commitment, planning, and scheduling.

It doesn't need to be costly. The time together is the most important element.

Once when my father-in-law was leaving the house after lunch to return to the field to work, my mother-in-law said, "Albert, you get right back in here and tell me you love me." He grinned and jokingly said, "Elsie, when we were married, I told you I loved you, and if that ever changes, I'll let you know." It's hard to overuse the expression "I love you." Use it daily.

Be quick to say, "I'm sorry"

6. Be quick to say, "I'm sorry." As hard as it is to form the words, be swift to say, "I apologize, and please forgive me," even though you are not the one who is totally at fault. True love is devel-

oped by those who are willing to readily admit personal mistakes and offenses.

When differences do arise, being able to discuss and resolve them is important, but there are instances when it is best to take a time-out. Biting your tongue and counting to ten or even a hundred is important. And occasionally, even letting the sun go down on your wrath can help bring you back to the problem in the morning more rested, calm, and with a better chance for resolution.

Occasionally we hear something like, "Why, we have been married for fifty years, and we have never had a difference of opinion." If that is literally the case, then one of the partners is overly dominated by the other or, as someone said, is a stranger to the truth. Any intelligent couple will have differences of opinion. Our challenge is to be sure that we know how to resolve them. That is part of the process of making a good marriage better.

Live within your means

7. Learn to live within your means. Some of the most difficult challenges in marriage arise in the area of finances. "The American Bar Association . . . indicated that 89 percent of all divorces could be traced to quarrels and accusations over money" (Marvin J. Ashton, "One for the Money," *Ensign*, July 1975, p. 72). Be willing to postpone or forgo some purchases in order to stay within your budget. Pay your tithing first, and avoid debt insofar as possible. Remember that spending fifty dollars a month less than you receive equals happiness and spending fifty more equals misery. The time may have come to get out the scissors and your credit cards and perform what Elder Jeffrey R. Holland called some "plastic surgery" ("Things We Have Learned—Together," *Ensign*, June 1986, p. 30).

Share home and family responsibilities

8. Be a true partner in home and family responsibilities. Don't be like the husband who sits around home expecting to be waited on, feeling that earning the living is his chore and that his wife alone is responsible for the house and taking care of the children. The task of caring for home and family is more than one person's responsibility.

Remember that you are in this partnership together. Barbara and I have discovered that we can make our bed every morning in less than a minute and it's done for the day. She says that she lets me do it to help me feel good about myself all day, and I guess there may be something to that.

Find time to study the scriptures together, and follow this sound counsel from President Kimball: "When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste, mentally and physically, . . . and both are working together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle" (*Marriage and Divorce* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], p. 24).

In summary:

- Remember the central importance of your marriage.
- Pray for its success.
- Listen.
- Avoid "ceaseless pinpricking."
- Keep your courtship alive.
- Be quick to say, "I'm sorry."
- Learn to live within your means.
- Be a true partner in home and family responsibilities.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, that the tomb was empty on that third day, and that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Thus with gratitude for the sealing power within the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we can confidently say with the poet, "I shall but love thee better after death" (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, no. 43, line 14). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Joe J. Christensen has spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Sustaining new leaders

I join in welcoming Elder Henry B. Eyring to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who are so ably presided over by President Boyd K. Packer. Elder Eyring is a special blend of brightness and sweetness. I am delighted to sustain President James E. Faust, my seatmate of fourteen years and for over thirty years a companion in various civic chores and Church assignments. I have been blessed with five wonderful sisters but no broth-

ers. President Faust has been that kind of brother to me for many years.

I renew my appreciation and sustaining vote for President Thomas S. Monson, who, over that same span of time, has given me opportunities, has tutored me, and has encouraged me. He is sometimes best known for feats of memory, but his quiet acts of kindness are much more important.

In 1935 a returning missionary, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, was asked to visit with the First Presidency because of his

special work in the British Isles. His fifteen-minute appointment soon stretched to nearly an hour and a half. Impressed, the First Presidency requested him to help with missionary work, and he has scarcely left the Church Administration Building since then. Only now he sits, humbly, in the center chair in the First Presidency Council Room to which he came humbly sixty years ago!

President Hinckley is a special blend of the practical and the spiritual, possessing a keen mind furnished with fixed principles. When we rightly describe him as having good judgment, good humor, goodwill, and as being a good listener, the common adjective is *good*. Goodness is thus the key to so much of what makes up President Hinckley, whom I am delighted to sustain as our President, prophet, seer, and revelator, the high calling which has come after such unusual preparation of this exceptional disciple of Christ.

Deny yourselves of all ungodliness

Jesus' instructions concerning discipleship involve both substance and sequence: "If any man will come after me, let him *deny* himself, and *take up* his cross daily, and *follow me*" (Luke 9:23; italics added). Elsewhere, Moroni declared the need for us to deny ourselves "all ungodliness" (Moroni 10:32), thus including both large and small sins. While boulders surely block our way, loose gravel slows discipleship too. Even a small stone can become a stumbling block.

King Benjamin and Paul both stressed the congenital weakness of the natural man, who is turned away from God and who regards spiritual things as "foolishness" (see Mosiah 3:19; 1 Corinthians 2:13-14; Colossians 3:9). Thus, putting off the views and appetites of the natural man is such a large part of denying oneself, a process sometimes accompanied by scalding shame and the reflux of re-

gret (see Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28).

Even so, in today's world, individual appetites, far from being denied, are actually celebrated! As one writer noted, this mantra has its own incessant "beat," and it goes "Me . . . Me . . . Me . . . Me!" (Tom Wolfe, "The Me Decade and the Third Great Awakening," in *The Purple Decades* [New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1982], p. 293).

Yet sensory happiness is illusory happiness. Even legitimate pleasure is as transitory as the things which produce it, while joy is as lasting as the things which produce it!

Of all today's malevolent "isms," hedonism takes the greatest toll. It is naive to say that hedonists merely march to the beat of a different drummer. So did the Gadarene swine!

The moral crisis of sexual immorality

A quarter of a century ago historian John Lukacs perceptively warned that sexual immorality was not merely a marginal development but, instead, was at the center of the moral crisis of our time (see *The Passing of the Modern Age* [New York: Harper and Row, 1970], p. 169). Some thought Lukacs was overstating it, but consider the subsequent and sobering tragedy of children having children, of unwed mothers, of children without parents, of hundreds of thousands of fatherless children, and of rampant spousal infidelity. These and related consequences threaten to abort society's future even before the future arrives! Yet carnalists are unwilling to deny themselves, even though all of society suffers from an awful avalanche of consequences!

Consider this sobering forecast: "About 40 percent of U.S. children will go to sleep in homes in which their fathers do not live" (David Blankenhorn, "Life without Father," *USA Weekend*, 26 Feb. 1995, pp. 6-7).

Some estimate this will rise to 60 percent. This same commentator has written, "Fatherlessness is the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy to domestic violence" (Blankenhorn, p. 7). Such outcomes, brothers and sisters, unfortunately constitute America's grossest national product, produced in the slums of the spirit created by spreading secularism!

The scourge of hedonism

In Proverbs we read, "For the commandment is a lamp" (Proverbs 6:23). Once darkened, a society loses its capacity to distinguish between right and wrong and the will to declare that some things are wrong *per se*. Without the lamp, our world finds itself desperately building temporary defenses, drawing new lines, forever falling back, unwilling to confront. A society which permits anything will eventually lose everything!

Therefore, recognized or not, the public has an enormous stake in private morality! Yet today there is so much hedonism and shouted justification with so little quiet shame. Bad deeds are viewed as nobody's fault and everything as excusable on one basis or another.

Amid such inversions, no wonder victims are often neglected and the guilty sometimes glorified. Likewise, in place of real confessions there are fluid variations of "I hope I can forgive myself." In contrast, the inquiring Apostles knew the direction in which they faced; all anxiously asked Jesus of the impending betrayal, "Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:22).

Gross sins arise ominously and steadily out of the swamp of self-indulgence and self-pity. But the smaller sins breed there too, like insects in the mud, including the coarsening of language. But why should we expect those who "mind the things of the flesh" to mind their tongues? (Romans 8:5).

For some, their god "is their belly," as are other forms of anatomical alle-

giance! (Philippians 3:19). A few hedonists actually glory in their shame, and there is even a "greediness" in their "uncleanness" (Ephesians 4:19). Sadly too, a few envy the wicked. Still others complain that the wicked seem to get away with it! (see Proverbs 23:17; Malachi 3:14-15).

Ironically, in all their eagerness to experience certain things, hedonists become desensitized. People who wrongly celebrate their capacity to feel finally reach a point where they lose much of their capacity to feel! In the words of three different prophets, such individuals become "past feeling" (see 1 Nephi 17:45; Ephesians 4:19; Moroni 9:20).

When people proceed "without principle," erelong they will be "without civilization," "without mercy," and "past feeling" (see Moroni 9:11-20). Such individuals do not experience real joy, such as being quietly and deeply grateful to a generous God, or of helping to restore those who "droop in sin" (2 Nephi 4:28), or of gladly forgoing praise and recognition so that it might flow, instead, to parched souls.

Our physical as well as our familial environment is likewise threatened by selfishness. But some worry only about holes in the ozone layer, while the fabric of many families who lack the lamp resembles Swiss cheese.

The need for self-denial

Of course we can't wave a wand and fix families instantly. Some levees and sandbags must be placed downstream. But the real problem lies at the family fountainhead. Many things will not get better until we have better families, but this will require much more self-denial, not less. Most major social and political problems simply cannot be solved without large doses of self-denial; ironically, this is a quality best developed in loving families where the lamp is lit.

Meanwhile, mortals remain free to choose between the things of the mo-

ment and the things of eternity (see 2 Nephi 2:27). Given the choices made by some, we all end up with more protected pornography than protected children. Of course better self-restraint than censorship, but urging self-restraint on hedonists is like discouraging Dracula from hanging around the blood bank!

No wonder most of the Ten Commandments are self-denying "Thou shalt nots." Heavenly Father loves his children perfectly, but he knows our tendencies perfectly too. To lie, steal, murder, envy, be sexually immoral, neglect parents, break the Sabbath, and bear false witness—all occur because one mistakenly seeks to please himself for the moment regardless of divine standards or human consequences. As prophesied, ethical relativism is now in steep crescendo: "Every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world" (D&C 1:16).

Distortions caused by self-indulgence

Without the lamp's perspective, gross distortion results (see Jacob 4:13–14). I remember reading that one Nazi leader used to listen to Haydn's music while watching Jewish people being gassed. He was probably proud of his music appreciation.

Mussolini is said to have made Italy's trains run on time, a genuine convenience to passengers, but scarcely compensation for the awful consequences of his totalitarian rule and the tens of thousands of lives lost thereby.

We all admire young David for taking on the mocking Goliath. But David's act of earlier bravery cannot compensate for his later adultery with the wife of Uriah. All things considered, brothers and sisters, to whom did David deal the greater blow, Goliath or Uriah? Or himself?

In the same vein, God's second commandment, love thy neighbor, clearly

leaves no room for racism. Yet it is not enough to be free of racism if one is simultaneously enslaved by other appetites. Jesus emphasized the need for proportion, saying there are "weightier matters" even among good things (Matthew 23:23). To the commandment-keeping young man, Jesus responded, "One thing thou lackest," referring to an errant attachment to material possessions (Mark 10:21). Most of us lack more than just one thing. As we come closer to the Lord, He has promised to "show unto [us our] weakness" (Ether 12:27). Hence, general goodness is no excuse for failing to work on those things which we yet lack.

Dangers of "small sins"

Any list of our present personal indulgences is actually an index—but a reverse index to joys—joys we will not experience until we do deny ourselves certain things. Meanwhile, the absence of gross sins in our lives can lull us into slackness concerning seemingly small sins. The failure to visit and care for parents is a failure to honor one's father and mother. In its lesser form, the lack of self-restraint causes unkind comments to a spouse, but in the extreme it can bring domestic abuse and even murder. The tendency to strike back whenever we are offended makes us brusque and rude, as if others were functions, not brothers and sisters. Thus, excess of ego is like a spreading, toxic spill from which flow all the deadly sins (see Proverbs 6:16–19). Young parents know how a mere half cup of spilled milk seems to cover half a kitchen floor. Small sins spread like that too.

Self-denial precedes full joy in Christ

With His perfect, spiritual symmetry, Jesus really is "the way, the truth, and the life," His way being in such sharp contrast to the world's ways (John 14:6).

Jesus' perfect character is thus not only holy, but wholly complete and finished. Without Jesus' supernal character, He could not have accomplished the astonishing atonement! And He has asked us to become much more like Him (see Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27). Though heavy, discipleship's burden can be made light (see Matthew 11:30). The Lord can "ease the burdens," and our shoulders can be made strong enough that we "may be able to bear it" (Mosiah 24:14; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

So it is that real, personal sacrifice never was placing an animal on the altar. Instead, it is a willingness to put the animal in us upon the altar and letting it be consumed! Such is the "sacrifice unto the Lord . . . of a broken heart and a contrite spirit," (D&C 59:8), a prerequisite to taking up the cross, while giving

"away all [our] sins" in order to know God (Alma 22:18); for the denial of self precedes the full acceptance of Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Know My Father Lives."

President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell has just addressed us, and the choir has sung "I Know My Father Lives."

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Our Savior's Love." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Kwok Yuen Tai of the Seventy, who comes from Hong Kong. This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brothers and sisters wherever you may be, my dear friends and associates in this great work, as you can well understand, this for me is a most solemn and sacred occasion. Humbly I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit as I struggle to share with you the feelings of my heart. If in the circumstances I speak unduly much in a personal vein, I hope you will excuse me. I shall then try to put the first person singular behind me.

The passing of President Hunter

We have mourned in recent days the passing of our beloved friend and leader, Howard William Hunter, the fourteenth President of the Church and prophet to the people. His tenure in office was brief, but the impression for good that he left was tremendous. Mild of manner, quiet in his ways, he was nonetheless a man whose strong convictions of the truth of

this work made him powerfully persuasive in his advocacy of the Christlike life.

He suffered much in his body before he was finally taken from us on the morning of March 3, 1995. More than 25,000 men, women, and children passed by his bier as his body lay in state in the beautiful rotunda of the Church Administration Building. With measured step they came one by one, reverently and with love for the man they had sustained only a few months before.

On Wednesday, March 8, 1995, his funeral services were held in this historic tabernacle and broadcast far and wide. Those services were a fitting memorial to a man of goodness and greatness who now belongs to the ages. Our hearts reach out with love and sympathy to his bereaved widow and to his sons and their families, now spanning three generations. May they be comforted,

sustained, and blessed by Him who declared, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you" (Isaiah 51:12).

Reorganizing the First Presidency

With President Hunter's passing, the First Presidency was dissolved. Brother Monson and I, who had served as his counselors, took our places in the Quorum of the Twelve, which became the presiding authority of the Church.

Three weeks ago today all of the living ordained Apostles gathered in a spirit of fasting and prayer in the upper room of the temple. Here we sang a sacred hymn and prayed together. We partook of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, renewing in that sacred, symbolic testament our covenants and our relationship with Him who is our divine Redeemer. The Presidency was then reorganized, following a precedent well established through generations of the past. There was no campaigning, no contest, no ambition for office. It was quiet, peaceful, simple, and sacred. It was done after the pattern which the Lord Himself had put in place.

We have received from many people expressions of congratulations and confidence. These have come from members of the Church and from those not of our faith. To one and all I express my deep appreciation. I know full well that it is not the man whom they compliment but, rather, the office.

Yesterday morning members of the Church across the world met together in a solemn assembly. You raised your hands, without compulsion and of your own free will, to confirm the action taken by the Apostles three weeks ago and to sustain those called to serve.

As you know, mine has been the special privilege to serve as a counselor to three great Presidents. I think I know something of the meaning of heavy responsibility. But with all of that, I have,

during these past few days, been overwhelmed with feelings of inadequacy and total dependency upon the Lord, who is my head and whose church this is; upon the strength of these good men who are my counselors; upon my dear Brethren of the Twelve, of the Seventy, and of the Presiding Bishopric; and upon the membership of the Church throughout the world. I search for words to express the depth of my gratitude and my appreciation and my love.

Years ago I gave a talk on the loneliness of leadership. Now for the first time I realize the full import of that loneliness. I do not know why this mantle has fallen upon my shoulders. I suppose some of you may also wonder. But we are here.

Valiant pioneer forebears

In circumstances such as these, one's searching thoughts go back over all of the years of one's life and even beyond. I am of only the third generation in the Church. My grandfather as a boy was baptized in the summer of 1836 in Ontario, Canada. His widowed mother eventually brought her two boys to Springfield, Illinois. From there my grandfather walked to Nauvoo, where he listened to the Prophet Joseph Smith. When the exodus of our people occurred in 1846, he was an eighteen-year-old youth of strength and capacity and faith. He was a skilled builder of wagons and a blacksmith. He was among those whom President Young requested to remain for a time in Iowa to assist those still on the westward trail. He married in 1848 and set out for this valley in the spring of 1850.

Somewhere along that wearisome trail, his young wife sickened and died. With his own hands he dug a grave, split logs to make a coffin, lovingly buried her, then tearfully took their eleven-month-old child in his arms and marched on to this valley.

He was among those who repeatedly were called by President Young to undertake a variety of difficult assignments incident to the establishment of our people in these mountain valleys. He served as president of the Millard Stake of Zion when there were only a handful of stakes, and when it included a vast area of central Utah, traveling thousands of miles by horse and buggy in the discharge of his ministry. He gave so generously of his substance in the establishment of schools that his once substantial estate was small at the time of his death.

Gratitude for parents, wife, and children

My father was similarly a man of great faith who served the Church without reservation in many trusted capacities. For a number of years he presided over what was then the largest stake in the Church, with more than 15,000 members. My mother and grandmothers were likewise women of great faith whose lives were not always easy because of requirements made upon them by the Church. But they did not complain. They met their responsibilities with cheerfulness and devotion.

For these forebears I feel a great sense of gratitude and love and an almost overwhelming obligation to keep the trust which they have passed. To my beloved wife of fifty-eight years later this month, I express appreciation. How empty our lives would be without these, our wonderful companions. How grateful I am for this precious woman who has walked at my side through sunshine and storm. We do not stand as tall as we once did. But there has been no shrinkage in our love one for another.

I likewise speak with gratitude for my children and my grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who have honored us with the goodness of their lives.

Gratitude for Church members

And most particularly, to each of you I express my deep appreciation. I have had opportunity to travel far and wide across this church during the thirty-seven years of my service as a General Authority. Everywhere I have gone, I have met wonderful people. There is so much of goodness in the lives of the Latter-day Saints. There are such tremendous expressions of faith in the service which you give. I know something of the sacrifices made by many of you. I wish I had the capacity to express my feelings of love and gratitude for you. I stand as your servant and pledge to you and to the Lord my very best effort as I ask for your continuing faith and prayers and uplifted hands.

I am fully aware that I am not a young man as I shoulder the responsibilities of this sacred office. Sister Hinckley and I are learning that the so-called golden years are laced with lead. But I think I can honestly say that I do not feel old. I cannot repudiate my birth certificate, but I can still experience a great, almost youthful exuberance in my enthusiasm for this precious work of the Almighty.

Expression of love

I love the people of this church of all ages, of all races, and of many nations.

I love the children. They are very much the same the world over. Regardless of the color of their skin and of the circumstances in which they live, they carry with them a beauty that comes of innocence and of the fact that it was not long ago that they lived with their Father in Heaven. How lovely you are, wherever you are, you precious children.

I love the youth of the Church. I have said again and again that I think we have never had a better generation than this. How grateful I am for your integ-

rity, for your ambition to train your minds and your hands to do good work, for your love for the word of the Lord, and for your desire to walk in paths of virtue and truth and goodness.

I have tremendous respect for fathers and mothers who are nurturing their children in light and truth, who have prayer in their homes, who spare the rod and govern with love, who look upon their little ones as their most valued assets to be protected, trained, and blessed.

I love the elderly who have faced into the storms of life and who, regardless of the force of the tempest, have gone forward and kept the faith. May your older years be filled with happiness and with satisfying remembrance of lives well lived.

Be faithful in doing the Lord's work

Now, my brethren and sisters, in conclusion I wish to leave with you one thought which I hope you will never forget.

This church does not belong to its President. Its head is the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name each of us has taken upon ourselves. We are all in this great endeavor together. We are here to assist our Father in His work and His glory, "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence. All of us in the pursuit of our duty touch the lives of others. To each of us in our respective responsibilities the Lord has said:

"Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

"And in doing these things thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and wilt promote the glory of him who is your Lord" (D&C 81:4).

Further, "And if thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality, and eternal life in the mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father" (D&C 81:6).

All of us in this great cause are of one mind, of one belief, of one faith.

You have as great an opportunity for satisfaction in the performance of your duty as I do in mine. The progress of this work will be determined by our joint efforts. Whatever your calling, it is as fraught with the same kind of opportunity to accomplish good as is mine. What is really important is that this is the work of the Master. Our work is to go about doing good, as did He.

If in my service I have offended anyone, I offer my apology. To those who for any reason find yourselves outside the embrace of the Church you once enjoyed, I invite you to return and partake of the happiness you once knew. You will find many with outstretched arms to warmly welcome you and assist you.

Respect people of other faiths

I plead with our people everywhere to live with respect and appreciation for those not of our faith. There is so great a need for civility and mutual respect among those of differing beliefs and philosophies. We must not be partisans of any doctrine of ethnic superiority. We live in a world of diversity. We can and must be respectful toward those with whose teachings we may not agree. We must be willing to defend the rights of others who may become the victims of bigotry.

I call attention to these striking words of Joseph Smith spoken in 1843:

"If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a 'Mormon,' I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for

the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination" (*History of the Church*, 5:498).

A time to become more Christlike

Now, my brethren and sisters, the time has come for us to stand a little taller, to lift our eyes and stretch our minds to a greater comprehension and understanding of the grand millennial mission of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is a season to be strong. It is a time to move forward without hesitation, knowing well the meaning, the breadth, and the importance of our mission. It is a time to do what is right regardless of the consequences that might follow. It is a time to be found keeping the commandments. It is a season to reach out with kindness and love to those in distress and to those who are wandering in darkness and pain. It is a time to be considerate and good, decent and courteous toward one another in all of our relationships—in other words, to become more Christlike.

We have nothing to fear. God is at the helm. He will overrule for the good of this work. He will shower down blessings upon those who walk in obedience to His commandments. Such has been His promise. Of His ability to keep that promise none of us can doubt.

This is the work of the Almighty

The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands, as seen in Daniel's vision, is rolling forth to fill the whole earth (see Daniel 2:44–45). No force under the heavens can stop it

if we will walk in righteousness and be faithful and true. The Almighty Himself is at our head. Our Savior, who is our Redeemer, the Great Jehovah, the mighty Messiah, has promised: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

"Therefore," said He, "fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . .

"Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

"Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven" (D&C 6:34, 36–37).

Unitedly, working hand in hand, we shall move forward as servants of the living God, doing the work of His Beloved Son, our Master, whom we serve and whose name we seek to glorify.

I repeat, this, my brethren and sisters, is the work of the Almighty. He lives, our Father and our friend. It is the work of our Redeemer, who out of a love beyond comprehension gave His life for each of us. It is a divine work restored through a chosen prophet. It is a work to which we dedicate our lives as we invoke choice blessings upon you, our beloved associates, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Our Savior's Love."

Elder Kwok Yuen Tai offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 165th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 2, 1995. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked me, Brother Monson, to conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 165th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We note that Elders Neal A. Maxwell, William R. Bradford, and Augusto A. Lim are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Alexander B. Morrison and Jay E. Jensen are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and to many

friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Donald Ripplinger and accompanied by John Longhurst, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin the service this day by singing "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise." The invocation will then be offered by Elder John M. Madsen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise."

Elder John M. Madsen offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Faith of Our Fathers," after which Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Faith of Our Fathers."

Elder L. Tom Perry

Marriage, a divine institution

Aren't these flowers beautiful as they surround this pulpit? Just showing the good and ill in the world, though, they're also loaded with pollen!

Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God. Achieving success in the home is a supernal challenge—no other success can compensate for it. Unless, however, a husband and wife learn to work together as one, marriage can also be an infernal ordeal. There are too many unhappy marriages in the

world today. There are too many marriages that do not stay the course, ending prematurely in divorce. There are too many children who are silently suffering from a lack of nurturing and care because their parents' union is unhappy or dissolved.

Before God created woman, He knew that man should not be alone. Following the creation of Eve, the first woman, the Lord instituted the union of marriage, then instructed the first man, Adam, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave

unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Adam learned that the bonds of marriage are stronger than any other family bond. The sacred bonds of marriage invite unity, fidelity, respect, and mutual support. We know from the scriptures that Adam and Eve learned this lesson. At the time they were cast out of the garden, it is recorded "that Adam began to till the earth, and to have dominion over all the beasts of the field, and to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, as I the Lord had commanded him. And Eve, also, his wife, did labor with him" (Moses 5:1).

No single issue causes more concern among the leaders of churches and the leaders of nations than the alarming rate of breakup of marriages today. Statistics show that strong marriages produce strong families. The breakup of the family is causing serious social problems that are destroying our communities—including increases in poverty, crime, and delinquency.

The union between husband and wife is not something to be trifled with. The marriage covenant is essential for the Lord to accomplish His divine purposes. Consistently the Lord has declared that His divine laws were instituted to safeguard and protect the holy union between husband and wife.

Much of what we learn as members of the Church is by example. We learn as much from our prophets from what they do as what they say. Watching President Kimball, President Benson, and President Hunter, the men of the Church have learned volumes about how they should treat their wives—with gentleness, kindness, and devotion. The women of the Church have learned a related lesson as they have observed the wives of these great prophets. They have learned how to be poised and accomplished individuals while remaining supporting helpmates to their husbands. The sweet

relationship of President and Sister Hinckley offers both the men and women of the Church a marvelous example to observe and emulate.

Sister Hinckley, an elect lady

Much will be said, written, and recorded about President Hinckley during the time he presides over the Church. Much less will be recorded about his dear companion, Marjorie. For you who have not had the opportunity of meeting Sister Hinckley, I would like to tell you something about her. What an example she has been and will continue to be to the women of the Church and to all the world. She is such a loyal, supportive companion to our President.

Sister Hinckley's great-grandfather

Sister Hinckley's roots sink deeply into rich pioneer soil, leaving an indelible imprint on her life and character. She wrote this about her great-grandfather:

"On a beautiful Sunday morning in the fall of 1841, my great-grandfather, William Minshall Evans, then sixteen years of age, was walking down the streets of Liverpool, England, on his way to church. Suddenly he heard singing that thrilled him beyond anything he had ever heard before. He followed the sound down an alley and up some rickety stairs into a room where a few people were holding a meeting. John Taylor, who later became president of the Church and who had a beautiful tenor voice, was the singer. The song he sang was so beautiful that William remained to hear the sermon.

"Upon returning home, William was reprimanded by his elder brother, David, for being absent from his accustomed place in the choir. Asked to give an account of himself, William replied, 'I have been where you should have been, and I shall not be satisfied until you all hear

the wonderful truth I have heard this morning."

"... William and David were converted to the gospel, and then helped convert other members of their family" (Marjorie P. Hinckley, "Music Was the Missionary," *Ensign*, July 1981, p. 48).

Sister Hinckley commented, "I never sing the hymns of the Church without remembering that it was the singing of a hymn that opened the door to the gospel for my family and made it possible for me to enjoy all the blessings that have followed" (p. 48).

Sister Hinckley's grandfather

President Hinckley shared the following story about Sister Hinckley's grandfather at the rededication of the Manti Temple. He said:

"Yesterday morning as we came here, Sister Hinckley and I were brought to the east temple door. They wanted to get us in quietly, I guess. But in any event we were brought privately to the east temple door, and the door was opened. There are two of them there (two sets of them), but the one we came through was opened—a very, very heavy door, some three inches thick, beautifully milled, beautifully put together, beautifully hung on substantial hardware. And it was a very touching experience because her grandfather, who was a young man then, at the time twenty-four years of age, married with one child and another one coming, hung those doors. And in the course of hanging those very heavy doors he suffered a hernia which became strangulated. He suffered terrible pain for a few days and died, literally a martyr to the faith which had prompted him to work on this temple as a finish carpenter over a long period of time, for which he received no compensation other than a pound of butter or a dozen eggs now and again" (fifth session, 15 June 1985).

We catch a glimpse from these two stories about Sister Hinckley's ancestors

of her special heritage and of her unique character. You see, Sister Hinckley has the same sensitivity to the Spirit as her great-grandfather and the same spirit of work and sacrifice as her grandfather.

Support of husband and children

Over the years my wife and I have had the privilege of traveling on many assignments with President and Sister Hinckley. In our travels we have always found Sister Hinckley so positive and cheerful. Her enthusiastic and supportive attitude clearly lifts her husband. Often the trips have been long and tiring. Schedules may not have been ideal. Accommodations may not have been four-star, sometimes way below. But in the midst of turmoil, discomfort, or challenge, Sister Hinckley has maintained her composure and her naturally happy disposition. Each time we would step off a plane to greet the Saints at a new destination, her kind and loving spirit was contagious. She has set a standard of support for priesthood-leader husbands that literally brings out the best in them.

Sister Barbara Smith made this observation when President and Sister Hinckley, accompanied by their children, were celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary while he was fulfilling an assignment:

"On a typical evening, [President Hinckley] would be exhausted after a day of meetings, including the evening meal with local leaders. [Sister Hinckley] would attend to the conversation of her husband and the leaders for a time, then slip quietly away to be sure that all was well with her family.

"[You can] sense in this pattern the careful way that Sister Hinckley has been able, over the years, to respond to the needs of her children while at the same time supporting her husband in his critical role in the work of our Father's kingdom" (Barbara B. Smith and Shirley

W. Thomas, *Women of Devotion* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990], p. 5).

What an example she is to the wives of priesthood leaders all over the world!

With all of the pressures of Church service thrust on the Hinckley family, Sister Hinckley has always maintained a balance between her two eternal callings—those of wife and mother. Her success in the role as a mother is evidenced by the Hinckley children—Dick, Clark, Kathleen, Virginia, and Jane. Each child is a credit to their parents.

Motherhood, the noblest of all callings

Sister Hinckley has said this about motherhood:

"It is the mothers of young children I would like to address first. These are golden years for you. These are years when you will probably do the most important work of your lives. Don't wish away your years of caring for small children. Life is what happens to you while you are making other plans. This is a time of great opportunity for you to build the kingdom. When you teach children to love their Heavenly Father, you have done one of the greatest things you will ever do. If you can be a full-time homemaker, be grateful. If not, you must do what is best for you. I for one have never felt a need to apologize for my role as a full-time homemaker.

"These are busy, busy days for you. I have seen women in all kinds of circumstances—Chinese women working on road repairs, European women working in the fields, Asian women sweeping streets—but it is my opinion that . . . Mormon women are among the hardest working women in the world. They plant gardens and [they] bottle the produce; they sew and bargain shop. They go on the heart fund drive. They take dinners to new mothers and the sick in their neighborhoods. They take care of aged parents. They climb Mount Timpanogos

with Cub Scouts, go to Little League games, sit on the piano bench while Jennie practices, do temple work, and worry about getting their journals up-to-date. My heart bursts with pride when I see them come into church on Sunday, some as early as 8:30 in the morning, their children all clean and shiny, their arms loaded with supplies, as they head for classes where they teach other women's children. They scrub their houses with little or no domestic help and then try to be the glamour girl in their husband's life when he arrives home at night. But remember, my dear young friends, that you are now doing the work that God intended you to do. Be grateful for the opportunity" ("Building the Kingdom from a Firm Foundation," in Mary E. Stovall and Carol Cornwall Madsen, eds., *As Women of Faith: Talks Selected from the BYU Women's Conferences* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989], p. 5).

Motherhood is the noblest and greatest of all callings.

A worthy role model

Sister Hinckley, you are an inspiration to all of us. You are diligent in seeking after the truths the Lord has revealed for our growth and development here in mortality. Your desire to know these truths has kept you busy studying the gospel. When the opportunity has availed itself, you have regularly signed up for institute classes to deepen your knowledge. That knowledge is clearly in evidence as you speak and teach the Saints. It is especially apparent when you stand before groups of full-time missionaries. Here you are at your best. How you inspire them, and how they respond to your instructions.

With all of the confusion existing in the world today over the role of women, you stand as a worthy role model for those who are still struggling to find the right balance in life. May they listen

when you declare how great it is to be eighty years of age because you can look back on a life filled with accomplishment, growth, understanding, faith, support, and fulfillment. You have said:

"Contrary to rumor, these *are* golden years, if you have a measure of good health. At this age, my dear contemporaries, we no longer have to compete with anyone. We don't have to prove anything—we just have to enjoy it all. How many of you have told your children how wonderful it is to be this age?" ("Building the Kingdom," p. 10).

President Hinckley paid this compliment to you as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles met in the Salt Lake Temple on the day he was ordained and set apart as President of the Church. In the part that I remember, he said: "She is a woman of great faith. She is a wonderful mother. How I love her."

Sister Hinckley, you are a wonderful example to all of us. May the Lord continue to bless you with good health and a long, long life. May each of us catch the enthusiastic spirit you have for the gospel of our Lord and Savior, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us. Elder Perry, we endorse everything you've said about Sister Hinckley. She's a wonderful woman in the Church.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, who was sustained at October conference as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Rebuilding a damaged life

Recently while traveling on an unfamiliar road, I encountered a large temporary sign declaring Rough Road Ahead, and indeed it was. Had I not been warned, that experience would have been disastrous. Life is like that. It's full of rough spots. Some are tests to make us stronger. Others result from our own disobedience. Helpful warnings in our personal life can also save us from disaster. A damaged road presents the same obstacles to every traveler until others repair it. The highway of life is different. Each one of us encounters unique challenges meant for growth. Also, our own bad choices can put more barriers in the path. Yet we have the capacity to smooth out the way, to fill in the depressions, and to beautify our

course. The process is called repentance; the destination is forgiveness.

If you have ignored warnings and your life has been damaged or disabled by a rough road, there is help available. Through that help you can renew and rebuild your damaged life. You can start over again and change your course from a downward, twisting, disappointing path to a superhighway to peace and happiness.

I want to help you find that relief. To do that it is necessary to give you some background information that will make the remedy more logical and the steps to healing more meaningful.

Understand the Atonement

Every incorrect choice we make, every sin we commit is a violation of eternal law. That violation generally brings

negative results we soon recognize. There are also other consequences of our acts of which we may not be conscious. They are nonetheless real. They can have a tremendous effect on the quality of our life here and most certainly will powerfully affect it hereafter. We can do nothing of ourselves to satisfy the demands of justice for a broken eternal law. Yet unless the demands of justice are paid, each of us will suffer endless negative consequences.

Only the life, teachings, and particularly the atonement of Jesus Christ can release us from this otherwise impossible predicament. Each of us has made mistakes, large or small, which if unresolved will keep us from the presence of God. For this reason the atonement of Jesus Christ is the single most significant event that ever has or ever will occur. This selfless act of infinite consequence, performed by a single glorified personage, has eternal impact in the life of every son and daughter of our Father in Heaven—without exception.¹ It shatters the bonds of death. It justifies our finally being judged by the Master.² It can prevent an eternity under the control of the devil.³ It opens the gates to exaltation and eternal life for all who qualify for forgiveness through repentance and obedience.⁴

The Redeemer can settle your individual account with justice and grant forgiveness through the merciful path of repentance.⁵ Full repentance is absolutely essential for the Atonement to work its complete miracle in your life. By understanding the Atonement, you will see that God is not a jealous being who delights in persecuting those who misstep. He is an absolutely perfect, compassionate, understanding, patient, and forgiving Father. He is willing to entreat, counsel, strengthen, lift, and fortify. He so loves each of us that He was willing to have His perfect, sinless, absolutely obedient, totally righteous

Son experience indescribable agony and pain and give Himself in sacrifice for all.⁶ Through that atonement we can live in a world where absolute justice reigns in its sphere so the world will have order. But that justice is tempered through mercy attainable by obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Repentance is the path to forgiveness

Which of us is not in need of the miracle of repentance? Whether your life is lightly blemished or heavily disfigured from mistakes, the principles of recovery are the same. The length and severity of the treatments are conditioned to fit the circumstances. Our goal surely must be forgiveness. The only possible path to that goal is repentance, for it is written:

"There is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. . . ."

"The Lord [will] not come to redeem [His people] in their sins, but to redeem them from their sins.

"And he hath power given unto him from the Father to redeem them from their sins because of repentance."⁷

Obedience and faith in the Savior give you power to resist temptation. Helaman taught, "It is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to . . . endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, . . . whereon if men build they cannot fall."⁸

Forgiveness comes through repentance. What is repentance? How is it accomplished? What are its consequences? These may seem to be simple questions, but it is clear that many do not know how to repent.

Follow the steps of repentance

In *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Spencer W. Kimball gives a superb guide to forgiveness through repentance. It has helped many find their way back. He identifies five essential elements of repentance:

Sorrow for sin. Study and ponder to determine how serious the Lord defines your transgression to be. That will bring healing sorrow and remorse. It will also bring a sincere desire for change and a willingness to submit to every requirement for forgiveness. Alma taught, "Justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved."⁹

Abandonment of sin. This is an unyielding, permanent resolve to not repeat the transgression. By keeping this commitment, the bitter aftertaste of that sin need not be experienced again. Remember, "But unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return."¹⁰ Joseph Smith declared: "Repentance is a thing that cannot be trifled with every day. Daily transgression and daily repentance is not . . . pleasing in the sight of God."¹¹

Confession of sin. You always need to confess your sins to the Lord. If they are serious transgressions, such as immorality, they need to be confessed to a bishop or stake president. Please understand that confession is not repentance. It is an essential step but is not of itself adequate. Partial confession by mentioning lesser mistakes will not help you resolve a more serious, undisclosed transgression. Essential to forgiveness is a willingness to fully disclose to the Lord and, where necessary, His priesthood judge *all* that you have done. Remember, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."¹²

Restitution for sin. You must restore as far as possible all that which is stolen,

damaged, or defiled. Willing restitution is concrete evidence to the Lord that you are committed to do all you can to repent.

Obedience to all the commandments. Full obedience brings the complete power of the gospel into your life with strength to focus on the abandonment of specific sins. It includes things you might not initially consider part of repentance, such as attending meetings, paying tithing, giving service, and forgiving others. The Lord said, "He that repents and *does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven.*"¹³

I would add a sixth step: *Recognition of the Savior.* Of all the necessary steps to repentance, I testify that the most critically important is for you to have a conviction that forgiveness comes because of the Redeemer. It is essential to know that only on His terms can you be forgiven. Witness Alma's declaration: "I was . . . in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But . . . I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul."¹⁴ You will be helped as you exercise *faith in Jesus Christ.*¹⁵ That means you trust Him and you trust His teachings. Satan would have you believe that serious transgression cannot be entirely overcome. The Savior gave His life so that the effects of all transgression can be put behind us, save the shedding of innocent blood and the denial of the Holy Ghost.

The fruit of true repentance is forgiveness, which opens the door to receive all of the covenants and ordinances provided on this earth and to enjoy the resulting blessings. When a repentant soul is baptized, all former sins are forgiven and need not be remembered. When repentance is full and one has been cleansed, there comes a new vision of life and its glorious possibilities. How marvelous the promise of the Lord:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."¹⁶ The Lord is and ever will be faithful to His words.

Serious sins require deep repentance

Do not take comfort in the fact that your transgressions are not known by others. That is like an ostrich with his head buried in the sand. He sees only darkness and feels comfortably hidden. In reality he is ridiculously conspicuous. Likewise our every act is seen by our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son. They know everything about us.

Adultery, fornication, committing homosexual acts, and other deviations approaching these in gravity are not acceptable alternate lifestyles. They are serious sins. Committing physical and sexual abuse are major sins. Such grave sins require deep repentance to be forgiven. President Kimball taught: "To every forgiveness there is a condition. The plaster must be as wide as the sore. The fasting, the prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin."¹⁷ "It is unthinkable that God absolves serious sins upon a few requests. He is likely to wait until there has been long, sustained repentance."¹⁸

If you have seriously transgressed, you will not find any lasting satisfaction or comfort in what you have done. Excusing transgression with a cover-up may appear to fix the problem, but it does not. The tempter is intent on making public your most embarrassing acts at the most harmful time. Lies weave a pattern that is ever more confining and becomes a trap that Satan will spring to your detriment.

Repent now

Sometimes the steps of repentance are initially difficult and painful, like the cleansing of a soiled garment. Yet they produce purity, peace of mind, self-

respect, hope, and, finally, a new person with a renewed life and abundance of opportunity.

This scripture will help you know what to do: "Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, . . . because of their yielding their hearts unto God."¹⁹

In closing, with all the tenderness and sincerity of heart I invite each one of you to thoughtfully review your life. Have you deviated from the standards that you know will bring happiness? Is there a dark corner that needs to be cleaned out? Are you now doing things that you know are wrong? Do you fill your mind with unclean thoughts? When it is quiet and you can think clearly, does your conscience tell you to repent?

For your peace now and for everlasting happiness, please repent. Open your heart to the Lord and ask Him to help you. You will earn the blessing of forgiveness, peace, and the knowledge you have been purified and made whole. Find the courage to ask the Lord for strength to repent *now*. I solemnly witness that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer. I know that He lives. I testify that He loves you personally and will help you.

Obtain His forgiveness by repenting *now*. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Mosiah 5:10-13.
2. See 2 Nephi 2:10.
3. See 2 Nephi 9:7-9.
4. See 2 Nephi 2:5-8.
5. See Alma 42:15.
6. See Helaman 5:9.
7. Helaman 5:9-11; italics added.
8. Helaman 5:12.
9. Alma 42:24.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 82:7.
11. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 148.

12. Proverbs 28:13.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:32; italics added.
14. Alma 38:8.
15. See Alma 11:40; 2 Nephi 9:22–24.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
17. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), p. 353.
18. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), p. 85.
19. Helaman 3:35.

Sister Bonnie D. Parkin

Celebrating covenants

President Hinckley, as a leader of the young women of the Church, may I speak for them in saying we love, support, and sustain you as our prophet.

Dear brothers and sisters, standing here so soon after my call is much like being thrown into a mountain lake of glacial runoff—I am still getting used to the shock. You see, I am the mother of sons. Four sons. That's right. Sons. You'd think that I would have been called to be the general den mother. Instead, my long desire for daughters has been filled twice: first with four fantastic daughters-in-law, and second with half a million young women around the world. Each one is unique and individually numbered and known in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. How do I know this? Because Heavenly Father has reached His tender hand from the heavens to hold and help me, Bonnie Parkin. Because the light of His Son has warmed my soul. Because I have made promises and covenants that have transformed my life as I've kept them.

Have covenants renewed your life? Do you celebrate them?

Celebrating a granddaughter's blessing

Recently we went to Pasadena, California, to the blessing of our first granddaughter, Jordan Emily. This was a unique experience for two reasons: First, my husband and I thought the Parkins were unable to have girls. And second, this blessing was the first official step

in her mortality as a daughter of God. We feel so much joy as we anticipate the potential her life holds here.

Jordan was fortunate. She was born to her parents who were sealed in the temple under the new and everlasting covenant. Provided her parents remain true to this agreement, Jordan will be beneficiary to those covenants by being in a home filled mostly with peace, love, protection, and understanding. Being born in the covenant is not the privilege of all members of the Church, but the blessings of the covenant will be made available to all who are worthy of them.

We hope little Jordan's life as a faithful Latter-day Saint will move from a baby receiving a priesthood blessing, to a child of God receiving baptismal covenants, to a young woman keeping those first promises and preparing to be worthy and qualified to make and keep sacred covenants, to a woman entering into temple covenants, to a wife being sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, and finally to an exalted daughter returning home to our Heavenly Father's open arms. This is our journey as Saints.

What are covenants?

So often we talk of making and keeping covenants, but exactly what are they? At baptism we demonstrate that we "are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; . . . mourn with those that mourn; . . . comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and . . . stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah

18:8-9). And that's just the beginning! In the temple we further covenant to be obedient, to sacrifice, to keep ourselves worthily pure, to contribute to the spreading of truth, to be chaste, to pray, to live the gospel, and to be forever faithful.

Heaven's emphasis is on individuals

Father in Heaven knows us as individuals. The covenants we make with Him are performed one-on-one. President Howard W. Hunter noted:

"I have always been impressed that the Lord deals with us personally, individually. We do many things in groups in the Church, . . . but . . . the *most* important things . . . are done individually. We bless babies one at a time, even if they are twins or triplets. We baptize and confirm children one at a time. We take the sacrament, are ordained to the priesthood, or move through the ordinances of the temple as individuals—as one person developing a [personal] relationship with our Father in Heaven. . . . *Heaven's emphasis is on each individual, on every single person*" ("Eternal Investments" [address to CES religious educators, 10 Feb. 1989], p. 4; italics added).

Covenants should bless our daily lives

These individual commitments made directly with our Heavenly Father are things to celebrate and consecrate! Do you remember what happened when Alma invited his people to make these covenants? They celebrated! They "clapped their hands with joy." I wonder why our covenants so often feel more like obligations than privileges.

How did you feel the last time you partook of the sacrament? Did you ponder those covenants made in fonts and within temples? The sacrament enables us to renew our covenants. Thus, if we keep those covenants with honor and exactness, we can feel as fresh and as pure as we did when we were first bap-

tized. We can feel as committed to a temple sealing as we did as a new bride or groom. We can feel as loved of God as our sweet little Jordan did when she received her name and blessing. Covenants keep us new.

Do those covenants change the actions of our *daily* lives? They should, even though it may be a struggle to keep them.

Covenants anchor us during adversity

We hear of Saints who hold on to their covenants even against great odds and in so doing find renewal and peace—not just in the life to come but in *this* life—because just like covenant breaking, covenant keeping becomes habit-forming.

We have all been victims of evil and unrighteousness, pain and suffering. I know a woman who was a victim. Her husband chose to be unfaithful to her. She suffered and she was in pain. It took many years, but life got better for her because she remained faithful to her covenants.

There are both stormy seas and calm waters in life. But as Ether tells us, "Hope cometh of faith, [and] maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God" (Ether 12:4). Covenants anchor us to solid ground, which, amidst the storms, makes our promises *not only meaningful for eternity but vital for today*. Have your covenants moved you to sing the song of redeeming love?

Helping youth keep covenants

At a Relief Society meeting a group of women were discussing how to teach youth to make and keep covenants. One woman, who was struggling with a teenage daughter, listened as the women talked about faith, prayer, good example, and scriptures. Finally she blurted

out, "I've tried all those things! And they're not working!" Quietly she added, "Love is all that is working for us right now." This good sister trusted that somehow her covenant to be charitable (even to her daughter) would make a difference. And it is.

Another young woman, Katie, was at camp. She felt angry and abandoned because of overwhelming family problems. Her testimony teetered in serious jeopardy. But a concerned leader, in an effort to live up to his holy calling, wrote Katie a note saying, "I love you. I believe in you. You have a testimony, because I have heard you bear it in these ways." Then he listed those ways. The note arrived at the right time; Katie was strengthened to live *her* covenants because someone else strived to live his.

Mark, a high school student in my ward, recently stood in fast meeting and talked about how he was finding strength to live his covenants. He summed it up with this formula succinctly and memorably. He said, "A scripture a day keeps Satan away."

Blessings of covenant keeping

What are the rewards of covenant keeping? Gentle-hearted King Benjamin said: "Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ. . . . And under this head ye are made free" (Mosiah 5:7-8). And we will "be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that [we] may have eternal life" (Mosiah 18:9).

Brothers and sisters, covenant keeping will help you recall the One with whom you're yoked, and your burden will be lighter.

If you have slipped in your covenants, take heart! The Savior so wants us to fulfill our promises that He has provided an everlasting atonement. If your heart is not singing the song of re-

deeming love, return to your covenants. Celebrate them. Like our new granddaughter, you too can be pure. The renewal of your covenants will awaken you like cold glacial waters on a hot day. Then remember, millions of Church members all around the globe are daily keeping covenants against all odds. *You can too.*

If you remember only one thing I say today, remember to *hold on to your covenants and celebrate them*. My covenants are an expression of my faith; they are why I stand before you today. Covenants help me focus on the big picture and not just on the immediate. As my sons have served missions, I have seen covenants further the work of the Lord. Covenants help me make a difference in the lives of others. My covenants are not negotiable. They make the choice of righteousness easier. I humbly pray that our covenants might become a greater source of celebration and strength in our lives; that we may walk uprightly and steadfastly, that when we most need the Lord's hand, it will be there waiting warmly. I treasure the covenants He has made with me and with all my heart hope to live faithful to them. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Now Let Us Rejoice," after which Elder Andrew W. Peterson, who was sustained at October conference as a member of the Seventy, will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."

Elder Andrew W. Peterson

Easter reflections

In two weeks we will celebrate Easter. Our thoughts and feelings will, hopefully, focus on Jesus Christ. For many people this will be another Easter that will casually come and casually go. For some this Easter will be a season of meditation, reflection, and appreciation.

There is one special Easter that I vividly recall, experienced twenty-seven years ago as a missionary serving in the North Argentine Mission. Our mission had sent missionaries into southern Bolivia. That Easter Sunday 1968 I spent in Quiriza, Bolivia, a small village nestled in the foothills of the Altiplano of southern Bolivia. I remember the preparations made by the villagers for that Easter. The mood, the music, the feel of that moment still linger with me to this day.

Early on Easter Sunday morning, Elder Arce asked me if I would accompany him to visit an investigator family. Shortly thereafter we walked down the dirt streets of that small village with adobe homes lining the way. We visited the family, reviewing important questions such as, Where do we come from? Why are we here? and Where are we going? We drew pictures with our fingers in the dirt floor. The Spirit was present. A baptismal invitation was extended and accepted. A beautiful baptismal service was held that afternoon. We baptized in the nearby muddy waters of the San Juan de Oro River. Seasons are reversed in South America. When it is springtime here, it is fall there.

Those being baptized disappeared behind large, freshly cut stacks of cornstalks, only to reappear dressed in beautiful white baptismal clothing. Their brown skin, black hair, and radiant smiles still linger to this day in my mind's eye. The power of that Easter Sunday still

moistens my eyes as I reflect on the universality of Christ's invitation to all to come unto Him.

Fulfilling missionary promises

For me, to have administered in His name as a missionary among those people prompted thoughts of Jesus talking to His disciples during His earthly ministry. He said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

Before we left Quiriza, Bolivia, for Argentina, we offered a special prayer. Accompanied by a dear missionary companion, kneeling on a dirt soccer field under the stars, the two of us took turns pouring out our hearts to our Heavenly Father. There were expressions of love and gratitude for the people, for our mission president, and for the privilege of being missionaries. Promises were made to help the people.

The years since my mission have provided opportunities for the fulfillment of those missionary promises. I returned home to marry my high school sweetheart, Christine Swensen. She is a wonderful companion, and I love her dearly. As a registered nurse she worked helping us to get through dental school. As school was drawing to a close and our sixth wedding anniversary was upon us, we were still without children. Then a door opened and an opportunity presented itself, and Ashley came into our lives—our dear, precious Ashley.

A year later we traveled to Bolivia to bring Joshua home from an orphanage. He was two years old. I can still see that beautiful little boy walking to me with outstretched arms, saying, "Papa, Papa."

Megan then joined us, not even twenty-four hours old when we brought

her home. Then back to Bolivia for Daniel, five months old when we held him for the first time.

Several years later, while I was presiding over the Mexico Merida Mission, Jennifer joined our family—a beautiful two-week-old Guatemalan baby girl born in Mexico. She opened the hearts of our missionaries and members in southern Mexico. Natalie Joy came into our family three weeks before our mission ended. Her middle name, Joy, is an eternal reminder of the witness we received that she should be included in our family.

After sixteen years of marriage and six adoptions, Anne and Andrew naturally joined our family, to the joy and happiness of their brothers and sisters. As a family we are forever grateful for the binding and sealing effect the temple provides for the members of Jesus Christ's church.

With special promises made to the Lord under the stars in Bolivia at Easter time 1968, there is not a day goes by but that Chris and I embrace our children and feel of God's love for all of His children. And now, as with Easter 1968, for me Easter season 1995 will be one never to be forgotten.

Remembrances of President Hunter

Six months ago as members of the Church we sustained President Howard W. Hunter as the fourteenth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I was sustained in that conference as a new Seventy. In early March, President Hunter passed away. My mind is fresh with remembrances of him. We will never forget President Hunter telling our children at the time I was set apart: "We love you. We want you to feel comfortable around us. We want you to feel like we are family." Following our setting apart, President Hunter and his counselors, President Hinckley and President Monson, shook hands with each of

our children—a treasured moment. Six months following that setting apart, I now stand before you for the first time to speak as a General Authority in the Tabernacle.

Reflections on President Hinckley

And President Gordon B. Hinckley has been sustained as the fifteenth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

During a visit twenty-seven years ago to South America, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley spoke to missionaries. He was younger then. He had served but seven years as an Apostle. He shared a scripture and extended an invitation. He taught from 2 Timothy: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (1:7-8).

Elder Hinckley invited missionaries to not fear and not be ashamed of their testimonies of Jesus Christ. His invitation penetrated my heart as a missionary then and is equally important to me and to you this day. The Lord has raised up a new prophet—one who has no fear, one who is full of power and love and of a sound mind, and one who by example reminds us never to be ashamed of our testimony of the Lord.

May this be an Easter season of meditation, reflection, and appreciation. May we resolve to be obedient to prophetic invitations from those who hold the keys of the kingdom. A favorite hymn says:

There is sunshine in my soul today,
More glorious and bright
Than glows in any earthly sky,
For Jesus is my light.
["There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today," *Hymns*, no. 227]

Jesus is my light. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Andrew W. Peterson, for that beautiful testimony.

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis, also a member of the Seventy, will now speak to us.

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis

A table encircled with love

Much has been written about the importance of the home. Elder Marion G. Romney has told us that "at the heart of society's fatal sickness is the instability of the family."¹ We recognize that some homes are large, graciously appointed, even luxurious. Others are very small and humble, with scant furnishings. Yet each and every "home can be a heav'n on earth when we are filled with love, . . . where we want to be," as one of our beloved hymns reminds us.²

One of the more important furnishings found in most homes is the kitchen table. Now it may be small, it may be large, or in the form of a little counter with barely room to put the food and utensils. Its major function seems to be a place for the different members of the family to receive nourishment.

On this special occasion my desire is to bring your attention to a deeper, more important function for the kitchen table, where we can receive much more than nourishment for our physical well-being.

Gospel discussions around the table

A family generally has two or more members of differing ages, but the family needs to meet—preferably not just to eat but to pray, to talk, to listen, to relate, to learn, and to grow together. President Gordon B. Hinckley has stated it so well:

"My plea—and I wish I were more eloquent in voicing it—is a plea to save the children. Too many of them walk with pain and fear, in loneliness and despair.

Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture. They need kindness and refreshment and affection. Every home, regardless of the cost of the house, can provide an environment of love which will be an environment of salvation."³

Most family members are subjected to the many forces of the world outside of the home, as well as the powerful influence of radio, television, videotapes, and many other things which we bring into our homes.

Picture a family gathering around a table, perhaps the kitchen table, talking about the gospel, talking about the sacrament meetings, the messages, talking about the current *Ensign* or the current *New Era*, talking about school with all of its ramifications, talking about general conference, talking about the Sunday School lessons, listening to good music, talking about Jesus Christ and his teachings. The list could be expanded. Not only parents but all family members would be wise to make certain that each person present has a chance to talk and ample opportunity to participate.

Family prayer around the table

Think of the potential of a family kneeling around a table (without television), praying, pleading for help, thanking our Father for blessings—teaching all ages the importance of a loving Father in Heaven. Family prayer with little ones may well develop older ones who someday will pray with their families.

Elder Thomas S. Monson stated it well:

"The Lord directed that we have family prayer when he said: 'Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.' (3 Nephi 18:21.)

"Will you join me as we look in on a typical Latter-day Saint family offering prayers unto the Lord? Father, mother, and each of the children kneel, bow their heads, and close their eyes. A sweet spirit of love, unity, and peace fills the home. As [a] father hears his tiny son pray unto God that his dad will do the right things and be obedient to the Lord's bidding, do you think that such a father would find it difficult to honor the prayer of his precious son? As a teenage daughter hears her sweet mother plead unto the Lord that her daughter will be inspired in the selection of her companions, that she will prepare herself for a temple marriage, don't you believe that such a daughter will seek to honor this humble, pleading petition of her mother, whom she so dearly loves? When father, mother, and each of the children earnestly pray that these fine sons in the family will live worthy that they may in due time receive a call to serve as ambassadors of the Lord in the mission fields of the Church, don't we begin to see how such sons grow to young manhood with an overwhelming desire to serve as missionaries?"⁴

As many have said, "How could you possibly send your parents and your children out into the world each day without gathering together and talking to the Lord?" Wise parents will examine their schedules and plan at least one time daily to gather the family for the blessings of prayer. Very soon, young members learn how to take their turn and learn the precious values found in family prayer.

Make home a happy place

I have stated before that "home should be a happy place because all work to keep it that way. It is said that

happiness is homemade, and we should endeavor to make our homes happy and pleasant places for us and our children. A happy home is one centered around the teachings of the gospel. This takes constant, careful effort by all concerned."⁵

A busy teenager in a rather large family complained about the amount of time that family prayer was taking. As the wise mother was praying the next day, she intentionally left that youngster out of the prayer. As the prayer concluded, the busy child said, "Mother, you left me out of the prayer!" The loving mother explained that she was just responding to the youngster's complaint. The busy child complained, "Don't leave me out."

Scripture study around the table

Visualize a family surrounding a table with the scriptures open, discussing the many truths and lessons to absorb. This indeed is a table encircled with love!

Educators agree that children need to read much more outside of school. We can bless our children by reading the scriptures with them on a daily basis—at the kitchen table.

To have a time when the family meets at the kitchen table may take considerable adjustment and careful planning, but what could be of more importance to the unity of the family, the spiritual growth of the family, the bridges built between members of a family as they talk, listen, and respond, surrounded by love? Our major success is simply trying—over and over.

Strengthen family ties

There are many forces in the world today seeking to decimate the family and the home. Wise parents will strive to strengthen family ties, increase spirituality in the home, and focus on Jesus

Christ and temple activity. President Hunter has told us:

"I pray that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness. . . .

"Secondly, and in that same spirit, I also invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy."⁶

The direction given by President Hunter can be markedly enhanced by what takes place around the kitchen table.

In our homes we should practice how to treat others. As Goethe said so well, "If you treat [an individual] as he is he will stay as he is, but if you treat him as if he were what he . . . could be [and might be], he will [become what he ought to be]."⁷

Make homes places of devotion

Elder Boyd K. Packer stated: "To bring some of the things of heaven into the home is to insure that family members will graduate to church participation. The family home evening is, of course, ready-made for this—a meeting at home that can be organized to fit every need; and it's just as much a church meeting, or can be, as those held at the chapel."⁸

This counsel also agrees with what Elder Dean L. Larsen has told us: "Our church buildings are not the only places where we can worship. Our homes should also be places of devotion. It would be well if each day we could 'go home to church.' There should be no other place

where the Spirit of the Lord is more welcome and more easily accessible than in our own homes."⁹

As we work to accomplish all of this in our homes, we will do well to remember the important statement of President Harold B. Lee: "Remember that the most important of the Lord's work that you [and I] will ever do will be . . . within the walls of [our] own home."¹⁰

My plea today is that each of us will look carefully at our homes and at the kitchen table and continually strive to bring heaven into our homes and come unto Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Scriptures As They Relate to Family Stability," *Ensign*, Feb. 1972, p. 57.
2. "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth," *Hymns*, no. 298.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, pp. 74–75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, p. 54.
4. *Pathways to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1973), pp. 26–27.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1990, p. 13; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, p. 12.
6. In *Ensign*, July 1994, pp. 4–5.
7. In Emerson Roy West, *Vital Quotations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), p. 171.
8. "Begin Where You Are—At Home," *Ensign*, Feb. 1972, p. 71.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1989, p. 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, p. 63.
10. *Strengthening the Home* (pamphlet, 1973), p. 7.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder LeGrand R. Curtis of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Apostasy and restoration

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has many beliefs in common with other Christian churches. But we have differences, and those differences explain why we send missionaries to other Christians, why we build temples in addition to churches, and why our beliefs bring us such happiness and strength to deal with the challenges of life and death. I wish to speak about some of the important additions our doctrines make to the Christian faith. My subject is apostasy and restoration.

Last year searchers discovered a Roman fort and city in the Sinai close to the Suez Canal. Though once a major city, its location had been covered by desert sands and its existence had been forgotten for hundreds of years (see "Remains of Roman Fortress Emerge from Sinai Desert," *Deseret News*, 6 Oct. 1994, p. A20). Discoveries like this contradict the common assumption that knowledge increases with the passage of time. In fact, on some matters the general knowledge of mankind regresses as some important truths are distorted or ignored and eventually forgotten. For example, the American Indians were in many respects more successful at living in harmony with nature than our modern society is. Similarly modern artists and craftsmen have been unable to recapture some of the superior techniques and materials of the past, like the varnish on a Stradivarius violin.

We would be wiser if we could restore the knowledge of some important things that have been distorted, ignored, or forgotten. This also applies to religious knowledge. It explains the need for the gospel restoration we proclaim.

True nature of the Godhead

When Joseph Smith was asked to explain the major tenets of our faith, he

wrote what we now call the Articles of Faith. The first article states, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." The Prophet later declared that "the simple and first principles of the gospel" include knowing "for a certainty the character of God" ("Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons*, 15 Aug. 1844, p. 614). We must begin with the truth about God and our relationship to him. Everything else follows from that.

In common with the rest of Christianity, we believe in a Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. However, we testify that these three members of the Godhead are three separate and distinct beings. We also testify that God the Father is not just a spirit but is a glorified person with a tangible body, as is his resurrected Son, Jesus Christ.

When first communicated to mankind by prophets, the teachings we now have in the Bible were "plain and pure, and most precious and easy" to understand (1 Nephi 14:23). Even in the transmitted and translated version we have today, the Bible language confirms that God the Father and his resurrected Son, Jesus Christ, are tangible, separate beings. To cite only two of many such teachings, the Bible declares that man was created in the image of God, and it describes three separate members of the Godhead manifested at the baptism of Jesus (see Genesis 1:27; Matthew 3:13-17).

In contrast, many Christians reject the idea of a tangible, personal God and a Godhead of three separate beings. They believe that God is a spirit and that the Godhead is only one God. In our view these concepts are evidence of the falling away we call the Great Apostasy.

Creed's change concept of Deity

We maintain that the concepts identified by such nonscriptural terms as

"the incomprehensible mystery of God" and "the mystery of the Holy Trinity" are attributable to the ideas of Greek philosophy. These philosophical concepts transformed Christianity in the first few centuries following the deaths of the Apostles. For example, philosophers then maintained that physical matter was evil and that God was a spirit without feelings or passions. Persons of this persuasion, including learned men who became influential converts to Christianity, had a hard time accepting the simple teachings of early Christianity: an Only Begotten Son who said he was in the express image of his Father in Heaven and who taught his followers to be one as he and his Father were one, and a Messiah who died on a cross and later appeared to his followers as a resurrected being with flesh and bones.

The collision between the speculative world of Greek philosophy and the simple, literal faith and practice of the earliest Christians produced sharp contentions that threatened to widen political divisions in the fragmenting Roman empire. This led Emperor Constantine to convene the first churchwide council in A.D. 325. The action of this council of Nicaea remains the most important single event after the death of the Apostles in formulating the modern Christian concept of deity. The Nicene Creed erased the idea of the separate being of Father and Son by defining God the Son as being of "one substance with the Father."

Other councils followed, and from their decisions and the writings of churchmen and philosophers there came a synthesis of Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine in which the orthodox Christians of that day lost the fulness of truth about the nature of God and the Godhead. The consequences persist in the various creeds of Christianity, which declare a Godhead of only one being and which describe that single being or God

as "incomprehensible" and "without body, parts, or passions." One of the distinguishing features of the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is its rejection of all of these post-biblical creeds (see Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991]; *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 1:56-58, 1:393-404, 2:548-53).

In the process of what we call the Apostasy, the tangible, personal God described in the Old and New Testaments was replaced by the abstract, incomprehensible deity defined by compromise with the speculative principles of Greek philosophy. The received language of the Bible remained, but the so-called hidden meanings of scriptural words were now explained in the vocabulary of a philosophy alien to their origins. In the language of that philosophy, God the Father ceased to be a Father in any but an allegorical sense. He ceased to exist as a comprehensible and compassionate being. And the separate identity of his Only Begotten Son was swallowed up in a philosophical abstraction that attempted to define a common substance and an incomprehensible relationship.

These descriptions of a religious philosophy are surely undiplomatic, but I hasten to add that Latter-day Saints do not apply such criticism to the men and women who profess these beliefs. We believe that most religious leaders and followers are sincere believers who love God and understand and serve him to the best of their abilities. We are indebted to the men and women who kept the light of faith and learning alive through the centuries to the present day. We have only to contrast the lesser light that exists among peoples unfamiliar with the names of God and Jesus Christ to realize the great contribution made by Christian teachers through the ages. We honor them as servants of God.

Truth restored in the First Vision

Then came the First Vision. An unschooled boy, seeking knowledge from the ultimate source, saw two personages of indescribable brightness and glory and heard one of them say, while pointing to the other, "*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). The divine teaching in that vision began the restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God the Son told the boy prophet that all the "creeds" of the churches of that day "were an abomination in his sight" (v. 19). We affirm that this divine declaration was a condemnation of the creeds, not of the faithful seekers who believed in them. Joseph Smith's first vision showed that the prevailing concepts of the nature of God and the Godhead were untrue and could not lead their adherents to the destiny God desired for them.

After a subsequent outpouring of modern scripture and revelation, this modern prophet declared, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit" (D&C 130:22).

This belief does not mean that we claim sufficient spiritual maturity to comprehend God. Nor do we equate our imperfect mortal bodies to his immortal, glorified being. But we can comprehend the fundamentals he has revealed about himself and the other members of the Godhead. And that knowledge is essential to our understanding of the purpose of mortal life and of our eternal destiny as resurrected beings after mortal life.

Life's purpose: to become like God

In the theology of the restored church of Jesus Christ, the purpose of mortal life is to prepare us to realize our destiny as sons and daughters of God—to become like him. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young both taught that "no

man . . . can know himself unless he knows God, and he can not know God unless he knows himself" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:75; see also *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], p. 340). The Bible describes mortals as "the children of God" and as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16–17). It also declares that "we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17) and that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). We take these Bible teachings literally. We believe that the purpose of mortal life is to acquire a physical body and, through the atonement of Jesus Christ and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, to qualify for the glorified, resurrected celestial state that is called exaltation or eternal life.

Three degrees of glory

Like other Christians, we believe in a heaven or paradise and a hell following mortal life, but to us that two-part division of the righteous and the wicked is merely temporary while the spirits of the dead await their resurrections and final judgments. The destinations that follow the final judgments are much more diverse. Our restored knowledge of the separateness of the three members of the Godhead provides a key to help us understand the diversities of resurrected glory.

In their final judgment the children of God will be assigned to a kingdom of glory for which their obedience has qualified them. In his letters to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul described these places. He told of a vision in which he was "caught up to the third heaven" and "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:2, 4). Speaking of the resurrection of the dead, he described "celestial

bodies," "bodies terrestrial" (1 Corinthians 15:40), and "bodies telestial" (Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Corinthians 15:40), each pertaining to a different degree of glory. He likened these different glories to the sun, to the moon, and to different stars (see 1 Corinthians 15:41).

We learn from modern revelation that these three different degrees of glory have a special relationship to the three different members of the Godhead.

The lowest degree is the telestial domain of those who "received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets" (D&C 76:101) and who have had to suffer for their wickedness. But even this degree has a glory that "surpasses all understanding" (D&C 76:89). Its occupants receive the Holy Spirit and the administering of angels, for even those who have been wicked will ultimately be "heirs of [this degree of] salvation" (D&C 76:88).

The next higher degree of glory, the terrestrial, "excels in all things the glory of the telestial, even in glory, and in power, and in might, and in dominion" (D&C 76:91). The terrestrial is the abode of those who were the "honorable men of the earth" (D&C 76:75). Its most distinguishing feature is that those who qualify for terrestrial glory "receive of the presence of the Son" (v. 77). Concepts familiar to all Christians might liken this higher kingdom to heaven because it has the presence of the Son.

In contrast to traditional Christianity, we join with Paul in affirming the existence of a third or higher heaven. Modern revelation describes it as the celestial kingdom—the abode of those "whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God" (D&C 76:70). Those who qualify for this kingdom of glory "shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever" (D&C 76:62). Those who have met the highest requirements for this kingdom, including faithfulness to covenants made in a temple of God and

marriage for eternity, will be exalted to the godlike state referred to as the "fulness" of the Father or eternal life (D&C 76:56, 94; see also D&C 131; 132:19–20). (This destiny of eternal life or God's life should be familiar to all who have studied the ancient Christian doctrine of and belief in deification or apotheosis.) For us, eternal life is not a mystical union with an incomprehensible spirit-god. Eternal life is family life with a loving Father in Heaven and with our progenitors and our posterity.

The theology of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is comprehensive, universal, merciful, and true. Following the necessary experience of mortal life, all sons and daughters of God will ultimately be resurrected and go to a kingdom of glory. The righteous—regardless of current religious denomination or belief—will ultimately go to a kingdom of glory more wonderful than any of us can comprehend. Even the wicked, or almost all of them, will ultimately go to a marvelous—though lesser—kingdom of glory. All of that will occur because of God's love for his children and because of the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ, "who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands" (D&C 76:43).

Church helps us achieve highest destiny

The purpose of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to help all of the children of God understand their potential and achieve their highest destiny. This church exists to provide the sons and daughters of God with the means of entrance into and exaltation in the celestial kingdom. This is a family-centered church in doctrine and practices. Our understanding of the nature and purpose of God the Eternal Father explains our destiny and our relationship in his eternal family. Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them. Under the

merciful plan of the Father, all of this is possible through the atonement of the Only Begotten of the Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As earthly parents we participate in the gospel plan by providing mortal bodies for the spirit children of God. The fullness of eternal salvation is a family matter.

It is the reality of these glorious possibilities that causes us to proclaim our message of restored Christianity to all people, even to good practicing Christians with other beliefs. This is why we build temples. This is the faith that gives us strength and joy to confront the challenges of mortal life. We offer these truths and opportunities to all people and testify to their truthfulness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

It will now be our privilege to listen to President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved President of the Church, who will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his address, we express appreciation to the Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Springville Utah Region, the combined institute men's

choir, the Mormon Youth Chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and uplifting music for this conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters (my, have they been busy); and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle, some of which came from the members in Japan and Korea.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference. We're grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions in many countries.

We express appreciation for honored guests who have complimented us by their attendance today and in each of the sessions.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "God Bless Our Prophet Dear." The benediction will then be offered by Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

The miracle of conference

My brethren and sisters, just a few words in conclusion. First, I'd like to say that we have participated in a miracle. As I have listened to all who have spoken, I have noted that there has been no duplication of treatment. Every man and woman who has spoken has chosen his or her own theme to treat. There are no assignments made to any of the speakers concerning what they should say. And yet they all fit together in a pattern that

is beautiful and wonderful. I have a profound feeling of gratitude to the Lord for His wonderful blessings upon us. We have listened to wise and inspired counsel. We have been taught and we have been edified.

Strength of the new generation

A week ago a conference of the young women was held in this tabernacle. It was an inspiration to look into their faces, thousands of them. One

could not do so without a feeling of peace and certitude concerning the future of this work. The theme of the conference was an appeal to the young women to read the scriptures.

I look back to my own youth. Neither young men nor young women were doing much scripture reading at that time. What a marvelous change has been wrought. A new generation is arising who are familiar with the word of the Lord. Growing up in a worldly environment that is laden with immorality and filth of every kind, our youth, for the most part, are meeting the challenge of living in the world without partaking of the evils of the world. It is with the young men as it is with the young women. Last evening this tabernacle was filled with fathers and sons, and hundreds of thousands were gathered in other halls across the Church. It is wonderful to feel the pulse of this generation of young people. Of course, there are some who do not measure up. That has been the case since the time of the great war in heaven described by John the Revelator. The issue then was free agency, as it is today. Then, as now, choices had to be made.

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

"And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7-9).

That ancient struggle continues, the unrelenting battle that comes of free agency. Some, unfortunately, choose the wrong. But many, so many, choose the right, including so very many of our choice young men and young women. They deserve and need our gratitude. They need our encouragement. They need the kind of examples that we can

become before them. May they be blessed as they pursue lives of virtue, of learning, of growing with faith and purpose, all the time remaining "true to the faith that [their] parents have cherished, true to the truth for which martyrs have perished" ("True to the Faith," *Hymns*, no. 254).

We have a work to do

In the Young Women conference, emphasis was given to the words of Alma found in the thirty-second chapter of the book of Alma. His teachings include these words: "Awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith" (v. 27).

My beloved associates, far more of us need to awake and arouse our faculties to an awareness of the great everlasting truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each of us can do a little better than we have been doing. We can be a little more kind. We can be a little more merciful. We can be a little more forgiving. We can put behind us our weaknesses of the past and go forth with new energy and increased resolution to improve the world about us, in our homes, in our places of employment, in our social activities.

We have work to do, you and I, so very much of it. Let us roll up our sleeves and get at it, with a new commitment, putting our trust in the Lord.

Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear;
But with joy wend your way.
Though hard to you this journey may appear,
Grace shall be as your day.
["Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30]

We can do it, if we will be prayerful and faithful. We can do better than we have ever done before.

The Church needs your strength. It needs your love and loyalty and devo-

tion. It needs a little more of your time and energy.

I am not asking anyone to give more at the expense of his or her employer. We have an obligation to be men and women of absolute honesty and integrity in the service of those who employ us.

I am not asking anyone to do so at the expense of your families. The Lord will hold you responsible for your children. But I am suggesting that we spend a little less time in idleness, in the fruitless pursuit of watching some inane and empty television programs. Time so utilized can be put to better advantage, and the consequences will be wonderful. Of that I do not hesitate to assure you.

"We will be true to thee till death!"

Now, my beloved brethren and sisters, as we return to our homes, may we go in safety, pondering the things we have heard these past two days. May we go with determination to try a little harder to be a little better. Please know that we are not without understanding of some of your problems. We are aware that many of you carry very heavy burdens. We plead with the Lord in your be-

half. We add our prayers to your prayers that you may find solutions to your problems. We leave a blessing upon you, even an apostolic blessing. We bless you that the Lord may smile with favor upon you, that there may be happiness and peace in your homes and in your lives, that an atmosphere of love and respect and appreciation may be felt among husbands and wives, children and parents. May you "look to God and live" (Alma 37:47) with happiness, with security, with peace, with faith.

At the opening of this session, the choir sang a wonderful hymn. "Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to thee till death!" ("Faith of Our Fathers," *Hymns*, no. 84). I would like to leave that thought with you: "Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to thee till death!" God bless you, my beloved associates, in this glorious work, I humbly pray in the name of Him whom we all serve, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God Bless Our Prophet Dear."

Bishop H. David Burton offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Springville Utah Region. James Kasen conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

At the general priesthood session a men's choir from the Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake University, and Orem institutes provided the music. Duane Huff con-

ducted the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

A

Audit Committee Report for 1994	26
Ayala, Elder Eduardo	36
Isolated members in Peru keep the faith; They trusted the Lord; They prayed faithfully; They studied the scriptures; They implemented priesthood programs; They humbled themselves; Courage to keep the faith; Prophets' loving influence; Let us keep the faith	

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell	28
Answers to life's questions; The plan of redemption; The role of mortality in God's plan; Learn doctrines and commandments; The role of agency in God's plan; Living the plan brings joy and peace; Make decisions based on God's plan; Obey commandments to find happiness; Answers are found in the gospel	
Bateman, Bishop Merrill J.	14
Lessons taught by death; Atonement heals grief, sorrow, and sin; The power to heal from within; The Atonement is intimate and infinite	
Brough, Elder Monte J.	56
Search for identity; Family role models; Manasseh Byrd Kearl; Gustave Henriod; Hannah Cornaby; John Davies; Tamma Miner; Genealogy helps us know our identity; We are sons and heirs of God	

C

Christensen, Elder Joe J.	84
Remember the importance of marriage; Pray for the success of your marriage; Listen to your spouse; Avoid ceaseless pinpricking; Keep your courtship alive; Be quick to say, "I'm sorry"; Live within your means; Share home and family responsibilities	
Church Audit Committee Report for 1994	26
Church Statistical Report for 1994	27
Curtis, Elder LeGrand R.	109
A table encircled with love; Gospel discussions around the table; Family prayer around the table; Make home a happy place; Scripture study around the table; Strengthen family ties; Make homes places of devotion	
Clyde, Sister Aileen H.	34
"Fear thou not; for I am with thee"; Seek God's light and forsake the world; "I the Lord . . . will hold thine hand"; The Lord's command to love; Covenants provide foundation	

D

- Dellenbach, Elder Robert K.** 9
 Book of Mormon translation a miracle; The current process of translation; Conditions in which Joseph translated; Translated by the gift and power of God; Miraculous pace of the translation; Magnitude of the Prophet's work; Evidence that Joseph is a prophet

E

- Eyring, Elder Henry B.** 32
 Becoming more humble; "Always remember him"; The humble proclaim the gospel; Blessings of remembering the Savior; I will keep my covenant

F

- Faust, President James E. (priesthood session)** 62
 The Lord's shepherds; Duties of husbands and fathers; Duties of home teachers; Duties of local priesthood leaders; Duties of the Presiding Bishopric; Duties of the Seventy; Duties of the Twelve; Duties of the First Presidency; Duties of the President of the Church; Let us be united; "Feed my sheep"
- Faust, President James E. (Sunday morning session)** 80
 Humbled and grateful to serve; The Church's rich cultural diversity; Look to the divinity within; Satisfy basic needs through obedience; Seek a unity of the faith; Spiritual and doctrinal unity; Diverse people united by the Spirit; Recovering the sacred within us

G

- General Authorities Present** 1
- General Priesthood Session** 50

H

- Haight, Elder David B.** 47
 Foreordination of President Hinckley; God prepares his servants; Heed the prophet's words; President Hinckley's preparation; A man for all the world
- Hales, Elder Robert D.** 17
 Expression of love for prophets; The Lord protects Jehoshaphat's people; Prophets speak plainly and boldly; Micaiah speaks plainly to Ahab; Restoration of prophetic authority; Come, listen to a prophet's voice; Prophets are prepared by the Lord; Blessings of heeding prophets; President Hinckley is our prophet today

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session)	70
Gratitude for sustaining vote; Releasing of regional representatives; The new office of area authority; Growth of the Church; Concern for the individual; Dedicate all efforts to the individual; Choose the right; Testimony and charge	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session)	116
The miracle of conference; Strength of the new generation; We have a work to do; "We will be true to thee till death!"	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session)	91
The passing of President Hunter; Reorganizing the First Presidency; Valiant pioneer forebears; Gratitude for parents, wife, and children; Gratitude for Church members; Expression of love; Be faithful in doing the Lord's work; Respect people of other faiths; A time to become more Christlike; This is the work of the Almighty	
Holland, Elder Jeffrey R.	51
Days never to be forgotten; Guiding the rising generation; Youth, gain testimonies and be faithful; Rudger Clawson proves faithful; Tom Yates proves faithful; Our priesthood legacy	
M	
Martins, Elder Helvécio	59
The revelation on priesthood; Home teacher—no greater calling; Home teachers feed the Lord's sheep; Our first home teachers; Guardians of the flock; Watchmen on the tower	
Maxwell, Elder Neal A.	87
Sustaining new leaders; Deny yourselves of all ungodliness; The moral crisis of sexual immorality; The scourge of hedonism; The need for self-denial; Distortions caused by self-indulgence; Dangers of "small sins"; Self-denial precedes full joy in Christ	
Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session)	66
"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations"; Participate in priesthood service; Prepare with purpose; Teach with testimony; Labor with love; Meeting missionaries in a clothing store; All can participate in missionary work; Conversion of Yvonne Ramirez	
Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session)	75
The inextinguishable light of mercy; Richard Kirkland's errand of mercy; The greatest act of mercy; The need for mercy; Forgiving ourselves; Correct small mistakes before they fester; Jesus forgives an adulteress; Blessed are the merciful	
Music, Summary of Conference	118

N

Nelson, Elder Russell M. 41
Children of the covenant; Identification and indoctrination; The Abrahamic covenant; The new and everlasting covenant; Unity among children of the covenant; A peculiar people; Becoming spiritually protected

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H. 112
Apostasy and restoration; True nature of the Godhead; Creeds change concept of Deity; Truth restored in the First Vision; Life's purpose: to become like God; Three degrees of glory; Church helps us achieve highest destiny

P

Packer, President Boyd K. 5
The line of unbroken authority; The Twelve bridge the line of authority; Sustaining the prophet; "We are living Apostles of the Lord"; Apostles bring unity of the faith; The shield of faith is made at home; God's plan for happy families

Parkin, Sister Bonnie D. 104
Celebrating covenants; Celebrating a granddaughter's blessing; What are covenants? Heaven's emphasis is on individuals; Covenants should bless our daily lives; Covenants anchor us during adversity; Helping youth keep covenants; Blessings of covenant keeping

Perry, Elder L. Tom 96
Marriage, a divine institution; Sister Hinckley, an elect lady; Sister Hinckley's great-grandfather; Sister Hinckley's grandfather; Support of husband and children; Motherhood, the noblest of all callings; A worthy role model

Peterson, Elder Andrew W. 107
Easter reflections; Fulfilling missionary promises; Remembrances of President Hunter; Reflections on President Hinckley

Priesthood Session, General 50

S

Samuelson, Elder Cecil O., Jr. 39
Seeing ourselves as Jesus sees us; Become like the Savior; Minister to the many and to the one; Be involved in the Savior's ministry

Saturday Afternoon Session	26
Saturday Morning Session	2
Scott, Elder Richard G.	100
Rebuilding a damaged life; Understand the Atonement; Repentance is the path to forgiveness; Follow the steps of repentance; Serious sins require deep repentance; Repent now	
Solemn Assembly	2
Statistical Report for 1994	27
Summary of Conference Music	118
Sunday Afternoon Session.....	96
Sunday Morning Session	74
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	3

W

Washburn, Elder J Ballard	12
Going to the temple as families; The Holy Ghost leads to the temple; Go to the temple worthily; The new and everlasting covenant; Keeping temple covenants at home; Gratitude for homes and temples	
Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	21
Living water to quench spiritual thirst; Live the gospel to be happy; Many Samaritans believe; Latter days a time of spiritual thirst; Jesus is the only source of living water; Prophets refresh us with living water; Drink living water at the temple; President Hinckley, the Lord's anointed; Bring living water to all who thirst	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS



4 02950 48000

05/18

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-fifth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

September 30 and October 1, 1995

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-fifth
Semiannual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
September 30 and October 1, 1995

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Report of the 165th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 165th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, September 30, 1995, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, September 30 and October 1, 1995. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, September 30, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: Carlos E. Asay, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goasland, and Harold G. Hillam

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*¹ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Cree-L. Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hans B. Ringger, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Earl C. Tingey, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, Claudio R. M. Costa, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Julio E. Dávila, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, In Sang Han, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, Helvécio Martins, James O. Mason, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Bruce D. Porter, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, F. David Stanley, Kwok

¹Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi was excused.

Yuen Tai, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, J Ballard Washburn, Lance B. Wickman, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrell A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Merrill J. Bateman, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, September 30, 1995, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music for the session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "Praise to the Man." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

It's a beautiful morning here in the valley of the mountains. We had a wonderful rain yesterday, and the sun is shining brightly this morning.

We welcome each of you from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this the first general session of the 165th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience which fills the historic Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Robert D. Hales, Dean L. Larsen, and Jorge A. Rojas are seated on the stand, and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Spen-

cer J. Condie and Dieter F. Uchtdorf are in attendance.

We welcome also the many others who are receiving these proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi, who is serving as president of the Tokyo Temple.

We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge the beautiful floral arrangements which have been provided through the kindness of faithful Saints living in Hawaii.

The music for this session will be provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert Bowden, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The chorus opened this session by singing "Praise to the Man" and will now favor us with "Rock of Ages." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Ronald E. Poelman of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Rock of Ages."

Elder Ronald E. Poelman offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Gathering for conference

My brethren and sisters, it is wonderful that we have the opportunity of meeting together each six months in these great world conferences. We gather from over the earth to bear our testimonies one to another, to hear instruction, to mingle as brethren and sisters. We partake of that sociality which is so pleasant and so important a part of the culture of this great organization.

For more than a century these gatherings have originated in this historic Tabernacle. From this pulpit has gone forth the word of the Lord. Through the years the speakers have come on the stage and then moved on. The personalities are different. But the spirit is the same. It is that spirit referred to when the Lord said, "He that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together" (D&C 50:22).

This great Tabernacle seems to grow smaller each year. We now meet with far larger groups gathered under a single roof in some regional conferences. For instance, not long ago we were in the Tacoma Washington Region. There on a Sunday morning we had the privilege of speaking to 17,328 Latter-day Saints assembled together as one congregation. The acoustics were not as good as they are in this remarkable structure.

Broadcasting conference to the world

Of course there are far more of you participating through the wonders of the electronic media than there are here on Temple Square. Increasingly the Tabernacle is becoming a broadcast studio from which these conference services go by radio, television, cable, satellite, and other resources to many tens of thousands of you in various parts of the world. They are now seen across the

United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. They are carried to many areas of the British Isles and Europe. We hope that the time is not far distant when they can be carried live to the islands of the Pacific, to New Zealand and Australia, to the lands of Asia, to the nations of Mexico, Central America, and South America. As it is, however, more than half of the membership of the Church can, with a little effort, both see and hear me as I speak to you today.

Just below where I speak, in the basement of the Tabernacle, a large group of translators are at work so that each who wishes to hear may do so in his or her own language. I pay tribute to and express thanks for the tremendous services of these dedicated men and women who give so freely of their time and talents to this work of translation.

The kingdom of God—one great family

The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands is rolling forth to fill the earth (see D&C 65:2). What a wonderful thing it is to be part of this growing kingdom of our Lord. There are no political boundaries separating the hearts of the children of God, regardless of where they may live. We are all of one great family. We are sons and daughters of God. We are engaged in the service of His Beloved Son. He is our Redeemer and our Savior, and a testimony of this truth burns within our hearts. Each is entitled to such a testimony of this work. It is an individual knowledge of great fundamental truths that binds us together into what we call the church and kingdom of God.

And so we gather each six months to renew our faith, to enlarge our understanding of things divine, to express our love and respect one for another in this great and remarkable brotherhood and sisterhood which all of us know as The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With you I look forward to the services in which we shall participate today and tomorrow, praying that the Lord will bless us, each one of us, with the companionship of His Holy Spirit.

I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon all who will speak, upon all who

will sing, upon all who will offer prayers, and in a very particular way, with great love and appreciation in my heart, upon all who will listen by the voice of the Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder M. Russell Ballard will now speak to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful to be able to stand before you today. After undergoing heart-bypass surgery two months ago, I am grateful to be able to stand anywhere. I have felt the powerful faith and prayers of Church members exercised in my behalf these past months, for which I express my sincere appreciation. I have been greatly blessed and publicly express humble gratitude to my Heavenly Father.

Visiting the sites of the Restoration

During the early part of July, Sister Ballard and I had the opportunity to travel to Church historic sites in Palmyra, Kirtland, and Nauvoo with our seven children, their companions, and twenty of our grandchildren. Some people have suggested this may have contributed to my heart problems. I don't know about that, but I do know that our tour of these locations filled our souls with an ever greater love and respect for the Prophet Joseph Smith, for his family, and for the stalwarts who first embraced the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and became members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. What an extraordinary experience it was to teach my family from the Doctrine and Covenants while standing on the very ground where many of those revelations and instructions were received.

Visiting those inspirational sites and immersing ourselves as a family in the

events of the Restoration reminded me again of the marvelous privilege we have to live in a day when we have such clear doctrinal understanding of our Heavenly Father's plan for the salvation and exaltation of His children. The clarity of our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ and His restored church is precious, empowering knowledge for each one of us. I thank God that in these difficult days of moral decay and departure from sound values, we have no shortage of revealed truth to guide our lives.

Hyrum Smith's legacy of faithfulness

During the past several weeks of physical recovery, I have found myself with more time on my hands than I am accustomed to, with an unscheduled opportunity to think, to ponder, and to pray. I do not recommend the course of action that brought this gift of time to me, but I believe all of us would benefit from time to ponder and meditate. In the quiet moments of personal introspection, the Spirit can teach us much.

The Spirit has confirmed to me the important responsibility we have to see that the legacy of faith of our pioneer forefathers is never lost. We can derive great strength, particularly our youth, from understanding our Church history. As a descendant of Hyrum Smith, I feel a solemn obligation to ensure that the Church never forgets the significant ministry of this great leader. Recogniz-

ing that no one save Jesus only excels the singular accomplishment of the Prophet Joseph, I am stirred within my soul to remember and respect the valiant life and remarkable contributions of his older brother, the patriarch Hyrum.

In September of 1840, Joseph Smith Sr. gathered his family around him. This venerable patriarch was dying and wanted to leave his blessing on his beloved wife and children. Hyrum, the eldest living son, asked his father to intercede with heaven when he arrived there so the enemies of the Church "may not have so much power" over the Latter-day Saints. Father Smith then laid his hands upon Hyrum's head and blessed him to have "peace . . . sufficient . . . to accomplish the work which God has given you to do." Knowing of Hyrum's lifelong faithfulness, he concluded this last blessing with the promise that Hyrum would "be as firm as the pillars of heaven unto the end of [his] days."¹

This blessing identified Hyrum's strongest characteristic. More than anything else, he was "firm as the pillars of heaven." Throughout Hyrum's life, the forces of evil combined against him in an attempt to defeat him or at least to prompt him to stray off course.

Hyrum's relationship with Joseph

After his older brother Alvin's death in 1823, Hyrum bore significant responsibility in the Smith family. At the same time he assisted and served his brother, Joseph the Prophet, throughout the long and arduous process of the Restoration. Ultimately he joined Joseph and other martyrs of past gospel dispensations. His blood was shed as his final testimony to the world.

Through it all Hyrum stood firm. He knew the course his life would take, and he consciously chose to follow it. To Joseph, Hyrum became companion, protector, provider, confidant, and eventually joined him as a martyr. Unjust

persecution engulfed them throughout their lives. Although he was older, Hyrum recognized his brother's divine mantle. While he gave Joseph strong counsel on occasion, Hyrum always deferred to his younger brother.

Speaking to his brother, Joseph once said, "Brother Hyrum, what a faithful heart you have got! Oh may the Eternal Jehovah crown eternal blessings upon your head, as a reward for the care you have had for my soul! O how many are the sorrows we have shared together."²

On another occasion Joseph referred to his brother with these profound and tender words: "I love him with that love that is stronger than death."³

Hyrum's service to the Church

Hyrum gave unfailing service to the Church. In 1829 he was among a handful of individuals who were allowed to view the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and for the rest of his life he testified to the divine nature of the Book of Mormon as one of the Eight Witnesses who "had seen the plates with his eyes and handled them with his hands."⁴ He was among the first to be baptized in this gospel dispensation. At age thirty he was the oldest of the six men chosen in 1830 to formally organize The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In 1831 he stood before the Ohio conference and pledged "that all he had was the Lord's and he was ready to do his will continually."⁵ In 1833, when the Lord chastised the Church for delaying the start of the Kirtland Temple, Hyrum was the first to start digging its foundation. As chairman of the temple committee, Hyrum rallied the Church to perform the seemingly impossible task of building the Kirtland Temple when most Church members literally had nothing to give to the cause. A few years later he repeated this service with the building of the Nauvoo Temple.

Hyrum served in the Ohio bishopric, on the first high council, as patriarch, as a counselor in the First Presidency, and finally as one of only two men ever to hold the office of Assistant President of the Church.

Hyrum served many missions for the Church. During one mission, traveling from Kirtland to Indiana, he endured one of his greatest trials when his first wife, Jerusha, died soon after giving birth to his sixth child. Hyrum's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, wrote that Jerusha's death "wrung our hearts with more than common grief. . . . She was a woman whom everybody loved."⁶

Although Hyrum was grieved, his faith was unshaken; his determination to serve Heavenly Father and his church never faltered. I believe God rewarded his faithfulness by bringing into his life one of the great women of Church history, Mary Fielding, whom he subsequently married. Together they built an extraordinary legacy of love and discipleship.

Clearly Hyrum Smith was one of the firm pillars of the Restoration. But sadly, many Church members know little about him except that he was martyred with his brother in Carthage Jail. That is significant, but he did far more. Indeed, Joseph Smith himself once suggested that his followers would do well to pattern their lives after Hyrum's.⁷ May I suggest a few examples from Hyrum's life that we may wish to follow.

Hyrum's dedicated scripture study

In 1829 when Joseph was finishing the translation of the Book of Mormon, Hyrum was anxious to begin spreading the gospel and building the Church. He asked Joseph to inquire of the Lord what he should do. In section 11 of the Doctrine and Covenants we read the Lord's response: "Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word. . . .

Study my word which hath gone forth . . . , and also study my word . . . which is now translating."⁸

Hyrum's life is a witness to his obedience to this instruction. To the very last day of his life, he devoted himself to obtaining the word through study of the scriptures. In Carthage Jail he read and commented on extracts from the Book of Mormon. The scriptures were obviously part of Hyrum's being, and he turned to them during times when he needed comfort and strength the most.

Just think of the spiritual strength we could gain in our lives and how much more effective we would be as teachers, missionaries, and friends if we studied the scriptures regularly. I am sure we, like Hyrum, will be able to endure our greatest trials if we search the word of God as he did.

Hyrum's faithful, believing heart

The second great example from Hyrum's life that we may wish to follow occurred very early in the Restoration. According to Lucy Mack Smith, when young Joseph first told the rest of the family about his experience in the Sacred Grove, Hyrum and all the others received the message "joyfully." The family sat "in a circle, . . . giving the most profound attention to a boy . . . who had never read the Bible through in his life."⁹ In contrast to the reaction of Laman and Lemuel to their younger brother Nephi's divine calling and to the jealousy of the older brothers of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, there was no jealousy or animosity in Hyrum Smith. Instead, real faith was born in him of the simple and joyful response he felt to the spiritual truth of his brother's message. The Lord let him know in his heart what was right, and he followed Joseph—faithfully—for the rest of his life.

"I, the Lord, love [Hyrum]," the Savior revealed in section 124 of the Doctrine

and Covenants, "because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me."¹⁰

Faithful Hyrum had a believing heart; he did not have to see everything Joseph saw. For him, hearing the truth from Joseph's lips and feeling the spiritual promptings whispering that it was true were enough. Faith to believe was the source of Hyrum's spiritual strength and is the source of the spiritual strength of faithful members of the Church then and today. We do not need more members who question every detail; we need members who have felt with their hearts, who live close to the Spirit, and who follow its promptings joyfully. We need seeking hearts and minds that welcome gospel truths without argument or complaint and without requiring miraculous manifestation. Oh, how we are blessed when members respond joyfully to counsel from their bishops, stake presidents, quorum or auxiliary leaders, some of whom might be younger than they and less experienced. What great blessings we receive when we follow "that which is right" joyfully and not grudgingly.

Hyrum's service to others

The third example from the life of Hyrum was his selfless service to others. His mother commented on this quality, saying that he was "rather remarkable for his tenderness and sympathy."¹¹ When Joseph was afflicted with severe pain in his leg, Hyrum relieved his mother and sat beside Joseph almost twenty-four hours a day for more than a week.

Hyrum was the first to extend a hand of friendship to a visitor, the first to attempt to moderate a dispute, the first to forgive an enemy. The Prophet Joseph was known to say that "if Hyrum could not make peace between two who had fallen out, the angels themselves might not hope to accomplish the task."¹²

Do similar needs exist in the Church and in our families today? Are we sen-

sitive to the concerns of those who need special attention? Are we aware of families who are struggling spiritually or emotionally and who need our love, encouragement, and support? Hyrum's example of selfless service could be a powerful influence in the world today if enough of us choose to follow it.

Hyrum's response to trials

Another great example comes to us from the dark dungeon of Liberty Jail. Here Hyrum, Joseph, and a few others suffered exposure to cold, hunger, inhumane treatment, and the loneliness of isolation from friends. In this schoolhouse jail, Hyrum learned the lesson of patience in adversity and affliction. In the midst of this most severe trial, his primary concern was not for himself and his companions but for his family. In a letter to his wife, Hyrum wrote that the "greatest part of my trouble" was wondering how she and the family were doing. "When I think of your trouble my heart is weighed down with sorrow. . . . But what can I do? . . . Thy will be done O Lord."¹³

As I travel throughout the Church, I see members being tried in the crucible of affliction. I see members suffering from debilitating health concerns. I see husbands, wives, and parents living in trying circumstances they cannot change regarding their spouses or their children. Every one of us is faced at times with unpleasant situations, adversity, and affliction that we cannot change. Many circumstances can be addressed only with time, tears, prayer, and faith. For us, like Hyrum, peace may come only when we bring ourselves to say, "But what can I do? . . . Thy will be done O Lord."

Surely Joseph was inspired when he wrote of his brother Hyrum, "Thy name shall be written . . . for those who come after thee to look upon, that they may pattern after thy works."¹⁴ May we help keep the promise made to Hyrum in sec-

tion 124 of the Doctrine and Covenants that his "name [shall] be had in honorable remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever."¹⁵ His name most certainly will be honorably revered as we follow his example and "pattern after [his] works." May the memory of Hyrum Smith and all of our faithful forefathers never fade from our minds, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), p. 309.
2. *History of the Church*, 5:107–8.
3. *History of the Church*, 2:338.
4. Quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981), p. 159.
5. Quoted in Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), p. 21.
6. *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 246.
7. See *History of the Church*, 5:108.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 11:21–22.
9. *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 82.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 124:15.
11. *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 55.
12. Osborne J. P. Widtsoe, "Hyrum Smith, Patriarch," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1911, p. 56.
13. Hyrum Smith letter to Mary Fielding Smith, 16 Mar. 1839, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
14. *History of the Church*, 5:108.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 124:96.

The chorus sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve has just spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

Elder Jack H. Goaslind of the Presidency of the Seventy will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Sister Janette Hales Beckham, general president of the Young Women.

Elder Jack H. Goaslind

Spiritual mountaintops

Recently I had the opportunity to attend meetings at Jackson Lake in the majestic Teton Mountains of Wyoming in the western part of the United States. The rugged mountain peaks and the breathtakingly beautiful scenery and the cool, crisp autumn air combined to lift and restore the spirits of almost every visitor. I must admit that the work I'd been sent there to do seemed a lot less like work than what most of us experience every day. The peaceful mountain setting had a restorative effect on me and others in attendance. The world's

problems seemed less insurmountable. The challenges I faced seemed much less threatening. I came away with a heightened outlook and a spirit brightened by new hope and enthusiasm.

Those mountain heights also stirred in me other reflections. I'd like to share some of those with you this morning.

The Lord has often used mountaintops as sanctuaries. In Old Testament times, when temples were not available the Lord used mountaintops as sacred places in which to reveal truths to His prophets. Likewise the New Testament and the Book of Mormon describe sacred mountaintops where God revealed

truths to His servants. Joseph Smith, kneeling in the Sacred Grove, was figuratively kneeling at the top of a great spiritual mountain.

Today the Lord provides us with ample space which, in a personal way, becomes our own spiritual mountaintop where we receive truth and inspiration. Searching the scriptures, for example, can answer many of the questions of our day by lifting our spirits to clarifying heights. Further, the world is dotted with holy temples which we may enter to receive instruction and inspiration and to perform sacred ordinances. Conferences such as this one, reports of the prophetic utterances of our beloved leaders, our own sacrament meetings and stake conferences—all provide rich, fulfilling opportunities to hear the truth and allow it to sink deep into our souls.

Testimony is a spiritual mountaintop

In our own lives, in our daily workaday world, we can create our own “mountaintop experience” so unique and personal that I wonder why more of us do not readily do so. The spiritual mountaintop of which I speak is the development and refining of a testimony of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Just as we can stand on the top of any great mountain and experience an awe-inspiring panorama, I believe we can stand in our own places and experience overwhelming awe in knowing that the Savior, in an act of love which defies mortal understanding, gave His life in taking upon himself our pain and suffering.

It seems to me that the power of a testimony of Jesus Christ is one of the great untapped sources of direction in our lives today. I am convinced that each of us, however good, loyal, or dedicated we try to be in the gospel and in the Church, could do so much more if we did it with the power and influence of an unwavering faith in the Lord. Let me give you an example.

Link teaching to a testimony of Jesus

I believe most parents within the sound of my voice try to teach their children right from wrong, to be honest, to respect others and their property, to live morally clean lives, and to love their families. They work hard to teach them the importance of the saving ordinances, such as baptism for the remission of sins. They want their sons to be ordained to the priesthood at the appropriate age. They teach their children to know that to be married in the right place to the right person at the right time by the right authority is critical to exaltation.

These important lessons, and others like them so crucial to every Latter-day Saint, are the hallmarks of everything we believe and hold dear. If these lessons are learned through the Spirit, taught under the strong influence of a strong testimony of the atonement of the Savior, they are taught and learned in an atmosphere of love and trust that goes a long way in ensuring they will be retained. As the scripture teaches, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). The belief, and finally conviction, that Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter’s son, the Redeemer of Israel—even our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ—gave His life in a selfless sacrifice so that we may have immortality and eternal life bring into focus every other teaching that we impart to our children and others for whom we have a stewardship.

Sometimes I think that we fear too much to link all of our teaching to the foundation of gospel truths. Too often, perhaps, we teach children to obey a law or a principle because our family expects that obedience. They might observe another truth in order to please a neighbor or a bishop, and another for yet some other reason. When we teach an eternal truth to our children and don’t explain it in the context of a firm testimony of the Savior, we miss the power of the ex-

ample of the greatest teacher the world has ever known.

Climb above comfortable plateaus

Likewise many of us have attained a level of obedience in which we consistently keep the letter of the law; we commit no grievous sins. As we look about us, we see that we do no worse than the next family, and we feel satisfied, comfortable. We are compatible with others on our plateau partway up the mountain. We like this scenic ledge where we have all the "do's and don'ts" under control. We need to learn—and then teach—that we are obedient to the laws and principles of the gospel because of our belief, our knowledge, our testimony, and our faith in Jesus Christ. Nephi, who reports in the scriptures that his "soul delighteth in plainness" (2 Nephi 25:4), reminds us in the twenty-fifth chapter of 2 Nephi, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (v. 26).

Perhaps knowing that it would be difficult at times for us to place our faith so fully in our testimonies of the Savior, President Harold B. Lee admonished us, "Walk to the edge of the light, and perhaps a few steps into the darkness, and you will find that the light will appear and move ahead of you" (quoted in Lucile C. Tate, *Boyd K. Packer: A Watchman on the Tower* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], p. 138).

It is in the development of our testimonies, in the moving even partway up the mountain and out of our comfort zones, that I think we begin to approach our own personal spiritual mountaintop where we can receive inspiration and truth as never before. It is there, just as I experienced in the tops of the Tetons, that we can think more clearly, see things more as they really are, and un-

derstand truth in a light that is pure and fresh. There, with the Holy Ghost to guide and influence us, we begin to understand, know how to teach, or bless the lives of others with new meaning and increased perception.

Know, remember, and serve Christ

If I could have but just one wish fulfilled this morning, I would plant deep in your hearts the unwavering remembrance of Jesus Christ. In our day President Howard W. Hunter inspired all of us by saying, "We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, p. 84; or *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 64).

Perhaps what President Hunter asked us to do in those challenging words was the same thing that the prophet Alma taught us about finding a mighty change in our hearts. Alma taught the members of the Church in Zarahemla that they needed to lift their hearts to a higher spiritual plane. He spoke of the need to trust God, and he told them how important it was to exercise faith. And then he asked this critical question which we need to ask ourselves today: "And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:26).

Anchor goodness in faith in Christ

Brothers and sisters, our goodness—our every righteous endeavor, our good works, our obedience, and our efforts to bless others—must be anchored in and driven by our faith in Christ, our testimonies of his mission and sacrifice, and our willingness to move off our comfortable plateaus. Until we find ways to strengthen, increase, and magnify our

testimonies of Jesus Christ and the effect of the Atonement in our lives, we will be unable to answer Alma's question in the affirmative.

Satan wants us to fail to reach that mountaintop that will allow us to develop a testimony so powerful that he will be unable to influence us. His work is to thwart our efforts, but the Lord has counseled us, "Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail" (D&C 6:34).

We have every confidence that earth and hell will not overtake you, but it will require that you move from your current plateaus and climb to higher ground.

Help children know and love the Savior

May I close with the powerful words of our beloved prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, and I quote:

"Go forward with your lives. The best lies ahead. . . . Bring into the lives of our young people something more of spirituality. . . . Cultivate in the heart of every boy [and girl] a sense of [their] re-

lationship to the Lord as [they become] acquainted with the Savior of the world by knowing some elements of the atonement of the Redeemer through which eternal life is made possible for each of us" (in *Church News*, 2 Sept. 1995, p. 2).

God bless you, parents. We love you. We know it is not easy to do what you are doing. We know that every new day brings challenges and trials that often seem insurmountable. May you find through increased faith and reliance upon the Lord renewed strength, vigor, and resilience in teaching and blessing the lives of those in your parental stewardship. May you find in the counsel given us by President Howard W. Hunter, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and all who have stood to bear unflinching testimony of Jesus Christ that only through love and devotion to the teachings of Him of whom we testify, and through the blessings of His atonement in our behalf, may we teach with the power to bless and save our families in the kingdom of God. Of this I testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Sister Janette Hales Beckham

At one time a mother said, "I wish they would just lock all the youth in the temple until they turn twenty-one." A father said, "I feel totally powerless in my own home. We are out of control." What force or power could soften the human cry for greater security, orderliness, control, even peace?

Power to calm outside fears

My first memories of a need for power came when my family moved the year I began third grade. I started figuring out more about friends and other people's families. As my new friends

talked to kids in the extended neighborhood, we sized up assets and numbers—who had shade trees you could sit in or chicken coops you could climb on. Besides whose dad was the strongest, I noticed many of the kids were older than I. Luckily I had two big sisters with lots of friends. In fact I once said I could call out the whole high school if needed. I felt I had the needed personal power for safety and self-preservation.

My eight-year-old world was enlarging. So was the need for the skills that help one cope in this civilized world. I started appreciating the safety one gets from size, numbers, resources. Our use

of what I call personal or political power begins early. Most children learn about size first. "If you don't stop that, I'll call Mom." "When Dad comes home, you'll be in big trouble." Resources can supplement our need for size. A toy becomes a stick. What begins as a snowman becomes a fortress. The world was at war in those days, but I was a third-grader. The physical danger I feared was the boy with a wooden gun that shot rubber rings taken from fruit jars. His target was girls' legs. Friends told me you could give the boy bottle rings and he wouldn't hit you, but adding to his arsenal seemed like a traitorous thing to do, and I doubted you could trust a commitment from a bully. I think a teacher eventually took his gun. In my world I appreciated people who had power, like teachers and parents, especially if they had fair rules.

Inner power of goodness and love

That same year the community seemed to rejoice with our family when my mother gave birth to her only son after four daughters. My dad was an only son, and now he had someone to carry on his name. Within months it was obvious that Tommy was severely handicapped. A force that was just the opposite of my outside world started to be felt inside. There seemed to develop a new dimension of love, tenderness, compassion. I watched my mother and dad make adjustments in lifestyle to lovingly care for a child who in his five and one-half years never learned to sit or speak but who warmed an entire room with his smile. The whole town seemed more gentle, interested, concerned. My outside fears were diminished. I felt securely attached because my mother and brother were there. My parents were home at night. Our home seemed more warm, full. There was a different power. It seemed to grow from the inside. It felt more permanent, unlike the temporary power I felt with my friends. It was calm and

peaceful—the power of goodness, the power of love.

A family learns the power of love

There is a power in goodness that is often learned in families. There is a void when it is lacking. I know one family that left what they described as "the good life" in a desire to *do good*. They agreed on a noble purpose that would take them to the Philippines for a year. The mother of this family reported, "We were flabbergasted it was so hard." Without the normal routine and conveniences of home, she said, "we were just the same old ornery people." Then they set a new routine—exercise at 5:30 A.M., 6:30 scripture study, then breakfast and school. Each afternoon they visited orphanages to play with the children.

Gradually the family started to notice a change—new levels of patience, gratitude, and respect. They started to talk to each other—to *really* talk and to *really* listen. The mother stated, "I will never forget the learning that took place for me and my family the day they brought a five-month-old baby into the orphanage whose tongue had been cut and an eye poked out." When they learned the mother, a beggar, had injured her own child, it gave a new dimension to the social studies lesson they had discussed at home. A new level of compassion started to develop—greater reverence for the sanctity of life. This family put their "trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good" (D&C 11:12), and gradually they started to experience the power to become changed.

The powers of heaven and of priesthood

The powers of heaven are available to everyone through righteousness. Mormon teaches that "every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the *power* and gift of Christ" (Moroni 7:16; italics added).

Revelation concerning power was given to Joseph Smith when political power had turned against him and he was a prisoner in Liberty Jail. His first plea to the Lord was for help to avenge his enemies. His prayer: "Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies" (D&C 121:5). Our Father in Heaven responded with a greater blessing: "My son, peace be unto thy soul" (v. 7). Then He made a promise if Joseph would endure and be faithful: "God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes" (v. 8).

It was in this prison setting that God taught Joseph Smith about priesthood power. "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (D&C 121:41). Priesthood power is used to minister, to preach, to teach, to baptize, to ordain, to heal, to seal, to restore, to bless, to prophesy, to testify, to do good.

Political power, on the other hand, can be used as a force for good, or it may be a force for evil. It is always temporary. We all have political power. We each need it. We should *use* it for *good*. Without proper exercise of this power, we might lose our freedom. Churches might cease to exist. Of course we need rules. We need laws, but we must remember that the scriptures tell us "the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness" (D&C 121:36).

The power of a mother's goodness

A faithful member shared her testimony of how the *power* of goodness influenced her life. She writes:

"Until I was about eight years old, I was oblivious to the fact that my mother had serious health problems—later diagnosed as multiple sclerosis. When I was a first-year Beehive, I awoke one May morning to find that my mother was

paralyzed from the neck down. She was already blind."

Confined to her bed, this courageous woman became the hub of the household. Her daughter wrote:

"One day it fell upon me to clean the oven, a chore I approached with self-pity and much complaining. I went into her bedroom to whine a little and realized that Mom was crying. She said, 'Do you know how much I would give to be able to get up and scrub that oven?' I gained a different perspective on the nature of work. To this day I think of that experience every time the oven needs cleaning."

She continues: "An unusual blessing came to me in having my mother available. She listened patiently to my early-adolescent concerns and questions. She made me feel like the most important and interesting person in the world. She was *always* HOME—attentive, interested, and always available."

Her mother died the spring of her senior year. She relates:

"One of the hardest moments in my young life was the day I returned home from school to an empty house and walked down that long hallway to her bedroom. My built-in counselor and confidante was no longer there, but she had given me those eternal, intangible gifts of love, wisdom, and acceptance. I will be forever grateful for her goodness."

This strong woman, though physically helpless, had the *power* to love, to motivate, to inspire, to perpetuate righteousness, to do good.

Seek the power of righteousness

My plea for each of us is to recognize that God has given each of us power—the power to act, to choose, to serve, to love, and to accomplish *much good*. Perhaps it is time to take control of ourselves. Our prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, has said, "Be faithful. . . . Do good." He

has told us: "We have nothing to fear. God is at the helm. . . . He will shower down blessings upon those who walk in obedience to His commandments" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 95; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 71). It is my prayer that we will seek the power of righteousness in our lives by following the counsel of the living prophet and by living the teachings of our Savior, Jesus Christ, in His name, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Jack H Goasland of the Presidency of the Seventy has spoken to us,

followed by Sister Janette Hales Beckham, general president of the Young Women.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Do What Is Right," following which we shall hear from Elder W. Craig Zwick and then Elder Bruce D. Porter, who were sustained as new members of the Seventy during our April conference.

The chorus and congregation sang "Do What Is Right."

Elder W. Craig Zwick

Encircled in the Savior's love

My heart trembles with deep humility as I occupy this sacred spot for the first time. I know with full assurance that President Hinckley's voice and thoughts represent the Savior's desires for each of us.

On a beautiful summer morning our family attended the Special Olympics to watch our son Scott participate. The Special Olympics are held each year to allow people with disabilities to enjoy friendly competition. We observed that as the runners were taking their positions for the fifty-yard dash, they were being encouraged by special friends affectionately known as huggers. Seconds before the start of the race, these huggers took their places at the finish line of the race. It didn't matter who crossed the finish line first. What did matter was that every runner completed the race and that every runner received a congratulatory hug. Both the courageous runners and the caring huggers taught important principles of truth.

The Lord spoke in plainness, "Be faithful and diligent in keeping the com-

mandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love" (D&C 6:20). We all want to feel the comfort of the Savior's embrace.

Reach out to those with disabilities

During His ministry the Savior, with great compassion, saw beyond the imperfections of body and mind and looked upon the heart. Our discipleship includes the sacred responsibility to follow His example of reaching out and loving those with disabilities. Valiant disciples seek meaningful ways to stretch their souls in service and love to others.

Elder Richard G. Scott's counsel is precise: "You become an instrument through which the Lord can bless another. The Spirit will let you feel the Savior's concern and interest, then the warmth and strength of His love" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, p. 9; or *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 9).

Our task, facilitated by prayer, is to recognize even the slight limitations of each person who may be suffering pain or discouragement. It may be a minor learning disability, dyslexia, or a slight

hearing impairment. Without our help, they may be unable to partake of the Savior's goodness or enjoy the fullness of life.

Each person wants to feel safe in what is sometimes a very cruel, competitive world. Everyone is of great worth because each is a spirit child of God.

Include those with disabilities

Mary, a young girl with mental disabilities and not a member of the Church, was limited, but she wanted very much to be included. Sensitive to her needs, several young women invited her to participate in the ward road show. Her family was invited to the performance. Mary's father wanted to know more about a church whose people cared enough about his daughter to include her. The whole family embraced the gospel and were baptized.

Thank you to each thoughtful friend, teacher, bishop, and all who ensure that no one feels alone or out of place. There is an ever-present need for meaningful involvement. We are all enriched and enhanced in the process.

Contributions of those with disabilities

Sister Navarro lives in a small village in southern Chile. Her body is afflicted with arthritis, and she suffers significant pain as she walks with the help of a cane. Every Sunday for nineteen years she has taken the hand of her daughter who is mentally disabled and, aided by a cane, shuffled two miles to attend church. Her calling as chorister in the Relief Society means everything to dear Sister Navarro. Her willingness to reach out to others is like a magnet for others to be of help to her disabled daughter.

The Savior in His infinite goodness allows all to enjoy. "All men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden" (2 Nephi 26:28).

Each person has unique gifts, and each needs to contribute as well as receive.

Jamie Wheeler is an exceptional sixteen-year-old. He was born with Down syndrome. Jamie has a calling in the ward and helps the bishop in other meaningful ways. He participates actively in the Boy Scout program. Truly he contributes and also receives genuine love and appreciation.

Learning from those with disabilities

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 354).

Our lives are blessed as we learn lessons from trusted friends whose disabilities and humility invite the Spirit. They teach us a new dimension of faith, courage, patience, love, and individual worth.

Four young men with severe disabilities work in the São Paulo Temple. Each has a different challenge, but each is blessing the lives of thousands as they contribute to the sweet spirit within this beautiful temple. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10).

My soul is stirring with deep appreciation and love for our oldest son, Scott, mentally disabled from birth. His courage and love have allowed many friends and each member of our family to feel through the Spirit "the Savior's concern and interest, then the warmth and strength of His love" (Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, p. 9; or *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 9). I am grateful for my eternal companion, Jan, whose faith and tender love for each of our children has made our home a peaceful setting. She truly looks for ways to make each child of God feel comforted.

The Savior's compassion

Ponder in your hearts the feelings of the Savior as He expresses His love for each child of God:

"They were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.

"And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.

"Have ye any that are . . . afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you. . . .

" . . . I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you" (3 Nephi 17:5-8).

I pray that our faith may be sufficient for each of us to feel encircled in the arms of our Savior's love. I know that our Savior lives and that He intimately knows each of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Bruce D. Porter

Our similarities to the prodigal son

The parable of the prodigal son is a parable of us all. It reminds us that we are, in some measure, prodigal sons and daughters of our Father in Heaven. For, as the Apostle Paul wrote, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Like the errant son of the Savior's parable, we have come to "a far country" (Luke 15:13) separated from our pre-mortal home. Like the prodigal, we share in a divine inheritance, but by our sins we squander a portion thereof and experience a "mighty famine" (v. 14) of spirit. Like him, we learn through painful experience that worldly pleasures and pursuits are of no more worth than the husks of corn that swine eat. We yearn to be reconciled with our Father and return to His home.

How long we have wandered
As strangers in sin,
And cried in the desert for thee!
[*"Redeemer of Israel," Hymns, no. 6*]

The Father's Eldest Son redeemed us

In the parable of the prodigal son, only the eldest son remains true to his father; in his own words, "Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment"

(Luke 15:29). Similarly, in the plan of salvation the Firstborn of the Father is sinless and without spot. Yet there is a vital difference. In the parable, the eldest son is jealous of the attention paid to the returning prodigal. In the plan of salvation, however, the Eldest Son *makes possible* the return of the prodigals.

The Father sends Him forth to redeem His sons and daughters from bondage. The Eldest is filled with compassion. "I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them" (Ezekiel 37:23). He journeys the long distance to find and bring home the prodigal ones. And there He finds us weary, hungry, and downtrodden. He feeds us and gives us drink. He lives among us and shares our burdens. Then, in a final act of supreme love, the Eldest Son takes of His own wealth and, one by one, He ransoms us. In order to pay the fulness of our debt, He is compelled to sacrifice His own fortune, yea, all that He has, every whit.

There are those who refuse the proffered ransom. Chained by pride, they prefer bondage to repentance. But those who accept of His offering and forsake their errant ways receive healing at His hands and liberty as His gift. These He leads back to the Father with songs of everlasting joy.

I testify that the Eldest Son of our Father in Heaven did redeem us from the bondage of sin. We are a purchased people. In the words of Paul, "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 7:23). In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Firstborn of the Father "descended below all things" (D&C 88:6); He bore "our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). At Golgotha, at the hands of men for whose very sins He had atoned, He "poured out his soul unto death" (v. 12), freely relinquishing His life as He overcame the world.

The Savior's sacrifices

In the premortal realm He had been the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Creator of the earth, the great I AM. From these exalted heights He descended, coming to earth in the most humble of circumstances that He might be no stranger to our sorrows. Instead of worldly station, He chose to be born in a lowly stable and live the simple life of a carpenter. He grew up in an obscure village in a despised precinct of Palestine. He made himself of no reputation, and was "a root out of a dry ground," having "no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2).

He might have had political power and honor; He chose instead to be a healer and a teacher. He might have won the favor of His people by freeing them from Roman oppression; instead, He saved them from their sins and was rejected by His own. He sacrificed the glory of Galilee to experience the humiliation and trial of Jerusalem. Then, in a most literal way, the Lord Jesus Christ paid the utmost demands of our ransom as He bore "the pain of all men" (D&C 18:11).

"And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him,

and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men" (1 Nephi 19:9).

Redeemer of Israel

A few years ago I visited Jerusalem shortly before Christmas. The streets were cold and dreary; there was political tension in the air. Yet peace filled my heart to know that this was the city He loved so much, the very place of His eternal sacrifice; to know that here had lived He who was the Savior of all mankind.

I returned to the United States late on a Saturday evening. When the Sabbath dawned, my alarm awoke me to these words from "O Holy Night":

The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend.
[Adolphe Adam, in *Recreational Songs* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1949), pp. 142-44]

And I began to weep as I contemplated the perfect life and glorious sacrifice of the Redeemer of Israel—He who was born the friend of the lowly and hope of the meek.

I bear testimony that the Lord Jesus Christ has paid the price of our sins upon condition of repentance. He is the Firstborn of the Father. He is the Holy One of Israel. He is the firstfruits of the Resurrection. I testify that He lives. I testify that He is in very deed "our only delight, . . . our King, our Deliv'rer, our all!" (*Hymns*, no. 6). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Zwick and Brother Porter of the Seventy.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

Elder Richard G. Scott

When the Lord answers no

It is so hard when sincere prayer about something we desire very much is not answered the way we want. It is especially difficult when the Lord answers *no* to that which is worthy and would give us great joy and happiness. Whether it be overcoming illness or loneliness, recovery of a wayward child, coping with a handicap, or seeking continuing life for a dear one who is slipping away, it seems so reasonable and so consistent with our happiness to have a favorable answer. It is hard to understand why our exercise of deep and sincere faith from an obedient life does not bring the desired result.

No one wants adversity. Trials, disappointments, sadness, and heartache come to us from two basically different sources. Those who transgress the laws of God will always have those challenges. The other reason for adversity is to accomplish the Lord's own purposes in our life that we may receive the refinement that comes from testing. It is vitally important for each of us to identify from which of these two sources come our trials and challenges, for the corrective action is very different.

Adversity from transgression

If you are suffering the disheartening effects of transgression, please recognize that the only path to permanent relief from sadness is sincere repentance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Realize your full dependence on the Lord and your need to align your life with His teachings. There is really no other way to get lasting healing and peace. Postponing humble repentance will delay or prevent your receiving relief. Admit to yourself your mistakes and seek help now. Your bishop is a friend with keys of authority to help you find peace of mind and contentment. The way will be opened for

you to have strength to repent and be forgiven.

Adversity to accomplish the Lord's purposes

Now may I share some suggestions with you who face the second source of adversity, the testing that a wise Heavenly Father determines is needed even when you are living a worthy, righteous life and are obedient to His commandments.

Just when all seems to be going right, challenges often come in multiple doses applied simultaneously. When those trials are not consequences of your disobedience, they are evidence that the Lord feels you are prepared to grow more (see Proverbs 3:11–12). He therefore gives you experiences that stimulate growth, understanding, and compassion which polish you for your everlasting benefit. To get you from where you are to where He wants you to be requires a lot of stretching, and that generally entails discomfort and pain.

When you face adversity, you can be led to ask many questions. Some serve a useful purpose; others do not. To ask, Why does this have to happen to me? Why do I have to suffer this now? What have I done to cause this? will lead you into blind alleys. It really does no good to ask questions that reflect opposition to the will of God. Rather ask, What am I to do? What am I to learn from this experience? What am I to change? Whom am I to help? How can I remember my many blessings in times of trial? Willing sacrifice of deeply held personal desires in favor of the will of God is very hard to do. Yet when you pray with real conviction, "Please let me know Thy will" and "May Thy will be done," you are in the strongest position to receive the maximum help from your loving Father.

Trust in the Lord

This life is an experience in profound trust—trust in Jesus Christ, trust in His teachings, trust in our capacity as led by the Holy Spirit to obey those teachings for happiness now and for a purposeful, supremely happy eternal existence. To trust means to obey willingly without knowing the end from the beginning (see Proverbs 3:5–7). To produce fruit, your trust in the Lord must be more powerful and enduring than your confidence in your own personal feelings and experience.

To exercise faith is to trust that the Lord knows what He is doing with you and that He can accomplish it for your eternal good even though you cannot understand how He can possibly do it. We are like infants in our understanding of eternal matters and their impact on us here in mortality. Yet at times we act as if we knew it all. When you pass through trials for His purposes, as you trust Him, exercise faith in Him, He will help you. That support will generally come step by step, a portion at a time. While you are passing through each phase, the pain and difficulty that come from being enlarged will continue. If all matters were immediately resolved at your first petition, you could not grow. Your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son love you perfectly. They would not require you to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for your personal benefit or for that of those you love.

The Savior's example in adversity

As in all things, the Master is our perfect example. Who could have asked with more perfect faith, greater obedience, or more complete understanding than did He when He asked His Father in Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"

(Matthew 26:39). Later He pled twice again, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (v. 42; see also v. 44).

How grateful I am personally that our Savior taught we should conclude our most urgent, deeply felt prayers, when we ask for that which is of utmost importance to us, with "Thy will be done" (v. 42). Your willingness to accept the will of the Father will not change what, in His wisdom, He has chosen to do. However, it will certainly change the effect of those decisions on you personally. That evidence of the proper exercise of agency allows His decisions to produce far greater blessings in your life. I have found that because of our Father's desire for us to grow, He may give us gentle, almost imperceptible promptings that, if we are willing to accept without complaint, He will enlarge to become a very clear indication of His will. This enlightenment comes because of our faith and our willingness to do what He asks even though we would desire something else.

The Lord gives what we need

Our Father in Heaven has invited you to express your needs, hopes, and desires unto Him. That should not be done in a spirit of negotiation, but rather as a willingness to obey His will no matter what direction that takes. His invitation "Ask, and ye shall receive" (3 Nephi 27:29) does not ensure that you will get what you *want*. It does guarantee that, if worthy, you will get what you *need*, as judged by a Father who loves you perfectly, who wants your eternal happiness even more than you do.

I testify that when the Lord closes one important door in your life, He shows His continuing love and compassion by opening many other compensating doors through your exercise of faith. He will place in your path packets of spiritual sunlight to brighten your way.

They often come after the trial has been the greatest, as evidence of the compassion and love of an all-knowing Father. They point the way to greater happiness and more understanding and strengthen your determination to accept and be obedient to His will.

True happiness is centered in Christ

It is a singularly marvelous blessing to have faith in the Savior and a testimony of His teachings. So few in the world have that brilliant light to guide them. The fulness of the restored gospel gives perspective, purpose, and understanding. It allows us to face what otherwise appear to be unjust, unfair, unreasonable challenges in life. Learn those helpful truths by pondering the Book of Mormon and other scriptures. Try to understand those teachings not only with your mind but also with your heart.

True enduring happiness with the accompanying strength, courage, and capacity to overcome the most challenging difficulties comes from a life centered in Jesus Christ. Obedience to His teachings provides a sure foundation upon which to build. That takes effort. There is no guarantee of overnight results, but there is absolute assurance that, in the Lord's time, solutions will come, peace will prevail, and emptiness will be filled.

Finding peace during adversity

Recently a great leader, suffering from physical handicaps that come with advancing age, said, "I am glad I have what I have." It is wisdom to open the windows of happiness by recognizing your abundant blessings.

Don't let the workings of adversity totally absorb your life. Try to understand what you can. Act where you are able; then let the matter rest with the Lord for a period while you give to others in worthy ways before you take on appropriate concern again.

Please learn that as you wrestle with a challenge and feel sadness because of it, you can simultaneously have peace and rejoicing. Yes, pain, disappointment, frustration, and anguish can be temporary scenes played out on the stage of life. Behind them there can be a background of peace and the positive assurance that a loving Father will keep His promises. You can qualify for those promises by a determination to accept His will, by understanding the plan of happiness, by receiving all of the ordinances, and by keeping the covenants made to assure their fulfillment.

The Lord is preparing you for exaltation

The Lord's plan is to exalt you to live with Him and be greatly blessed. The rate at which you qualify is generally set by your capacity to mature, to grow, to love, and to give of yourself. He is preparing you to be a god. You cannot understand fully what that means, yet He knows. As you trust Him, seek and follow His will, you will receive blessings that your finite mind cannot understand here on earth. Your Father in Heaven and His Holy Son know better than you what brings happiness. They have given you the plan of happiness. As you understand and follow it, happiness will be your blessing. As you willingly obey, receive, and honor the ordinances and covenants of that holy plan, you can have the greatest measure of satisfaction in this life, yes, even times of overpowering happiness. You will prepare yourself for an eternity of glorious life with your loved ones who qualify for that kingdom.

I know the principles that we have discussed are true. They have been tested in the crucible of personal experience. To recognize the hand of the Lord in your life and to accept His will without complaint is a beginning. That decision does not immediately eliminate the struggles that will come for your growth. But I witness that it is the best way there is for you

to find strength and understanding. It will free you from the dead ends of your own reasoning. It will allow your life to become a productive, meaningful experience when otherwise you may not know how to go on (see D&C 24:8).

I testify that you have a Heavenly Father who loves you. I witness that the Savior gave His life for your happiness. I know Him. He understands your every need. I positively know that as you accept Their will without complaint, They will bless and sustain you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Boyd K. Packer

The brilliant morning of forgiveness

In April of 1847, Brigham Young led the first company of pioneers out of Winter Quarters. At that same time, 1,600 miles to the west the pathetic survivors of the Donner Party straggled down the slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains into the Sacramento Valley.

They had spent the ferocious winter trapped in the snowdrifts below the summit. That any survived the days and weeks and months of starvation and indescribable suffering is almost beyond belief.

Among them was fifteen-year-old John Breen. On the night of April 24 he walked into Johnson's Ranch. Years later John wrote:

"It was long after dark when we got to Johnson's Ranch, so the first time I saw it was early in the morning. The weather was fine, the ground was covered with green grass, the birds were singing from the tops of the trees, and the journey was over. I could scarcely believe that I was alive.

"The scene that I saw that morning seems to be photographed on my mind. Most of the incidents are gone from memory, but I can always see the camp near Johnson's Ranch."¹

The chorus sang "True to the Faith."

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott has just spoken to us, followed by the chorus singing "True to the Faith."

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will now be our concluding speaker for this session.

At first I was very puzzled by his statement that "most of the incidents are gone from memory." How could long months of incredible suffering and sorrow ever be gone from his mind? How could that brutal dark winter be replaced with one brilliant morning?

On further reflection I decided it was not puzzling at all. I have seen something similar happen to people I have known. I have seen some who have spent a long winter of guilt and spiritual starvation emerge into the morning of forgiveness. When morning came, they learned this:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."²

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."³

"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."⁴

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."⁵

Alma feels the joy of forgiveness

When the prophet Alma was young, he spent such a time "racked," as he said, "with eternal torment, [his] soul . . . harrowed up to the greatest degree."⁶

He even thought, "*Oh, . . . that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body.*"⁷

But his mind caught hold of a thought. When he nurtured the thought and acted upon it, the morning of forgiveness came, and he said:

"I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

"And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!"⁸

The promise of complete forgiveness

Letters come from those who have made tragic mistakes. They ask, "Can I ever be forgiven?"

The answer is *yes!*

The gospel teaches us that relief from torment and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few who defect to perdition after having known a fulness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." That is, Isaiah continued, "if ye be willing and obedient."⁹

Even that grace of God promised in the scriptures comes only "after all we can do."¹⁰

You may tell yourself that your transgressions are not spiritually illegal. That will not work; neither will rebellion, nor anger, nor joking about them. You cannot do that. And you don't have to do it.

Repentance: the way back

There is a way back. It will not help if, out of tender regard for your feelings, I avoid telling you about the hard part.

John Breen did not come to that morning at Johnson's Ranch simply by desiring it. He wallowed and clawed his way up over the pass, suffering every step of the way. But once he knew he would survive and the suffering would end, surely he did not complain at the ordeal. And he had help all the way down. He was with rescuers.

When an offense is minor, so simple a thing as an apology will satisfy the law. Most mistakes can be settled between us and the Lord, and that should be done speedily.¹¹ It requires a confession to Him, and whatever obvious repairs need to be made.

With sincere repentance as a pattern in our lives, measured by our willingness to "confess them and forsake them,"¹² the Lord has promised that we may "always retain a remission of [our] sins."¹³

Alma bluntly told his wayward son that "repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment."¹⁴

The punishment may, for the most part, consist of the torment we inflict upon ourselves. It may be the loss of privilege or progress.¹⁵ (For further information, see additional text in this endnote.) We are punished *by* our sins, if not *for* them.

There are some transgressions which require a discipline which will bring about the relief that comes with the morning of forgiveness. If your mistakes have been grievous ones, go to your bishop. Like the rescuers who brought John Breen down from the mountaintops, bishops can guide you through the steps required to obtain forgiveness insofar as the Church is concerned. Each one of us must work out individually forgiveness from the Lord.

The need to make restitution

To earn forgiveness, one must make restitution. That means you give back what you have taken or ease the pain of those you have injured.

But sometimes you *cannot* give back what you have taken because you don't have it to give. If you have caused others to suffer unbearably—defiled someone's virtue, for example—it is not within your power to give it back.

There are times you cannot mend that which you have broken. Perhaps the offense was long ago, or the injured refused your penance. Perhaps the damage was so severe that you cannot fix it no matter how desperately you want to.

Your repentance cannot be accepted unless there is a restitution. If you cannot undo what you have done, you are trapped. It is easy to understand how helpless and hopeless you then feel and why you might want to give up, just as Alma did.

The thought that rescued Alma, when he acted upon it, is this: Restoring what you cannot restore, healing the wound you cannot heal, fixing that which you broke and you cannot fix is the very purpose of the atonement of Christ.

When your desire is firm and you are willing to pay the "uttermost farthing,"¹⁶ the law of restitution is suspended. Your obligation is transferred to the Lord. He will settle your accounts.

Comforting knowledge

I repeat, save for the exception of the very few who defect to perdition, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no apostasy, no crime exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. That is the promise of the atonement of Christ.

How all can be repaired, we do not know. It may not all be accomplished in this life. We know from visions and visitations that the servants of the Lord continue the work of redemption beyond the veil.¹⁷

This knowledge should be as comforting to the innocent as it is to the guilty. I am thinking of parents who suffer un-

bearably for the mistakes of their wayward children and are losing hope.

We cannot condone unworthy conduct

Some members wonder why their priesthood leaders will not accept them just as they are and simply comfort them in what they call pure Christian love.

Pure Christian love, the love of Christ, does not presuppose approval of all conduct. Surely the ordinary experiences of parenthood teach that one can be consumed with love for another and yet be unable to approve unworthy conduct.

We cannot, as a church, approve unworthy conduct or accept into full fellowship individuals who live or who teach standards that are grossly in violation of that which the Lord requires of Latter-day Saints.

If we, out of sympathy, should approve unworthy conduct, it might give present comfort to someone but would not ultimately contribute to that person's happiness.¹⁸

In the most tender of sermons in the revelations on kindness and long-suffering, on meekness, gentleness, on love unfeigned, the Lord instructs us to reprove "betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then [show] forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved."¹⁹

Seek relief now

The Lord provides ways to pay our debts to Him. In one sense we ourselves may participate in an atonement. When we are willing to restore to others that which we have not taken, or heal wounds that we did not inflict, or pay a debt that we did not incur, we are emulating His part in the Atonement.

So many live with accusing guilt when relief is ever at hand. So many are like the immigrant woman who skimmed and saved and deprived herself until, by

selling all of her possessions, she bought a steerage-class ticket to America.

She rationed out the meager provisions she was able to bring with her. Even so, they were gone early in the voyage. When others went for their meals, she stayed below deck—determined to suffer through it. Finally, on the last day, she must, she thought, afford one meal to give her strength for the journey yet ahead. When she asked what the meal would cost, she was told that all of the meals had been included in the price of her ticket.

Never give up hope

That great morning of forgiveness may not come at once. Do not give up if at first you fail. Often the most difficult part of repentance is to forgive yourself. Discouragement is part of that test. Do not give up. That brilliant morning will come.

Then “the peace of God, which passeth . . . understanding” comes into your life once again.²⁰ Then you, like Him, will remember your sins no more. How will you know? You will know!²¹

Some years ago I was in Washington, D.C., with President Harold B. Lee. Early one morning he called me to come into his hotel room. He was sitting in his robe reading *Gospel Doctrine*, by President Joseph F. Smith, and he said, “Listen to this!

“‘Jesus had not finished his work when his body was slain, neither did he finish it after his resurrection from the dead; although he had accomplished the purpose for which he then came to the earth, he had not fulfilled all his work. And when will he? Not until he has redeemed and saved every son and daughter of our father Adam that have been or ever will be born upon this earth to the end of time, except the sons of perdition. That is his mission. We will not finish *our* work until we have saved ourselves, and then not until we shall have saved all

depending upon us; for we are to become saviors upon Mount Zion, as well as Christ. We are called to this mission.’”²²

“There is never a time,” the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “when the spirit is too old to approach God. *All are within the reach of pardoning mercy, who have not committed the unpardonable sin.*”²³

And so we pray, and we fast, and we plead, and we implore. We love those who wander, and we never give up hope.

I bear witness of Christ and of the power of His atonement. And I know that “his anger kindleth against the wicked; they repent, and in a moment it is turned away, and they are in his favor, and he giveth them life; therefore, weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”²⁴ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John Breen, “Pioneer Memoirs,” unpublished, as quoted on “The Americanization of Utah,” PBS television broadcast.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
3. Isaiah 43:25.
4. Jeremiah 31:34.
5. Hebrews 8:12; see also Hebrews 10:17.
6. Alma 36:12; italics added.
7. Alma 36:15; italics added.
8. Alma 36:19–20.
9. Isaiah 1:18–19.
10. 2 Nephi 25:23.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:21.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 58:43; see also Ezekiel 18:21–24, 31–32.
13. Mosiah 4:12; italics added.
14. Alma 42:16.
15. Forgiveness will come eventually to all repentant souls who have not committed the unpardonable sin (see Matthew 12:31). Forgiveness does not, however, necessarily ensure exaltation, as is the case with David (see D&C 132:38–39; see also Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:25–27; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 339).

16. See Matthew 5:25-26.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 138.
18. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 256-57.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43.
20. Philippians 4:7.
21. See Mosiah 4:1-3.
22. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 442; italics added.
23. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 191; italics added.
24. Joseph Smith Translation, Psalm 30:5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 61:20.

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Twelve, has been our concluding speaker for this session.

The chorus will now sing "Our Savior's Love." The benediction will be offered by Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "Our Savior's Love."
Elder F. Burton Howard offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, September 30, 1995, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the combined ward choirs from the Cottonwood Utah Region, under the direction of Brother Jay J. Campbell, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, President Faust made the following remarks.

President James E. Faust

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We welcome you to the second general session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world

where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders Jeffrey R. Holland, L. Aldin Porter, and Julio E. Dávila are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elder Neil L. Andersen and Bishop Richard C. Edgley are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by the combined ward choirs from the Cottonwood Utah Region, under the direction of Brother Jay J. Campbell, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "The Morning Breaks." The invocation will be offered by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy.

The choir sang "The Morning Breaks."
Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "I Am a Child of God." President Thomas S.

Monson will then present the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "I Am a Child of God."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd K. Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

In view of their assignments to serve in Area Presidencies, it is proposed that we extend an official vote of release and appreciation to Elders Rex D. Pinegar and Charles Didier for their service as members of the Presidency of the Quo-

rum of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain as Presidents of the Quorums of the Seventy Elders Carlos E. Asay, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goasland, and Harold G. Hillam. All in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elders Ted E. Brewerton and Hans B. Ringger and that they be designated as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it.

With gratitude for their service as General Authorities, it is proposed that we release Elders Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Helvécio Martins, J Ballard Washburn, and Durrel A. Woolsey as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

Those who may wish to join us in releasing with a vote of thanks Elders Charles Didier, J Ballard Washburn, and F. Burton Howard as the general Sunday School presidency may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain as the general Sunday School presidency Elder Harold G. Hillam as president, Elder F. Burton Howard as first counselor, and Elder Glenn L. Pace as second counselor. Those in favor, please indicate. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your loving and prayerful support.

President Faust

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Need for increased consecration

Whenever Church members speak of consecration, it should be done reverently while acknowledging that each of us “come[s] short of the glory of God,” some of us far short (Romans 3:23). Even the conscientious have not arrived, but they sense the shortfall and are genuinely striving. Consoling, God’s grace flows not only to those “who love [Him] and keep all [His] commandments,” but likewise to those “that [seek] so to do” (D&C 46:9).

A second group of members are “honorable” but not “valiant.” They are not really aware of the gap nor of the importance of closing it (see D&C 76:75, 79). These “honorable” individuals are certainly not miserable nor wicked, nor are they unrighteous and unhappy. It is not what they have done but what they have left undone that is amiss. For example, if valiant, they could touch others deeply instead of merely being remembered pleasantly.

In a third group are those who are grossly entangled with the “ungodliness” of the world, reminding us all, as Peter wrote, that if “[we are] overcome” by something worldly, “[we are] brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19).

Serve the true Master

If one “mind[s] the things of the flesh” (Romans 8:5), he cannot “have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16) because his thought patterns are “far from” Jesus, as are the desires or the “intents of his heart” (Mosiah 5:13). Ironically, if the Master is a stranger to us, then we

will merely end up serving other masters. The sovereignty of these other masters is real, even if it sometimes is subtle, for they do call their cadence. Actually, “we are all enlisted” (*Hymns*, no. 250), if only in the ranks of the indifferent.

To the extent that we are not willing to be led by the Lord, we will be driven by our appetites, or we will be greatly preoccupied with the lesser things of the day. The remedy is implicit in the marvelous lamentation of King Benjamin: “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13). For many moderns, sad to say, the query “What think ye of Christ?” (Matthew 22:42) would be answered, “I really don’t think of Him at all!”

Examples of keeping back a portion

Consider three examples of how honorable people in the Church keep back a portion and thus prevent greater consecration (see Acts 5:1–4).

A sister gives commendable, visible civic service. Yet even with her good image in the community, she remains a comparative stranger to Jesus’ holy temples and His holy scriptures, two vital dimensions of discipleship. But she could have Christ’s image in her countenance (see Alma 5:14).

An honorable father, dutifully involved in the cares of his family, is less than kind and gentle with individual family members. Though a comparative stranger to Jesus’ gentleness and kindness, which we are instructed to emulate,

a little more effort by this father would make such a large difference.

Consider the returned missionary, skills polished while serving an honorable mission, striving earnestly for success in his career. Busy, he ends up in a posture of some accommodation with the world. Thus he forgoes building up the kingdom first and instead builds up himself. A small course correction now would make a large, even destinational, difference for him later on.

Greater consecration corrects omissions

These deficiencies just illustrated are those of omission. Once the telestial sins are left behind and henceforth avoided, the focus falls ever more on the sins of omission. These omissions signify a lack of qualifying fully for the celestial kingdom. Only greater consecration can correct these omissions, which have consequences just as real as do the sins of commission. Many of us thus have sufficient faith to avoid the major sins of commission, but not enough faith to sacrifice our distracting obsessions or to focus on our omissions.

Most omissions occur because we fail to get outside ourselves. We are so busy checking on our own temperatures, we do not notice the burning fevers of others even when we can offer them some of the needed remedies, such as encouragement, kindness, and commendation. The hands which hang down and most need to be lifted up belong to those too discouraged even to reach out anymore.

Letting God educate our desires

Actually, everything depends—initially and finally—on our desires. These shape our thought patterns. Our desires thus precede our deeds and lie at the very cores of our souls, tilting us toward or away from God (see D&C 4:3). God can educate our desires (see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake

City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 297). Others seek to manipulate our desires. But it is we who form the desires, the “thoughts and intents of [our] hearts” (Mosiah 5:13).

The end rule is “according to [our] desires . . . shall it be done unto [us]” (D&C 11:17), “for I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts” (D&C 137:9; see also Alma 41:5; D&C 6:20, 27). One’s individual will thus remains uniquely his. God will not override it nor overwhelm it. Hence we’d better want the consequences of what we want!

Another cosmic fact: only by aligning our wills with God’s is full happiness to be found. Anything less results in a lesser portion (see Alma 12:10–11). The Lord will work with us even if, at first, we “can no more than desire” but are willing to “give place for a portion of [His] words” (Alma 32:27). A small foothold is all He needs! But we must desire and provide it.

The need to lose ourselves

So many of us are kept from eventual consecration because we mistakenly think that, somehow, by letting our will be swallowed up in the will of God, we lose our individuality (see Mosiah 15:7). What we are really worried about, of course, is not giving up self, but selfish things—like our roles, our time, our pre-eminence, and our possessions. No wonder we are instructed by the Savior to lose ourselves (see Luke 9:24). He is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new self. It is not a question of one’s losing identity but of finding his true identity! Ironically, so many people already lose themselves anyway in their consuming hobbies and preoccupations but with far, far lesser things.

Ever observant, in both the first and second estates, consecrated Jesus always knew in which direction He faced: He consistently emulated His Father: “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what

he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19), for "I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11).

Submission brings revelation and joy

As one's will is increasingly submissive to the will of God, he can receive inspiration and revelation so much needed to help meet the trials of life. In the trying and very defining Isaac episode, faithful Abraham "staggered not . . . through unbelief" (Romans 4:20). Of that episode John Taylor observed that "nothing but the spirit of revelation could have given him this confidence, and . . . sustained him under these peculiar circumstances" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:361). Will we too trust the Lord amid a perplexing trial for which we have no easy explanation? Do we understand—really comprehend—that Jesus knows and understands when we are stressed and perplexed? The complete consecration which effected the Atonement ensured Jesus' perfect empathy; He felt our very pains and afflictions before we did and knows how to succor us (see Alma 7:11–12; 2 Nephi 9:21). Since the Most Innocent suffered the most, our own cries of "Why?" cannot match His. But we can utter the same submissive word "nevertheless . . ." (Matthew 26:39).

Progression toward submission confers another blessing: an enhanced capacity for joy. Counseled President Brigham Young, "If you want to enjoy exquisitely, become a Latter-day Saint, and then live the doctrine of Jesus Christ" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:247).

Thus, brothers and sisters, consecration is not resignation or a mindless caving in. Rather, it is a deliberate expanding outward, making us more honest when we sing, "More used would I be" ("More Holiness Give Me," *Hymns*, no. 131). Consecration, likewise, is not

shoulder-shrugging acceptance, but, instead, shoulder-squaring to better bear the yoke.

Do not shrink from full consecration

Consecration involves pressing forward "with a steadfastness in Christ" with a "brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men . . . [while] feasting upon the word of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:20). Jesus pressed forward sublimely. He did not shrink, such as by going only 60 percent of the distance toward the full atonement. Instead, He "finished [His] preparations" for all mankind, bringing a universal resurrection—not one in which 40 percent of us would have been left out (see D&C 19:18–19).

Each of us might well ask, "In what ways am I shrinking or holding back?" Meek introspection may yield some bold insights! For example, we can tell much by what we have already willingly discarded along the pathway of discipleship. It is the only pathway where littering is permissible, even encouraged. In the early stages, the debris left behind includes the grosser sins of commission. Later debris differs; things begin to be discarded which have caused the misuse or underuse of our time and talent.

Hard times can hasten consecration

Along this pathway leading to consecration, stern and unsought challenges sometimes hasten this jettisoning, which is needed to achieve increased consecration (see Helaman 12:3). If we have grown soft, hard times may be necessary. If we are too contented, a dose of divine discontent may come. A relevant insight may be contained in reproof. A new calling beckons us away from comfortable routines wherein the needed competencies have already been developed. One may be stripped of accustomed luxury so that the malignant mole of materialism may be removed. One may be scorched

by humiliation so pride can be melted away. Whatever we lack will get attention, one way or another.

John Taylor indicated that the Lord may even choose to wrench our very heartstrings (see *Journal of Discourses*, 14:360). If our hearts are set too much upon the things of this world, they may need to be wrenched, or broken, or undergo a mighty change (see Alma 5:12).

Submit to God and trust Him

Consecration is thus both a principle and a process, and it is not tied to a single moment. Instead, it is freely given, drop by drop, until the cup of consecration brims and finally runs over.

Long before that, however, as Jesus declared, we must "settle this in [our] hearts": that we will do what He asks of us (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28). President Young further counseled us "to submit to the hand of the Lord, . . . and acknowledge his hand in all things, . . . then you will be exactly right; and until you come to that point, you cannot be entirely right. That is what we have to come to" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:352).

Thus, acknowledging God's hand includes, in the words of the Prophet Joseph, trusting that God has made "ample provision" beforehand to achieve all His purposes, including His purposes in our lives (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 220). Sometimes He clearly directs; other times it seems He merely permits some things to happen. Therefore, we will not always understand the role of God's hand, but we know enough of His heart and mind to be submissive. Thus when we are perplexed and stressed, explanatory help is not always immediately forthcoming, but compensatory help will be. Thus our process of cognition gives way to our personal submission as we experience those moments when we learn to

"be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

Then the more one's will is thus "swallowed up," the more his afflictions, rather than necessarily being removed, will be "swallowed up in the joy of Christ" (Alma 31:38).

Seventy years ago, Lord Moulton coined a perceptive phrase, "obedience to the unenforceable," describing "the obedience of a man to that which he cannot be forced to obey" ("Law and Manners," *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1924, p. 1). God's blessings, including those associated with consecration, come by unforced obedience to the laws upon which they are predicated (see D&C 130:20–21). Thus our deepest desires determine our degree of "obedience to the unenforceable." God seeks to have us become more consecrated by giving everything. Then, when we come home to Him, He will generously give us "all that [He] hath" (D&C 84:38).

The only possession that is ours to give

In conclusion, the submission of one's will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God's altar. The many other things we "give," brothers and sisters, are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God's will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give!

Consecration thus constitutes the only unconditional surrender which is also a total victory!

May we deeply desire that victory, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, will be

our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Powerful ideas

Last summer I attended the funeral of an elect lady. One speaker described three of her great qualities: loyalty, obedience, and faith. As he elaborated on her life, I thought how appropriate it was to speak of such powerful qualities in a funeral tribute. A life is not a trivial thing, and its passing should not be memorialized with trivial things. A funeral service is a time to speak of powerful ideas—ideas that can appropriately stand beside the importance of life, ideas that are powerful in their influence on those who remain behind.

As I enjoyed the spirit of this inspiring funeral, my thoughts were directed toward the application of this principle in other settings. Parents should also teach powerful ideas. So should home teachers, visiting teachers, and the teachers in various classes. The Savior warned that we will be judged for “every idle word that [we] shall speak” (Matthew 12:36). Modern revelation commands us to cease from “light speeches” and “light-mindedness” (D&C 88:121) and to cast away “idle thoughts” and “excess of laughter” (D&C 88:69). There are plenty of other spokesmen for trivial things. Latter-day Saints should be constantly concerned with teaching and emphasizing those great and powerful eternal truths that will help us find our way back to the presence of our Heavenly Father.

About thirty years ago some scholars authored a book on general education—the body of knowledge expected of all educated persons. Its title, *The Knowledge Most Worth Having*, is a good reminder of the fact that knowledge is not of equal value (Wayne C. Booth, ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

1967]). Some knowledge is more important than others. That principle also applies to what we call spiritual knowledge.

We are children of God

Consider the power of the idea taught in our beloved song “I Am a Child of God” (*Hymns*, no. 301), sung so impressively by the choir at the beginning of this session. Here is the answer to one of life’s great questions, “Who am I?” I am a child of God with a spirit lineage to heavenly parents. That parentage defines our eternal potential. That powerful idea is a potent antidepressant. It can strengthen each of us to make righteous choices and to seek the best that is within us. Establish in the mind of a young person the powerful idea that he or she is a child of God, and you have given self-respect and motivation to move against the problems of life.

When we understand our relationship to God, we also understand our relationship to one another. All men and women on this earth are the offspring of God, spirit brothers and sisters. What a powerful idea! No wonder God’s Only Begotten Son commanded us to love one another. If only we could do so! What a different world it would be if brotherly and sisterly love and unselfish assistance could transcend all boundaries of nation, creed, and color. Such love would not erase all differences of opinion and action, but it would encourage each of us to focus our opposition on actions rather than actors.

The power of love

The eternal truth that our Heavenly Father loves all His children is an im-

mensely powerful idea. It is especially powerful when children can visualize it through the love and sacrifice of their earthly parents. Love is the most powerful force in the world. Arthur Henry King has said: "Love is not just an ecstasy, not just an intense feeling. It is a driving force. It is something that carries us through our life of joyful duty" (*The Abundance of the Heart* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986], p. 84).

We all have our own examples of the power of love. More than twenty-five years ago I recorded some memories I had of my father, who died before I was eight years old. What I wrote then illustrates the power of love in the life of a boy:

"The strongest impression I have of my relationship with my father I cannot document with any event or any words I can recall. It is a feeling. Based on words and actions long since lost to mind, this feeling persists with all the clarity of perfect faith. He loved me and he was proud of me. . . . That is the kind of memory a boy can treasure, and also a man" ("Memories of My Father," 15 Oct. 1967).

Mortal life has a purpose

Another powerful idea we should teach one another is that mortal life has a purpose and that mortal death is not the end but only a transition to the next phase of an existence that is immortal. President Brigham Young taught that "our existence here is for the sole purpose of exaltation and restoration to the presence of our Father and God" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 37). The idea of eternal progress is one of the most powerful ideas in our theology. It gives us hope when we falter and challenge when we soar. Surely this is one of the great "solemnities of eternity" that we are commanded to let "rest upon [our] minds" (D&C 43:34).

The work of the Church is eternal

Another idea that is powerful to lift us from discouragement is that the work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "to bring to pass the . . . eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39), is an eternal work. Not all problems are overcome and not all needed relationships are fixed in mortality. The work of salvation goes on beyond the veil of death, and we should not be too apprehensive about incompleteness within the limits of mortality.

Heavenly Father will hear our prayers

A powerful idea with immediate practical application is the reality that we can pray to our Heavenly Father and He will hear our prayers and help us in the way that is best for us. Most of us have experienced the terrible empty feeling that comes from being separated from those who love us. If we remember that we can pray and be heard and helped, we can always withstand that feeling of emptiness. We can always be in touch with a powerful friend who loves us and helps us in His own time and in His own way.

Thousands of experiences show that we can pray and have our prayers answered. Some of the choicest involve young children. In the biography of President Spencer W. Kimball we read:

"Again and again Spencer watched his parents take their problems to the Lord. One day when Spencer was five and out doing his chores, little one-year-old Fannie wandered from the house and was lost. No one could find her. Clare, sixteen, said, 'Ma, if we pray, the Lord will direct us to Fannie.' So the mother and children prayed. Immediately after the prayer Gordon walked to the very spot where Fannie was fast asleep in a large box behind the chicken coop. 'We thanked our Heavenly Father over and over,' Olive recorded in her journal" (in Edward L. Kimball and

Andrew E. Kimball Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977], p. 31).

The Resurrection and Atonement

Every follower of Jesus Christ knows that the most powerful ideas of the Christian faith are the resurrection and the atonement of Jesus Christ. Because of Him we can be forgiven of our sins and we will live again. Those powerful ideas have been explained in countless sermons from this pulpit and a million others. They are well known but not well applied in the lives of most of us.

Choose what builds, not what tears down

Our model is not the latest popular hero of sports or entertainment, not our accumulated property or prestige, and not the expensive toys and diversions that encourage us to concentrate on what is temporary and forget what is eternal. Our model—our first priority—is Jesus Christ. We must testify of Him and teach one another how we can apply His teachings and His example in our lives.

Brigham Young gave us some practical advice on how to do this. "The difference between God and the Devil," he said, "is that God creates and organizes, while the whole study of the Devil is to destroy" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 69). In that contrast we have an important example of the reality of "opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11).

Remember, our Savior, Jesus Christ, always builds us up and never tears us down. We should apply the power of that example in the ways we use our time, including our recreation and diversions. Consider the themes of the books, magazines, movies, television, and music we make popular by our patronage. Do the purposes and actions portrayed in our chosen entertainment build up or tear down the children of God? During my lifetime I have seen a strong trend to displace what builds up and dignifies

the children of God with portrayals and performances that are depressing, demeaning, and destructive.

The powerful idea in this example is that whatever builds people up serves the cause of the Master, and whatever tears people down serves the cause of the adversary. We support one cause or the other every day by our patronage. This should remind us of our responsibility and motivate us toward fulfilling it in a way that would be pleasing to Him whose suffering offers us hope and whose example should give us direction.

Put the Savior first

We should always put the Savior first. The first commandment Jehovah gave to the children of Israel was, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). This seems like a simple idea, but in practice many find it difficult.

It is surprisingly easy to take what should be our first devotion and subordinate it to other priorities. Fifty years ago the Christian philosopher C. S. Lewis illustrated that tendency with an example that is distressingly applicable in our own day. In his book *The Screwtape Letters*, a senior devil explains how to corrupt Christians and frustrate the work of Jesus Christ. One letter explains how any "extreme devotion" can lead Christians away from the Lord and the practice of Christianity. Lewis gives two examples, extreme patriotism or extreme pacifism, and explains how either "extreme devotion" can corrupt its adherent:

"Let him begin by treating the Patriotism or the Pacifism as a part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him on to the stage at which the religion becomes merely part of the 'Cause,' in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce in favour of the British war effort or of pacifism. . . .

Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing" (C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, rev. ed. [New York: Macmillan, 1982], p. 35).

We can readily see that tendency in our own time, with many causes that are good in themselves but become spiritually corrupting when they assume priorities ahead of Him who commanded, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Jesus Christ and His work come first. Anything that would use Him or His kingdom or His church as a means to an end serves the cause of the adversary.

"Never take no cutoffs"

Two other powerful ideas were given voice by a noble young woman who survived a terrible experience. Virginia Reed was a survivor of the tragic Donner-Reed party, which made one of the earliest wagon treks into California. If this wagon train had followed the established Oregon Trail from Fort Bridger (Wyoming) northwest to Fort Hall (Idaho) and then southwest toward California, they would have reached their destination in safety. Instead, they were misled by a promoter. Lansford W. Hastings persuaded them they could save significant distance and time by following his so-called Hastings Cutoff. The Donner-Reed party left the proven trail at Fort Bridger and struggled southwest. They blazed a trail through the rugged Wasatch Mountains and then south of the Great Salt Lake and westward over the soggy surface of the salt flats in furnace heat.

The delays and incredible energies expended on this unproven route cost the Donner-Reed party an extra month in reaching the Sierra Nevada Mountains. As they hastened up the eastern slope trying to beat the first snows, they were caught in a tragic winter storm only one day short of the summit and a down-

hill passage into California. Marooned for the winter, half their group perished from starvation and cold.

After months in the mountains and incredible hardships of hunger and terror, thirteen-year-old Virginia Reed reached California and sent a letter to her cousin in the Midwest. After recounting her experiences and the terrible sufferings of their party, she concluded with this wise advice: "Never take no cutoffs and hurry along as fast as you can" (Virginia E. B. Reed letter to Mary Gillespie, 16 May 1847, quoted in J. Roderic Korn and Dale L. Morgan, eds., *West from Fort Bridger* [Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1994], p. 238).

That is powerful and true advice, especially for teenagers. Young people are surrounded by many beckoning paths and many persuasive promoters who offer advice and cutoffs as substitutes for the proven way. "Try out this detour" and "tarry here for a while" are familiar proposals on the journey of life. My young friends, remember Virginia Reed's advice: "Never take no cutoffs and hurry along as fast as you can."

Focus on powerful ideas

I conclude with an example from the life of the Apostle Paul. During his ministry he was exposed to ample light-mindedness, idle thoughts, and trivial things. In Athens he observed that "all the Athenians and strangers which were there [in his immediate vicinity] spent their time in nothing else, but . . . to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). Paul's determination to focus on powerful ideas is evident in one of his letters to the Saints in Corinth. He had not come "with excellency of speech or of wisdom," he reminded them. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

Let us follow the commandments of God and the examples of his servants.

Let us focus our teachings on those great and powerful ideas that have eternal significance in promoting righteousness, building up the children of God, and

helping each of us toward our destiny of eternal life. That we may do so is my fervent prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Loren C. Dunn

The law of witnesses

Since the restoration of the gospel there has been given at this pulpit and in many other places the most marvelous array of direct testimony to the divine mission of the Redeemer that possibly has ever been recorded.

The law of witnesses has always been a part of the Lord's work on earth. This law states that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1; see also Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Matthew 18:15–16; John 8:12–29). This witness confirms that certain events took place and that God-given doctrine and principles are true.

The first duty of a witness is to testify. A person who can testify to the truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is speaking of things he or she knows to be true. With the Lord and His true witnesses there is truth that reaches beyond worldly understanding. Paul understood this when he said:

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:12–13).

I was just a young boy when I sat in a stake conference in the Tooele Utah Stake, listening carefully to the visitor. He was LeGrand Richards, and he preached the gospel in his warm and spiritual way. That positive experience has stayed with me. I don't remember

what he said, but I do know how I felt as he spoke. I learned later that I felt that way because I was listening to a special witness of Jesus Christ. I knew he knew, and somehow my roots grew deeper that day as to truths of the gospel.

The calling of special witnesses

Orson Pratt said: "A person can not be a witness to that which he merely believes. God requires mankind, or certain individuals among mankind, to be witnesses for him—witnesses of his existence—so that they can bear testimony to others" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:209–10).

There were many who saw the great miracles and heard the teachings of the Savior as He dwelled on earth, but not all became witnesses. There were no personal administrations of Christ to the unbelieving. Only to certain ones did the Lord open their eyes so they knew who He really was.

With the calling of the Twelve by the Savior, there was instituted the calling of the special witnesses of Christ.

The Prophet Joseph, referring to the resurrection of the Lord, said, "God raised Him from the dead, and we (the apostles) are His witnesses . . . , and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God ha[s] given to [all those who] obey Him" (*History of the Church*, 2:19).

Church members are witnesses

Every person who receives baptism into the Church and has received and felt the confirmation of the Spirit through the gift of the Holy Ghost stands as a

witness "of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9). When partaking of the sacrament, that person renews that witness to take the Savior's name, keep His commandments, and remember Him. A person so moved by the Spirit not only knows these things himself, but the Spirit carries them into the hearts of others. This is the basis of the Church's great missionary effort. "For when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1).

The witness of the Holy Ghost is even more compelling than the witness of sight. As members of the Church, we become witnesses of the Savior and the truthfulness of this work not only in word but also in keeping our covenants and in how we treat others and in how we live our everyday lives.

Testimonies of special witnesses

The First Presidency and the Twelve are called as "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23). They are men who by divine designation, priesthood ordination, and the fire of the Holy Ghost hold the keys to the ministry on earth. The Seventy act under the direction of the First Presidency and the Twelve and are special witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world. Together, all the members become what Paul refers to as a "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1).

The Prophet Joseph defined the work of the kingdom in our dispensation with these sacred words:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him [Jesus Christ], this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:22–23).

The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris—stated, "And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true" ("The Testimony of Three Witnesses," Book of Mormon).

Said Wilford Woodruff from this Tabernacle: "Joseph Smith was what he professed to be, a prophet of God, a seer and revelator. He . . . lived long enough to deliver the keys of the kingdom . . . unto the Twelve Apostles. . . . The foundation that he laid we have built upon" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:164).

And said David O. McKay, whose life reached from some of those who began this work to some of us serving today who were called by him: "I have an abiding testimony that the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and revealed through him the Gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . Godhood, Brotherhood, Service—these three guiding principles in the Christ[like] life permeate all our Church activity" (in Joseph E. Cardon and Samuel O. Bennion, comps., *Testimonies of the Divinity of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Its Leaders* [Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1930], p. 178).

And from our living Prophet-President, Gordon B. Hinckley: "I have a testimony of the living reality of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, my Savior and my Redeemer, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New Testament. . . . Because of His atoning sacrifice, . . . each of us, if we will walk in obedience to His truths, may go on to exaltation and an eternal life beyond our ability at this stage to understand or comprehend.

He is my Redeemer, my Lord, my Savior, my King, my friend" (Vacaville-Santa Rosa California Regional Conference, priesthood leadership session, 20 May 1995).

The witness borne by those who occupy this pulpit today is consistent with those who, by divine authority, began this work.

That same witness is echoed by the members and missionaries of this church to every one of our Father's children. It is an invitation to learn of the doctrine, to feel the Spirit, and to be healed by partaking of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My personal witness

And to that witness I would add my own witness as to the truthfulness of this work. I know that we have a God in heaven who looks after us and is watching over us. I know God lives. I know He lives. I know God lives. I know this. I

know this. I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Redeemer. I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. I know that Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet of God today and that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ. May the Lord so bless us that we may listen to the witnesses and bear witness ourselves, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, followed by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Elder Ted E. Brewerton, who received emeritus status in this session, will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Ted E. Brewerton

Search Book of Mormon to know Christ

Some people place faith in good luck symbols, even a rabbit's foot, but remember, it didn't do the rabbit any good.

I do not wish to be light-minded, but I believe we should ask ourselves if we truly and seriously place our faith where it belongs and rely upon the merits of Christ. Do we have an assurance that salvation comes only through Him and that He will take upon himself our burdens and sorrows if we place unwavering faith in Him?

The scriptures state, "They are they which testify of [God]" (John 5:39). Eternal life is knowing God and His Holy Son (see John 17:3). One can know Him by searching the Book of Mormon. Every page testifies of Him. The changes published in the Book of Mormon in 1981 go

back beyond the first edition of 1830 to the handwritten manuscript.

Ancient texts support Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon is a sacred, ancient American document recorded by writers as the events unfolded, starting more than 2,000 years ago.

The Book of Mormon is a record of families that the Lord led to the Americas for specific purposes. Three groups left the land of Jerusalem and crossed the oceans, beginning several centuries before the birth of our Savior, and arrived in the promised land, the Americas.

Ancient American texts written by native Americans support this origin. For example, a translator of the *Title of the Lords of Totonicapán*, the original text of which was recorded in 1554 in the lan-

guage of the Quiché of Guatemala from legends centuries old, states:

"The three great Quiché nations . . . are descendants of the Ten Tribes of the Kingdom of Israel, whom Shalmaneser reduced to perpetual captivity and who, finding themselves on the border of Assyria, resolved to emigrate. . . .

"These, then, were the three nations of Quichés, and they came from where the sun rises, descendants of Israel, of the same language and same customs. . . . They were sons of Abraham and Jacob. . . .

"Now on the twenty-eighth of September of 1554 we sign this attestation in which we have written that which by tradition our ancestors told us, who came from the other part of the sea, from Cíván-Tulán, bordering on Babylonia" (*Title of the Lords of Totonicapán*, trans. Dionisio José Chonay and Delia Goetz [Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953], pp. 167, 170, 194).

Latter-day Lamanites recognize truth

Elder Mark E. Petersen, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, wrote: "As the ancient Israelites suffered a dispersion which sprinkled them among all the nations, so the descendants of Laman and Lemuel [sons of Lehi] were sifted over the vast areas of the western hemisphere. *They are found from pole to pole*" (*Children of Promise* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1981], p. 31; italics added).

Many migratory groups came to the Americas, but none was as important as the three mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The blood of these people flows in the veins of the Blackfoot and the Blood Indians of Alberta, Canada; in the Navajo and the Apache of the American Southwest; the Inca of western South America; the Aztec of Mexico; the Maya of Guatemala; and in other native American groups in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific islands.

These choice native people recognize the truth of the Book of Mormon, which was recorded for them by their own ancestors. President Spencer W. Kimball said:

"The converted Lamanite is devout. Few ever apostatize. Some lose their way as they partake of the worldliness about them, but generally the children of Lehi of the twentieth century have inherited that grace and ability to believe like their ancestors of the long ago. We read in Helaman 6:36: 'And thus we see that the Lord began to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites, because of *their easiness and willingness to believe in his words*'" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 178; italics added).

A second witness of Christ

Every ecclesiastical authority of *any church* and every agnostic should rejoice and praise God for having sent the priceless Book of Mormon to them or to us. *Why?* Because it is a sacred, second, undeniable witness to the world that God lives and Jesus is the very Christ, our Redeemer.

The *first witness* is the Holy Bible, which testifies of the Master from the Middle East. The Lord said in John 10:16 that other sheep would hear His voice. The Lord came to the Americas after His resurrection and said, "And verily I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (3 Nephi 15:21). Two such witnesses cannot be denied without placing the soul in peril.

The crucial messages or purposes of the Book of Mormon are shown on its title page: "To show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the

Lord . . . And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations."

References to a bearded white god

Ancient American literature contains references to a white, bearded god who descended out of the heavens. He is called by many names; one example is Quetzalcoatl. Historians of the sixteenth century, whose texts I have, recorded pre-Hispanic beliefs concerning the white, bearded god who came to the Americas *long before* the arrival of the Spanish conquerors. The following paragraphs contain examples of these beliefs:

Bernardo de Sahagun (born 1499) wrote: "Quetzalcoatl was esteemed and considered as a god, and was worshipped in older times. He had long hair and was bearded. The people worshipped only the Lord" (*Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España* [Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, S. A., 1985], pp. 195, 598).

Diego Duran (born 1537) wrote: "A great man—a person venerable and religious—bearded, tall, long hair, dignified deportment, heroic acts, miracles—I affirm he could have been one of the blessed apostles" (*Historia de las Indias de Nueva España*, 1867, first ed., 2 vols. [Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, S. A., 1967], 1:9).

Bartolomé de las Casas (born 1474) wrote that Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent, was white, had a rounded beard, was tall, and came from the sea in the east, from whence he will return (see *Los Indios de Mexico y Nueva España Antología* [Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, S. A., 1982], pp. 54, 218, 223).

The Tamanacos Indian tribes in Venezuela have the same legend of a white, bearded god: "[Amalivacá] had a face the color of the light fluffy clouds of the morning, and white was his long head of hair. . . . He said: 'I am Amalivacá, and I come in the name of my father INA-UIKI'" (Arturo Hellmund Tello, *Leyen-*

das Indigenas del Bajo Orinoco, trans. Ted E. Brewerton [Buenos Aires, Argentina: Imprenta Lopez, Peru 666, 1948], pp. 19–22).

The Book of Mormon gives an accurate account of the coming of the Lord to ancient America.

The Book of Mormon—a firm anchor

When we accept the ancient roots of the book and believe that Joseph Smith did have ancient records that could not be in English, we then may ask how he translated them. The only reasonable answer is the way he said: by divine revelation.

What would be more perilous to us, eternally, than to say the Book of Mormon is holy scripture if it were not? Those who have questions or concerns about the Church may cling in security to this firm anchor that is immutable and tangible evidence of the truthfulness of the Church.

The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi wrote, "For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23).

The Holy Ghost gives primary evidence

Elder B. H. Roberts wrote in 1909:

"[The Holy Ghost] must ever be the chief source of evidence for the truth of the Book of Mormon. All other evidence is secondary to this, the primary and infallible. No arrangement of evidence, however skilfully ordered; no argument, however adroitly made, can ever take [the] place [of the Holy Ghost]. . . .

" . . . Secondary evidences in support of truth, like secondary causes in natural phenomena, may be of first-rate importance, and mighty factors in the achievement of God's purposes" (*New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909], 2:vi–vii).

The sun rises rather quietly, and at times we think that the Lord's voice is that quiet, but His voice is audible if we will only pray, meditate, and listen as He places clear thoughts in our minds.

As surely as the sun rises, God lives, as does His Almighty Son. As surely as the sun rises daily, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is *His*.

Because the sun rises, we see everything else.

Because Jesus Christ lives, we see by His light eternal, unchanging truths and an illuminated path showing the purpose of our premortal life, the reason for our

current existence, and the effect of premortal and mortal life on our life after what we call death.

The Bible is a witness.

The Book of Mormon is a witness.

I am one of the witnesses that He *is* risen, and He *is* coming. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Ted E. Brewerton has just addressed us.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Blessings of the priesthood

A few weeks ago I was in Santiago, Chile, participating in priesthood training meetings. In the Saturday meeting we had a discussion about the importance of brethren receiving the priesthood after baptism. Early Sunday morning I was awakened with a moving testimony of the power of the priesthood in our lives. For a few hours before dawn I reflected and pondered upon what the priesthood means to me, to my family, and to all the world.

Brothers and sisters, can you imagine how dark and empty mortality would be if there were no priesthood? If the power of the priesthood were not upon the earth, the adversary would have freedom to roam and reign without restraint. There would be no gift of the Holy Ghost to direct and enlighten us; no prophets to speak in the name of the Lord; no temples where we could make sacred, eternal covenants; no authority to bless or baptize, to heal or comfort. Without the power of the priesthood, "the whole earth would be utterly wasted" (D&C 2:3; see also vv. 1-2). There would be no light, no hope—only darkness.

What a dark world this would be without priesthood blessings for you and me.

A loving Father in Heaven has sent His sons and daughters here to mortality to gain experience and to be tested. He has provided the way back to Him and has given us enough spiritual light to see our way. The priesthood of God gives light to His children in this dark and troubled world. Through priesthood power we can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost to lead us to truth, testimony, and revelation. This gift is available on an equal basis to men, women, and children. Through the blessings of the priesthood we can be equipped with "the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11; see also vv. 12-18). This protection is available to every one of us.

Through the priesthood many other blessings are also available to all of the sons and daughters of God, making it possible for us to make sacred covenants and receive holy ordinances that enable us to travel that strait and narrow way back to our Father in Heaven (see Matthew 7:13-14).

The power of God

The priesthood is the power of God, which is given to man to act in His name. The priesthood of God is timeless. It "was in the beginning, [and] shall be in the end of the world also" (Moses 6:7; see also *History of the Church*, 3:386). Before this world was created, the pre-mortal Council in Heaven was held under the direction of the priesthood. The formation of the universe and of the world upon which we live was brought to pass not by chance but through the power of the priesthood. The great Creator spoke, and the elements obeyed. The processes of nature that enable us to exist on this planet, the resources of this world that sustain life—all were set into motion and continue their course through the power of God's magnificent priesthood. While most of the earth's inhabitants do not recognize this priesthood power, all living creatures are its beneficiaries.

Priesthood given to man

The creation of this earth provided a place for the sons and daughters of God to live and grow—a place where our Father could bestow the blessings of His wondrous priesthood upon us. The priesthood was first given to Adam, who held the keys from generation to generation. Adam ordained seven generations of his posterity to the priesthood, beginning with his sons Abel and Seth (see D&C 84:16; 107:40–53). After the death of Adam, the priesthood continued from father to son, even until Melchizedek.

Originally this priesthood "was called the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God. But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek" (D&C 107:3–4) because "Melchizedek was such a great high priest" (v. 2).

One who received the priesthood at the hands of Melchizedek was Abraham (see D&C 84:14). The Lord later covenanted with Abraham that "in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed . . . shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal" (Abraham 2:11).

The Savior's use of the priesthood

It was through the priesthood that the Son of God, the Savior Jesus Christ, established His church—both in the Old World and in the New World. On both continents He established sacred covenants and ordinances as a means for entering "in at the strait gate . . . which leadeth unto life [eternal]" (Matthew 7:13–14; 3 Nephi 14:13–14). In both places He ordained twelve special witnesses to govern the Church and to carry His word to the sons and daughters of God.

Jesus Christ atoned for the sins of all who will repent and be baptized through the power of the holy priesthood. Through the Atonement our Savior broke the bands of death and became "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

Priesthood withdrawn and restored

Following the death of Jesus and His Apostles, the earth was enshrouded with darkness. Known as the Dark Ages, this was a period of great apostasy, when for a long period of time the priesthood blessings and ordinances were withheld from mortals on the earth (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957–66], 2:45).

But as had been prophesied, the glorious priesthood of God, together with a fulness of its blessings, has been restored to the earth in our own time. The restoration of the priesthood and its blessings

began in 1820, when Joseph Smith, a young boy prophet, beheld and spoke with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in a sacred grove of trees.

Later additional heavenly messengers—John the Baptist; Peter, James, and John; Moses, Elias, and Elijah; and others—brought to the Prophet Joseph Smith the power, authority, and keys necessary for the salvation and exaltation of mankind. As a result, the Church of Jesus Christ was restored upon the earth, complete with the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods of old. Now, as God covenanted with Abraham, all the individuals and families of the earth may be blessed.

Think of it, brothers and sisters—the priesthood has been restored. It is here on the earth today. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the living prophet. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve are modern-day Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Under the direction of these prophets, seers, and revelators, who hold the keys in this dispensation, priesthood holders in the Church today have the legitimate right to act in the name of God. As His authorized agents, they are commissioned to go forth and bless others through the power and authority of the priesthood, making all priesthood covenants, ordinances, and blessings available today.

And the blessings of the priesthood are available to *everyone*. Indeed the Father “*inviteth . . . all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . all are alike unto God*” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Priesthood blessings as a child grows

What are some of the blessings of the priesthood? Come with me as we follow a child's ideal spiritual journey through life. Let us see many of the possibilities he or she has during a lifetime to receive blessings through the priesthood.

As a newborn the baby is tenderly cradled in loving hands as the father, grandfather, bishop, or another priesthood holder pronounces a name and a sacred blessing upon the child as the Holy Spirit inspires.

Soon that child begins to attend Primary and Sunday School and receives lessons and instructions at the hands of faithful teachers—men and women who have been called and set apart by priesthood power to teach the ways of the Lord.

When the child reaches eight years of age, the age of accountability, he or she is immersed in the waters of baptism by one who holds the priesthood. The young boy or girl is then confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by one holding the holy Melchizedek Priesthood. In this ordinance the child is given the gift of the Holy Ghost, which, if he or she listens to the still, small voice, will help him or her to stay on the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life.

Every Sunday the growing child, together with other worthy Saints, receives the sacrament at the hands of priesthood bearers—the bread representing the body of Christ, and the water representing His blood that was shed to atone for our sins. During the sacrament, the child remembers the sufferings of the Savior, witnesses that he or she is willing to bear the Savior's name, and promises to always remember Him and keep His commandments. In return, the Lord promises “*that they may always have his Spirit to be with them*” (D&C 20:77).

Priesthood blessings as youth grow

As the young man or young woman continues to mature, he or she may seek spiritual counsel and guidance from the bishop and other youth leaders. Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women leaders are men and women who have been called and set apart by priesthood authority to lead and inspire youth in the Church.

When additional counsel or comfort is needed, or during times of illness, the young man or woman may receive a priesthood blessing from a father, home teacher, bishop, or other priesthood holder. A patriarchal blessing—given through an ordained patriarch—contains words inspired by God to His sons and daughters, serving as a guide and comfort for a lifetime and even with eternal significance. Think of the wonder of it.

If he is found worthy, a young man receives the Aaronic Priesthood—the preparatory priesthood—and, as he matures, is ordained as a deacon, then as a teacher, and finally as a priest. Later he may qualify to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained to the office of elder. The young woman becomes a member of the Young Women organization and later of the Relief Society. All of these experiences give the young man or woman many opportunities to learn and serve—and to enjoy a brotherhood or a sisterhood that is more precious than typical friendships in the world.

The young man or young woman may be set apart as a full-time missionary and serve under the priesthood direction of a mission president, sharing a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ with all who will listen. Through the blessings of service and sacrifice, they experience a humbling change of heart that allows them to discern the difference between the tendency of *taking* in the world in contrast to the *giving* of the kingdom of God. Then, having established a pattern of giving, they give Church and community service throughout their lives, while at the same time being blessed by the service of others.

Priesthood blessings in the temple

The greatest of priesthood blessings available to this young man or woman are found in the temple. There they get a glimpse of heaven. In that holy place, although they are *in* the world, they are

not *of* the world. In the temple they see themselves as the offspring of royalty—as a son or a daughter of God. The joys of eternity, which can seem so distant outside the temple, suddenly seem within reach.

In the temple the plan of salvation is explained and sacred covenants are made. These covenants, together with the wearing of sacred temple garments, strengthen and protect the endowed person against the powers of the adversary. After receiving their own endowments, the young man or woman may attend the temple and perform vicarious ordinances to make priesthood blessings available to those who have died without the opportunity of receiving these blessings during mortality.

In the culminating temple ordinance—eternal marriage—bride and groom are promised that if they are faithful, they will enjoy a family union with one another, with their children, and with the Lord throughout all eternity. It is called eternal life.

Priesthood blessings for families

As this righteous man or woman establishes a home with his or her eternal companion, they continue to enjoy blessings of the priesthood. Revelation from God is made known to them throughout their lives as they listen to and follow the counsel of living prophets, seers, and revelators. The husband dedicates the family's home "as a sanctuary . . . where family members can worship, find safety from the world, grow spiritually, and prepare for eternal family relationships" (*Lay Hold upon the Word of God* [Melchizedek Priesthood personal study guide 1, 1988], p. 155).

As their children grow, the parents teach them the gospel in family home evening. They teach their children to pray individually and as a family. They study the scriptures individually and as a family—including the Book of Mor-

mon and other scriptures of the Restoration—written and preserved through the generations of time by holy prophets. They teach them the plan of salvation. They help each son and daughter prepare to receive the same priesthood blessings and ordinances that they themselves have received.

Each time this mother is about to give birth, her devoted husband may gently place his hands upon her head and, through the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood, pronounce a special blessing. Later he tenderly cradles in his hands their newborn babe, born in the priesthood covenant, and utters inspired words of a father's blessing.

And thus the cycle of priesthood blessings begins again and again with each succeeding generation—all with the Father's sacred purpose of bringing to pass "the immortality and eternal life" of his sons and daughters (Moses 1:39).

Seek earnestly for priesthood blessings

My brothers and sisters, I have witnessed the remarkable power of the priesthood to lift and bless, to heal and comfort, to strengthen and empower men, women, and children throughout the world. With all the sincerity of my heart, I desire to see the blessings of the priesthood be made accessible to all.

You brethren who have the priesthood—magnify it. You who have had the priesthood but have allowed it to lie dormant—reactivate it. You brethren who have never had it—seek diligently to obtain it. And may all of us seek more earnestly to receive and share the blessings of the priesthood, bringing the powers of heaven more fully into our lives and into the lives of our loved ones.

A sonnet testimony

Since those early-morning hours in Santiago, I have reflected and pondered much upon the priesthood and what it

means to all the world. Let me share my deepest feelings in a sonnet testimony of the blessings of the priesthood.

For priesthood pow'r—a sacred, holy gift—
We praise thy blessed name, O Lord above,
For this, thy pow'r to bless, to guide, to lift,
Assures us of thy never-ending love.

What hopelessness, what darkness, what despair
Would fill our lives without thy priesthood's pow'r,
For Satan, free to bind us in his snare,
Would drag us down in misery every hour.

Thy Holy Spirit fills our lives with light;
From Satan's fiery darts we may be free.
Thy covenants exalt; our hopes are bright:
Through priesthood pow'r we shall return to thee.

We sing hosannas! Thy blest name we praise
For priesthood pow'r restored in latter days!

I promise that the bounteous blessings of the priesthood can be ours through our obedience and that all of the magnificent, eternal blessings that God makes available to men and women and families upon this earth can be ours through the power of the priesthood. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just heard from Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder L. Tom Perry, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Lehi's dream of the tree of life

Lehi had a marvelous dream while he journeyed with his family into the wilderness. This dream or vision of the tree of life, symbolically presented, provides us with much knowledge about life and the course we should follow. The scriptures record:

"And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy.

"And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.

"And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit" (1 Nephi 8:10-12).

In Lehi's dream he beheld many seeking to come forward to partake of this delicious fruit, which was defined as the love of God. A rod of iron, meaning the word of God, would lead them to the tree. However, there was also a mist of darkness, or temptation, along the path that caused many to become lost along the way. Again the scriptures record:

"And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.

"And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed.

"And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious

building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth.

"And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.

"And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost" (1 Nephi 8:24-28).

Personal and family preparedness

It is this part of Lehi's dream I would like to comment on today. The current cries we hear coming from the great and spacious building tempt us to compete for ownership in the things of this world. We think we need a larger home with a three-car garage and a recreational vehicle parked next to it. We long for designer clothes, extra TV sets (all with VCRs), the latest model computers, and the newest car. Often these items are purchased with borrowed money without giving any thought to providing for our future needs. The result of all this instant gratification is overloaded bankruptcy courts and families that are far too preoccupied with their financial burdens.

We live in a most exciting and challenging period in human history. As technology sweeps through every facet of our lives, changes are occurring so rapidly that it can be difficult for us to keep our lives in balance. To maintain some semblance of stability in our lives, it is essential that we plan for our future. I believe it is time, and perhaps with some urgency, to review the counsel we have received in dealing with our personal and family preparedness. We want to be found with oil in our lamps suffi-

cient to endure to the end. President Spencer W. Kimball admonished us:

"In reviewing the Lord's counsel to us on the importance of preparedness, I am impressed with the plainness of the message. The Savior made it clear that we cannot place sufficient oil in our preparedness lamps by simply avoiding evil. We must also be anxiously engaged in a positive program of preparation."

President Kimball also said: "The Lord will not translate one's good hopes and desires and intentions into works. Each of us must do that for himself" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], p. 8).

"If ye are prepared ye shall not fear"

On a daily basis we witness widely fluctuating inflation; wars; interpersonal conflicts; national disasters; variances in weather conditions; innumerable forces of immorality, crime, and violence; attacks and pressures on the family and individuals; technological advances that make occupations obsolete; and so on. The need for preparation is abundantly clear. The great blessing of being prepared gives us freedom from fear, as guaranteed to us by the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants: "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).

Just as it is important to prepare ourselves spiritually, we must also prepare ourselves for our temporal needs. Each of us needs to take the time to ask ourselves, What preparation should I make to care for my needs and the needs of my family?

We have been instructed for years to follow at least four requirements in preparing for that which is to come.

Gain an adequate education

First, gain an adequate education. Learn a trade or a profession to enable you to obtain steady employment that will provide remuneration sufficient to

care for yourself and your family. The rapidly changing world breeds obsolescence and requires us to be continually engaged in preparing ourselves for the future. We can become antiquated in our professions if we do not stay up-to-date. Imagine how many patients a dentist would have if he continued to use the same tools and techniques he used a decade ago. What about a businessman who tried to compete without the use of computers? Or a builder who had not stayed abreast of the latest materials and methods available? Education has, of necessity, become a lifelong pursuit. We must, in our scheduling of time, allot sufficient time to educate ourselves for now and for the future.

Live within your income

Second, live strictly within your income and save something for a rainy day. Incorporate in your lives the discipline of budgeting that which the Lord has blessed you with. As regularly as you pay your tithing, set aside an amount needed for future family requirements. Include your children while planning for the future. I am convinced that in many backyards, a crop of corn, raspberries, or tomatoes, planted and harvested by your children each year and sold to your neighbors, will in time yield enough to make a major contribution to a mission or a college education fund. Go out in your garages and look over the *unused* bicycles, toy cars, athletic equipment, skis, roller blades, et cetera, and calculate what the return would have been had the cost of these items been invested in future needs. Remember, I emphasized *unused* articles. How many of you have seen garages so full of things that there is no longer room for the car?

Avoid unnecessary debt

Third, avoid excessive debt. Necessary debt should be incurred only after

careful, thoughtful prayer and after obtaining the best possible advice. We need the discipline to stay well within our ability to pay. Wisely we have been counseled to avoid debt as we would avoid the plague. President J. Reuben Clark fearlessly and repeatedly counseled members of the Church to take action:

"Live within your means. Get out of debt. Keep out of debt. Lay by for a rainy day which has always come and will come again. Practice and increase your habits of thrift, industry, economy, and frugality" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1937, p. 107). We should have displayed in a prominent place President Clark's description of interest:

"Interest never sleeps nor sickens nor dies. . . . Once in debt, interest is your companion every minute of the day and night; you cannot shun it or slip away from it; you cannot dismiss it; it yields neither to entreaties, demands, or orders; and whenever you get in its way or cross its course or fail to meet its demands, it crushes you" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1938, p. 103).

Incurrence of debt is such an enticement. Accompanying the ease with which we can obtain debt should be the great caution of avoidance. Take the opportunity to compute how much you would add to your personal net worth if your home mortgage was only for ten or fifteen years instead of thirty. Compute the value of sweat equity if your time and your talents are invested in adding to the size and comfort of your home.

It is so easy to allow consumer debt to get out of hand. If you do not have the discipline to control the use of credit cards, it is better not to have them. A well-managed family does not pay interest—it earns it. The definition I received from a wise boss at one time in my early business career was "Thems that understands interest receives it, thems that don't pays it."

Store a reserve of food and supplies

Fourth, acquire and store a reserve of food and supplies that will sustain life. Obtain clothing and build a savings account on a sensible, well-planned basis that can serve well in times of emergency. As long as I can remember, we have been taught to prepare for the future and to obtain a year's supply of necessities. I would guess that the years of plenty have almost universally caused us to set aside this counsel. I believe the time to disregard this counsel is over. With events in the world today, it must be considered with all seriousness.

Prepare for less prosperous times

Careers are ever changing. They tell me that young people entering the work force today will have major career changes maybe three or four times during their work life. Job changes will occur even more frequently, even ten to twelve times during a life's work cycle. I know of no other way to prepare for these times of adjustment than to be certain that during times of employment, preparations are made for less prosperous times, should they occur. Start now to create a plan if you don't already have one, or update your present plan. Watch for best buys that will fit into your year's supply. We are not in a situation that requires panic buying, but we do need to be careful in purchasing and rotating the storage that we're putting away. The instability in the world today makes it imperative that we take heed of the counsel and prepare for the future.

Hold to the iron rod

President Lee, in commenting on Lehi's great vision, said this:

"If there is any one thing most needed in this time of tumult and frustration, when men and women and youth and young adults are desperately seek-

ing for answers to the problems which afflict mankind, it is an 'iron rod' as a safe guide along the straight path on the way to eternal life, amidst the strange and devious roadways that would eventually lead to destruction and to the ruin of all that is 'virtuous, lovely, or of good report' (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 90; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 7).

Unfortunately there are too many of us that are like the scoffers in Lehi's vision. They stand aloof and are inclined to hold in derision the faithful who have chosen to accept Church authorities as God's special witnesses of the gospel and His agents in directing the affairs of the Church. My sincere counsel to you today is to remember the good basic principles we have been taught from the very beginning—principles of thrift, industry, and integrity that have served mankind in every period of time. Avoid the great and spacious building that is the pride of the world, for it will fall, and great will be the fall thereof.

May God bless us with the wisdom to follow the counsel we have received as we prepare spiritually and temporally for the strength and security of our family units, in my humble prayer in the name

of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight saving time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

We express our deep gratitude to the combined ward choirs from the Cottonwood Utah Region for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon.

The choir will now sing in closing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder W. Don Ladd of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder W. Don Ladd offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, September 30, 1995. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus. Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session. These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, and loca-

tions in many countries throughout the world.

There are approximately 2,360 elders viewing these proceedings at the Provo Missionary Training Center.

Elders L. Tom Perry, James M. Parimore, and Gary J. Coleman are on the stand in the Assembly Hall; D. Todd Christofferson and Han In Sang in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Stephen Naudal and Max Caldwell in the BYU Marriott Center.

We announce that at this afternoon's session, Elders Ted E. Brewerton and Hans B. Ringger were given emeritus status. Elders Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Helvécio Martins, J Ballard Washburn, and Durrel A. Woolsey were released from their service as Seventies. Elders Jack H Goaslind and Harold G. Hillam were sustained as Presidents of the Seventy, succeeding Rex D. Pinegar and Charles Didier. Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, and Glenn L. Pace were sustained to succeed Elders Charles Didier, J Ballard Washburn, and F. Burton Howard as the general Sunday School presidency. I suppose I should also announce that Brigham Young University won its football game today.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brothers Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We will begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Awake, My Sons, Awake." I think we should have delayed that until the middle of my talk! After the singing, Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Awake, My Sons, Awake."

Elder Earl C. Tingey offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Thy Servants Are Prepared," and then we shall hear from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir sang "Thy Servants Are Prepared."

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Called to touch lives

I am grateful that we are assembled as the priesthood of God tonight, presided over by the prophet who holds and exercises the keys of the holy priesthood in all the world. President Hinckley spoke in the Sunday morning session of conference last April. Near the end of that talk, he said this: "Now, my brethren and sisters, in conclusion I wish to leave with you one thought which I hope you will never forget."

With that introduction, which surely caught our attention, he then said:

"This church does not belong to its President. Its head is the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name each of us has taken upon ourselves. We are all in this great endeavor together. We are here to assist our Father in His work and His glory, 'to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man' (Moses 1:39). Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence. All of us in the pursuit of our duty touch the lives of others. To each of us in our respective responsibilities the Lord has said:

"Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees' (D&C 81:5)" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 94; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 71).

You must have wondered about that idea that your calling carries for you as serious a responsibility as his does for him. But you can see why that must be so. You and he are called by the same Savior, whose church this is. You are involved in the same work, which is to help the Lord bring to pass the eternal life of man. In your calling you touch lives. The life you touch in your service will be as valuable to God as any other life. And so how you touch a life is as serious a matter for you as it would be for any other servant of God.

That seriousness comes from your assigned purpose. Your responsibility is to touch people so that they will make the choices that will take them toward eternal life. And eternal life is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

A deacon touches a life

Some of you young men may feel uncomfortable with the thought that what may seem to you simple assignments or everyday acts could have eternal consequences. But you may have done more than you know. Your deacons quorum president next week may ask you to invite to come with you to a Sunday meeting a boy who has never attended, nor has anyone in his family. You may trudge up to his house, get him to come with you a few times, and then see him move away. You may think you haven't done much that mattered. But the grandfather of such a boy came up to me during a stake conference, described in detail how a deacon had done just that for his grandson—more than ten years before and almost a continent away—and with tears in his eyes asked me if

I could thank that deacon for him, now grown older, unaware that the Savior had reached out through a twelve-year-old servant assigned by a thirteen-year-old quorum president.

Some of you brethren know the feelings of that grandfather. The mother of his grandson was raising him alone with no contact with the Church. The grandfather had tried every way he knew to reach out to touch their lives. He loved them. He felt responsible for her and for his grandson. And he knew what you know: He knew that someday, when they saw things as they really are, they would wish with all their hearts that they had made the choices that would qualify them for eternal life, choices which won't and can't be made without faith in Jesus Christ sufficient to salvation.

His heartache was one most of us have felt over someone we cared about and could not seem to reach. And that heartache will lead you to ponder and pray for the answer to this question: How can I touch a life with faith?

Help others increase their faith

A place to begin your pondering is with the Savior and His disciples. Early in His mortal ministry, they wanted Him to touch their lives with faith.

"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

"And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (Luke 17:5-6).

You will not be surprised that the Lord responded by speaking of a seed. The first thing to know about how faith in Him increases is to think of its growth like that of a tree. You remember how Alma used that illustration. The seed is the word of God. It must be planted in the heart of the person you serve and

whose faith you want to see increase. He described what must happen this way:

"Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.

"Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea" (Alma 32:28–29).

Just as soil needs preparation for a seed, so does a human heart for the word of God to take root. Before he told the people to plant the seed, Alma told them that their hearts were prepared. They had been persecuted and cast out of their churches.

Alma, with his love, and the circumstances of their lives, which led them to be humble, had prepared them. They were then ready to hear the word of God. If they chose to plant it in their hearts, the growth in their souls would surely follow, and that would increase their faith.

Help others want to obey

It's not hard to see from these examples what you can do to touch someone's life with faith. To begin with, you recognize that what people choose to do, and what the Savior has done, will matter more than what you do. But there are things you can do to make it more likely that they will make the choices that will move them toward eternal life.

You know first of all that to plant the seed, they must do more than hear the word of God. They have to try it by

keeping commandments. The Lord said it this way:

"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16–17).

It won't be enough for them simply to listen to the word of God. They must choose to keep commandments because they feel at least a beginning desire to know the will of our Heavenly Father and submit to it. That feeling of surrender is not likely to come unless they experience some feeling of being loved and some value in their being meek and lowly of heart.

You can help with your example. If you love them because you feel God's love for them, they will feel that. If you are meek and humble because you feel your dependence on God, they will sense that too.

Teach with love, as Aaron did

In addition to your example, you can teach the word of God to them in a way that is more likely to give them a desire to repent and to try to live it. They may think they have heard preaching enough. But they must do more than hear the word of God; they must plant it in their hearts by trying it.

You can make that more likely if you talk with them about it in a way that helps them feel how much God loves them and how much they need God.

Aaron, one of the great missionaries in the Book of Mormon, knew how to teach that way. You remember how he taught King Lamoni's father, the old king.

The king's heart had already been prepared by seeing love and humility in the way Aaron's brother had treated Lamoni, the king's son. But even with that preparation of the old king's heart,

Aaron taught the word of God in a way that emphasizes God's love and our need for Him. Listen to this description of how he did it:

"And it came to pass that when Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam, reading the scriptures unto the king—how God created man after his own image, and that God gave him commandments, and that because of transgression, man had fallen.

"And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name" (Alma 22:12–13).

You won't very often have the remarkable result that Aaron had. After hearing the word of God taught that way, in what the scriptures sometimes call the plan of happiness, the old king said that he would give whatever he had to root the wickedness out of him and have eternal life. When Aaron told him to cry to God in prayer for forgiveness, the king bowed down on the spot. The seed was planted. He was doing the will of God (see vv. 15–18).

Help others plant the seed

When you touch the hearts of people you serve, you won't do everything exactly the way Aaron did. But you will do some of the same things. You will try to help them feel that God loves them by the way you treat them. You will be humble so that they are more likely to choose to be meek and lowly of heart. You will teach the word of God, when the Spirit prompts you, in a way that testifies of God's love for them and their need for the atonement of Jesus Christ. And you will teach them commandments they can keep. That is why, when you go into the mission field, you learn to com-

mit those you teach to pray or to read the Book of Mormon or to come with you to a sacrament meeting or to be baptized. You know that when they keep commandments, they plant the seed. And you know that it will grow, their souls will be expanded, and that when that happens their faith will increase.

Teach when hearts are prepared

You not only know what to do but you know when the Spirit is apt to prompt you to do it. The times people will be most likely to choose to try the word of God, to repent, will be when they feel at least the beginnings of His love for them and their dependence on Him.

For instance, wise bishops have learned that funerals can be such times. When death occurs in a family, the bishop, quorum members, and the home and visiting teachers reach out to the family because they love them. The family generally feels humbled, longing for comfort and peace. For many, their hearts will be prepared to hear the word of God.

The bishop will know that as he plans the funeral service. He will be sure that testimony is given of the plan of salvation, of the atonement of Jesus Christ, of the Resurrection, and of glorious reunions, because that will bring comfort and hope. But such teaching will do more than that. The word of God will be heard by people with hearts softened by love and by grief and so more likely to choose living it more fully. And from doing that, faith will increase and the changes will come in people which move them toward eternal life.

Prove love by service

Your opportunities won't come only at times of great tragedy or overwhelming need. Life has in it moments of challenge that will bring even the people most hardened to spiritual things to say

to themselves, "Isn't there more than this?" If you have been a constant friend, if you have proved your love by service and so become trusted, they may turn to you with that question. When they do, you can say, knowing that their hearts are prepared, "Yes, there is, and I can tell you where it is and what you can do to find it."

Your teaching will become easier as those you serve try the word of God. For instance, a deacon or an elder might choose to follow the command to search the scriptures and so read passages that tell him of the honor and glory bestowed through the holy priesthood (D&C 124:34). From such obedience in reading scriptures, he might be able to hear the Holy Ghost whisper that such an honor, such a holy calling deserves wearing better than everyday clothes when he performs priesthood ordinances or more considerate speech wherever he is. Because others may not honor the dignity of the priesthood in those ways, such obedience may take faith. But faith, when exercised, increases. And that increase in faith will give greater power to hear and to obey.

Refresh and nurture others' faith

Now, you will have great moments in your service to others as they discover the source of faith or when that faith leads them to go through the pain of repentance to gain the peace of forgiveness.

But even people with faith developed by obedience and with sins washed away will need your help to refresh and strengthen their faith. There are reasons for that. Blessings when they are no longer seen as coming from our Heavenly Father can lead to pride. The peace of forgiveness can lead to overconfidence, forgetting to pray always lest we be overcome. Even some who have exercised faith enough to have great spiritual experiences have later been deceived

into apostasy or overcome with the trials of life. All of them need your help in nurturing faith, in learning to put all their trust in God.

For all those you serve, wherever they may be in the tests of life, the way you nurture will be much the same. You will love them. You will encourage them as they choose to be humble. You will present the word of God to them in the way most likely to lead to their choosing to exercise enough faith to repent and thus see that there is more that God would have them do. And that will help them endure in faith.

The Lord will make you fishers of men

Now, your responsibility to touch lives might seem overwhelming. You can take heart that you were called by the Savior. You have the same promise He gave those He called at the beginning of His earthly ministry. He called first humble men, uneducated, with less schooling and less gospel knowledge than the most recently ordained of you may have. But listen to what He said, and know that it applies to you:

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

"And they straightway left their nets, and followed him" (Matthew 4:18-20).

He will make you a fisher of men, however inadequate you may feel now. It won't be done by a mysterious process. It will be the natural result of your choosing to follow Him. Just think about what you must do to be a fisher of men, to touch lives with faith for Him. You will need to love the people you serve. You will need to be humble and full of hope. You will need to have the Holy Ghost as your companion to know when to speak and what to say and how to testify.

But all of that will come naturally, in time, from the covenants you make and keep as you follow Him. Here is the description of how that will happen, from the eighth chapter of Moroni, the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses:

"And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins;

"And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God."

You may not have seen that mighty change in yourself yet. But it will come as you continue to follow Him. You can trust that He will qualify you as His servant, to assist Him in touching lives with

faith to bring to pass the eternal life of man. And you will find satisfaction in that service beyond your fondest dreams.

I testify that God the Father lives and that He loves you. I testify that Jesus is the Christ, that He called you, and that He atoned for your sins and those of all you will ever serve. I testify that President Gordon B. Hinckley holds the keys that allow us to offer to our Father's children the covenants and ordinances that can qualify them for eternal life. And I pray with all my heart that we may touch lives with faith enough to repent and to make and keep those sacred covenants. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presidency of the Bishopric.

Elder Harold G. Hillam

Sacrifice in missionary service

As I look at you this evening, I can see many young men with their valiant fathers and loyal priesthood leaders seated side by side. These fathers and leaders are ready to pay the price, yes, even sacrifice, for the success of you young men.

In the spirit of sacrifice, I recall a conversation I had some years ago with my stake president in Idaho. We were discussing the forthcoming Aaronic Priesthood-Scout campout. I explained to him that it would be necessary for each person to bring his own sleeping bag, to which the president replied, "I have never slept in a sleeping bag."

I quickly responded, "President, you can't be serious. You have lived in beautiful Idaho all these years and you have never slept in a sleeping bag?"

"Nope!" he said, "I never have. But I have sure lain in a lot of 'em." And then he went on to say, "And I'll lie in a whole bunch more of them if it will help to save boys."

The sacrifice I would like to speak to you about is the sacrifice that accompanies missionary service. Since the beginning of time our Heavenly Father has called worthy servants to go into the world to proclaim the gospel and to testify of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Many of those who have fulfilled their callings have done so with considerable sacrifice.

Sacrifices of Mosiah's missionary sons

Let me tell you of four who served their missions long ago. They were Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni, sons of Mosiah, the king. They had become so powerfully converted they wanted everyone to hear the gospel message. From the Book of Mormon we read:

"They were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble" (Mosiah 28:3).

They pled with their father that they might go and do missionary work among the Lamanites. Now Mosiah feared for his sons' safety in the land of their enemy.

"And king Mosiah went and inquired of the Lord if he should let his sons go up among the Lamanites to preach the word" (v. 6).

The first part of the Lord's answer might not have been exactly what Mosiah wanted to hear:

"The Lord said unto Mosiah: Let them go up" (v. 7). But then follow three marvelous promises: the first, "For many shall believe on their words"; and the second, "I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites"; and then the third, "They shall have eternal life" (v. 7).

Now He did not promise them great wealth, but He did promise the greatest of all the gifts of God, *eternal life*! Can you imagine a more marvelous promise for faithful missionaries?

The four missionary sons of Mosiah did not choose the easy course. Their choice was neither convenient nor popular: They gave up the kingship. "Mosiah had no one to confer the kingdom upon" (v. 10)—they were all on missions. Serving a mission wasn't necessarily accepted. They were ridiculed even by other members of the Church. Ammon recalls the experience: "Now do ye remember, my

brethren, that we said unto our brethren in the land of Zarahemla, we go up to the land of Nephi, to preach unto our brethren, the Lamanites, and they *laughed us to scorn*?" (Alma 26:23; italics added). Their choice to serve a mission was not one of convenience. Ammon spoke of the challenges they encountered: "We have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our cheeks; . . . and taken and bound with strong cords, and cast into prison." However, Ammon continues, "through the power and wisdom of God we have been delivered again" (v. 29).

They were not easy missions, but thousands were converted.

Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball

Now let's look to another set of missionaries closer to our time, the time of the Restoration. There was considerable persecution from enemies in and outside the Church. At a time when it appeared that the Prophet needed them at home, two of the Apostles, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, were called on foreign missions. The following is Elder Heber C. Kimball's historic account of the pathetic setting at his departure:

"I went to the bed and shook hands with my wife, who was shaking with the ague, having two children lying sick by her side; I embraced her and my children, and bid them farewell; the only child well was little Heber Parley, and it was with difficulty he could carry a two-quart pail full of water from a spring at the bottom of a small hill to assist in quenching their thirst. It was with difficulty we got into the wagon and started down the hill about ten rods; it appeared to me as though my very inmost parts would melt within me; leaving my family in such a condition, as it were, almost in the arms of death; it seemed to me as though I could not endure it. I said to the teamster, 'Hold up.' Said I to Brother Brigham, 'This is pretty tough, ain't it?

Let's rise up and give them a cheer.' We arose and swinging our hats three times over our heads, we cried 'Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah for Israel!' Vilate [Kimball] hearing the noise arose from her bed and came to the door; she had a smile on her face and she and Mary Ann Young cried out to us, 'Good bye, God bless you.' We returned the compliment and then told the driver to go ahead. After this I felt a spirit of joy and gratitude at having the satisfaction of seeing my wife standing upon her feet, instead of leaving her in bed, knowing as I did that I should not see them again for two or more years" (quoted in Helen Mar Whitney, "Life Incidents," *Woman's Exponent*, 15 July 1880, p. 25). This was one of four missions that these two Apostle missionaries served.

Elder Bugs's sacrifice

Now to the present for an interview I had with a handsome zone leader in the Brazil São Paulo Interlagos Mission. I said to the missionary, "Tell me about your family." He then relayed the following. He was born into a wealthy family. His father had a responsible position in a multinational corporation. They moved from Brazil to Venezuela. He was one of seven children, all members of the Church.

When the missionary was fifteen years old, his father was shot and killed by a fleeing thief. In a family council it was decided to return to Brazil and invest their savings in the purchase of a small home. A year and a half later, the mother informed the children that she had been diagnosed with cancer. The family used valuable savings to help pay the medical expenses—but to no avail. Six months later the mother passed away, leaving the young family alone.

Our young missionary, Elder Bugs (pronounced Boogs), then sixteen years old, went to work, first selling clothing, then later computer supplies. He used

his hard-earned money to support the young family. He said, "We were always blessed to have enough to eat. I would work during the day, then help the children with their studies at night. I especially miss my little sister. I taught her to read."

Elder Bugs continued, "Then the bishop invited me to come in for an interview. He called me on a mission. I told him I would need to speak with my family first. In our family council they reminded me that Dad had always taught us that we should be prepared to serve the Lord as full-time missionaries. I accepted the call. When I received my letter from the prophet, I withdrew all my savings. I bought a new suit, a pair of pants, white shirts and ties, and a new pair of shoes. I gave the rest of the money to the bishop (enough for about four months of support for the family). I hugged my little family and left for my mission."

I looked at that brave young man and I said, "But, Elder, with you away, who is taking care of your family?"

"Oh," he said, "my brother is sixteen. He is the same age I was when our mother died. He is taking care of the family now."

I had an opportunity recently to talk by telephone with Elder Bugs. He has been home from his mission for six months now. When I asked him how he was doing, he said, "I have a good job again and I am caring for the family, but oh, how I miss my mission. It was the greatest thing I have ever done. I am now helping my younger brother prepare for his mission."

No sacrifice is too great for the Master

Why have these great missionaries and others like them been willing to sacrifice the comforts of home, family, loved ones, and sweethearts to answer the call to serve? It's because they have a testimony of Jesus Christ. And when they know Him there is no bed too short

or too hard, no climate too hot or too cold, no food too different or language so strange that they are unwilling to serve Him. No sacrifice is too great to serve the Master, who sacrificed His all to provide the way for His brothers and sisters to return home to their Heavenly Father. And because they are faithful to their callings, thousands will revere their names throughout the eternities.

I testify there is no more majestic call than to be in the full-time service of our Redeemer, to help to bring our Heavenly Father's children to the knowledge of Him who has made eternal life possible. I pray that every able young man—and every able couple—will join those who have paid the price to serve a full-time mission. And this I pray in the name of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Bishop H. David Burton

Brethren, I am honored and humbled to share this historic podium with others of the General Authorities, particularly the fifteen prophets, seers, and revelators seated behind me, whom I love and revere. I bear witness that these mighty men of God, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, have been prepared, refined, tested, and called to preside over and to give direction to this expansive priesthood labor.

An “I will” attitude

There is a sign prominently displayed in a shopping mall in Manila, the Philippines, that reads, “Your ‘I will’ is more important than your ‘IQ.’” As I ponder the meaning of that short phrase, there comes to mind the chorus of the great Primary song based on 1 Nephi 3:7: “I will go; I will do the thing the Lord commands. I know the Lord provides a way; he wants me to obey” (“Nephi’s Courage,” *Children’s Songbook*, pp. 120–21). I also find myself humming and whistling the refrain from the celebrated hymn of the Restoration: “I’ll go where you want me to go, dear Lord . . . ; I’ll say what you want me to say . . . ; I’ll be what you want me to be” (“I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go,” *Hymns*, no. 270).

Far too many who have been blessed with great ability and exceptional intellect fail to have an “I will” attitude when

it comes to going, doing, saying, and being what the Lord commands.

I will go, I will do, I will say, and I will be all convey determined obedience. Our third article of faith states, “We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” Certainly the most magnificent act of obedience was accomplished in Gethsemane. You may recall the heartfelt plea of the Savior: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

“I wills” for priesthood holders

For us who bear the priesthood of God, there are many important “I wills”: *I will* be loyal to the oath and covenant of the priesthood; *I will* be responsive to my quorum president; *I will* exhibit perfect fidelity to the covenants made in holy places; and, *I will* serve with excellence in my Aaronic Priesthood ministry, preparing myself for further priesthood service. Possibly the most significant “I will” we all could commit to this night is *I will* follow the living prophets.

Commit to follow the living prophet

Brigham Young said, “You cannot destroy the appointment of a prophet of

God, but you can cut the thread that binds you to the prophet of God, and sink yourselves to hell" (quoted by Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Apr. 1963, p. 81; or *Improvement Era*, June 1963, p. 501).

Elder John A. Widtsoe said: "The most important prophet in any age is the living prophet. . . . To follow the living prophet, the interpreter of the past, is the essence of wisdom. The very strength of the Church lies in the doctrine of continuous revelation through a living prophet" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 3 vols. in 1, arr. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960], p. 352).

President Wilford Woodruff recalled a meeting at which the Prophet Joseph Smith said to Brigham Young, "Brother Brigham I want you to take the stand and tell us your views with regard to the written oracles and the written word of God." Brigham Young is reported to have laid the scriptures, one by one, before him and then indicated he felt the words of the living prophet were more important than the writings before him because the words of the living oracles convey the word of God to us in our day. President Woodruff went on to say, "When he was through, Brother Joseph said to the congregation: 'Brother Brigham has told you the word of the Lord, and he has told you the truth'" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1897, pp. 22-23).

How are we doing in obeying the living prophets? Do you recall their counsel just six months ago in the last general priesthood meeting? For example, do you remember President Faust saying: "There is no greater responsibility than that of being a husband and a father, from which there is no release. . . . 'Love thy wife with all thy heart, and . . . cleave unto her and none else' [D&C 42:22]"? (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 63; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 46).

Can you remember President Monson's fervent request: "Brethren of the priesthood, the world is in need of your

help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. . . . Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service"? (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 67; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 49).

Young men, oh, I hope the magnificent counsel of President Hinckley continues to ring in your ears: "You cannot indulge in any unbecoming behavior without injury to the beauty of the fabric of your lives. Immoral acts of any kind will introduce an ugly thread. Dishonesty of any kind will create a blemish. Foul and profane language will rob the pattern of its beauty" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 73; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 53).

Become acquainted with Nephi

Young men who hold the priesthood of Aaron, may I offer an "I will" for your serious consideration? It is *I will* become very well acquainted with the noble prophet Nephi through studying, pondering, and feasting upon the first two books of the Book of Mormon. My young friends, I promise that when you come to really know Nephi, you will be so impressed with his determination, courage, and desire to be obedient to the "things the Lord commands" that you will have a strong desire to incorporate his attributes into your own lives. Then when you are tempted by the adversary, as you may be nearly every day, to deviate from the counsel of the prophets, the wishes of your parents, or what "the Lord commands," you can immediately have the words of stalwart Nephi automatically come to your mind: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded" (1 Nephi 3:7). And when someone with whom you associate suggests you participate in something that is not as "the Lord commands," you can think of the courageous plea Nephi made to his elder brothers: "Let us be faithful

in keeping the commandments of the Lord" (v. 16).

Young athletes honor the Sabbath

I am aware of a group of courageous young men who followed the example of Nephi. After winning a baseball state championship for their age-group, their team, made up mostly of Aaronic Priesthood holders, was invited to represent their state in a tournament to be held in a distant location. Upon arriving at the tournament site, they learned that some of the games were scheduled to be played on the Sabbath day. Each of these young men had to make a difficult personal decision: would he support the team, including several nonmember team members; or if scheduled on Sunday, would he follow what "the Lord commands" in keeping the Sabbath day holy? Their honoring the Sabbath day could mean the team would forfeit their chances of winning the tournament. One by one they quietly approached the coaches, and following the example of Nephi they independently chose to decline participation on the Sabbath day. As it turned out, when Sunday arrived the team's record, coupled with adverse weather conditions, interrupted the schedule. I have had occasion to closely follow these young men over the years. They have continued to pattern their lives after the sterling example of Nephi. They have gone on missions, and they continue to strive to do and say what the Lord has commanded.

A baseball player's perseverance

A few weeks ago I, like perhaps many of you, witnessed on television a long-standing baseball record broken—a record once thought unbreakable. Tears rolled down my cheeks as I watched this fine athlete who broke the record stand on the field with his family and receive accolades of the public and his team. Although I am impressed with this young

man's ability to hit and field a baseball, I am far more impressed with the attributes he displayed in achieving that feat. He demonstrated great perseverance, constancy, sacrifice, courage, and determination in reaching his goal. These are some of the attributes we need to help us be successful in going, doing, and saying as "the Lord commands."

Make family leadership top priority

You adult brethren, may I suggest an "I will" for us which has been repeatedly emphasized by modern prophets? It is of critical importance in today's world, where the influence of the adversary is intensifying and the foundation of our society, the family, is disintegrating. It is *I will* resolve that the leadership of my family will be my most important and sacred responsibility; and *I will* not leave the teaching and governance of my family to society, to the school, or to the Church. We are reminded in the Doctrine and Covenants that fathers and mothers are held accountable by the Lord to teach their children about faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost, and the need to pray and walk uprightly before the Lord (see D&C 68:25, 28).

Perhaps you have heard some say, "I am so busy with living and providing that I have little time to devote to my family, but I make an effort to see that my limited time is quality time." Brethren, this type of rationalization is severely flawed. Effective family leadership requires both quantity and quality time.

When I was called to be bishop of our ward, our young four-year-old son inquired of me, "Are you the guy they give those envelopes of money to?" I answered, "Yes, I am the one," realizing that we needed a little lesson on tithing. Brandon clapped his hands and exclaimed, "Oh goody, we're going to be rich!" We later learned he was thinking that Dad no longer would have to work

and would therefore have lots more time for him!

If giving your family quantity time means focusing less on providing the "wants" in life or putting aside nonfamily involvement with fishing poles, golf clubs, boats, trips, and so on, those things should be done immediately. Brethren, we need desperately to recommit to this extremely important "I will." May we never be too busy to do the things that matter most: to preside in righteousness in our homes and follow, unconditionally, the counsel of living prophets.

Align our wills with God's will

Brethren, I pray we may often recall, and perhaps even hum and sing, that simple but infectious Primary song: "I will go; I will do the thing the Lord commands. I know the Lord provides a way; he wants me to obey." May we focus and align our "I wills" with His will. I testify

that the Lord wants us to obey the living prophets. I further testify that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ lives. He is our Savior and our Redeemer. He has, upon the principles of our repentance, atoned for our sins. I testify that this is so, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy has addressed us, followed by Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

President James E. Faust

Dangers of living on the edge

It is always a sacred responsibility to address the great body of the priesthood of this church. This evening I wish to speak primarily to the splendid young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. I do so because I recognize that the future of the Church and even the world depends upon how you young men regard and honor your priesthood.

Recently I asked some special young people what I should know about your generation. One young man spoke for the group and said, "We live on the edge." Since that time I have thought a lot about what it means to live on the edge. Of course it can mean many things. I think my fine young friend was referring to hazardous motorcycling, cliff climbing, and other forms of recreation

which may involve taking unnecessary risks to produce a challenge or a thrill.

Some years ago Elder Marion D. Hanks told about a group of Boy Scouts who went cave exploring. The narrow trail was marked with white stones and lighted in sections as they went. After about an hour they came to a huge, high dome. Below it lay an area called the Bottomless Pit, so called because the floor of the cave had collapsed into a deep, gaping hole. It was hard not to jostle each other on that narrow path. Pretty soon one of the bigger boys accidentally pushed a smaller boy into a muddy area away from the light. Terrified as he lost his footing, he screamed in the darkness. The ranger heard his cry of terror and came quickly. The boy let out another cry as the beam of the ranger's light showed that he was right on the very edge of the pit.¹

In this story the boy was rescued. But this does not always happen. So many times young people are enticed to go to the very edge or even beyond it. With only a precarious toehold, it is easy to be seriously injured or even die. Life is too precious to throw away in the name of excitement or, as Jacob said in the Book of Mormon, "looking beyond the mark."²

You young people may think that you are indestructible and that you are going to live forever. In a few years you will learn that this is not so. Living on the edge can also mean being perilously close to the Bottomless Pit. Of even more danger is to put your souls at risk by dabbling in drugs or other mind-abusing substances to "get a buzz."

Some of you may think that you will discover your strengths and abilities by living on the edge. Perhaps you also think it is a way to find your identity or manliness. Your identity, however, cannot be found from thrill seeking, such as intentionally and unnecessarily exposing your life or your soul to any kind of danger, physical or moral. There will always be enough risks that will come to you naturally without your having to seek them out. Your strength and identity will come from honoring your priesthood, developing your talents, and serving the Lord. Each of you will have to work very hard to qualify for your eternal potential. It will not be easy. Finding your true identity will tax your ability far beyond climbing a dangerous cliff or speeding in a car or on a motorcycle. It will require all of your strength, stamina, intelligence, and courage.

The best counsel I ever received about staying away from the edge came when President Harold B. Lee called me, as a young married man, to be a member of a bishopric. He said, "From now on, you must not only avoid evil, but also the appearance of evil." He did not interpret that counsel. That was left to my conscience.

Act rather than be acted upon

That brings me to an important point that I wish to make this evening to the priesthood of God. Each of us must take the responsibility for the moral decisions we make in life about how close we live to the edge. Nephi states, "And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon."³ Being acted upon means somebody else is pulling the strings.

We live in a time when many want to avoid the responsibility for their acts. When I was a young lawyer, I was appointed by the judges to defend persons who were charged with infractions of the law. One time I was assigned to represent a young man. As we approached the bench, the venerable old federal judge looked down at both of us and asked, "Which one of you is the accused?" From these experiences I learned that some individuals did not think they were responsible or guilty in any way even though they had violated a law. They felt they were not to be blamed. They had abdicated their consciences. They may have committed the wrongful act, but they felt it was really their parents' fault because they were not properly taught, or it was society's fault because they were never given a chance in life. So often they had some reason or excuse for blaming their actions on someone or something else rather than accepting the responsibility for their own actions. They did not act for themselves but were acted upon.

Mickey Mantle, American baseball star of many years ago, recently admitted to years of various forms of substance abuse. Upon receiving a liver transplant in an effort to save his life, he made an amazing statement. He said, "Don't use me for a role model." He also said that he was committing the rest of his life to being a better example. Mickey Mantle finally accepted the responsibility for his

mistakes. Unfortunately he died shortly thereafter.

In World War II, many of us went through officers' training. We were taught that the only appropriate answer when we made a life-threatening mistake was, "No excuse, sir."

Joseph F. Smith stands firm

Each of us must at times courageously and firmly stand up for what we are and what we believe. When President Joseph F. Smith was a young man, he was faced with this predicament:

"One morning when he and several other missionaries were returning to Salt Lake City, a group of rough Mormon-haters rode up on horses, firing their guns and cursing.

"The leader jumped off his horse and shouted, 'We will kill anyone who is a Mormon!' The other missionaries had fled into the woods, but Joseph F. bravely stood his ground. The man shoved a gun in Joseph F.'s face and asked, 'Are you a Mormon?'

"Joseph F. stood tall and said, 'Yes siree; dyed in the wool; true blue, through and through!'

"The man was surprised at his reply. He put the gun away, shook Joseph's hand, and said, 'Well, you are the pleasantest man I ever met! I'm glad to see a fellow stand up for his convictions.' He jumped back on his horse and rode off with his companions."⁴

Unlike Joseph F. Smith, the danger you young men face is not so much physical; but rather it is the danger of being personally deceived and misled. This danger is, in some ways, more subtle and difficult and requires more strength and courage than facing physical danger.

Avoid even the appearance of evil

Staying away from the edge is an individual responsibility. Occasionally our well-meaning young people want every

detail of appropriate and inappropriate conduct to be specified, perhaps so they can feel comfortable in getting closer to the edge. They sometimes seem more concerned with what the gospel prohibits than what it gives. For instance, some young adults were surprised when they learned that it was inappropriate for mixed young single adult groups to be involved together in overnight activities. They said, "Why hasn't the prophet told us?" The Church counsel in this matter has been clear for many years. It should not have been necessary to tell these young people to avoid the appearance of evil. My strong advice is, if there is any question about your personal conduct, don't do it. It is the responsibility of prophets to teach the word of God—not to spell out every jot and tittle of human behavior. Our moral agency requires us to know good from evil and choose the good. If we are trying to avoid not only evil but the very appearance of evil, we will act for ourselves and not be acted upon.

Provide safety for women and children

Holders of the priesthood of God are not only to be accountable for their own acts, but are to provide moral and physical safety for the women and children of their families and of the Church. You young single men who hold the priesthood and are dating the splendid young ladies of the Church have a duty to do everything you can to protect their physical safety and virtue. The priesthood you hold gives you the greater responsibility to see that the high moral standards of the Church are always maintained. The Lord knows that you know better than to approach the edge of sexual enticement. You will lose part of that which is sacred about you if you go beyond the edge and abuse the great powers of procreation. Each of us is accountable for his own actions. How can any of us hope to play a great role in

time or eternity if we have no power of self-control?

How to satisfy internal emptiness

Some thrill seekers seem to be trying to satisfy an internal emptiness through the external gratification of alcohol, drugs, and illicit sexual relations. To ease their consciences, some vainly wait for the Church to "get modern," to "wake up," or to "get with the times." That internal emptiness can be filled only by making our relationship with "God the center of our being," as President David O. McKay taught:

"It is not an easy thing to make God the center of our being. To do so we must determine to keep his commandments. Spiritual attainment, not physical possessions, not the indulgence and the gratification of the body, must become the *chief goal*."

"Only in the complete surrender of our inner life may we rise above the selfish, sordid pull of nature. . . . As the body dies when the spirit leaves it, so the spirit dies when we exclude God from it. I cannot imagine peace in a world from which God and religion are banished."⁵

Getting the power of God into your life

The Lord has a great work for each of us to do. You may wonder how this can be. You may feel that there is nothing special or superior about you or your ability. Perhaps you feel or have been told that you are stupid. Many of us have felt that, and some of us have been told that. Gideon felt this when the Lord asked him to save Israel from the Midianites. Gideon said, "My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."⁶ He had only three hundred men, but with the help of the Lord, Gideon defeated the armies of the Midianites.⁷

The Lord can do remarkable miracles with a person of ordinary ability who

is humble, faithful, and diligent in serving the Lord and seeks to improve himself. This is because God is the ultimate source of power. By the gift of the Holy Ghost we can not only know all things but even "the truth of all things."⁸

Many of you worry about your future. I think every conscientious young man does. But you do not realize what opportunities lie ahead of you. After a lifetime of dealing with human affairs, I am persuaded that your future will be beyond your dreams if you observe the following:

1. Do not live on the edge.
2. Avoid not only evil but even the appearance of evil.
3. Follow the counsel of Nephi to act for yourselves and not be acted upon.
4. Seek first the kingdom of God and receive the great promise that all else will be added upon you.
5. Follow the counsel of Church leaders.

Chosen in the premortal existence

In this great hall and listening this evening are thousands of future leaders of the Church who have been called out of the world and chosen by the Lord before the foundations of the world, as described by Abraham:

"Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

"And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born."⁹

I believe the Lord has brought forth special spirits who were reserved from before the world was to be strong and valiant in this difficult time of the world's

history. Upon you young men will soon rest the future of the kingdom of God on earth. In your time the challenges and opportunities will be greater than ever before.

With all my heart I urge you young men to be worthy and true to your priesthood callings in your youth. Yours is a preparatory priesthood now. If you remain worthy, soon the greater priesthood will be yours, and with it will come the great responsibility for the holy work of God in all the earth.

May you be equal to it, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Story adapted from "Questions for the Iconoclast," *Improvement Era*, June 1957, pp. 446–48.

2. Jacob 4:14.

3. 2 Nephi 2:26.

4. "Courageous Mormon Boy," *Friend*, Aug. 1995, p. 43.

5. *Gospel Ideals* (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953), p. 295; italics added.

6. Judges 6:15.

7. See Judges 7.

8. Moroni 10:5.

9. Abraham 3:22–23.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

Ye who are called to labor

It is no small undertaking to stand before you this evening. I am impressed by your faith, in awe of your potential, and inspired by your devotion to duty in the cause of the Master.

A dear personal friend and associate in the work of the Lord, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, had a favorite hymn which he enjoyed hearing sung. He said the words of the hymn prompted him to do his best. Listen to just two verses:

Ye who are called to labor and minister for God,
Blest with the royal priesthood, appointed by his word
To preach among the nations the news of gospel grace,
And publish on the mountains salvation, truth, and peace: . . .

The Comforter will teach you, his richest blessings send.
Your Savior will be with you forever to the end.¹

What a mighty promise these precious words proclaim. They apply to you young men who bear the Aaronic Priesthood and to your fathers and other brethren who have received the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Learn as youth to choose the right

It seems like yesterday that I was secretary of the deacons quorum in my ward. We were tutored by wise and patient men who taught us from the holy scriptures, even men who knew us well. These men who took time to listen and to laugh, to build and to inspire, emphasized that we, like the Lord, could increase in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.² They were examples to us. Their lives were a reflection of their testimonies.

Youth is a time for growth. Our minds during these formative years are receptive to truth, but they are also receptive to error. The responsibility to choose rests with each deacon, teacher,

and priest. As the years go by, the choices become increasingly complex, and at times we may be tempted to waver. The need for a personal code of honor is demanded not only on a daily basis but frequently many times in a given day.

The counsel found in one of the hymns sung frequently in our meetings provides an inspired guide:

Choose the right when a choice is
placed before you.

In the right the Holy Spirit guides;
And its light is forever shining o'er
you,
When in the right your heart con-
fides.³

A spirit of determination to do the right thing can come in earliest boyhood. At the cemetery, following a lovely funeral I attended, there stood near the open grave a small lad. His face was one of innocence, and his shining eyes showed the promise of a bright future. I said to him, "You, my boy, are going to make a great missionary. How old are you?"

He answered, "Ten."

"In nine years we're going to be looking for you to serve a mission," I countered.

His response was immediate and told me something about him. He said, "Brother Monson, you won't have to look for me 'cause I'll be looking for you." Young men, some lessons in life are learned from your parents, while others you learn in school or in church. There are, however, certain moments when you know our Heavenly Father is doing the teaching and you are His student. Let me share with you tonight such a lesson, effectively taught and everlastingly learned. The lesson pertains to swimming but goes far beyond that skill.

Rescuing a woman from the Provo River

I learned to swim in the swift-running currents of the Provo River in beau-

tiful Provo Canyon. The "old swimming hole" was in a deep portion of the river, formed by a large rock which had fallen into the river, I assume, when the workmen constructing the railroad were blasting through the canyon. The pool was dangerous, what with its depth of sixteen feet, its current, which moved swiftly against the large rock, and the sucking action of the whirlpools below the rock. It was not a place for a novice or the inexperienced swimmer.

One warm summer afternoon when I was about twelve or thirteen, I took a large, inflated inner tube from a tractor tire, slung it over my shoulder, and walked barefoot up the railroad track which followed the course of the river. I entered the water about a mile above the swimming hole, sat comfortably in the tube, and enjoyed a leisurely float down the river. The river held no fear for me, for I knew its secrets.

That day the Greek-speaking people in Utah held a reunion at Vivian Park in Provo Canyon, as they did every year. Native food, games, and dances were the order of the day. But some left the party to try swimming in the river. When they arrived at the swimming hole, it was deserted, for afternoon shadows were beginning to envelop it.

As my inflated tube bobbed up and down, I was about to enter the swiftest portion of the river just at the head of the swimming hole when I heard frantic cries, "Save her! Save her!" A young lady swimmer, accustomed to the still waters of a gymnasium swimming pool, had fallen from the rock into the treacherous whirlpools. None of the party could swim to save her. Suddenly I appeared on the potentially tragic scene. I saw the top of her head disappearing under the water for the third time, there to descend to a watery grave. I stretched forth my hand, grasped her hair, and lifted her over the side of the tube and into my arms. At the pool's lower end, the water was slower as I paddled the tube, with my precious

cargo, to her waiting relatives and friends. They threw their arms around the water-soaked girl and kissed her, crying, "Thank God! Thank God you are safe!" Then they hugged and kissed me. I was embarrassed and quickly returned to the tube and continued my float down to the Vivian Park bridge. The water was frigid, but I was not cold, for I was filled with a warm feeling. I realized that I had participated in the saving of a life. Heavenly Father had heard the cries, "Save her! Save her," and permitted me, a deacon, to float by at precisely the time I was needed. That day I learned that the sweetest feeling in mortality is to realize that God, our Heavenly Father, knows each one of us and generously permits us to see and to share His divine power to save.

Follow the path to the celestial kingdom

Pray always in the performance of your priesthood responsibilities, and you will never be in the position of Alice in Wonderland. As Lewis Carroll tells us, Alice was following a path through a forest in Wonderland when it divided into two directions. Standing irresolute, she inquired of the Cheshire Cat, which had suddenly appeared in a nearby tree, which path she should take. "Where do you want to go?" asked the cat.

"I don't know," said Alice.

"Then," said the cat, "it really doesn't matter, does it?"

We who hold the priesthood know where it is we wish to go. Our objective is the celestial kingdom of our Heavenly Father. Ours is the sacred duty to follow the well-defined path that leads to it.

Prepare for missions

Soon you will be ready to serve a mission. It's wonderful that you are willing and prepared to serve wherever the Spirit of the Lord directs. This alone is a modern miracle, considering the times in which we live.

Missionary work is hard work. Missionary service is demanding and requires long hours of study and preparation, that the missionary himself might match the divine message he proclaims. It is a labor of love but also of sacrifice and devotion to duty.

An anxious mother of a prospective missionary once asked me what I would recommend her son learn before the arrival of his missionary call. I am certain she anticipated a profound response which would contain the more familiar requirements for service of which we are all aware. However, I said, "Teach your son how to cook, but more particularly, teach him how to get along with others. He will be happier and more productive if he learns these two vital skills."

Young men, you are preparing for your missions when you learn your duties as deacons, teachers, and priests and then perform those duties with determination and love, knowing you are on the Lord's errand.

Sometimes the lessons will come quietly. A few weeks ago I was visiting a sacrament meeting at a care facility in Salt Lake City. The priests at the sacrament table were sitting quietly prior to performing their duties when the opening hymn was announced. A patient near the front of the large room had difficulty opening his hymnbook. Without so much as a question, one of the young men slipped to the patient's side and, gently turning the pages to the correct hymn, placed the disabled man's finger at the beginning of the first verse of the hymn. They exchanged an understanding smile, and the priest returned to his seat. This modest gesture of love and helpfulness impressed me. I congratulated him and said, "You are going to be an effective missionary."

Some missionaries are gifted with the power of expression, while others have a superior knowledge of the gospel. Some, however, are late bloomers who day by day become more proficient and

successful. Avoid the temptation of ladder climbing in the mission leadership ranks. It matters little whether you are a district or zone leader or assistant to the president. The important thing is that each one does his very best in the work to which he has been called. Why, I had some missionaries who were 'so adept at training new missionaries that I couldn't spare them for other leadership assignments.

Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies

Entering the mission field can sometimes be an overpowering and frightening experience. President Harold B. Lee was talking to me one day concerning those who feel inadequate and are worried when they receive an assignment in the Church. He counseled, "Remember, whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies."

When I served as president of the Canadian Mission, headquartered in Toronto, one missionary came to our mission without some of the talents of others, yet he devotedly plunged into his missionary labors. The work was difficult for him; however, he valiantly struggled to be his best self.

At a zone conference with a General Authority attending, the missionaries had not done too well in a scripture quiz conducted by the visitor. The visitor, with a little sarcasm, commented, "Why, I don't believe this group knows even the names of the basic missionary pamphlets and their authors."

Well, that was the proverbial "straw" that broke the camel's back. I spoke up, "I think they *do* know them."

"Well, we will see," he said, and then he had the missionaries stand. In making a selection of a missionary to prove the point, none of the bright-appearing, experienced, polished missionaries was selected, but rather my new missionary, who had a hard time gaining knowledge of such things, was singled out. My heart

literally sank. I looked at the pleading expression on the elder's face; I knew that he was paralyzed with fear. How I prayed—oh, how I prayed: "Heavenly Father, come to his rescue." And He did. After a long pause, the visitor said, "Who authored the pamphlet *The Plan of Salvation*?"

After what seemed like an eternity, the trembling missionary responded, "John Morgan."

"Who wrote *Which Church Is Right*?"

Again the pause, and then the reply, "Mark E. Petersen."

"How about *The Lord's Tenth*?"

"James E. Talmage wrote that one," came the response.

And so it went through the list of missionary pamphlets we used. Finally came the question, "Is there another pamphlet?"

"Yes. It's called *After Baptism, What?*"

"Who wrote it?"

Without hesitation the missionary answered, "The name of the author isn't shown in the pamphlet, but my mission president told me it was written by Elder Mark E. Petersen by assignment from President David O. McKay."

The General Authority then showed his greatness. Turning to me he said, "President Monson, I owe you and your missionaries an apology. They *do* know the basic pamphlets and their authors." He stood tall in my sight that day, and we became close personal friends.

But what about the missionary? He completed an honorable mission and returned to his home in the West. Later he was called to serve as the bishop of his ward. Every year I receive a Christmas card from him and his wife and family. He always signs his name and then adds this comment, "From your best missionary."

The Lord looketh on the heart

Each year when that Christmas card arrives, I think of that experience, and

the lesson from 1 Samuel in the Holy Bible penetrates my soul. You will recall that the prophet Samuel was directed by the Lord to go to Bethlehem, even to Jesse, with the revelation that a king would be found among the sons of Jesse. Samuel did as the Lord had commanded him. Each of Jesse's sons was introduced to Samuel—even seven of them. Though they were fair and qualified in appearance, Samuel was told by the Lord that none was to be chosen. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him. . . . And he sent, and brought him in. . . . And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he."⁴

The lesson for us to learn is found in the sixteenth chapter of 1 Samuel, verse seven: "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."⁵

Who honors God, God honors

As bearers of the priesthood, all of us united as one can qualify for the guiding influence of our Heavenly Father as we pursue our respective callings. We are engaged in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We, like those of olden times, have answered His call. We are on His errand. We shall succeed in the solemn charge given by Mormon to declare the Lord's word among His people. He wrote: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus

Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life."⁶

May we ever remember the truth, "Who honors God, God honors." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Ye Who Are Called to Labor," *Hymns*, no. 321.
2. See Luke 2:52.
3. "Choose the Right," *Hymns*, no. 239.
4. 1 Samuel 16:11–12.
5. 1 Samuel 16:7.
6. 3 Nephi 5:13.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

Brethren, we remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast. As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus.

Following my remarks the choir will conclude by singing "To Nephi, Seer of Olden Time," following which the benediction will be offered by Elder Ben B. Banks of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now, if I may have an interest in your faith and prayers, I hope to be able to say something that is helpful. Last Saturday evening, one week ago, a great Relief Society conference was held in

this Tabernacle. It was an inspiring experience to look into the faces of that vast congregation of women of strength and faith and capacity. Now it is likewise an inspiring experience to look into the

faces of you brethren and feel of your strength, your faith, your loyalty, your devotion.

This has been an hour of inspiration. We have heard much of wonderful counsel that will bless our lives if we will accept it. I desire to speak of two or three matters.

The first has already been dealt with by President Monson and Brother Hildam. I wish to add my endorsement, together with a few further observations.

Miraculous missionary work

I speak also of missionary service. I was recently in London, England, and there we held a meeting with the missionaries serving in that area. Representatives of the British Broadcasting Corporation filmed part of the service. They are preparing a documentary of our missionary work in the British Isles.

Prior to this I had been interviewed by a representative of the BBC Radio Worldwide Service. He had seen the missionaries and noted their youthful appearance. He asked me, "How do you expect people to listen to these callow youth?"

In case some of you do not know the meaning of *callow*, it means immature, inexperienced, lacking sophistication.

I replied to the reporter with a smile, "Callow youth? It is with these missionaries today as it was with Timothy in the days of Paul. It was Paul who wrote to his young companion, saying, 'Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity' (1 Timothy 4:12).

"The remarkable thing is that people do receive them and listen to them. They are wholesome. They are bright, they are alert, they are upstanding. They are clean looking, and people quickly develop confidence in them."

I might have added, "They are a miracle." They knock on doors, but not

many are at home these days in a city like London. And so missionaries approach them on the street and engage them in conversation.

It is not an easy thing for a sensitive young man or woman to do this. But they come to believe in these further words of Paul to Timothy:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:7-8).

They recognize that fear comes not from God but from the adversary of truth. And so they develop a capacity to engage people in conversation concerning their work and their message. They and their associates will bring into the Church during this year of 1995 almost 300,000 converts. That is the equivalent of a hundred new stakes of Zion and more than five hundred new wards in one year.

"Callow youth?" Yes, they are lacking in sophistication. What a great blessing this is. They carry no element of deception. They speak with no element of sophistry. They speak out of their hearts with personal conviction. Each is a servant of the living God, an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their power comes not of their learning in the things of the world. Their power comes of faith and prayer and humility. As we have been reminded, the work is not easy. It has never been easy. Long ago Jeremiah said that the Lord would gather His people one of a city and two of a family and bring them to Zion and feed them with pastors after His own heart (see Jeremiah 3:14-15). In terms of the individual missionary, the harvest is not great in most instances, but in the aggregate it becomes tremendous. The work demands courage, it demands effort, it demands dedication, it demands the humility to get on one's knees and ask the Lord for help and direction.

Prepare to serve a mission

I throw out a challenge to every young man within this vast congregation tonight. Prepare yourself now to be worthy to serve the Lord as a full-time missionary. He has said, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30). Prepare to consecrate two years of your lives to this sacred service. That will in effect constitute a tithe on the first twenty years of your lives. Think of all that you have that is good—life itself, health, strength, food to eat and clothing to wear, parents, brothers and sisters, and friends. All are gifts from the Lord.

Blessings of missionary service

Of course your time is precious, and you may feel you cannot afford two years. But I promise you that the time you spend in the mission field, if those years are spent in dedicated service, will yield a greater return on investment than any other two years of your lives. You will come to know what dedication and consecration mean. You will develop powers of persuasion which will bless your entire life. Your timidity, your fears, your shyness will gradually disappear as you go forth with boldness and conviction. You will learn to work with others, to develop a spirit of teamwork. The cankering evil of selfishness will be supplanted by a sense of service to others. You will draw nearer to the Lord than you likely will in any other set of circumstances. You will come to know that without His help you are indeed weak and simple—but that with His help you can accomplish miracles.

You will establish habits of industry. You will develop a talent for the establishment of goals of effort. You will learn to work with singleness of purpose. What a tremendous foundation all of this will become for you in your later educational efforts and your life's work. Two years will not be time lost. It will be skills gained.

You will bless the lives of those you teach and their posterity after them. You will bless your own life. You will bless the lives of your family, who will sustain you and pray for you.

And above and beyond all of this will come that sweet peace in your heart that you have served your Lord faithfully and well. Your service will become an expression of gratitude to your Heavenly Father.

You will come to know your Redeemer as your greatest friend in time or eternity. You will realize that through His atoning sacrifice He has opened the way for eternal life and an exaltation above and beyond your greatest dreams.

If you serve a mission faithfully and well, you will be a better husband, you will be a better father, you will be a better student, a better worker in your chosen vocation. Love is of the essence of this missionary work. Selflessness is of its very nature. Self-discipline is its requirement. Prayer opens its reservoir of power.

And so, my dear young brethren, resolve within your hearts today to include in the program of your lives service in the harvest field of the Lord as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Importance of temple work

And now, brethren, I pass to another subject. Missionary work is concerned with providing saving ordinances to our Father's living children throughout the world. Temple work is primarily concerned with service in behalf of the sons and daughters of God who have passed beyond the veil of death. God is no respecter of persons. If the living in all nations are deserving of the saving ordinances of the gospel, then those of all past generations must likewise be deserving.

Our people cannot partake of all of the blessings of the gospel unless they

can receive their own temple ordinances and then make these ordinances available to those of their kindred dead and others. If this is to happen, temples must be available to them. I feel very strongly about this.

Back in 1954, before I was a General Authority, President McKay called me into his office and told me of the planned construction of the Swiss Temple. He gave me an assignment to find a way by which the temple ordinances could be administered to those of various languages without multiplying the number of temple workers. Since that time I have had much to do with these sacred buildings and the ordinances administered therein.

Report on temple building

We now have forty-seven working temples. Eight of these are in Utah, sixteen in other areas of the United States, two in Canada, and twenty-one outside of North America. Twenty-eight of the forty-seven have been dedicated since I came into the First Presidency in 1981. In addition, four have been rededicated after very extensive remodeling. We now have under construction six more, located in American Fork and Vernal, Utah; St. Louis, Missouri; Hong Kong; Preston, England; and Bogotá, Colombia.

We have announced seven additional temples: for Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic; Madrid, Spain; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Recife, Brazil; Cochabamba, Bolivia; Nashville, Tennessee; and Hartford, Connecticut. And we are working on the possibility of another—in Venezuela.

After working for years to acquire a suitable site in the Hartford area, during which time the Church has grown appreciably in areas to the north and south, we have determined that we will not at this time build a temple in the immediate area of Hartford, but rather we will build

one in the area of Boston, Massachusetts, and another in White Plains, New York. In other words, there will be two to serve the needs of the people where originally it was planned one would do. We have beautiful sites in both of these new locations.

We apologize to our faithful Saints in the Hartford area. We know you will be disappointed in this announcement. You know that we and your local officers have spent countless hours searching for a suitable location that would handle the needs of the Saints of New York and New England. While we deeply regret disappointing the people in the Hartford area, we are satisfied that we have been led to the present decision and that temples will be located in such areas that those of you who reside in the Hartford area will not have too far to drive.

Additionally, we are working on six other sites. It is a tremendously ambitious program.

I have a burning desire that a temple be located within reasonable access to Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We can proceed only so fast. We try to see that each temple will be in an excellent location where there will be good neighbors over a long period of time. Real estate prices in such areas are usually high. A temple is a much more complex structure to build than an ordinary meetinghouse or stake center. It is built to a higher standard of architecture. It takes longer and costs more. The work is moving about as fast as we can go. It is my constant prayer that somehow it might be speeded up so that more of our people might have easier access to a sacred house of the Lord.

Brigham Young once said that if young people really understood the blessings of temple marriage, they would walk all the way to England if that were necessary (see *Journal of Discourses*, 11:118). We hope they will not have to go anywhere near that far.

Our need for temple attendance

These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology. I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein. I am satisfied that every man or woman who goes to the temple in a spirit of sincerity and faith leaves the house of the Lord a better man or woman. There is need for constant improvement in all of our lives. There is need occasionally to leave the noise and the tumult of the world and step within the walls of a sacred house of God, there to feel His spirit in an environment of holiness and peace.

If every man in this church who has been ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood were to qualify himself to hold a temple recommend and then were to go to the house of the Lord and renew his covenants in solemnity before God and witnesses, we would be a better people. There would be little or no infidelity among us. Divorce would almost entirely disappear. So much of heartache and heartbreak would be avoided. There would be a greater measure of peace and love and happiness in our homes. There would be fewer weeping wives and weeping children. There would be a greater measure of appreciation and of mutual respect among us. And I am confident the Lord would smile with greater favor upon us.

Growth in Church membership

Now, brethren, I have one more matter before I conclude, and if I run

overtime a little, I hope you will excuse me.

I desire to present to the priesthood of the Church my appraisal of the present condition of this great organization of which each of us is a part and in which each of us has an interest. I think you are entitled to occasionally hear such a report.

I am grateful to be able to say that the Church is in good condition. It is healthy. It is growing in numbers. As of the end of 1994 our membership stood at 9,025,000, a gain of 300,730 over the previous year. This means that we are adding a million new members each three and one-half years, and I am confident that momentum will increase. It is expanding geographically over the world. I believe that it is well managed. But we are not without problems. Too many of our people drift into inactivity. Too many fail to live the principles of the gospel. But with all of this, we have cause to rejoice as to what is occurring.

Management of sacred Church funds

The Church has no debt. I qualify that to the extent that we have some contracts for the purchase of properties where the sellers insist on payments over a period of time. There are resources to ensure that these contracts will be covered in a timely way.

In our few business enterprises, some debt is used as a tool of management. But the ratio of debt to assets would be envied by the executives of any large organization.

The Church has been living within its means, and it will continue to do so. I am profoundly grateful for the law of tithing. To me it is a constantly recurring miracle. It is made possible by the faith of the people. It is the Lord's plan for financing the work of His kingdom.

It is so simple and straightforward. It consists of thirty-five words set forth

in section 119 of the Doctrine and Covenants. What a contrast with the cumbersome, complex, and difficult tax codes with which we live as citizens.

There is no compulsion to pay tithing other than the commandment of the Lord, and that, of course, becomes the best of all reasons. This is the only large society of which I am aware that does not drop from its rolls those who fail to pay what might be considered their dues.

The payment of tithing carries with it the conviction of the truth of the principle.

Now, we know that these funds are sacred. We have a compelling trust to use them carefully and wisely. I have said before that I keep on the credenza in my office this genuine widow's mite (too small for you to see, but it's there nevertheless), given me long ago by Brother David B. Galbraith, who at the time was the president of the Jerusalem Branch of the Church. I keep it as a reminder of the sacrifice it represents, that we are dealing with the consecration of the widow as well as the offering of the wealthy. I thank all who live honestly with the Lord in the payment of their tithes and offerings. But I know that you do not need to be thanked. Your testimony of the divinity of this law, and of the blessings that flow from its observance, is as strong as is my testimony.

Not only are we determined to live within the means of the Church, but each year we put into the reserves of the Church a portion of our annual budget. We are only doing what we have suggested every family do. Should there come a time of economic distress, we would hope to have the means to weather the storm.

Great contributions of voluntary service

We recognize the importance of consecrated voluntary service in carrying forward the programs of the Church. We have a veritable army of dedicated people

who give freely of their time to assist in the work. Our Human Resources people indicate that there are 96,484 of these volunteers now serving. They represent the equivalent of 10,000 full-time employees, and their service has an annual value of \$360 million. They labor in a missionary or volunteer capacity in our Church Educational System, in our family history organization, in the temples, and in various other departments and offices of the Church. We are deeply grateful and heavily indebted to them for their magnificent contribution. I am confident that the Lord is pleased with their dedicated service.

Growth of seminary and institute

Our program of weekday religious education moves forward. Wherever the Church is organized, the seminary program is put in place. Likewise our institutes are providing a wonderful service for those of college and university age. During this 1995-1996 academic year, there are more than 583,000 students enrolled in seminaries and institutes. Many of you young men who are here this evening—I venture almost every one of you—is a beneficiary of this wonderful Church program. I'd like all of you to stand, just for a moment, who are seminary or institute enrollees. Look at that! That says it! Thank you very much.

We hope that all for whom these programs are available will take advantage of them. Knowledge of the gospel will be increased, faith will be strengthened, and you will enjoy wonderful associations and friendships with those of your own kind.

Distribution of the Book of Mormon

I think of the Prophet Joseph's struggle in getting out the first edition of the Book of Mormon. There were 5,000 copies in that first edition, and its printing was made possible only through the

generosity of Martin Harris. You may be interested to know that last year 3,742,629 copies of the Book of Mormon were distributed. All or substantial parts of the book are printed in eighty-five languages. We may not be flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon, as President Benson had urged us to do, but let me say that it is no small thing to distribute three and three-quarter million copies in a single year.

Growth in stakes, wards, and buildings

It was my privilege to preside over the 150th stake of the Church, which was created in 1945, 115 years after the Church was organized. Now, an even fifty years later, there are 2,101 stakes of Zion. Seven hundred and seventy-two new wards and branches were organized during 1994, bringing the total at the close of the year to 21,774 wards and branches. It should be apparent to all why we must construct so many new buildings in which to house our people for worship and instruction. We have 375 new buildings in the course of construction at the present time. They are becoming increasingly costly to build. We hope that you will take good care of them. To you young men I make a special plea that you do all possible in this regard. We want these facilities *used* for the purposes for which they are constructed, but we do not want them *abused*. Utility costs are high. Turn off the lights when the buildings are not in use. Leave no litter about them. Keep the grounds clean and attractive. Wherever one of our buildings is found, it ought to say to those who pass, "The people who worship here are people who believe in cleanliness, order, beauty, and respectability."

Our responsibility to advance the work

I have already spoken to you about the increase in the number of temples. It is so with every aspect of the program. I see a bright future ahead. I do not discount the fact that we will be faced with problems. This work has always been faced with problems. The work of the adversary continues against it. But we will move forward as those who have gone before us have moved forward. Every man and boy within the sound of my voice tonight has the responsibility to assist in this great work of reaching out and growing stronger.

Brethren, thank you for your faith. Thank you for your devotion. We are aware of the great trust which you place in us. We are aware of the sacred trust placed in us by the Lord. And He has likewise placed a sacred trust in each of you who holds His divine priesthood. As I have said before, we are all in this together. Each of us has his part in the building of this kingdom. How wonderful, how very satisfying it is to know that each of us can do something to strengthen this, the work of the Almighty.

It is true. It is our Father's work. It is the church of our Redeemer. The priesthood which we hold is a very real and a very precious thing. I leave you my testimony, my love and my blessing, and my gratitude, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "To Nephi, Seer of Olden Time."

Elder Ben B. Banks offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 1, 1995. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Donald Ripplinger conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!" President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 165th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Henry B. Eyring, Graham W. Doxey, and Sam K. Shima-bukuro are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders F. Enzo Busche and Lowell D. Wood are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of these various facilities, who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Donald Ripplinger, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened these services by singing "Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!" We express appreciation to Brother Ripplinger, who for twenty years has served as associate director and who will retire in January 1996.

The choir will now sing "Lean on My Ample Arm," following which Elder Hugh W. Pinnock of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Lean on My Ample Arm."

Elder Hugh W. Pinnock offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

The heavenly virtue of patience

Recently I met an old friend I had not seen for some time. He greeted me with the salutation, "How is the world treating you?" I don't recall the specifics of my reply, but his provocative question caused me to reflect on my many blessings and my gratitude for life itself and the privilege and opportunity to serve.

At times the response to this same question brings an unanticipated answer. Some years ago I attended a stake conference in Texas. I was met at the airport by the stake president, and while we were driving to the stake center I said, "President, how is everything going for you?"

He responded, "I wish you had asked me that question a week earlier, for this week has been rather eventful. On Friday

I was terminated from my employment, this morning my wife came down with bronchitis, and this afternoon the family dog was struck and killed by a passing car. Other than these things, I guess everything is all right."

Life is full of difficulties, some minor and others of a more serious nature. There seems to be an unending supply of challenges for one and all. Our problem is that we often expect instantaneous solutions to such challenges, forgetting that frequently the heavenly virtue of patience is required.

The counsel heard in our youth is still applicable today and should be heeded. "Hold your horses," "Keep your shirt on," "Slow down," "Don't be in such a hurry," "Follow the rules," "Be careful" are more than trite expressions. They describe sincere counsel and speak the wisdom of experience.

The mindless and reckless speeding of a youth-filled car down a winding and hazardous canyon road can bring a sudden loss of control, the careening of the car with its precious cargo over the precipice, and the downward plunge that oftentimes brings permanent incapacity, perhaps premature death, and grieving hearts of loved ones. The glee-filled moment can turn in an instant to a lifetime of regret.

O precious youth, please give life a chance. Apply the virtue of patience.

Patience in adversity

In sickness, with its attendant pain, patience is required. If the only perfect man who ever lived—even Jesus of Nazareth—was called upon to endure great suffering, how can we, who are less than perfect, expect to be free of all such challenges?

Who can count the vast throngs of the lonely, the aged, the helpless—those who feel abandoned by the caravan of life as it moves relentlessly onward and then disappears beyond the sight of

those who ponder, who wonder, and who sometimes question as they are left alone with their thoughts. Patience can be a helpful companion during such stressful times.

Occasionally I visit nursing homes, where long-suffering is found. While attending Sunday services at one facility, I noticed a young girl who was to play her violin for the comfort of those assembled. She told me she was nervous and hoped she could do her best. As she played, one called out, "Oh, you are so pretty, and you play so beautifully." The strains of the moving bow across the taut strings and the elegant movement of the young girl's fingers seemed inspired by the impromptu comment. She played magnificently.

Afterward I congratulated her and her gifted accompanist. They responded, "We came to cheer the frail, the sick, and the elderly. Our fears vanished as we played. We forgot our own cares and concerns. We may have cheered them, but they truly did inspire us."

Wendy Bennion's patience

Sometimes the tables are reversed. A dear and cherished young friend, Wendy Bennion of Salt Lake City, was such an example. Just the day before yesterday, she quietly departed mortality and returned "to that God who gave [her] life" (Alma 40:11). She had struggled for over five long years in her battle with cancer. Ever cheerful, always reaching out to help others, never losing faith, she had a contagious smile that attracted others to her as a magnet attracts metal shavings. While Wendy was ill and in pain, a friend of hers, feeling downcast with her own situation, visited her. Nancy, Wendy's mother, knowing Wendy was in extreme pain, felt that perhaps the friend had stayed too long. She asked Wendy, after the friend had left, why she had allowed her to stay so long when she herself was in so much pain. Wendy's re-

sponse: "What I was doing for my friend was a lot more important than the pain I was having. If I can help her, then the pain is worth it."

The Savior's patience

Wendy's attitude was reminiscent of Him who bore the sorrows of the world, who patiently suffered excruciating pain and disappointment, but who, with silent step of His sandaled feet, passed by a man who was blind from birth, restoring his sight. He approached the grieving widow of Nain and raised her son from the dead. He trudged up Calvary's steep slope, carrying His own cruel cross, undistracted by the constant jeers and taunting that accompanied His every step. For He had an appointment with divine destiny. In a very real way He visits us, each one, with His teachings. He brings cheer and inspires goodness. He gave His precious life that the grave would be deprived of its victory, that death would lose its sting, that life eternal would be our gift.

Taken from the cross, buried in a borrowed tomb, this man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, arose on the morning of the third day. His resurrection was discovered by Mary and the other Mary when they approached the tomb. The great stone blocking the entrance had been rolled away. Came the query of two angels who stood by in shining garments: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."¹

Paul declared to the Hebrews:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."²

Job's patience

Perhaps there has never occurred such a demonstration of patience as that exemplified by Job, who was described

in the Holy Bible as being perfect and upright and one who feared God and eschewed evil.³ He was blessed with great wealth and riches in abundance. Satan obtained leave from the Lord to try to tempt Job. How great was Job's misery, how terrible his loss, how tortured his life. Urged by his wife to curse God and die, his reply bespoke his faith: "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."⁴ What faith, what courage, what trust. Job lost possessions—all of them. Job lost his health—all of it. Job honored the trust given him. Job personified patience.

Joseph Smith's patience

Another who portrayed the virtue of patience was the Prophet Joseph Smith. After his supernal experience in the grove called Sacred, where the Father and the Son appeared to him, he was called upon to wait. At length, after Joseph suffered through over three years of derision for his beliefs, the angel Moroni appeared to him. And then more waiting and patience were required. Let us remember the counsel found in Isaiah: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."⁵

Stop, look, and listen

Today in our hurried and hectic lives, we could well go back to an earlier time for the lesson taught us regarding crossing dangerous streets. "Stop, look, and listen" were the watchwords. Could we not apply them now? Stop from a reckless road to ruin. Look upward for heavenly help. Listen for His invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁶

He will teach us the truth of the beautiful verse:

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.⁷

We will learn that each of us is precious to our Elder Brother, even the Lord Jesus Christ. He truly loves us.

His life is the flawless example of one afflicted with sorrows and disappointments, who nonetheless provided the example of forgetting self and serving others. The remembered verse of childhood echoes afresh:

Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so!⁸

And so does the Book of Mormon, and so does the Doctrine and Covenants, and so does the Pearl of Great Price. Let the scriptures be your guide, and you will never find yourself traveling the road to nowhere.

Angels in disguise

Today some are out of work, out of money, out of self-confidence. Hunger haunts their lives, and discouragement dogs their paths. But help is here—even food for the hungry, clothing for the naked, and shelter for the homeless.

Thousands of tons move outward from our Church storehouses weekly—even food, clothing, medical equipment and supplies to the far corners of the earth and to empty cupboards and needy people closer to home.

I witness the motivation that prompts busy and talented dentists and doctors on a regular basis to leave their practices and donate their skills to those who need such help. They travel to faraway places to repair cleft palates, correct malformed bones, and restore crippled bodies—all

for the love of God's children. The afflicted who have patiently waited for corrective help are blessed by these "angels in disguise."

Promises made in eastern Germany

In the words of a well-known song, I wish you could "come fly with me" to eastern Germany, where I visited last month. As we traveled along the autobahns, I reflected on a time twenty-seven years before when I saw on the same autobahns just trucks carrying armed soldiers and policemen. Barking dogs everywhere strained on their leashes, and informers walked the streets. Back then, the flame of freedom had flickered and burned low. A wall of shame sprang up, and a curtain of iron came down. Hope was all but snuffed out. Life, precious life, continued on in faith, nothing wavering. Patient waiting was required. An abiding trust in God marked the life of each Latter-day Saint.

When I made my initial visit beyond the wall, it was a time of fear on the part of our members as they struggled in the performance of their duties. I found the dullness of despair on the faces of many passersby but a bright and beautiful expression of love emanating from our members. In Görlitz the building in which we met was shell-pocked from the war, but the interior reflected the tender care of our leaders in bringing brightness and cleanliness to an otherwise shabby and grimy structure. The Church had survived both the war and the Cold War which followed. The singing of the Saints brightened every soul. They sang the old Sunday School favorite:

If the way be full of trial; Weary not!
If it's one of sore denial, Weary not!
If it now be one of weeping,
There will come a joyous greeting,
When the harvest we are reaping—
Weary not!
Do not weary by the way,

Whatever be thy lot;
There awaits a brighter day
To all, to all who weary not!⁹

I was touched by their sincerity. I was humbled by their poverty. They had so little. My heart filled with sorrow because they had no patriarch. They had no wards or stakes—just branches. They could not receive temple blessings—neither endowment nor sealing. No official visitor had come from Church headquarters in a long time. The members were forbidden to leave the country. Yet they trusted in the Lord with all their hearts, and they leaned not to their own understanding. In all their ways they acknowledged Him, and He directed their paths.¹⁰ I stood at the pulpit, and with tear-filled eyes and a voice choked with emotion I made a promise to the people: “If you will remain true and faithful to the commandments of God, every blessing any member of the Church enjoys in any other country will be yours.”

That night as I realized what I had promised, I dropped to my knees and prayed, “Heavenly Father, I’m on Thy errand; this is Thy church. I have spoken words that came not from me, but from Thee and Thy Son. Wilt Thou, therefore, fulfill the promise in the lives of this noble people?” There coursed through my mind the words from the psalm: “Be still, and know that I am God.”¹¹ The heavenly virtue of patience was required.

Patience brings fulfillment of promises

Little by little the promise was fulfilled. First, patriarchs were ordained, then lesson manuals produced. Wards were formed and stakes created. Chapels and stake centers were begun, completed, and dedicated. Then, miracle of miracles, a holy temple of God was permitted, designed, constructed, and dedicated. Finally, after an absence of fifty years, approval was granted for full-time missionaries to enter the nation and for

local youth to serve elsewhere in the world. Then, like the wall of Jericho, the Berlin Wall crumbled, and freedom, with its attendant responsibilities, returned.

All of the parts of the precious promise of twenty-seven years earlier were fulfilled, save one. Tiny Görlitz, where the promise had been given, still had no chapel of its own. Now even that dream became a reality. The building was approved and completed. Dedication day dawned. Just a month ago Sister Monson and I, along with Elder and Sister Dieter Uchtdorf, held a meeting of dedication in Görlitz. The same songs were sung as were rendered twenty-seven years earlier. The members knew the significance of the occasion, marking the total fulfillment of the promise. They wept as they sang. The song of the righteous was indeed a prayer unto the Lord and had been answered with a blessing upon their heads.¹²

At the conclusion of the meeting we were reluctant to leave. As we did so, seen were the waving hands of all, heard were the words, “*Auf Wiedersehen, auf Wiedersehen*”; God be with you till we meet again.”

Patience, that heavenly virtue, had brought to humble Saints its heaven-sent reward. The words of Rudyard Kipling’s “Recessional” seemed so fitting:

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.¹³

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 24:5–6.
2. Hebrews 12:1.
3. See Job 1:1.
4. Job 19:25–26.
5. Isaiah 55:8–9.
6. Matthew 11:28.

7. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "A Psalm of Life," lines 5–8.
8. "Jesus Loves Me!" Anna B. Warner, in *Alexander's Gospel Songs*, comp. Charles M. Alexander (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1908), p. 139.
9. "If the Way Be Full of Trial, Weary Not," *Deseret Sunday School Songs* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1909), no. 158.
10. See Proverbs 3:5–6.
11. Psalm 46:10.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
13. "God of Our Fathers, Known of Old," *Hymns*, no. 80.

The choir sang "What Was Witnessed in the Heavens?"

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "What Was Witnessed in the Heavens?"

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President James E. Faust

Priesthood blessings

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I wish to affirm my love and appreciation to you for your faithfulness and devotion. I earnestly entreat your faith and prayers as I address a most important and holy subject: the divine, magnifying, and strengthening power that can come to us through priesthood blessings.

A priesthood blessing is sacred. It can be a holy and inspired statement of our wants and needs. If we are in tune spiritually, we can receive a confirming witness of the truth of the promised blessings. Priesthood blessings can help us in the small and great decisions of our lives. If, through our priesthood blessings, we could perceive only a small part of the person God intends us to be, we would lose our fear and never doubt again.

Blessings strengthen and magnify us

As a small boy I remember being intrigued by my grandmother's magnifying glass, which she used in her old age to read and do needlework. When the glass was in focus, everything I looked at was greatly magnified. But I was most in-

trigued by what happened when the lens concentrated the sunlight on an object. When it passed through the magnifying glass, the sunlight's power was absolutely amazing.

This great magnifying effect can be compared to a profound blessing that came to Jacob, who wrestled most of the night for a blessing:

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled [with a messenger¹ from God] until the breaking of the day. . . .

"And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

"And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."²

Jacob received his blessing in this marvelous experience, and as heirs of Abraham through the blood of Israel we also receive our blessings of divine favor. As the Lord said in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, . . .

"Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs re-

main through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began."³

Unlike Jacob, we do not need to wrestle physically much of the night for blessings to strengthen and magnify us. In the Church, blessings are available to all who are worthy through those authorized and even appointed to give priesthood blessings. Stake presidents, bishops, quorum presidents, and home teachers are authorized to give blessings. Worthy fathers and grandfathers, as well as other Melchizedek Priesthood holders, may give blessings to members in times of sickness and when important events occur. Such individual blessings are part of the continuous revelation that we claim as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Priesthood influence in the family

Elder John A. Widtsoe stated, "Every father, having children born to him under the covenant, is to them as a patriarch, and he has the right to bless his posterity in the authority of the Priesthood which he holds."⁴

We know that the gospel always has and always will operate through families. Since early biblical times, order has been brought into the house of Israel through family units. The family unit had inherently and internally the natural love and concern and the blood ties to bring a governing peace and stability to the peoples of God. The same is true today for essentially the same reasons. No other unit of society is an effective substitute for the ties of love and affection inherent in families. The natural leaders of the family unit are the parents, standing side by side as equals in their loving guidance of their children. Each parent brings a separate enriching influence. The power of the priesthood should be the dominant influence in family affairs. Priesthood blessings do not just involve men. They

bless equally and fully the women and children of the family. Whatever diminishes family order is destructive to the family unit and to society.

Ordained patriarchs

We are most fortunate that some men are specifically ordained and authorized by their priesthood office and calling to give blessings and declare our lineage in the house of Israel. The inspired declaration of lineage is an integral part of the blessing. I pay honor and tribute to the noble, faithful men who are our ordained patriarchs. They have not sought this heavy and lonely responsibility. They are often among the most humble and devoted of our brethren. These chosen men live worthy of the inspiration of heaven. Patriarchs are privileged to bestow blessings, for they are entitled to speak authoritatively under the inspiration of the Lord.

The office of patriarch is an office of the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is one of blessing, not of administration. It is a sacred and spiritual revelatory calling which usually continues for much of the patriarch's life. Our patriarchs devote themselves fully to their callings and do all they can to live in faith and worthiness so that each blessing is inspired. The patriarch's calling becomes a beautiful, sacred, spiritual, and fulfilling experience. As moved upon by the Holy Spirit, the patriarch declares by inspiration the lineage in the house of Israel of the recipient, together with such blessings, spiritual gifts, promises, advice, admonition, and warnings the patriarch feels inspired to give. The patriarchal blessing is, in essence, a prophetic blessing and utterance.

Patriarchal blessings—a star to follow

A patriarchal blessing from an ordained patriarch can give us a star to follow, which is a personal revelation from

God to each individual. If we follow this star, we are less likely to stumble and be misled. Our patriarchal blessing will be an anchor to our souls, and if we are worthy, neither death nor the devil can deprive us of the blessings pronounced. They are blessings we can enjoy now and forever.

As with many other blessings, patriarchal blessings should ordinarily be requested by the one desiring the blessing. Responsibility for receiving a patriarchal blessing rests primarily on the individual when he or she has sufficient understanding of the significance of a patriarchal blessing. I encourage all members of the Church having this maturity to become worthy and obtain their blessings. By their very nature, all blessings are conditional on worthiness, regardless of whether the blessing specifically spells out the qualifications. The patriarchal blessing is primarily a guide to the future, not an index to the past. Therefore, it is important that the recipient be young enough that many of the significant events of life are in the future. I recently heard of a person over ninety years of age who received his patriarchal blessing. It would be interesting to read that blessing.

Patriarchal blessings come from God

The patriarch has no blessing of his own to give. We heard Elder LeGrand Richards tell of a patriarch who once said to a woman, "I have a wonderful blessing for you." But when the patriarch laid his hands on the head of the recipient, his mind went completely blank. He apologized. "I was mistaken. I do not have a blessing for you. It is the Lord who has the blessing for you." The woman came back the next day, and after the patriarch had prayerfully implored the Lord, a blessing came that mentioned many concerns known only to this good sister. All blessings come from God. Our Heavenly Father knows

His children. He knows their strengths and weaknesses. He knows their capabilities and potential. Our patriarchal blessings indicate what He expects of us and what our potential can be.

Study and ponder patriarchal blessings

Patriarchal blessings should be read humbly, prayerfully, and frequently. A patriarchal blessing is very sacred and personal, but it may be shared with close family members. It is a sacred guideline of counsel, promises, and information from the Lord; however, a person should not expect the blessing to detail all that will happen to him or her or to answer all questions. The fact that one's patriarchal blessing may not mention an important event in life, such as a mission or marriage, does not mean that it will not happen. In order to receive the fulfillment of our patriarchal blessings, we should treasure in our hearts the precious words they contain, ponder them, and so live that we will obtain the blessings in mortality and a crown of righteousness in the hereafter.

My own blessing is short, and it is limited to perhaps three-quarters of a page on one side, yet it has been completely adequate and perfect for me. I received my patriarchal blessing as I entered my early teenage years. The patriarch promised that my blessing would "be a comfort and a guide" to me throughout my life. As a boy I read it over and over again. I pondered each word. I prayed earnestly to understand fully the spiritual meaning. Having that blessing early in my life guided me through all of the significant events and challenges of my life. I did not fully understand the meaning of my blessing until I gained more maturity and experience. This blessing outlined some of the responsibilities I would have in the kingdom of God on earth.

President Heber J. Grant told of the patriarchal blessing he received: "That patriarch put his hands upon my head

and bestowed upon me a little blessing that would perhaps be about one-third of a typewritten page. That blessing foretold my life to the present moment."⁵

Fulfillment of promises

Elder John A. Widtsoe said: "It should always be kept in mind that the realization of the promises made may come in this or the future life. Men have stumbled at times because promised blessings have not occurred in this life. They have failed to remember that, in the gospel, life with all its activities continues forever and that the labors of earth may be continued in heaven. Besides, the Giver of the blessings, the Lord, reserves the right to have them become active in our lives, as suits His divine purpose. We and our blessings are in the hands of the Lord. But, there is the general testimony that when the gospel law has been obeyed, the promised blessings have been realized."⁶

This was well illustrated in my father's patriarchal blessing. He was told in his blessing that he would be blessed with "many beautiful daughters." He and my mother became the parents of five sons. No daughters were born to them, but they treated the wives of their sons as daughters. Some years ago when we had a family gathering, I saw my father's daughters-in-law, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters moving about, tending to the food and ministering to the young children and the elderly, and the realization came to me that Father's blessing literally had been fulfilled. He has indeed many beautiful daughters. The patriarch who gave my father his blessing had spiritual vision to see beyond this life. The dividing line between time and eternity disappeared.

Declaration of lineage

The Church is expanding at a tremendous rate. We now have stakes of Zion in a great many countries of the

world, and most stakes have at least one patriarch. This growth permits many people across the earth the privilege of receiving patriarchal blessings. As President Joseph Fielding Smith stated, "The great *majority* of those who become members of the Church are *literal descendants* of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph."⁷ However, Manasseh, the other son of Joseph, as well as the other sons of Jacob, has many descendants in the Church. There may be some come into the Church in our day who are not of Jacob's blood lineage. No one need assume that he or she will be denied any blessing by reason of not being of the blood lineage of Israel. The Lord told Abraham, "And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father."⁸

Nephi tells us that "as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord."⁹ Therefore it makes no difference if the blessings of the house of Israel come by lineage or by adoption.

Some might be disturbed because members of the same family have blessings declaring them to be of a different lineage. A few families are of a mixed lineage. We believe that the house of Israel today constitutes a large measure of the human family. Because the tribes have intermixed one with another, one child may be declared to be from the tribe of Ephraim and another of the same family from Manasseh or one of the other tribes. The blessing of one tribe, therefore, may be dominant in one child, and the blessing of another tribe dominant in yet another child. So children from the same parents could receive the blessings of different tribes.

The power of priesthood blessings

One of the principal reasons for my speaking about this subject is that patriar-

chal blessings and other blessings testify of the divinity of Christ and the truthfulness of the Church. These sacred blessings also strengthen the lives of those worthy persons who receive such blessings. Thus father's blessings, patriarchal blessings, and other blessings are a remarkable privilege which can come to faithful members with sufficient maturity to understand the nature and importance of the blessings. These individualized priesthood blessings are a powerful witness of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in seeking to bring exaltation to each of us. They are our personal revelation from God.

Our blessings can encourage us when we are discouraged, strengthen us when we are fearful, comfort us when we sorrow, give us courage when we are filled with anxiety, and lift us up when we are weak in spirit. Our testimonies can be strengthened every time we read our patriarchal blessings.

Like the images in my grandmother's magnifying glass, we can become stronger, our talents and ability can be magnified and multiplied, our understanding can be greatly enlarged, and our spirituality can flower. Moroni taught that "every good gift cometh of Christ."¹⁰ But the Lord said, "What doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift?"¹¹

Live so that blessings can be fulfilled

I humbly and prayerfully urge any who for any reason may not have lived so as to realize a fulfillment of the priesthood blessings pronounced upon them to so order their lives as to reclaim those blessings.

I charge the faithful members of this church to seek to understand the full significance of your blessings. Gifts may have been bestowed upon you of which you are unaware. These gifts can be of both a profoundly spiritual and temporal nature. I pray that we may all receive our gifts.

In so doing our understanding, our faith, and our testimony in the Lord Jesus Christ will be increased. I humbly so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 1:17.
2. Genesis 32:24, 26-28.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 86:9-10.
4. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, arr. G. Homer Durham, 3 vols. in 1 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), p. 321.
5. Quoted in James R. Clark, comp., *Messengers of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 5:152.
6. *Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 323.
7. *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:246.
8. Abraham 2:10.
9. 2 Nephi 30:2.
10. Moroni 10:18.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 88:33.

The choir sang "When He Comes Again," "Families Can Be Together Forever," and "I Love to See the Temple."

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us. The choir then sang three of our children's songs—"When He Comes Again," "Families Can Be Together Forever," and "I Love to See the Temple."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning." We shall then hear from Elder Robert E. Wells of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Robert E. Wells

On this Sabbath morning I have chosen as my text our unique, three-part, Christ-focused message to the world.

The divine Sonship of Jesus Christ

First is the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, which is central to understanding the entire plan of salvation. He is the First Begotten Son of the Father in the premortal existence and the Only Begotten Son of the Father on earth. God the Eternal Father is the literal parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of His other spirit children (see 1 Nephi 11:18, 21; James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924], p. 466).

When we refer to the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, we are also referring to His role as a God in the premortal sphere. This Firstborn Son of Elohim the Father was chosen and ordained in the primeval councils in heaven to be the Savior of the yet-to-be-born race of mortals (see James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916], p. 4). Jesus was also chosen and sent by the Father to organize and create this earth, our solar system, our galaxy, even worlds without number.

Jesus Christ was and is Jehovah of the Old Testament, the God of Adam and of Noah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jehovah appeared to and talked to the ancient prophets. When He spoke He did so on behalf of the Father, and He said what His Father would have said. Jehovah of the Old Testament became Jesus Christ of the New Testament when He was born into mortality.

The “divine Sonship” also refers to the designation “Only Begotten Son in the flesh.” Ancient and modern scriptures use the title “Only Begotten Son” to emphasize the divine nature of Jesus

Christ. This title signifies that Jesus’ physical body was the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal Eternal Father, which verity is crucial to the Atonement, a supreme act that could not have been accomplished by an ordinary man. Christ had power to lay down His life and power to take it up again because He had inherited immortality from His Heavenly Father. From Mary, His mother, Christ inherited mortality, or the power to die.

This infinite atonement of Christ and Christ’s divine Sonship go together hand in hand to form the single most important doctrine of all Christianity. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “We view the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ as the center and core and heart of revealed religion” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], p. 81). The book of Alma declared, “This is the whole meaning of the law” (34:14).

The divine mission of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon

The second part of our gospel message and central to the Restoration is the divine mission of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon to bring people unto Christ.

We declare that the heavens opened to Joseph Smith and a pillar of light descended brighter than the noonday sun. In that pillar stood two personages—God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ—whose brightness and glory defied all description. The Father spoke, saying, Joseph, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

One of the hallmarks of the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith was his divine education in the writings and prophecies of the ancient apostles and prophets. The writings and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith “read like a seamless gospel

fabric, woven from the sacred truths of ancient and modern scripture" (Richard C. Galbraith, introduction to *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993], p. 5).

Joseph Smith was much more than an uneducated plowboy of the American frontier. Rather, in the process of his divine education he received the greatest heavenly tutorials ever given to man. He received direct answer to prayer from God, not from books. After the First Vision he received other visions and numerous visits from angelic ministers, and "he was taught for years by . . . holy angels sent from God out of heaven to teach and instruct him and prepare him to lay the foundation of this Church" (Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:265). The inspiration of the Holy Ghost was likewise fundamental in Joseph's expounding of biblical scripture. He received revelations from Jesus Christ, and the Urim and Thummim provided another means by which Joseph Smith received scriptural instructions.

The eternal truths he taught answered a brood of questions that had been in the minds of philosophers for centuries. When one studies the doctrinal teachings revealed to Joseph Smith, that person, if he or she is sincere in the search for truth, will be led to Jesus Christ and His role as our Savior, Redeemer, and Advocate with the Father. In studying these teachings of Joseph about the Savior, uncertainty and doubt flee, and hearts are changed. The honest person finds greater meaning in life by the Prophet's answers to the philosophical questions, Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? Because of revelations given to Joseph, the memory veil between this life and our premortal existence becomes almost transparent at times. And the veil between this life and the spirit world becomes thinner, causing family ties to

become stronger, sweeter, and more meaningful as the hearts of the children turn to their fathers and the hearts of the fathers turn to their children.

The Prophet Joseph taught that the same sociality that we enjoy in this life will continue into the next, giving great comfort to those seeing friends and loved ones depart from this earth (see D&C 130:2). The doctrines of salvation taught by this prophet distill upon our souls as the very dew from heaven (see D&C 121:45). Joseph taught eternal truths that lead those who hunger and thirst for righteousness to the living Christ and to the bosom of God the Father.

Like Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon is a divine instrument to draw the reader closer to Christ. It is a collection of writings by prophets who lived in the Western Hemisphere, who believed in Christ, and who prophesied of Christ, some of whom associated with Christ during the brief time He visited the Americas after His resurrection. Those ancient American prophets wrote the Book of Mormon for our day. It has withstood every conceivable test by both skeptical and sincere minds. It is not on trial. We are the ones on trial, being tested by our acceptance or rejection of its truths, teachings, commandments, and declarations (see 2 Nephi 33:11-14).

President Ezra Taft Benson reminded us forcefully that if we forget to teach and preach the Book of Mormon, and if we forget to study and meditate on the contents of this book of Holy Writ, we will be under condemnation. We have a mission and a commandment to declare its contents to the world and to bear testimony of it (see D&C 84:54-58).

The divine nature of the Church

Our third declaration is the divine nature of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to prepare the way for the Second Coming of Christ. This

church has received from on high the restoration of the divine authority to have and to exercise the priesthood of Jesus Christ and to use this priesthood in performing the requisite saving ordinances so that they are recorded in heaven as well as on earth.

The restoration referred to was essential to the Second Coming because a study of ecclesiastical history shows that the original laws had been transgressed, the original ordinances had been changed, and the everlasting covenants had been broken, just as Isaiah had prophesied many centuries before (see Isaiah 24:5). Furthermore, Paul had warned that the Second Coming would occur only after a falling away from the original teachings of Christ and the Apostles (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

To prepare the way for the Second Coming, the Restoration took place—through Joseph Smith—of every necessary doctrine and sacred ordinance given by God to the prophets of past dispensations, including the Christ-focused temple ordinances.

We have, in original form, everything that has ever been brought to earth that is part of the great Plan of Salvation—nothing altered, nothing modified. We believe in the same priesthood authority held by the ancients; the same

organization as the primitive Church, headed by apostles and prophets; the same spiritual gifts; the same ancient scriptures as well as new latter-day scriptures—the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

I pray that we each will see how great the importance is to gain an understanding, through diligent and prayerful study, of the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ—the Savior of the world; that Joseph Smith's divine mission was to bring about the restoration of the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and also the Book of Mormon, which is indeed another witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God; and that this church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—is “the Lord's kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the second coming of the Messiah” (introduction to the Book of Mormon). I so declare in all humility and testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Robert E. Wells of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“This do in remembrance of me”

The hours that lay immediately ahead would change the meaning of all human history. It would be the crowning moment of eternity, the most miraculous of all the miracles. It would be the supreme contribution to a plan designed from before the foundation of the world for the happiness of every man, woman,

and child who would ever live in it. The hour of atoning sacrifice had come. God's own Son, His Only Begotten Son in the flesh, was about to become the Savior of the world.

The setting was Jerusalem. The season was that of the Passover, a celebration rich in symbolism for what was about to come. Long ago the troubled and enslaved Israelites had been “passed over,”

spared, finally made free by the blood of a lamb sprinkled on the lintel and doorposts of their Egyptian homes (see Exodus 12:21–24). That, in turn, had been only a symbolic reiteration of what Adam and all succeeding prophets were taught from the beginning—that the pure and unblemished lambs offered from the firstlings of Israel's flocks were a similitude, a token, a prefiguration of the great and last sacrifice of Christ which was to come (see Moses 5:5–8).

Now, after all those years and all those prophecies and all those symbolic offerings, the type and shadow was to become reality. On this night when Jesus' mortal ministry was concluding, the declaration made by John the Baptist when that ministry had begun now meant more than ever—"Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

As a final and specially prepared Passover supper was ending, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His Apostles, saying, "Take, eat" (Matthew 26:26). "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). In a similar manner He took the cup of wine, traditionally diluted with water, said a blessing of thanks for it, and passed it to those gathered about Him, saying: "This cup is the new testament in my blood," "which is shed . . . for the remission of sins." "This do in remembrance of me." "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (Luke 22:20; Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:26).

The sacrament—our passover

Since that upper room experience on the eve of Gethsemane and Golgotha, children of the promise have been under covenant to remember Christ's sacrifice in this newer, higher, more holy and personal way.

With a crust of bread, always broken, blessed, and offered first, we remember

His bruised body and broken heart, His physical suffering on the cross where He cried, "I thirst," and finally, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (John 19:28; Matthew 27:46).

The Savior's physical suffering guarantees that through His mercy and grace (see 2 Nephi 2:8) every member of the human family shall be freed from the bonds of death and be resurrected triumphantly from the grave. Of course the time of that resurrection and the degree of exaltation it leads to are based upon our faithfulness.

With a small cup of water we remember the shedding of Christ's blood and the depth of His spiritual suffering, anguish which began in the Garden of Gethsemane. There He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38). He was in agony and "prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

The Savior's spiritual suffering and the shedding of His innocent blood, so lovingly and freely given, paid the debt for what the scriptures call the "original guilt" of Adam's transgression (Moses 6:54). Furthermore, Christ suffered for the sins and sorrows and pains of all the rest of the human family, providing remission for all of our sins as well, upon conditions of obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel He taught (see 2 Nephi 9:21–23). As the Apostle Paul wrote, we were "bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20). What an expensive price and what a merciful purchase!

That is why every ordinance of the gospel focuses in one way or another on the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and surely that is why this particular ordinance with all its symbolism and imagery comes to us more readily and more repeatedly than any other in our life. It comes in what has been called "*the most sacred, the most holy*, of all the meetings

of the Church" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 2:340).

Perhaps we do not always attach that kind of meaning to our weekly sacramental service. How "sacred" and how "holy" is it? Do we see it as *our* passover, remembrance of *our* safety and deliverance and redemption?

With so very much at stake, this ordinance commemorating our escape from the angel of darkness should be taken more seriously than it sometimes is. It should be a powerful, reverent, reflective moment. It should encourage spiritual feelings and impressions. As such it should not be rushed. It is not something to "get over" so that the real purpose of a sacrament meeting can be pursued. This *is* the real purpose of the meeting. And everything that is said or sung or prayed in those services should be consistent with the grandeur of this sacred ordinance.

Privilege of Aaronic Priesthood holders

The administration and passing of the sacrament is preceded by a hymn which all of us should sing. It doesn't matter what kind of musical voice we have. Sacramental hymns are more like prayers anyway—and everyone can give voice to a prayer!

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.
["There Is a Green Hill Far Away,"
Hymns, no. 194]

It is an important element of our worship to unite in such lyrical and moving expressions of gratitude.

In that sacred setting we ask you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood to prepare and bless and pass these emblems of the Savior's sacrifice worthily

and reverently. What a stunning privilege and sacred trust given at such a remarkably young age! I can think of no higher compliment heaven could pay you. We do love you. Live your best and look your best when you participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

May I suggest that wherever possible a white shirt be worn by the deacons, teachers, and priests who handle the sacrament. For sacred ordinances in the Church we often use ceremonial clothing, and a white shirt could be seen as a gentle reminder of the white clothing you wore in the baptismal font and an anticipation of the white shirt you will soon wear into the temple and on your missions.

That simple suggestion is not intended to be pharisaic or formalistic. We do not want deacons or priests in uniforms or unduly concerned about anything but the purity of their lives. But how our young people dress can teach a holy principle to us all, and it certainly can convey sanctity. As President David O. McKay taught, a white shirt contributes to the sacredness of the holy sacrament (see Conference Report, Oct. 1956, p. 89).

Sacramental prayers

In the simple and beautiful language of the sacramental prayers those young priests offer, the principal word we hear seems to be *remember*. In the first and slightly longer prayer offered over the bread, mention is made of a willingness to take upon us the name of the Son of God and to keep the commandments He has given us.

Neither of those phrases is repeated in the blessing on the water, though surely both are assumed and expected. What *is* stressed in both prayers is that all of this is done in remembrance of Christ. In so participating we witness that we will always remember Him, that

we may always have His Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77, 79).

Remember His premortal life and birth

If remembering is the principal task before us, what might come to our memory when those plain and precious emblems are offered to us?

We could remember the Savior's premortal life and all that we know Him to have done as the great Jehovah, creator of heaven and earth and all things that in them are. We could remember that even in the Grand Council of Heaven He loved us and was wonderfully strong, that we triumphed even there by the power of Christ and our faith in the blood of the Lamb (see Revelation 12:10–11).

We could remember the simple grandeur of His mortal birth to just a young woman, one probably in the age range of those in our Young Women organization, who spoke for every faithful woman in every dispensation of time when she said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

We could remember His magnificent but virtually unknown foster father, a humble carpenter by trade who taught us, among other things, that quiet, plain, unpretentious people have moved this majestic work forward from the very beginning and still do so today. If you are serving almost anonymously, please know that so, too, did one of the best men who has ever lived on this earth.

Remember His example and teachings

We could remember Christ's miracles and His teachings, His healings and His help. We could remember that He gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and motion to the lame and the maimed and the withered. Then, on those days when we feel our progress has halted or our joys and views have grown dim, we can press forward steadfastly in

Christ, with unshaken faith in Him and a perfect brightness of hope (see 2 Nephi 31:19–20).

We could remember that even with such a solemn mission given to Him, the Savior found delight in living; He enjoyed people and told His disciples to be of good cheer. He said we should be as thrilled with the gospel as one who had found a great treasure, a veritable pearl of great price, right on our own doorstep. We could remember that Jesus found special joy and happiness in children and said all of us should be more like them—guileless and pure, quick to laugh and to love and to forgive, slow to remember any offense.

We could remember that Christ called His disciples friends and that friends are those who stand by us in times of loneliness or potential despair. We could remember a friend we need to contact or, better yet, a friend we need to make. In doing so we could remember that God often provides His blessings through the compassionate and timely response of another. For someone nearby we may be the means of heaven's answer to a very urgent prayer.

We could—and should—remember the wonderful things that have come to us in our lives and that "all things which are good cometh of Christ" (Moroni 7:24). Those of us who are so blessed could remember the courage of those around us who face more difficulty than we but who remain cheerful, who do the best they can, and trust that the Bright and Morning Star will rise again for them—as surely He will do (see Revelation 22:16).

Remember His response to adversity

On some days we will have cause to remember the unkind treatment He received, the rejection He experienced, and the injustice—oh, the injustice—He endured. When we, too, then face some of that in life, we can remember that Christ was also troubled on every side, but not

distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed (see 2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

When those difficult times come to us, we can remember that Jesus had to descend below all things before He could ascend above them, and that He suffered pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind that He might be filled with mercy and know how to succor His people in their infirmities (see D&C 88:6; Alma 7:11-12).

Remember what His wounds signify

To those who stagger or stumble, He is there to steady and strengthen us. In the end He is there to save us, and for all this He gave His life. However dim our days may seem, they have been darker for the Savior of the world.

In fact, in a resurrected, otherwise perfected body, our Lord of this sacrament table has chosen to retain for the benefit of His disciples the wounds in His hands and His feet and His side—signs, if you will, that painful things happen even to the pure and perfect; signs, if you will, that pain in this world is *not* evidence that God doesn't love you. It is the *wounded* Christ who is the captain of our soul—He who yet bears the scars of sacrifice, the lesions of love and humility and forgiveness.

Those wounds are what He invites young and old, then and now, to step forward and see and feel (see 3 Nephi 11:15; 18:25). Then we remember with Isaiah that it was for each of us that our Master was “despised and rejected . . . ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). All this we could remember when we are invited by a kneeling young priest to remember Christ always.

Fortified by the sacramental feast

We no longer include a supper with this ordinance, but it is a feast nevertheless. We can be fortified by it for whatever life requires of us, and in so doing we will be more compassionate to others along the way.

One request Christ made of His disciples on that night of deep anguish and grief was that they stand by Him, stay with Him in His hour of sorrow and pain. “Could ye not watch with me one hour?” He asked longingly (Matthew 26:40). I think He asks that again of us every Sabbath day when the emblems of His life are broken and blessed and passed.

How great the wisdom and the love
That filled the courts on high
And sent the Savior from above
To suffer, bleed, and die!
[“How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195]

“Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!” (“I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193). I bear witness of Him who is the Wonder of it all, and I do so in His own name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “Awake and Arise.”

President Hinckley

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us, and the choir has sung “Awake and Arise.” It's all right to awake, but please don't arise until I get through speaking!

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing “Where Love Is,” and the benediction will be offered by Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A personal consecration

My brethren and sisters, thank you for your sustaining hands and hearts and for your expressions of confidence and love. My faith in this great work has been strengthened by what I have seen and heard as I have traveled among you during the past six months.

I have a desire to get out with the Latter-day Saints across the world, to look into your faces, to shake your hands wherever possible, to share with you in a more personal and intimate way my feelings concerning this sacred work, and to feel of your spirit and your love of the Lord and His mighty cause. I wish I had some way to thank you individually for the kindness you have shown us in so many ways. I know that your respect, confidence, and love are to be earned through the service that we give. I have only one desire, and that is that while the Lord gives me strength I may serve Him faithfully and well through service to His sons and daughters, you my brethren and sisters. To that end I consecrate my strength, my time, and whatever talent I may possess.

Expressions of love and faith

I love this church. I love the Prophet Joseph, to whom God our Eternal Father and the Risen Lord spoke with that same intimacy with which I speak with you today. I feel love for all of those who accepted his testimony in those early and difficult years. Their lives in large measure constitute the early history of this work. It is a wonderful thing to have strong and deep roots. From them has grown the great worldwide movement we know as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I thank the Lord that He planted in my heart while I was yet a boy a love for the Prophet Joseph Smith, a love for the Book of Mormon, a love for those great

men and women who endured so much in establishing a foundation on which to build this cause and kingdom. I love the priesthood which is among us, this authority given to men to speak in the name of God. I am grateful for its power and authority, which reach even beyond the veil of death. I love the Saints wherever they walk in faith and faithfulness. I am thankful for the strength of your testimonies and for the goodness of your lives. I love the missionaries who are out on the front line of the world bearing testimony of the restoration of the gospel. I pray for them that they may be protected and that they may be led to those who will receive their message.

I love the youth of this church, so very many of them who are eager in their ways, who are searching for truth, who pray and try to do the right thing. I feel great love and respect for the women of the Relief Society, for the young women in their organization, for the Primary children, who are beautiful wherever they are regardless of the color of their skin or the circumstances in which they live.

I feel a great sense of gratitude for our bishops and those who serve with them, for our presidents of stakes and their associates, for the newly called Area Authorities, and for my brethren of the General Authorities.

Expansion of the Church

I have a strong, uplifting sense of optimism concerning this work. I have lived long enough now to have seen the miracle of its growth. Mine has been the favored lot of assisting in its establishment across much of the world. Everywhere it is growing stronger. Everywhere it is touching an increasing number of lives for good.

Our statisticians tell me that if the present trend continues, then sometime in February of 1996, just a few months

from now, there will be more members of the Church outside the United States than in the United States.

The crossover of that line is a wonderfully significant thing. It represents the fruit of a tremendous outreach. The God of Heaven, whose servants we are, never intended that this should be a narrow, parochial work. John the Revelator "saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6). That angel has come. His name is Moroni. His is a voice speaking from the dust, bringing another witness of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have not as yet carried the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. But we have made great strides. We have gone wherever we are permitted to go. God is at the helm, and doors will be opened by His power according to His divine will. Of that I am confident. Of that I am certain.

I cannot understand those of small vision, who regard this work as limited and provincial. They have no expanding view of it. As certainly as there is an Almighty Father in Heaven, as surely as there is His Son, our Divine Redeemer, so certainly is this work destined to reach out to people everywhere.

Joshua and Caleb bring a good report

The story of Caleb and Joshua and the other spies of Israel has always intrigued me. Moses led the children of Israel into the wilderness. In the second year of their wandering, he chose a representative from each of the twelve tribes to search the land of Canaan and bring back a report concerning its resources and its people. Caleb represented the tribe of Judah, Joshua the tribe of Ephraim. The twelve of them went into the land of Canaan. They found it to be fruitful. They were gone forty days. They brought back

with them some of "the firstripe grapes" as evidence of the productivity of the land (Numbers 13:20).

They came before Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel, and they said concerning the land of Canaan, "Surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it" (v. 27).

But ten of the spies were victims of their own doubts and fears. They gave a negative report of the numbers and stature of the Canaanites. They concluded that "they are stronger than we" (v. 31). They compared themselves as grasshoppers to the giants they had seen in the land. They were the victims of their own timidity.

Then Joshua and Caleb stood before the people and said:

"The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

"If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

"Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (Numbers 14:7-9).

But the people were more willing to believe the ten doubters than to believe Caleb and Joshua.

Then it was that the Lord declared that the children of Israel should wander in the wilderness forty years until the generation of those who had walked with doubt and fear should pass away. The scripture records that "those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord.

"But Joshua . . . and Caleb . . . , which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still" (vv. 37-38). They were the only ones of that group who survived through those four decades of wandering and who had the privilege of entering the promised land concerning which they had reported in a positive manner.

Gospel is good news, not doom and gloom

We see some around us who are indifferent concerning the future of this work, who are apathetic, who speak of limitations, who express fears, who spend their time digging out and writing about what they regard to be weaknesses which really are of no consequence. With doubt concerning its past, they have no vision concerning its future.

Well was it said of old, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). There is no place in this work for those who believe only in the gospel of doom and gloom. The gospel is good news. It is a message of triumph. It is a cause to be embraced with enthusiasm.

The Lord never said that there would not be troubles. Our people have known afflictions of every sort as those who have opposed this work have come upon them. But faith has shown through all their sorrows. This work has consistently moved forward and has never taken a backward step since its inception. I think of the boy Joseph persecuted and ridiculed by those his senior. But the pain of the wounds of that persecution was tempered by the declaration of Moroni, who told him that God had a work for him to do and that his name "should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people" (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

He and his brother Hyrum were murdered June 27, 1844. Their enemies thought that this would end the cause for which they had given their lives. Little did they realize that the blood of the martyrs would give nurture to the young roots of the Church.

Pioneers' faith rose above doubts

I stood the other day on the old docks of Liverpool, England. There was practically no activity the Friday morning

when we were there. But once this was a veritable beehive. During the 1800s, tens of thousands of our people walked over the same stone paving on which we walked. They came from across the British Isles and from the lands of Europe, converts to the Church. They came with testimony on their lips and faith in their hearts. Was it difficult to leave their homes and step into the unknown of a new world? Of course it was. But they did it with optimism and enthusiasm. They boarded sailing vessels. They knew the crossing at best was hazardous. They soon found out that for the most part it was miserable. They lived in cramped quarters week after week. They endured storms, disease, sickness. Many died on the way and were buried at sea. It was an arduous and fearsome journey. They had doubts, yes. But their faith rose above those doubts. Their optimism rose above their fears. They had their dream of Zion, and they were on their way to fulfill it.

With a great overpowering spirit of optimism, based on a solid bedrock of faith, they built this Tabernacle in which we meet this day. Through forty years they constructed the temple just to the east of us. Through all their travail was a shining, bright, and wonderful vision concerning the growth of this work.

I can scarcely comprehend the magnitude of Brigham Young's faith in leading thousands of people into the wilderness. He had never seen this country, except as he had seen it in vision. It was an act of boldness almost beyond comprehension. For him their coming here was all part of the grand pattern of the growth and destiny of this work. To those who followed him it was the pursuit of a great dream.

So it was in the latter part of the last century. It seemed the whole world stood against us. But the faithful knew there was sunlight behind those dark clouds and that if they held on the storm would pass.

To those who have drifted away

Today we walk in the sunlight of goodwill. There is a tendency on the part of some to become indifferent. There are those who drift off, seeking the enticements of the world, forsaking the cause of the Lord. I see others who think it is all right to lower their standards, perhaps in small ways. In this very process they lose the cutting edge of enthusiasm for this work. For instance, they think the violation of the Sabbath is a thing of unimportance. They neglect their meetings. They become critical. They engage in backbiting. Before long they have drifted from the Church.

The Prophet Joseph once declared, "Where doubt is, there faith has no power" (*Lectures on Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], p. 46).

I invite any who may have so drifted to come back to the strong and solid moorings of the Church. This is the work of the Almighty. Whether we as individuals go forward will depend on us. But the Church will never fail to move forward. I remember an old song rendered in stirring tones by a male chorus: "Start me with ten who are stouthearted men, and I'll soon give you ten thousand more." (Oscar Hammerstein II, "Stouthearted Men").

When the Lord took Moses unto Himself, He then said to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9). This is His work. Never forget it. Embrace it with enthusiasm and affection.

Let us not be afraid. Jesus is our leader, our strength, and our king.

A call to move the work forward

This is an age of pessimism. Ours is a mission of faith. To my brethren and sisters everywhere, I call upon you to reaffirm your faith, to move this work

forward across the world. You can make it stronger by the manner in which you live. Let the gospel be your sword and your shield. Each of us is a part of the greatest cause on earth. Its doctrine came of revelation. Its priesthood came of divine bestowal. Another witness has been added to its testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is literally the little stone of Daniel's dream which was "cut out of the mountain without hands [to] roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2).

"Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory!" (D&C 128:22). So wrote the Prophet Joseph in a psalm of faith.

How glorious is the past of this great cause. It is filled with heroism, courage, boldness, and faith. How wondrous is the present as we move forward to bless the lives of people wherever they will hearken to the message of the servants of the Lord. How magnificent will be the future as the Almighty rolls on His glorious work, touching for good all who will accept and live His gospel and even reaching to the eternal blessing of His sons and daughters of all generations through the selfless work of those whose hearts are filled with love for the Redeemer of the world.

Stay the course; keep the faith

Back in the days of the Great Depression, an old sign dangled by one staple from a piece of rusting barbed wire. The owner of the farm had written:

Burned out by drought,
Drowned out by flud waters,
Et out by jackrabbits,
Sold out by sheriff,
Still here!

So it is with us. There have been makers of threats, naysayers, and criers of doom. They have tried in every con-

ceivable way to injure and destroy this church. But we are still here, stronger and more determined to move it forward. To me it is exciting. It is wonderful. I feel like Ammon of old who said: "Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding" (Alma 26:35).

I invite every one of you, wherever you may be as members of this church, to stand on your feet and with a song in your heart move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building the kingdom. Together we shall stay the course and keep the faith, the Almighty being our strength. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Where Love Is."

Elder Carlos H. Amado offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 1, 1995. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We welcome you this lovely afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 165th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We note that Richard G. Scott, John H. Groberg, and James O. Mason are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Angel Abrea and Lance B. Wickman are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and to many

friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We also welcome distinguished guests who are with us.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Craig Jessop, newly appointed associate director, and accompanied by John Longhurst, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service by singing "For the Strength of the Hills." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the Seventy.

The choir sang "For the Strength of the Hills."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Pinegar.

The choir will now sing "Saints, Behold How Great Jehovah." Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Saints, Behold How Great Jehovah."

Elder David B. Haight

Getting along in years

As some of us get older, we slow down, so you'll have to tolerate us a little. I thank the Lord for His blessings to me and that I am able to attend this conference and hear what we have heard so far. This is a momentous period in our Church history.

When Elder LeGrand Richards was getting along in years, he generally gave extemporaneous conference talks. As you know, we have some time restraints. There was concern as to how to notify him when his time was up. A little flashing light was put on the podium, and during one of his talks he said, "There's a light here that keeps flashing." The next conference they made the light red, but he just put his hand over it. So I might resort to some of that today. As we age, we get to the point where the teleprompter doesn't work for us anymore; then the printers seem to be doing a poor job in printing the text; and then the ink doesn't seem to be as good as it used to be either! But I am honored and grateful to be here with you.

Faithfulness brings strength

I am sure that those of you who were here this morning felt as I did as we listened to our prophet and leader: that the mantle of God's prophet rests comfortably and with divine authority on President Gordon B. Hinckley. I felt that as he spelled out his words of counsel to us this morning with such firm direction and inspiration, encouraging us to raise our sights for achievement, the Lord's voice was being heard. In the eighty-eighth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord teaches us that His voice is Spirit (see v. 66).

I am thankful not only to be here, but I am thankful for good music and for the influence of good music in our lives

and for this number that the choir sang this morning, "For the Strength of the Hills" (*Hymns*, no. 35). As the choir was singing those words, I was thinking of the strength that I have felt not only in this conference but throughout my life—the strength that we receive by being faithful, obedient members of the Church. Living as we should becomes our strength of character.

Parents' arduous journey to the temple

My grandfather had been living in Farmington, Utah, for a few years before he and his family were asked to go out into south-central Idaho and help settle a new community to be named Oakley. My father, Hector, was a teenager when they moved. My mother, Clara, was a teenager living in Tooele, Utah, when her father was asked to move to Oakley and build the first flour mill there. And so Hector and Clara fell in love out in that little Idaho town.

When it was time to be married in 1890, they didn't ask where they would be married and what they would do. They knew what to do. I remind those of you who may not have your geography straight that in that part of Idaho it is about 180 miles to the Logan Temple. But my parents went to the Logan Temple from that little town to be married on May 15, 1890. I've often wondered how they made the trip. Imagine one of the old double-seat surrey buggies without any sides on it, pulled by a team of horses. In spite of spring rains, they set out to go 180 miles in the buggy.

I don't know how many were in the company, but if you would imagine a modern automobile with its steel top, glass sides, heaters, radio, comfortable seats by the side of that buggy, you would see a great difference. Imagine those young people with some of their party organizing to travel 180 miles. It

would take a week. They set out to make the seven-day trip to the temple in that buggy. They were without sleeping bags or winter clothing as we know it today, but they had clothing that was appropriate for that time—blankets and quilts—and some flour sacks filled with food.

So when we sing about the strength of the hills, we should thank the Lord for the strength of where we are and who we are and what we believe in and how we live. Are the young people today wondering if it would be inconvenient for them to go a few miles to the Manti Temple or the St. George Temple or the Atlanta Georgia Temple or even to the Stockholm Sweden Temple or the Johannesburg South Africa Temple or wherever it might be? Picture in your minds what went on only a few years ago, and your travel to a temple will not seem so inconvenient.

Sixty-five wonderful years of marriage

My wife, Ruby, and I recently celebrated our sixty-fifth wedding anniversary. We were married in the Salt Lake Temple on September 4, 1930. The next morning we went up to see her mother on M Street in Salt Lake City to bid her good-bye. And as part of those tender moments, she fixed a little basket for us to put in the car. She said to me, "David, promise me that you'll take good care of Ruby." And I said, "I promise." I remind Ruby periodically that someday I'm going to meet her mother, and I hope I will be able to look her straight in the eye and say, "I think maybe I've done it."

Ruby and I were married the right way, sealed in the temple with its divine covenants and commitments that promote trustworthiness, faithfulness, devotion, and dedication. Now, after sixty-five wonderful years, we look back on our time together and realize that it gets better as time goes on.

Journey to California

When Ruby and I left for California in 1930 in our little Model T Ford, we crossed Nevada going a hundred miles an hour on those gravel, washboard roads—thirty miles straight ahead and seventy miles up and down. We'd never been to California before, so when we finally made it to Lake Tahoe, that large lake looked warm and beautiful. I didn't know that it was icy cold under the first inch of water. We found a little motel and went in and put on our swimsuits. I wanted to demonstrate to her that she had married a real "he-man." We went on the pier out in the lake, and I thought it looked so wonderful. The sun was just going down. I dove straight down, to demonstrate to Ruby what a "find" she had made. As I dove through the icy water farther down, I thought I was a goner. I clamored to get out.

We had a wonderful time together as we drove on to Berkeley, California. We found a furnished apartment for forty-five dollars a month. But our second day, when I came home that evening, I discovered that my key wouldn't work in the door. I finally went to the manager and said, "I'm sorry, my key doesn't work." She said, "Oh, that's all right. Your wife has moved you." I said, "Moved us?" "Yes," she said, "we had another apartment that was five dollars less."

Seek first the kingdom of God

Well, Ruby and I figured out one day that we have moved around the United States twenty-seven times. We moved to California on three different occasions. We moved to Illinois twice. We've moved back and forth and around. But out of that, we look back upon it all with joy. Now, with our three children and our fifty-plus grand- and great-grandchildren, we say, "What a wonderful life has been ours."

If we seek first the kingdom of God and live as we should, all the rest of life seems to fall into place and wonderful things happen. So as we look upon our family, we are pleased that all who could of our grandsons and some of our granddaughters have served missions. They all understand and can sing "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301) and other wonderful songs of Zion. We're proud of them. One member of our family has a little painting, a watercolor, not made by a famous artist. The painting was made by some Armenian children. It was given as a gift of thanks in return for a gift of life because some of the family and some of the grandchildren helped get food across the border into Armenia. Life is rich and full and wonderful. It all falls into place if we help it by the way we live.

George Romney

A few weeks ago, Ruby and I were up in Oakley, Idaho, for a couple of days, restoring our old family home. I had a phone call from Lenore Romney in Detroit, Michigan. Lenore is the wife of George Romney. She said, "George died this morning." She wanted to know if I could arrange to attend the funeral. I told her I would be honored to come but that I would need to arrange it with those who are my superiors in the Church.

After I hung up the phone, I walked up the street from our old family home. I walked across the canal over to the area where the Romneys used to live. George's father's name was Gaskell Romney. My father was their bishop. I looked at the area. The house wasn't there anymore. Then I walked along the old irrigation canal bank. I looked at the area where my father baptized me. I looked at where George and I used to swim. Swimming suits in those days were a pair of bib overalls, not the high-fashioned kind you see today but the real denim, old-fashioned bib overalls. We

cut the legs off and cut the pockets out so we wouldn't drown. That's all we had for swimming suits. We used to sit on the canal bank in a little bit of sunshine and shiver because it was so cold. But swimming was our main recreation. George and I were about the same age. He was my friend. He was my pal.

As I walked along the canal bank, thinking about George, I thought of a poem by Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benét that they had written about Nancy Hanks, the mother of Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln was only seven when Nancy Hanks died, and they loved each other very much. But in that tender poem the Benét's reflected that if Nancy Hanks came back today, she might ask, "What-ever happened to my boy, Abe? Did he get to town? Did he learn to read? Did he ever amount to anything?" (See "Nancy Hanks," in Edwin Markham, comp., *The Book of American Poetry* [New York: Wm. H. Wise and Co., 1936], pp. 791-92.)

George's mother had died while he was a teenager. She didn't get to see what he became. At the funeral I was honored to be there with the governor of the state of Michigan—a state of some nine million people, where George had been elected governor three times. The governor said George Romney was a great man who never allowed service to man to obscure service to God. The *Detroit News* said George Romney used his religion as a compass to chart his public life.

I leave you my love, my witness, and my testimony that this work is true. You young people who are wondering about going out into the world and making your way, bear in mind that other people too, who have used the gospel as a compass to guide them, have done pretty well. The gospel is true. We have a living prophet upon the earth. May you live it fully, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Haight, you've not only done pretty well, you've done very well indeed as you have set the pace and established the tone for this conference session. We love you.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Windows of light and truth

My beloved brothers and sisters, as President Hinckley walked into this meeting, he said, "We decided to come back." I replied, "Thank goodness." It's a privilege to speak on this occasion, and I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to be with me.

This is an age of digital information. Our computers have become windows through which we can gaze upon a world that is virtually without horizons or boundaries. Literally at the click of a button, we can browse through the digitized libraries of universities, museums, government agencies, and research institutions located throughout the world. A worldwide web of electronic connections now moves data at ever-increasing speed and volume along what we call the information superhighway. Through the windows of personal computer monitors in homes and offices, we can access this network of interconnected data banks to see texts, art, photos, maps, and charts and to hear music and speech that are stored in widely dispersed locations.

Likewise, instruments of many types give us insight that we would not have without them. Telescopes and microscopes bring to our view the otherwise unseen and unknown. Modern medicine uses imaging "windows" such as magnetic resonance imaging scanners to bring into view otherwise unseen vital information that skilled physicians can use for the benefit of their patients. The air traffic controller's radarscope is an-

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy.

other example of a window that provides lifesaving vision of faraway objects that are invisible without this crucial instrument. A skilled controller can use the information on his radarscope to guide a pilot to safety.

Windows of revelation

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints declares boldly that through another type of window, the windows of heaven, we can access spiritual information from the Source of light and truth. "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."¹ In this dispensation of the fulness of times, the *revelation* superhighway has been carrying heavy traffic of eternal truth ever since that day in the spring of 1820 when the Lord answered a farm boy's fervent prayer in the Sacred Grove and ushered in the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are blessed to live in these, the latter days, when a loving Heavenly Father has called a great leader, President Gordon B. Hinckley, as prophet, seer, and revelator. Through him the Lord opens windows of revelation to guide and bless all of our Father's children who will heed the words of the prophet. Today, as in ancient times, God opens windows of gospel light and truth by revealing "his secret unto his servants the prophets."² Those who have "eyes to see, and ears to hear"³ can learn eternal principles; view

majestic vistas of knowledge, foresight, and wisdom; and receive direction on how to live their lives.

If we configure our hearts and minds properly with faith, disciplined obedience, prayer, and scripture study, we can access the network of divine and eternal truths. We can receive the teachings and counsel of God's prophet, opening to us knowledge and revelation from our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

The Lord counsels us to become skilled in using these spiritual windows so we can seek and receive personal revelation for ourselves and our families. When the storms of life leave us confused, the windows of revelation can guide us safely home to our Heavenly Father. If we should yield to temptations of the adversary and find ourselves weakened spiritually, inspired bishops and other caring leaders can open the windows of revelation to provide spiritual direction. Well-prepared and inspired missionaries can open the windows of heaven to enlighten those "who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it."⁴

Obedience opens the windows of heaven

The windows of heaven are open wide to the faithful and righteous; nothing closes them faster than disobedience. The unworthy cannot access fully the network of revealed truth. "The powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness."⁵ "Obedience is the first law of heaven."⁶ That is why Alma exhorted us to "be humble, . . . submissive and . . . diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times."⁷

To open the windows of heaven, we must conform our will to God's will. Diligent, enduring obedience to God's laws is the key that opens the windows of heaven. Obedience enables us to be receptive to the mind and will of the Lord.

"The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient"⁸ are those who receive the blessings of revelation through the open windows of heaven.

Missionary service

The Lord has commanded Church members to "proclaim . . . unto the world"⁹ the restoration of the fulness of the gospel, open the windows of light and truth to all of our brothers and sisters, and do so "with all [our] heart, might, mind and strength."¹⁰ Our Savior has told us that "the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of [his] disciples," who "shall go forth and none shall stay them."¹¹

Members of the Lord's church can joyfully echo these words of the prophet Mormon: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life."¹²

We are the Savior's disciples who "shall go forth." All of us are "called of him to [be missionaries to] declare his word among his people." We may serve as full-time missionaries in young adulthood and as older couples. This window of opportunity is opened for a relatively short period of time. We should follow the counsel of President Spencer W. Kimball and "do it," and, he added, "Do it right now." Stake missionaries and loving neighbors have the opportunity of this divine service. We all have the sacred obligation and joyful opportunity to throw open the windows of light and truth by proclaiming the blessings of everlasting life to a darkened world. If we shy away from this responsibility, we should remember that the Lord has promised that "*none shall stay [us]*" and that "there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated."¹³ We can experience no greater joy than to see

the light of the gospel shine in the eyes and face of a newly baptized brother or sister who has "spiritually been born of God," who has "experienced [a] mighty change in [heart]," and who has "the image of God engraven upon [his or her countenance!]"¹⁴

If we are to fulfill the Lord's command to open the windows of heaven to all of our brothers and sisters, we must prepare to teach the gospel. With study of the scriptures, fasting, and prayer, we fortify our testimonies. We cultivate Christlike attributes of "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence."¹⁵ Through exemplary obedience we can "let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven."¹⁶ By keeping the commandments we can light our gospel candle and put it "on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto *all* that are in the house."¹⁷

The law of tithing

These words from the third chapter of Malachi have a familiar ring for Latter-day Saints:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."¹⁸

Perhaps we tend to think of the law of tithing as a temporal commandment only and to see it from a material perspective. We would be shortsighted and ungrateful if we failed to see and acknowledge the great spiritual blessings that result from obedience to this divine law. When we are obedient, the windows of heaven are opened not just to pour out blessings of earthly abundance, but also to pour out blessings of spiritual

abundance—blessings of infinite and eternal worth.

President Hinckley has declared that the blessings from paying tithing "may not be always in the form of financial or material benefit." He explained that "there are many ways in which the Lord can bless us beyond the riches of the world. There is the great boon of health. The Lord has promised [in Malachi 3:11] that he will rebuke the devourer for our sakes. Malachi speaks of the fruits of our ground. May not that rebuke of the devourer apply to *various* of our personal efforts and concerns?"¹⁹

The Word of Wisdom

Beginning in 1833 the Prophet Joseph Smith taught the blessings of avoiding tobacco and other addictive substances when the Lord opened the windows of heaven and revealed "a Word of Wisdom, for the benefit of the . . . saints in Zion." The Lord gave this revelation as a warning against the "evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days."²⁰

One of the first articles to document a link between smoking and lung cancer appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1950,²¹ 117 years after the Lord opened this window to His prophet.

The physical blessings of health and strength that are promised²² through obedience to the Word of Wisdom are now well known and well documented.²³ In addition, the spiritual blessings of "wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures,"²⁴ come to those who keep their bodies free from addictive substances. When we obey the Word of Wisdom, windows of personal revelation are opened to us and our souls are filled with divine light and truth. If we keep our bodies undefiled, the Holy Ghost "shall come upon [us] and . . . dwell in [our] heart[s]"²⁵ and teach us "the peaceable things of immortal glory."²⁶

Word of wisdom for the mind

Our Heavenly Father opened the windows of heaven and gave His children the Word of Wisdom to warn against consuming substances that can damage and destroy our physical bodies. He likewise has, through prophets, cautioned against consuming the steady diet of evil that is offered relentlessly in today's media, especially magazines, movies, videocassettes, video games, and television. The windows of computer monitors and television screens can bring to us very useful information, but they can also bring information that is evil, degrading, and destructive.

The Lord has warned repeatedly against the evils and designs of conspiring men in our day who would enslave us to our appetites and passions by tempting and tantalizing us with obscene images, words, and music. Through His servants the Lord has cautioned us strongly not to take into our minds thoughts that can harm our spirits.

Since 1950, Church leaders speaking in general conference have counseled us some seventy-five times against unhealthy media consumption. In recent years, as standards of public decency and morality have declined and as public media have reflected and often led that decline, these words of loving concern from inspired shepherds of the Lord's flock have come with more frequency and greater urgency. The watchmen on the tower have raised a warning voice.

I add my own voice. I suggest that we pay greater heed to voices of warning that our Father in Heaven has raised against the forces of Satan that come so easily and so pervasively into our homes through the media. I think of all the words of counsel and direction that we have received on this matter as constituting collectively a "word of wisdom for the mind." Just as we exercise great care about what we take into our bodies through our mouths, we should exert a

similar vigilance about what we take into our minds through our eyes and ears.

Gift of the Holy Ghost

The gift of the Holy Ghost may be likened to a sure, personal compass to provide lifesaving vision, wisdom, and insight as a spiritual window. The Holy Ghost gives us clear guidance and direction in a world of unanchored faith. President James E. Faust expressed his assuring testimony that "the Spirit of the Holy Ghost is the greatest guarantor of inward peace in our unstable world. . . . It will calm nerves; it will breathe peace to our souls. . . . It can enhance our natural senses so that we can *see more clearly*, hear more keenly, and remember what we should remember. It is a way of maximizing our happiness."²⁷

Worthy worship

Windows must be washed regularly to clean away dust and dirt. If left to accumulate without regular cleaning, thickening grime can block out light and darken the window. Just as earthly windows need consistent, thorough cleaning, so do the windows of our spirituality.

Weekly sacrament meeting attendance helps us strengthen our resolve to keep our personal windows of heaven free from the obscuring haze of earthly distractions and temptations. By partaking of the sacrament worthily to renew our baptismal covenants, we clarify our view of life's eternal purpose and divine priorities. The sacrament prayers invite personal introspection, repentance, and rededication as we pledge our willingness to remember our Savior, Jesus the Christ. This commitment to become like Christ, repeated weekly, defines the supreme aspiration of Latter-day Saint life.

Frequent temple attendance, as our circumstances allow, is another way to keep our spiritual windows clean. Worship in the house of the Lord will keep a

our view of what matters most clear and sharp, focused crisply, and free from the dust of the world.

Testimony

I testify that the windows of heaven are indeed open. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's living prophet today. Joseph Smith is the Prophet of the Restoration. Jesus is the Christ, the Lord and Savior of all mankind. Our Heavenly Father lives and loves each of His children. The Lord has restored the network of eternal truth. We can open the windows of heaven to our personal view. Through these divine windows we can gaze with the Savior "upon the wide expanse of eternity,"²⁸ a universe without horizons, "worlds without end."²⁹ I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:9.
2. Amos 3:7.
3. Deuteronomy 29:4.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
6. Ezra Taft Benson, mission presidents' seminar, 21 June 1988; see *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), p. 26. See also S. Dilworth Young, in Conference Report, Apr. 1952, p. 29; Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978), p. 126; and *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 539.

7. Alma 7:23; italics added.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 1:18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 1:4, 5.
12. 3 Nephi 5:13.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:5, 2; italics added.
14. Alma 5:14, 19.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 4:6.
16. Matthew 5:16.
17. Matthew 5:15; italics added.
18. Malachi 3:10.
19. In Conference Report, Apr. 1982, p. 60; or *Ensign*, May 1982, p. 40; italics added.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 89:1, 4.
21. See "Milestones," *Time*, 24 July 1995, p. 19.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 89:18–21.
23. See Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, pp. 87–88; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 69. See also James E. Enstrom, "Health Practices and Cancer Mortality among Active California Mormons," *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, 6 Dec. 1989, pp. 1807–14; Edward Norden, "How to Live As Long As They Do," *Longevity*, Sept. 1990, pp. 72–73.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 89:19.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
26. Moses 6:61.
27. In Conference Report, Apr. 1989, p. 41; or *Ensign*, May 1989, pp. 32–33; italics added.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 38:1.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 76:112.

Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen

Man is that he might have joy

President Hinckley, I feel that I can speak for the Saints throughout the world, that we were profoundly stirred by your prophetic charge to move the work forward with greater energy. We pledge our lives and our obedience to accomplish that purpose.

While teaching at BYU in 1978, Brother Dennis Rasmussen applied and was selected to study at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. In the opening session, as he gave his name and university, Rabbi Muffs boomed, "You're the Mormon! . . . Do you pay your tithing?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Do you pay it with a joyful heart?"

"Yes," he said.

"I believe," the rabbi said, "that joy is the essence of religion. There is nothing more fundamental to religious living than joy. . . . I am working on a book about joy."

Brother Rasmussen responded, "There's a passage in the Book of Mormon that you might like. It says, 'Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.'"¹

Rabbi Muffs was profoundly touched and exclaimed, "I've found the text I've searched for all my life . . . in the Book of Mormon." Turning to Brother Rasmussen he said, "Say it again, but not so fast." As he repeated the familiar words, the rabbi's eyes glowed in appreciation of this great truth he understood but had not heard so succinctly expressed.²

How important it is to know the purpose of our existence. Man is that he might have joy, and that joy will come to us as we keep God's commandments!³

Joy in the Basuare family

Last February I saw this joy personified as I accompanied the missionaries in Santiago, Chile, to visit some of their converts. At the Basuare home, eight-year-old twin boys, Nicolas and Ignacio, met us at the door, dressed in white shirts and ties, just like missionaries. Their father had been baptized three weeks earlier, and the following week he baptized his wife and sons. We talked of their conversion. They shared their feelings of love for the missionaries and the joy they were experiencing in living the gospel and keeping the commandments. They proudly showed us the picture of the Santiago temple displayed in their living room, a symbol of their goal to become an eternal family one year from the date of their baptism.

I asked Nicolas if he would like to be a missionary when he grew up. He answered yes, and we shook hands on the

promise that he would prepare for the day. Then I asked Ignacio the same question. He hesitated and replied, "I'm not sure I can make that promise. I'm only eight years old."

I persisted, "Nicolas made the promise. Wouldn't you like to do the same?"

He still hesitated and said, "I don't know if I could be ready."

I could see I had taken on more than I could manage, so I said, "Perhaps you'd better talk this over with your father."

He went to his father, who took him in his arms and said, "Ignacio, Jesus was a missionary. He walked the streets like Elder Sheets and his companion and made the people happy by teaching them to keep the commandments. Wouldn't you like to be like Jesus?"

"Yes, Papi, I would."

"Do you think if we work together, you can be ready to be a missionary when you are nineteen years old?"

"I think so."

"Wouldn't you like to make the promise to Elder Mickelsen that you will do that?"

He came to me, and we shook hands to confirm the promise. I marveled that this young father, a convert of just three weeks, could be so sensitive in helping his family follow the Savior and how he emulated the missionaries in teaching his son. Their goal of becoming an eternal family will surely be reached under the guidance of this faithful father.

Teaching the Ten Commandments to children

Since the beginning of creation such family happiness has been central to our Heavenly Father's plan. Having been cast out of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve began to multiply and replenish the earth. As their family increased, they called upon the Lord for help. He gave them commandments and told them to teach them to their children.⁴ These eternal laws were reiterated to Moses on Si-

nai, summed up by the Savior in the two great commandments,⁵ and repeated to Joseph Smith in a revelation known as the "law of the Church."⁶ We also must teach these commandments to our children. Our happiness in this life and joy in the future as eternal families depend on how well we *live* them. I believe we can teach the Ten Commandments to our children in a positive way so they will reflect the higher law the Savior has given us.

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."⁷ Teach them that God lives, that He really does exist, and that He is the literal Father of our spirits. We are created in His image. We have all of His attributes in embryo.⁸ He loves us and wants us to be like Him. He wants us to communicate with Him. *Teach them to pray.*

2. Thou shalt not bow to any graven image.⁹ *Our Father in Heaven must come first. Nothing in this world can take His place.* Teach your children to recognize His hand in all things, to respect and honor Him.¹⁰ Show them how to worship Him through selfless service to others. Worship Him in family prayer and family home evening. We fail to worship Him when we give preeminence to sports, academics, entertainment, wealth, vanity, or anything else of this world.

3. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."¹¹ Prepare your children to take upon themselves the name of Christ through the covenant of baptism. When we make this covenant, we become known as His children and promise to keep His commandments.¹² When we break the promises and covenants we make to Him and do not repent, we take His name in vain.¹³

4. Thou shalt honor the Sabbath day to keep it holy.¹⁴ Teach your children to set apart one-seventh of their time to learn of Him, to take their minds from the burdens of daily work, and to remember Him. As we dedicate this time to

Him, it concentrates our hearts and our minds on the *real purpose* of our existence and takes us out of the world. It is a day to become as He is, to worship Him, and to minister to others as He did. We don't need rules for the Sabbath day when we understand and live its purpose.

5. "Honour thy father and thy mother."¹⁵ Teach your children obedience; train them up in the way they should go.¹⁶ Our children learn to obey their Father in Heaven through honoring, respecting, and obeying their earthly parents. Teach them family ethics and establish the parameters of their conduct. The Lord gave the children of Israel the promise that their days would be long upon the land the Lord had given them. The same promise is valid today. For them it was the land of Canaan; for us it is eternal life with our families.¹⁷

6. "Thou shalt not kill."¹⁸ We are created in the image of God.¹⁹ The union of the flesh with the spirit can bring us a fulness of joy.²⁰ Teach your children to respect the sanctity of human life, to revere it and cherish it. Human life is the precious stepping-stone to eternal life, and we must jealously guard it from the moment of conception.²¹

7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery."²² Teach your children that our bodies are temples of God, wherein the Spirit of God can dwell.²³ Teach them the sacred nature of the family, the beauty of marriage, and the godlike nature of procreation, which our Father in Heaven has given us. We enter into a partnership with Him in the creation of life. This power must be respected, protected, and exercised only within the sacred bonds of marriage.²⁴ It is a celestial power that, if abused, will be taken away.

8. "Thou shalt not steal."²⁵ Teach your children to be honest and to respect that which belongs to others, especially that which belongs to our Father in Heaven. Teach them by example to pay a full tithing and give generous offerings.

As they stamp their actions with honesty, they will be filled with the Spirit and power of God.²⁶ Teach them the joy of giving and sharing.²⁷

9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness."²⁸ Teach your children to always tell the truth, to tell things as they really are, to build, to find the good in others, and to be positive and complimentary. Truth is more precious than any earthly possession. Truth is the essence of our existence.²⁹ As we tell the truth, our confidence will wax strong in the presence of God and our fellowman.³⁰

10. "Thou shalt not covet."³¹ We must love our children and teach them they are children of a Heavenly Father, who loves them. As they feel our love, they will feel His love and will be grateful for their good name and for the name of Christ, which they bear. As they feel our love and the love of their Heavenly Father, they feel no need for the possessions of others. Help them to measure personal progress and not compare themselves to others. Teach them to love others and to rejoice with their achievements.

Eternal laws of happiness

As we keep the Ten Commandments, we express our love to God, and with the active application of these eternal principles, we express our love to our fellowmen. These are eternal laws of happiness that, if followed, will lead us back to our Father in Heaven.³² I pray that we may be able to teach them by example and precept. May we all feel the joy the Basare family felt as they came to know the truth of the gospel and are now teaching the commandments to their children.

With a positive understanding of the commandments, our children will have a greater desire to follow them and a better comprehension of the power of the Atonement for forgiveness when they make mistakes. As they understand His sacrifice for us, they will repent and go

forward with a perfect brightness of hope, knowing that Christ will pay for their sins if they follow Him.³³

May we teach and live the commandments so that together with our families we may fill the measure of our creation³⁴ and obtain the joy our Father in Heaven desires for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:25; compare Moses 5:10; 6:48.
2. Dennis Rasmussen, "An Elder among the Rabbis," *Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1981, pp. 344-45.
3. See Jacob 5:75; Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), pp. 276-77.
4. See Moses 5:1-5; 6:57-62; Doctrine and Covenants 20:19.
5. See Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:33.
6. See headnote to and text of Doctrine and Covenants 42.
7. Exodus 20:3.
8. See James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), p. 487.
9. See Exodus 20:4-5; Matthew 19:16-22; 2 Nephi 27:25; Acts 17:29; Doctrine and Covenants 93:19.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:21; Alma 31:5.
11. Exodus 20:7.
12. See Alma 19:35; Mosiah 5:7; Moses 5:1-9; Doctrine and Covenants 20:37; Moroni 6:1-8.
13. See Proverbs 30:9; Doctrine and Covenants 136:21.
14. See Exodus 20:8-11; Doctrine and Covenants 59:9-14.
15. Exodus 20:12.
16. See Proverbs 22:6; *Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941), p. 207; Hebrews 12:9.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
18. Exodus 20:13; see also Doctrine and Covenants 42:18; Matthew 19:18.

19. See Genesis 1:27; Moses 1:13; Mosiah 7:27; Ether 3:16–17.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:33.
21. See James E. Faust, Brigham Young University devotional address, 15 Nov. 1994.
22. Exodus 20:14; see also Doctrine and Covenants 42:24.
23. See 1 Corinthians 6:19.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–17.
25. Exodus 20:15; see also Matthew 19:18; Doctrine and Covenants 42:20; Doctrine and Covenants 119; Malachi 3:8–11.
26. See *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 43.
27. See Matthew 5:42; Acts 20:35.
28. Exodus 20:16; Matthew 19:18.
29. See *Hymns*, no. 272; Doctrine and Covenants 93:24; John 8:32.
30. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
31. Exodus 20:17; see also Doctrine and Covenants 19:25.
32. See 2 Nephi 9:18–24.
33. See 2 Nephi 31:20.
34. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:19; John Taylor, *The Government of God*

(Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1852), pp. 32–46.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy. We sent Brother Mickelsen and Sister Mickelsen to South America for a three-year call. They stayed five years. I'm amazed that his English is as proficient as it is. He could have given the same sermon in Spanish equally as well.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing that favorite hymn of President Spencer W. Kimball, "I Need Thee Every Hour." Then Sister Anne G. Wirthlin, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Sister Anne G. Wirthlin

Scriptures pertaining to children

Brothers and sisters, just one year ago Sister Susan Warner and I were sustained as counselors to Sister Patricia Pinegar in a new Primary general presidency. Having reared twenty-four children between us, we might have had reason to feel quite confident in our ability to understand the needs of children. However, the responsibility of representing the children of the Church in today's world weighed heavily upon us. Our greatest desire was to know the will of our Father in Heaven and to seek His direction. In counseling with Elder Robert D. Hales at the time of our call, he suggested that as we read our scriptures, we mark the passages that pertain to children. We found there are many. In

fact it seems that the scriptures were written for families. The prophets have left no doubt as to the desires of the Lord regarding His little ones:

Nephi began his record, "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1).

Enos began his record, "Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it" (Enos 1:1).

Our Primary theme is from the words of Isaiah: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (3 Nephi 22:13).

How do we teach children?

Our Father in Heaven wants us to teach His children, to teach them who they really are, and to bring them to the Savior. In her general conference message last October, I remember Sister Pinegar's searching question: "Who will teach the children?" It was not only a question but an invitation for all of us, all of us who find children within the circle of our influence, to answer the call of our Father in Heaven to teach His children.

As we humbly try to answer that call, another more probing question comes to mind: How do we teach the children? How do we impress the word of the Lord upon their hearts while they are young so that as they grow into the years of their youth, they will have the ability to discern between truth and error and the inner strength to resist temptation? How can we so nourish them in their spiritual growth that their obedience moves from mere outward compliance to an inward desire born out of a love for their Father in Heaven and an understanding of who they are?

Teach children to love the Lord

These questions, while perplexing to us, are not unique to our day. They have challenged parents through all generations. And the counsel of the Lord, though given hundreds of years ago through Moses to the children of Israel, is as if He were speaking to us today. In Deuteronomy we read:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. . . .

"And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:5-7, 9).

When first we love the Lord with all our hearts, then we can lead our children to Him in all of our interactions. They will grow in their devotion to the Lord as they see our devotion to Him. They will understand the power of prayer as they hear us pray to a loving Heavenly Father, who is there listening and answering our prayers. They will understand faith as they see us live by faith. And they will learn the power of love by the kind and respectful ways that we relate to them. We cannot teach truth to our children apart from the trusting, caring relationships that we have with them. Elder Howard W. Hunter said, "A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, p. 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 65).

When our children feel our love for the Lord and our unconditional love for them, then our example becomes a meaningful guide to them as they develop their own spiritual strength. Remember the Lord's commandment to the Israelites to, first, put His words in their hearts, and then He said, "Teach them diligently unto thy children" (Deuteronomy 6:7). In all that we do we can teach our children to love the Lord. At times our most impressionable teaching happens when we don't even realize that we're teaching.

I remember as a teacher of the eleven-year-old girls in Primary, we held a luncheon for the girls and their mothers. I had asked each girl to introduce her mother and tell one thing that she admired about her. One of the girls said that she knew that her mother loved to read the scriptures. She held up her scriptures and said, "I can tell where she has been in the house by where I find her scriptures." I have remembered that example over the years and thought how

natural it would have been for that mother to transmit a love of the scriptures to her children, because she had developed that love herself. We teach first what we are—and those are the impressions that live in the minds and hearts of our children.

Home—an oasis in the world

There is a spirit that pervades in our homes when there is a love of the Lord, a love for one another, and a commitment to obedience that springs out of that love. As I speak of that spirit, I remember our mission home in Frankfurt, Germany, where my husband served as mission president. Our daughter, Marianne, was ten years old at the time. Some of her friends from school would come to the mission home and occasionally stay overnight. One night, one of her friends said, "I like to come to your house because I feel safe here." Marianne understood what she meant—all of our family knew the spirit of the mission home. It was a legacy that was left by thousands of dedicated missionaries who had passed through that home and shared their testimonies and their love for their Heavenly Father and the Savior. It is a spirit that can be felt in all of our homes when as families we share testimonies and feelings of the Spirit as we read the scriptures and when we kneel together in prayer.

President Kimball shared vivid memories of his home when the family knelt before meals to pray, their chairs turned back from the table, dinner plates upside down. He remembers night prayers at his mother's knee. He said, "I feel sorry for children who must learn these important lessons after they are grown, when it is so much harder" (in Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977], p. 31). Home can be an oasis in the world. It's a place where every child has a right to feel safe.

Children's testimonies nourished by love

In a fast and testimony meeting I attended recently in my own ward, three children bore their testimonies. Richie stood at the beginning of the meeting and said, "Last night I was reading from 1 Nephi, chapters 1, 2, and 3; and as I was reading I felt a great feeling of peace. I felt good inside. I'm thankful for the scriptures."

Charity told of an experience she had of attending a concert with her family and becoming separated from her parents. She said, "I found a corner and sat down and prayed to Heavenly Father. I asked Him to send the Holy Ghost to be with me until my parents could find me—and I wasn't afraid."

Spencer had just been ordained to be a deacon. He expressed his appreciation for the bishop who had ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood and told how much it meant to him to be a deacon. These children had been touched in their hearts by parents, teachers, and leaders who first loved the Lord and then turned the children to Him.

Touch the hearts of the children

Within our family circle we can help our children identify feelings of the Spirit and encourage them to express those feelings in their own words. We can invite them to share the things they are learning in Primary and other Church meetings. By so doing we open the door for the Spirit to confirm those teachings in their hearts.

Brothers and sisters, we can touch the hearts of our children and bring them to the Savior. They will see Him first through our eyes, and they will learn how to know and love Him as their most trusted friend. They will understand what it means to have His Spirit to be with them—and that will be their strength. It is my prayer, my brothers and sisters, that we may all keep that vision before

us, and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Sister Anne G. Wirthlin, first counselor in the Pri-

mary general presidency. Elder Hans B. Ringger, who received emeritus status at the Saturday afternoon session, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Durrel A. Woolsey, who was released as a member of the Seventy yesterday afternoon.

Elder Hans B. Ringger

"Lord, to whom shall we go?"

Crowds pushed toward Christ along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, eager to hear His message as He began His mission to mankind. Many disciples followed Him during these days. However, some of them were offended by Christ's teachings and turned away from Him. Upon their departure Christ asked His twelve disciples if they also wanted to leave Him. Simon Peter answered Christ's question by asking, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (John 6:68).

This question is as relevant and urgent today as it was 2,000 years ago. As Latter-day Saints we believe that Christ shows us the way and place to go and what we must do to find Him. It is up to each of us to recognize Christ's way and to follow it.

Bring life into harmony with God

A few months ago I had the privilege to hear a powerful testimony from a man searching for the truth. Through the gospel his eyes were opened to the eternal and he was able to redirect his life. At the same time I learned that a faithful member of the Church had distanced himself from the gospel and had changed his beliefs. Both men had tried with good intentions to find out to whom they should go but arrived at opposite conclusions and, therefore, went on diverging paths. What can be the cause for such opposing actions?

I believe that words and actions are rooted in our thoughts and that our thoughts determine our deeds. Our daily decisions, planned or spontaneous, are the result of our thoughts, and we are responsible for them. Although we as individuals might think that we are and can act independently of God, we cannot escape the realization that we are subject to eternal laws. Our happiness and our peace in this life, as well as in the life after, depend on our readiness to base our thoughts and actions on God-given laws. True peace of mind and everlasting happiness come from being in harmony with God. If we are to be one with Deity, then it is we who must change—and not God.

I believe that the two men chose different paths because their way of thinking and their understanding of God are different. It is essential to know God so that we can gain eternal blessings and salvation through living in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Gaining a knowledge of Christ and God is a prerequisite for a true understanding of our mission in life. Lowell L. Bennion writes in his book *Legacies of Jesus*: "One of the most important things we need to learn is what are the attributes of God. Christ came to earth to reveal to us the character of God. He is the revelation of God to human beings, teaching us by precept and example the meaning of faith, humility, integrity, and love" (*Legacies of Jesus* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990], p. 61).

Follow in Christ's footsteps

We learn of God through Christ's life; we know God through following Christ's example. My dear brothers and sisters and friends and listeners, let us truly know our Savior and His Father. We should ask ourselves if our decisions are in accordance with the example of Christ, that we may follow in Christ's footsteps. Let us not be deceived or dissuaded from Christ's way, but let us reap the blessings of peace and eternal joy through following Him.

Christ's teachings, His example, and His perfection leave no question that He is the Son of God. He says of Himself, "And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11).

With that knowledge of Him we are promised, as it is written in John, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which . . . believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40).

Accept the restored gospel

In order to go the right direction in life and receive the blessings of the gospel, it is important first to be willing to accept the restored gospel in all its fulness. Christ said to Joseph Smith regarding the restoration of His gospel, "A light shall break forth . . . , and it shall be the fulness of my gospel" (D&C 45:28).

In addition, it is important to accept God's divine authority and the authority of His servants. Paul explained to the branch in Ephesus why authority was given and why we will be blessed when following the servants of the Lord. He wrote:

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Obey without compromise

Further, as we know God's commandments, we must keep them without compromises or exceptions. We are at times tempted to place less importance on the teachings of Christ in our lives for the sake of convenience, or we let external circumstances pollute our faith. To help us escape seductive influences that take us away from Christ, He commands us, "That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day" (D&C 59:9).

To follow His commandments will bring freedom, independence, strength, and true happiness. I therefore ask everyone this day, "To whom shall we go?" Let us decide to follow Christ and be His true disciples, not offended by His message of truth but rejoicing in it. I know no other way or place where we can go, and thus add my testimony to the one of Simon Peter when he said to Christ:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69).

I testify to you that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son. They are real. Jesus is risen. He is our Christ and Savior. He is the Son of the living God. This knowledge is my faith, my testimony, and my life. I pray that we all may come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and act accordingly with a pure heart, with hope, and with charity. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Durrel A. Woolsey

A strategy for war

I would like to speak to you today about a strategy for war. We sing the hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers! Marching as to war" (*Hymns*, no. 246). Paul said, "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8). In the book of Revelation we are told of a war in heaven (see Revelation 12:7). What kind of battle? What kind of war?

The war is for the souls of men. The battle lines have been drawn since Adam: evil versus righteousness. In this the final dispensation and in preparation for the Millennium, the forces of evil have intensified and united under the powerful influences of Satan. On the opposite side of the line, the kingdom of God is clearly sounding the trumpet of righteousness as perhaps never before. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is on the offensive in the declaration of good to be good and evil to be evil.

Satan's influence in the latter days

Isaiah prophesied of our time on this very subject when he said, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). Satan offers a strange mixture of just enough good to disguise the evil along his downward path to destruction, as described by Nephi, an ancient prophet, when he said:

"For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

"And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth

them away carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:20–21).

Satan does rage in the hearts of some. Many he will lull away into carnal security; others he flattereth, or he says there is no hell. He has lured and enlisted many followers with enticements of fame, riches, and power. He forges a Rembrandt-quality representation by calling evil good and good evil. He has confused many people, even nations and leaders, to the point of an immoral approach to moral issues.

Let me mention just three examples of voices that are ungodly and powerful among Satan's many proclamations. First, he says individual agency is justification for the destruction of a human life through abortion; second, same-gender intimate associations and even marriages are acceptable; and third, chastity and fidelity are old-fashioned and narrow-minded—to be sexually active with free expression is acceptable.

At this very moment, international heroes in sports, music, and movies not only live immoral lives but teach that immorality around the world through the powerful influence of the media. They are idolized and accepted by millions worldwide. The world in general seems to have lapsed into a coma of unrighteousness, leaving God-given and time-honored moral values and principles behind.

The need for Christ-centered living

The Brethren have said to push the world back. We are many more than the ten needed to save Sodom and Gomorrah. How will we fight this battle as it continues? The faithful Saints of God, with the undergirding of His holy priesthood, are the most powerful force on earth. We must hold fast to forceful proclamations from God regarding the sanctity of life, His eternal and never-

ending instruction to be chaste and pure. His loving counsel that families are ordained of God with a father, mother, and children to live together forever was not intended to be the exception but the rule. A return to Christ by an individual will bring peace of mind in place of turmoil, tranquillity to replace strife, courage and optimism in place of fear.

This Christ-centered way of living is not only for individuals but for families, entire governments, and nations, and will bring about similar results. For example, the individual or even a nation living a chaste and virtuous life has little to fear of the dread disease AIDS. Fatherless families created through strife and divorce would be virtually unknown.

Ten symptoms of the descending path

As you survey your individual responsibility, where do you stand? There are symptoms or warnings of the descending path. Ten symptoms to be aware of might be:

- An increasing shortness of vision or an inability to see clearly things of a spiritual nature.
- An ever-increasing callousness to things of God.
- A hardening of the spiritual arteries—attention to spiritual needs moves from daily or weekly to monthly, then occasionally, then not at all.
- An increasing dependence upon a growing army of psychiatric specialists instead of priesthood, God, and self.
- An increasing independence from spiritual things.
- An increasing number of friends with lower moral standards.
- Quotes from talk shows instead of scriptures.
- Raised voices in place of subdued tones.
- Verbal, even physical, abuse replacing a circle of love.
- Gradual acceptance of evil—not all at once, but a little bit at a time.

The prescription for victory

Some are more familiar with the location of sand traps on the golf course or a good tennis backhand than with the location of lifesaving scriptures. Many search for happiness in current financial pages instead of the inspired counsel from prophets. I have observed that the great majority of people the world over waste and wear out their lives making major commitments of time and effort toward projects that have absolutely no exalting benefits yet have eternal consequences.

We must be involved in a good and a righteous cause. We must see through the glass clearly, with an objective look at ourselves and families so as not to be caught in the second great calamitous worldwide flood that is even now all around us. It has been prophesied that the faithful will win this great war, that they will triumphantly rise up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ at the time of His second coming. The prescription for this victory includes daily individual and family prayers with a family home evening at least weekly. You may say, "I don't have time." Brothers and sisters, you simply cannot afford not to take the time. It is amazing how much time suddenly becomes available with the television off. This prescription continues the same as it has always been—keep the commandments; follow the prophets; read, understand, and even ponder the scriptures.

I testify that God lives, that His Son, Jesus Christ, has brought to pass the reality of the plan of redemption. Because of Him and His loving atonement, those who desire will win the war and be together with Him eternally. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We express our appreciation for the addresses we have just heard and for the

faithful service rendered by Elder Hans B. Ringger and Elder Durrel A. Woolsey, truly giants of the Lord.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Perfection pending

If I were to ask which of the Lord's commandments is most difficult to keep, many of us might cite Matthew 5:48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."¹

Keeping this commandment can be a concern because each of us is far from perfect, both spiritually and temporally. Reminders come repeatedly. We may lock keys inside the car or even forget where the car is parked. And not infrequently we walk intently from one part of the house to another, only to forget the reason for the errand.

When comparing one's personal performance with the supreme standard of the Lord's expectation, the reality of imperfection can at times be depressing. My heart goes out to conscientious Saints who, because of their shortcomings, allow feelings of depression to rob them of happiness in life.

We all need to remember: men are that they might have joy—not guilt trips!² We also need to remember that the Lord gives no commandments that are impossible to obey. But sometimes we fail to comprehend them fully.

Our understanding of perfection might be aided if we classify it into two categories. The first could pertain uniquely to this life—*mortal* perfection. The second category could pertain uniquely to the next life—*immortal* or *eternal* perfection.

Mortal perfection

In this life certain actions can be perfected. A baseball pitcher can throw a no-hit, no-run ball game. A surgeon can

perform an operation without an error. A musician can render a selection without a mistake. One can likewise achieve perfection in being punctual, paying tithing, keeping the Word of Wisdom, and so on. The enormous effort required to attain such self-mastery is rewarded with a deep sense of satisfaction. More importantly, spiritual attainments in mortality accompany us into eternity.³

James gave a practical standard by which mortal perfection could be measured. He said, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect* man."⁴

Scriptures have described Noah, Seth, and Job as *perfect* men.⁵ No doubt the same term might apply to a large number of faithful disciples in various dispensations. Alma said that "there were many, exceedingly great many,"⁶ who were pure before the Lord.

This does not mean that these people never made mistakes or never had need of correction. The process of perfection includes challenges to overcome and steps to repentance that may be very painful.⁷ There is a proper place for chastisement in the molding of character, for we know that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."⁸

Mortal perfection can be achieved as we try to perform every duty, keep every law, and strive to be as perfect in our sphere as our Heavenly Father is in His. If we do the best we can, the Lord will bless us according to our deeds and the desires of our hearts.⁹

Eternal perfection

But Jesus asked for more than mortal perfection. The moment He uttered the words "even as your Father which is

in heaven is perfect," He raised our sights beyond the bounds of mortality. Our Heavenly Father has eternal perfection. This very fact merits a much broader perspective.

Recently I studied the English and Greek editions of the New Testament, concentrating on each use of the term *perfect* and its derivatives. Studying both languages together provided some interesting insights, since Greek was the original language of the New Testament.

In Matthew 5:48 the term *perfect* was translated from the Greek *teleios*, which means "complete." *Teleios* is an adjective derived from the noun *telos*, which means "end."¹⁰ The infinitive form of the verb is *teleiono*, which means "to reach a distant end, to be fully developed, to consummate, or to finish."¹¹ Please note that the word does not imply freedom from error; it implies achieving a distant objective. In fact, when writers of the Greek New Testament wished to describe perfection of behavior—precision or excellence of human effort—they did not employ a form of *teleios*; instead, they chose different words.¹²

Teleios is not a total stranger to us. From it comes the prefix *tele-* that we use every day. *Telephone* literally means "distant talk." *Television* means "to see distantly." *Telephoto* means "distant light," and so on.

With that background in mind, let us consider another highly significant statement made by the Lord. Just prior to His crucifixion, He said that on "the third day I shall be perfected."¹³ Think of that! The sinless, errorless Lord—already perfect by our mortal standards—proclaimed His own state of perfection yet to be in the future.¹⁴ His *eternal* perfection would follow His resurrection and receipt of "all power . . . in heaven and in earth."¹⁵

The perfection that the Savior envisions for us is much more than errorless performance. It is the eternal expectation as expressed by the Lord in His great

intercessory prayer to His Father—that we might be made perfect and be able to dwell with them in the eternities ahead.¹⁶

The Lord's entire work and glory pertains to the immortality and eternal life of each human being.¹⁷ He came into the world to do the will of His Father, who sent Him.¹⁸ His sacred responsibility was foreseen before the Creation¹⁹ and was foretold by all His holy prophets since the world began.²⁰

The atonement of Christ fulfilled the long-awaited purpose for which He had come to the earth. His concluding words upon Calvary's cross referred to the culmination of His assignment—to atone for all humankind. Then He said, "It is finished."²¹ Not surprisingly, the Greek word from which *finished* was derived is *teleios*.

That Jesus attained eternal perfection following His resurrection is confirmed in the Book of Mormon. It records the visit of the resurrected Lord to the people of ancient America. There He repeated the important injunction previously cited but with one very significant addition. He said, "I would that ye should be perfect *even as I*, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect."²² This time He listed himself along with His Father as a perfected personage. Previously He had not.²³

Resurrection is requisite for eternal perfection. Thanks to the atonement of Jesus Christ, our bodies, corruptible in mortality, will become incorruptible. Our physical frames, now subject to disease, death, and decay, will acquire immortal glory.²⁴ Presently sustained by the blood of life²⁵ and ever aging, our bodies will be sustained by spirit and become changeless and beyond the bounds of death.²⁶

Eternal perfection is reserved for those who overcome all things and inherit the fulness of the Father in His heavenly mansions. Perfection consists in gaining eternal life—the kind of life that God lives.²⁷

Ordinances and covenants of the temple

Scriptures identify other important prerequisites to eternal perfection. They relate to the ordinances and covenants of the temple.²⁸ No accountable individual can receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom without the ordinances of the temple. Endowments and sealings are for our personal perfection and are secured through our faithfulness.²⁹

This requirement also pertains to our ancestors. Paul taught "that they without us should not be made *perfect*."³⁰ Again, in that verse, the Greek term from which *perfect* was translated was a form of *teleios*.³¹

In latter-day revelation the Lord was even more explicit. His prophet wrote: "My dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation. . . . They without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect."³²

Encouragement from the Savior's example

Our climb up the path to perfection is aided by encouragement from the scriptures. They hold the promise that we shall, if faithful in all things, become like Deity. John the beloved Apostle wrote:

"We should be called the sons [and daughters] of God. . . .

" . . . When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."³³

Continuing encouragement comes as we follow the example of Jesus, who taught, "Be ye holy; for I am holy."³⁴ His hope for us is crystal clear! He declared: "What manner of men ought ye to be?

Verily I say unto you, even as I am."³⁵ Thus our adoration of Jesus is best expressed by our emulation of Jesus.³⁶

People have never failed to follow Jesus because His standards were imprecise or insufficiently high. Quite to the contrary. Some have disregarded His teachings because they were viewed as being too precise or impractically high! Yet such lofty standards, when earnestly pursued, produce great inner peace and incomparable joy.

There is no other individual to compare with Jesus Christ, nor is there any other exhortation equal to His sublime expression of hope: "I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect."³⁷

This divine entreaty is consistent with the fact that as begotten children of heavenly parents, we are endowed with the potential to become like them, just as mortal children may become like their mortal parents.

The Lord restored His church to help us prepare for perfection. Paul said that the Savior placed in the Church apostles, prophets, and teachers "for the perfecting of the saints, . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect* man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."³⁸

The *perfect* man described in Paul's quotation is the completed person—*teleios*—the glorified soul!

Moroni taught how to gain this glorious objective. His instruction stands in any age as an antidote for depression and a prescription for joy. I echo his plea: "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; . . . love God with all your might, mind and strength. . . . [Then] ye may be perfect in Christ, . . . holy, [and] without spot."³⁹

Meanwhile, brothers and sisters, let us do the best we can and try to improve

each day. When our imperfections appear, we can keep trying to correct them. We can be more forgiving of flaws in ourselves and among those we love. We can be comforted and forbearing. The Lord taught, "Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now . . . ; wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected."⁴⁰

We need not be dismayed if our earnest efforts toward perfection now seem so arduous and endless. Perfection is pending. It can come in full only after the Resurrection and only through the Lord. It awaits all who love Him and keep His commandments. It includes thrones, kingdoms, principalities, powers, and dominions.⁴¹ It is the end for which we are to endure.⁴² It is the eternal perfection that God has in store for each of us. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Those words were given additional intensity in the Joseph Smith Translation: "Ye are therefore commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect" (JST, Matthew 5:50).
2. See 2 Nephi 2:25.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19.
4. James 3:2; italics added.
5. See Genesis 6:9; Doctrine and Covenants 107:43; Job 1:1.
6. Alma 13:12.
7. See Hebrews 5:8.
8. Hebrews 12:6.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
10. Incidentally, the feminine form of this noun is *teleia*, the Greek term for a period at the end of a sentence.
11. Footnote *b* for Matthew 5:48 states: "GR complete, finished, fully developed" (LDS edition of the King James Version of the Bible [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979], p. 1195).
12. A few examples include:
 - "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast *perfected* praise" (Matthew 21:16; italics added).
 - "The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is *perfect* shall be as his master" (Luke 6:40; italics added). In both of these verses, *perfect* came from the Greek term *katartizo*, which means "to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust; to fit or frame for one's self"—an act of preparation.
 - Another speaks of "*perfect* understanding" (Luke 1:3; italics added). In this instance, *perfect* came from the Greek adverb *akribos*, which means "exactly, accurately."
 - Another verse refers to those who touched the hem of the Master's garment and "were made *perfectly* whole" (Matthew 14:36; italics added). *Perfect* in this instance came from the Greek *diasozo*, which means "to preserve through danger, to bring safely through, to save, keep from perishing, to rescue."
13. Luke 13:32; italics added.
14. In the Greek text of that proclamation, the verb *teleiono* was again used, in its future tense—*teleiouma*.
15. Matthew 28:18; see also Doctrine and Covenants 93:2–22.
16. See John 17:23–24.
17. See Moses 1:39.
18. See 3 Nephi 27:13.
19. See Moses 4:1–2; 7:62; Abraham 3:22–28.
20. See Acts 3:19–21.
21. John 19:30. In modern revelation Jesus used similar language. He said, "I partook and *finished* my preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:19; italics added).
22. 3 Nephi 12:48; italics added.
23. See Matthew 5:48.
24. See Alma 11:45; Doctrine and Covenants 76:64–70.
25. See Leviticus 17:11.
26. "A resurrection means to become immortal, without blood, yet with a body

of flesh and bone" (LDS Bible Dictionary, p. 761).

27. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1946), p. 331; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 237.
28. Joseph Smith taught, "Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 162).
29. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 2:45.
30. Hebrews 11:40; italics added.
31. *Teleioo*
32. Doctrine and Covenants 128:15; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 159.
33. 1 John 3:1-3. For additional commentary, see Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, pp. 7-9.
34. 1 Peter 1:16; see also Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26.
35. 3 Nephi 27:27.
36. See Neal A. Maxwell, *We Talk of Christ, We Rejoice in Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), p. 145; Hugh B. Brown, *The Abundant Life* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), p. 199.
37. 3 Nephi 12:48.
38. Ephesians 4:12-13; italics added.
39. Moroni 10:32-33.
40. Doctrine and Covenants 67:13.
41. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
42. This concept is supported by the fact that in verses of the New Testament that refer to the *end* for which we are to endure, the Greek word from which *end* was translated was also derived

from *telos* (see Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13).

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

It will now be our privilege to listen to President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved President of the Church, who will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his address, we express appreciation to the combined ward choirs from the Cottonwood Utah Region, the Mormon Youth Chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music for this conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and the vast army of interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference. We're grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of the conference in many countries.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Abide with Me!" The benediction will be offered by Elder Claudio R. Mendes Costa of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

The fabric of faith and testimony

This has been a most remarkable thing, this conference. We have listened to twenty-eight different speakers. No one was assigned a topic on which to speak. Each was free to choose his or her message. There is always the risk of repetition in that. But isn't it remarkable that all of it seems to have been woven together into a beautiful fabric of expression of faith and testimony. I am grateful for what we have heard. I will be a better man if I will put into my life the things of which I have been reminded in this conference, and I would like to suggest that each of you will be a better man or woman if you will put into your lives something of what you have heard in this great conference.

A praying people

Brethren and sisters, I know that you are a praying people. That is a wonderful thing in this day and time when the practice of prayer has slipped from many lives. To call upon the Lord for wisdom beyond our own, for strength to do what we ought to do, for comfort and consolation, and for the expression of gratitude is a significant and wonderful thing. We know that you pray for us, and we appreciate your prayers. They sustain us; they remind us of the great trust which you have placed in us. I want you to know that we pray for you always. We pray for you that you may be happy, and that in living the gospel there may be love and peace in your homes and growing goodness in your lives. That is what

this is all about, for God sent His Only Beloved Son "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The great purpose of the work in which we are engaged is to help each of us along the way of immortality and eternal life.

Our love and blessing for you

Please know of our great love for you. I thank the Lord every morning of my life for the restoration of the gospel and its meaning in the lives of faithful Latter-day Saints.

You parents, love your children. Cherish them. They are so precious. They are so very, very important. They are the future. You need more than your own wisdom in rearing them. You need the help of the Lord. Pray for that help and follow the inspiration which you receive.

Now, as we say good-bye to you at the conclusion of this conference, please know of our love for each of you. Even those who transgress, we want you to know that we love you. We cannot condone the sin, but we love the sinner.

God bless you. I leave my blessing upon you, that as you walk in faith there may be peace in your hearts and goodness and gladness in your lives, and that the Spirit of the Lord may dwell with you in your homes, to bring nurture to you and those you love most dearly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Abide with Me!"

Elder Claudio R. Mendes Costa offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the combined ward choirs from the Cottonwood Utah Region. Jay J. Campbell conducted the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

At the general priesthood session a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus provided the music. Donald Ripplinger and Robert C. Bowden con-

ducted the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Donald Ripplinger and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Clay Christiansen and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

B

- Ballard, Elder M. Russell** 4
 Visiting the sites of the Restoration; Hyrum Smith's legacy of faithfulness; Hyrum's relationship with Joseph; Hyrum's service to the Church; Hyrum's dedicated scripture study; Hyrum's faithful, believing heart; Hyrum's service to others; Hyrum's response to trials
- Beckham, Sister Janette Hales** 11
 Power to calm outside fears; Inner power of goodness and love; A family learns the power of love; The powers of heaven and of priesthood; The power of a mother's goodness; Seek the power of righteousness
- Brewerton, Elder Ted E.** 37
 Search Book of Mormon to know Christ; Ancient texts support Book of Mormon; Latter-day Lamanites recognize truth; A second witness of Christ; References to a bearded white god; The Book of Mormon—a firm anchor; The Holy Ghost gives primary evidence
- Burton, Bishop H. David** 57
 An "I will" attitude; "I wills" for priesthood holders; Commit to follow the living prophet; Become acquainted with Nephi; Young athletes honor the Sabbath; A baseball player's perseverance; Make family leadership top priority; Align our wills with God's will

D

- Dunn, Elder Loren C.** 35
 The law of witnesses; The calling of special witnesses; Church members are witnesses; Testimonies of special witnesses; My personal witness

E

- Eyring, Elder Henry B.** 49
 Called to touch lives; A deacon touches a life; Help others increase their faith; Help others want to obey; Teach with love, as Aaron did; Help others plant the seed; Teach when hearts are prepared; Prove love by service; Refresh and nurture others' faith; The Lord will make you fishers of men

F

- Faust, President James E. (priesthood session)** 60
 Dangers of living on the edge; Act rather than be acted upon; Joseph F. Smith stands firm; Avoid even the appearance of evil; Provide safety for women and children; How to satisfy internal emptiness; Getting the power of God into your life; Chosen in the premortal existence

Faust, President James E. (Sunday morning session) 80

Priesthood blessings; Blessings strengthen and magnify us; Priesthood influence in the family; Ordained patriarchs; Patriarchal blessings—a star to follow; Patriarchal blessings come from God; Study and ponder patriarchal blessings; Fulfillment of promises; Declaration of lineage; The power of priesthood blessings; Live so that blessings can be fulfilled

G**General Authorities Present 1****General Priesthood Session 48****Goaslind, Elder Jack H 8**

Spiritual mountaintops; Testimony is a spiritual mountaintop; Link teaching to a testimony of Jesus; Climb above comfortable plateaus; Know, remember, and serve Christ; Anchor goodness in faith in Christ; Help children know and love the Savior

H**Haight, Elder David B. 97**

Getting along in years; Faithfulness brings strength; Parents' arduous journey to the temple; Sixty-five wonderful years of marriage; Journey to California; Seek first the kingdom of God; George Romney

Hales, Elder Robert D. 40

Blessings of the priesthood; The power of God; Priesthood given to man; The Savior's use of the priesthood; Priesthood withdrawn and restored; Priesthood blessings as a child grows; Priesthood blessings as youth grow; Priesthood blessings in the temple; Priesthood blessings for families; Seek earnestly for priesthood blessings; A sonnet testimony

Hillam, Elder Harold G. 54

Sacrifice in missionary service; Sacrifices of Mosiah's missionary sons; Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball; Elder Bugs's sacrifice; No sacrifice is too great for the Master

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session) 3

Gathering for conference; Broadcasting conference to the world; The kingdom of God—one great family

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) 68

Miraculous missionary work; Prepare to serve a mission; Blessings of missionary service; Importance of temple work; Report on temple building; Our need for temple attendance; Growth in Church membership; Management of sacred Church funds; Great contributions of voluntary service; Growth of seminary and institute; Distribution of the Book of

Mormon; Growth in stakes, wards, and buildings; Our responsibility to advance the work

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) 92

A personal consecration; Expressions of love and faith; Expansion of the Church; Joshua and Caleb bring a good report; Gospel is good news, not doom and gloom; Pioneers' faith rose above doubts; To those who have drifted away; A call to move the work forward; Stay the course; keep the faith

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session) 120

The fabric of faith and testimony; A praying people; Our love and blessing for you

Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. 87

"This do in remembrance of me"; The sacrament—*our* passover; Privilege of Aaronic Priesthood holders; Sacramental prayers; Remember His pre-mortal life and birth; Remember His example and teachings; Remember His response to adversity; Remember what His wounds signify; Fortified by the sacramental feast

M

Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 27

Need for increased consecration; Serve the true Master; Examples of keeping back a portion; Greater consecration corrects omissions; Letting God educate our desires; The need to lose ourselves; Submission brings revelation and joy; Do not shrink from full consecration; Hard times can hasten consecration; Submit to God and trust Him; The only possession that is ours to give

Mickelsen, Elder Lynn A. 104

Man is that he might have joy; Joy in the Basuare family; Teaching the Ten Commandments to children; Eternal laws of happiness

Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 64

Ye who are called to labor; Learn as youth to choose the right; Rescuing a woman from the Provo River; Follow the path to the celestial kingdom; Prepare for missions; Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies; The Lord looketh on the heart; Who honors God, God honors

Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session) 75

The heavenly virtue of patience; Patience in adversity; Wendy Bennion's patience; The Savior's patience; Job's patience; Joseph Smith's patience; Stop, look, and listen; Angels in disguise; Promises made in eastern Germany; Patience brings fulfillment of promises

Music, Summary of Conference	121
Nelson, Elder Russell M.	115
Perfection pending; Mortal perfection; Eternal perfection; Ordinances and covenants of the temple; Encouragement from the Savior's example	

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	31
Powerful ideas; We are children of God; The power of love; Mortal life has a purpose; The work of the Church is eternal; Heavenly Father will hear our prayers; The Resurrection and Atonement; Choose what builds, not what tears down; Put the Savior first; "Never take no cutoffs"; Focus on powerful ideas	

P

Packer, President Boyd K.	21
The brilliant morning of forgiveness; Alma feels the joy of forgiveness; The promise of complete forgiveness; Repentance: the way back; The need to make restitution; Comforting knowledge; We cannot condone unworthy conduct; Seek relief now; Never give up hope	
Perry, Elder L. Tom	45
Lehi's dream of the tree of life; Personal and family preparedness; "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear"; Gain an adequate education; Live within your income; Avoid unnecessary debt; Store a reserve of food and supplies; Prepare for less prosperous times; Hold to the iron rod	
Porter, Elder Bruce D.	16
Our similarities to the prodigal son; The Father's Eldest Son redeemed us; The Savior's sacrifices; Redeemer of Israel	
Priesthood Session, General	48

R

Ringger, Elder Hans B.	111
"Lord, to whom shall we go?" Bring life into harmony with God; Follow in Christ's footsteps; Accept the restored gospel; Obey without compromise	

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	25
Saturday Morning Session	2

Scott, Elder Richard G.	18
When the Lord answers no; Adversity from transgression; Adversity to accomplish the Lord's purposes; Trust in the Lord; The Savior's example in adversity; The Lord gives what we need; True happiness is centered in Christ; Finding peace during adversity; The Lord is preparing you for exaltation	
Summary of Conference Music	121
Sunday Afternoon Session	96
Sunday Morning Session	75
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	26

W

Wells, Elder Robert E.	85
The divine Sonship of Jesus Christ; The divine mission of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon; The divine nature of the Church	
Wirthlin, Sister Anne G.	108
Scriptures pertaining to children; How do we teach children? Teach children to love the Lord; Home—an oasis in the world; Children's testimonies nourished by love; Touch the hearts of the children	
Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	100
Windows of light and truth; Windows of revelation; Obedience opens the windows of heaven; Missionary service; The law of tithing; The Word of Wisdom; Word of wisdom for the mind; Gift of the Holy Ghost; Worthy worship; Testimony	
Woolsey, Elder Durrel A.	113
A strategy for war; Satan's influence in the latter days; The need for Christ-centered living; Ten symptoms of the descending path; The prescription for victory	

Z

Zwick, Elder W. Craig	14
Encircled in the Savior's love; Reach out to those with disabilities; Include those with disabilities; Contributions of those with disabilities; Learning from those with disabilities; The Savior's compassion	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS



4 02950 49000

95049

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-sixth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 6 and 7, 1996

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-sixth
Annual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
April 6 and 7, 1996

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Report of the 166th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 166th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 1996, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 6 and 7, 1996. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 6, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: Carlos E. Asay, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goasland, and Harold G. Hillam

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Dallas N. Archibald, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Earl C. Tingey, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Lino Alvarez, L. Edward Brown, C. Max Caldwell, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Rulon G. Craven, Julio E. Dávila, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, In Sang Han, William Rolfe Kerr, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, James O. Mason, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Bruce D. Porter, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Dennis E. Simmons, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Jerald L. Taylor, Fran-

cisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, Richard B. Wirthlin, and Lowell D. Wood
The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 166th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 1996, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!" President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you, wherever you may be, from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this the first general session of the 166th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We note that this April 6th is the 166th anniversary of the founding of the Church.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder James M. Parimore, who is excused.

As I indicated last October, this historic and wonderful Tabernacle is becoming increasingly inadequate in accommodating all who wish to attend

these conferences and other large gatherings. The Tabernacle is filled to capacity this morning. I am pleased to announce that we have had our architects and engineers working on the design of a hall which will seat three or four times as many for conference and which will serve other Church purposes, as well as possibly some community cultural events. It is a big undertaking, but we can do it more easily in our circumstances than could our forebears in their circumstances when they built this Tabernacle. More will be said on this at a later time.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus under the direction of Brother Robert Bowden with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

They opened by singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" and will now favor us with "O My Father." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Charles Didier of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "O My Father."

Elder Charles Didier offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

It will now be our privilege to listen to President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President James E. Faust

"The rising up of my church"

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, as we begin this historic conference I am confident that we will hear the word of the Lord during all of the proceedings. That divine guidance has directed the affairs of this Church for over 166 years today, since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was legally organized on April 6, 1830. What has happened in this work in this relatively short time is a miracle. As a small boy I remember hearing my great-uncle William Wetzel tell about walking with his family across the American plains to the Salt Lake Valley. His stories of struggle, sacrifice, and faith made an indelible impression on my young heart.

When Great-grandfather's family arrived in this valley, most of the members of the Church lived in a group of small, dusty settlements in the territory of Deseret. Many had braved the ocean to come to the United States. Then they traveled by wagon and handcart through the searing heat and the intense cold of the American plains and the high mountain peaks to find peace and worship God.

In large measure, members of our faith were at that time a despised, persecuted, and driven people. But since then has come the fulfillment of the Lord's statement, "In this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun."¹ No one can fully understand how and why the Church has come "out of obscurity"² and blossomed without knowing some of the fundamental prophetic truths on which the Church rests.

Follow the Brethren

When I was first named as a General Authority many years ago, I went to see

President Hugh B. Brown, then in the First Presidency, and asked him, "President Brown, what advice have you got for a new, young, inexperienced General Authority?" This wise and venerable man responded simply and directly, "Stick with the Brethren." Who are the Brethren? The Brethren are those who hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. They are the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, each of whom is an apostle and prophet; the Seventy; and, in temporal matters, the Presiding Bishopric.

The rise of the Church from Palmyra to Kirtland, from Kirtland to Nauvoo, from Nauvoo to the West, and in over 150 countries all over the world has come about because the body of the Church, wherever it was, has been loyal to the Brethren. Millions of men and women have followed the prophets of God. I wish to pay special tribute to all of the faithful women since the time of the Restoration who have listened to the prophetic voice of the Church. Their supernal womanly gifts and talents have blessed the work of God in a most important and indispensable way.

Those who have stayed with the Brethren have a firm testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God who, under divine authority, reestablished the Church of Jesus Christ in our time. Such solid faith is the foundation of the loyalty manifested by the great majority of faithful members who, throughout the history of the Church, have received the confirming witness concerning the reality of continuing revelation. This revelation has come in its time from each of the Presidents of the Church, their counselors in the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who serve under the direction of the President.

Only those with authority may lead

The dispensation of divine truth in which we now live, in distinction from previous dispensations, will not be destroyed by apostasy. This is in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy that "the God of heaven [shall] set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" nor "left to other people."³ President John Taylor affirmed this also when he said: "There is one thing very certain, . . . and that is, whatever men may think, and however they may plot and contrive, that this Kingdom will never be given into the hands of another people. It will grow and spread and increase, and no man living can stop its progress."⁴

From the beginning some from both inside and outside of the Church have sought to persuade members of the Church against following the inspired declarations of those who hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. Some of those seeking to mislead have done so claiming special endowments of intelligence or inspiration beyond the established order of the Church. As a warning against those so claiming special authority, the Lord made it clear "that it shall not be given to any one . . . to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church."⁵

Apostasy and return of Oliver Cowdery

In the early days of the Restoration, Oliver Cowdery became the second elder of the Church and participated with Joseph in the marvelous Restoration experiences. He was ordained with the Prophet Joseph in 1829 under the hands of a heavenly messenger when the priesthood was restored to the earth. Oliver served as a scribe, writing down the translation of the Book of Mormon as it poured forth from the mouth of the

Prophet Joseph. He shared with the Prophet Joseph the great visions manifested in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 and witnessed the bestowal of the keys by Moses, Elias, and Elijah.

In an early revelation the Lord warned Oliver: "Behold, thou art blessed, and art under no condemnation. But beware of pride, lest thou shouldst enter into temptation."⁶ Oliver had great intellect and enjoyed marvelous spiritual blessings. However, over time he forgot the Lord's warning, and pride entered into his heart. Brigham Young later said of this pride:

"I have seen men who belonged to this kingdom, and who really thought that if they were not associated with it, it could not progress. One man especially, whom I now think of, . . . was peculiarly gifted in self-reliance and general ability. He said as much to the Prophet Joseph a number of times as to say that if he left this kingdom, it could not progress any further. I speak of Oliver Cowdery. He forsook it, and it still rolled on, and still triumphed over every opposing foe, and bore off safely all those who clung to it."⁷

In October 1848, 10 years after leaving the Church, Oliver Cowdery visited the Church headquarters in Iowa and humbly petitioned to be received again into the Church through baptism. Describing this memorable event, George A. Smith wrote of Oliver: "He bore testimony in the most positive terms . . . and told the people if they wanted to follow the right path, to keep [in] the main channel of the stream—where the body of the Church goes, there is the authority."⁸

In his final testimony he affirmed the coming of John the Baptist, holding the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood; and the coming of Peter, James, and John, holding the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. He further stated: "These Priesthoods, with their authority, are now, and must continue to be, in the body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints. Blessed is the Elder who has received the same, and thrice blessed and holy is he who shall [continue] to the end."⁹

"By their fruits ye shall know them"

Over the years many offshoots and splinter groups have not stayed with the Brethren. This is not a new phenomenon. After the Crucifixion of the Savior, Peter and the Apostles were preaching to a hostile audience. Gamaliel, a man learned in the law, defended their right to preach. After recalling the ill fate of two different groups that had risen up and drawn people away, he presented this sure test of truth. Said he, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."¹⁰

In the great Sermon on the Mount, the Savior posed a poignant question: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" He went on to say: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."¹¹ The sweet fruits of this work are now known over much of the earth.

Respect domains of authority

To validate those who have authority, the Lord also said, "All things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith."¹² Yet He also said that "every man might speak in the name of God."¹³ How can this be? Every man and young man in the Church who lives in accordance with the Savior's teachings is ordained to the priesthood. The use of this power, however, is limited. Every father is to his family a patriarch and every mother a matriarch as coequals in their distinctive parental roles. Members, men and women, may receive inspiration by the gift of the Holy

Ghost for their personal lives and for their areas of responsibility.

Only the prophet and President, and no one else, can use *all* of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. In our time that man is President Gordon B. Hinckley. He and his counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have delegated specific authority and responsibility to other General Authorities and to local authorities and auxiliary leaders to direct the work in their own areas of responsibility.

Early in the Church the Lord warned members, "Thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church."¹⁴

Some have said, "My integrity will not permit me to yield my conscience to anyone." A clear conscience is a very precious spiritual endowment when it is guided by the Holy Ghost. Ultimately everyone has the responsibility of making his or her own moral decisions. However, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated that "it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church . . . to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves."¹⁵

In addition, some have claimed higher spiritual gifts or authority outside the established priesthood authority of the Church. They say that they believe in the principles and ordinances of the gospel and accept the President of the Church as the legal administrator thereof, but claim they have a higher order which the President does not have. This is often done to justify an activity which is not in accordance with the doctrines of the Church. There can be no higher order, however, because the President of the Church both holds and exercises all of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. The Lord has said of the President of the Church that "none else shall be appointed [to receive commandments and revelations] except it be through him."¹⁶

Apostasy and return of Thomas B. Marsh

Thomas B. Marsh was another favored associate of the Prophet Joseph. Over this pulpit in the April 1984 general conference, President Hinckley reminded us that Brother Marsh was serving as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve when he chose to disregard the decisions of the First Presidency and other Church leaders in a dispute between his wife and another woman over some milk strippings.¹⁷

When, as did the prodigal son, he finally "came to himself,"¹⁸ he wrote to Heber C. Kimball, who had been his associate in the Quorum of the Twelve, stating:

"Having lost my wife three years since, I began to awake to a sense of my situation; . . . I know that I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight and have rendered myself unworthy of your confidence; or of a place in the family of Heaven. . . . I deserve no place among you in the church even as the lowest member; but I cannot live long so without a reconciliation with the 12 and the Church whom I have injured." He then recited the typical lesson his years of rebellion had taught him: "The Lord could get along very well without me and He has lost nothing by my falling out of the ranks; But O what have I lost?! Riches, greater riches than all this world or many planets like this could afford." He pleaded with his brethren for comfort and peace and their smiles upon him.¹⁹

After being rebaptized, Thomas came to Salt Lake City, where he asked Brigham Young, the President of the Church, for forgiveness. He was invited by President Young to speak at a Sunday service where Thomas offered this advice to his listeners: "If there are any among this people who should ever apostatize and do as I have done, prepare your backs for a good whipping, if you are such as

the Lord loves. But if you will take my advice, you will stand by the authorities."²⁰

Five fundamental truths of authority

The Prophet Joseph explained in the winter of 1832–33 that "no true angel from God will ever come to ordain any man, because they have once been sent to establish the priesthood by ordaining me thereunto; and the priesthood being once established on earth, with [the] power to ordain others, no heavenly messenger will ever come to interfere with that power by ordaining any more. . . . You may therefore know, from this time forward, that if any man comes to you professing to be ordained by an angel, he is either a liar or has been imposed upon in consequence of transgression by an angel of the devil, for this priesthood shall never be taken away from this church."²¹

May I now review five of the fundamental prophetic truths of the Church:

First, the keys and the authority of God have been given by Him to Joseph Smith and each of his successors who have been called as Presidents of the Church.

Second, those keys and authority are never to be given to another people, and those who have such authority are "known to the Church."²²

Third, continuing revelation and leadership for the Church come through the President of the Church, and he will never mislead the Saints.

Fourth, individual members of the Church may receive revelation for their own callings and areas of responsibility and for their own families. They may not receive spiritual instruction for those higher in authority.

Fifth, those who claim direct revelation from God for the Church outside the established order and channel of the priesthood are misguided. This also applies to any who follow them.

If any find themselves in this position, please know that there is always an open door in the Church for those who wish to return to full fellowship with the sisters and with the brethren of the priesthood. The welcome will be with open arms.

My testimony of the divinity of the callings of the presiding Brethren as the representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ flows from the deepest wellspring of my soul. For many years I have watched the process of continuous revelation which emanates from God through the keys, authority, and direction of the President of the Church. I testify that this revelatory power has directed this work since April 6, 1830. That confirmation is the source of the greatest knowledge I have. I counsel and pray that all will heed the ongoing prophetic voice of this Church, which reveals the word of God in our day. Of this I witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 5:14.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
3. Daniel 2:44; see also Doctrine and Covenants 138:44.
4. In *Journal of Discourses*, 25:348; see also 14:367.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 23:1.
7. In *Journal of Discourses*, 11:252.
8. George A. Smith to Orson Pratt, 20 Oct. 1848, in *Millennial Star*, 1 Jan. 1849, 14.
9. Oliver Cowdery to Samuel W. Richards, 13 Jan. 1849, in *Deseret News*, 26 Mar. 1884, 153.
10. Acts 5:38–39.
11. Matthew 7:16–20.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 26:2.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:20.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 28:6.
15. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 21; see also Doctrine and Covenants 28:12.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 43:4.
17. See Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 110–11; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 83.
18. Luke 15:17.
19. Thomas B. Marsh to Heber C. Kimball, 5 May 1857, Brigham Young Collection, Church Historical Department; spelling and punctuation modernized.
20. In *Journal of Discourses*, 5:206.
21. Reported in “Although Dead, Yet He Speaketh,” *Millennial Star*, 20 Nov. 1846, 139.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now address us.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

The law of witnesses

Humbly, gratefully I stand before you to testify of God's words and works. I come in the spirit of one going before to prepare the way. The commission to do so comes from the Lord. My desire is to help us prepare for His Second Coming and to dwell in His presence, to en-

joy the gifts and graces He alone can bestow.

During the course of this general conference, much will be said concerning the Lord's work and what Heavenly Father desires of His children. These are sacred things. May it be known that the speakers do not stand alone in their declarations. Accompanying their testimonies, I

raise my voice as yet another witness. This process is referred to as the *law of witnesses*.

This law was established to introduce, affirm, and seal the truth upon the hearts of God's children. One never stands alone in carrying the word of God to the world. Moses was called as a prophet to lead Israel, but he was not left alone. The Lord sent to him his brother, Aaron, not only as a voice but as a witness with Moses that the God of Abraham had spoken.

This law of witnesses ushered in the birth, life, and mission of Christ Jesus. Holy angels, John the Baptist, prophets, apostles, the Holy Ghost, the Savior himself, and God our Father all declared His divinity.

This same pattern prevailed at each step in the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. Multiple witnesses, reliable beyond refute, have written and spoken of what their ears heard, their eyes beheld, their hearts understood. In every dispensation two or more witnesses have joined their voices in such proclamations. It is the pattern of heaven. Said the Apostle Paul, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1).

Bearing witness to a skeptical father

The essential nature of witnesses was brought forcibly to my mind some years ago while seeking permission from a man for his wife and children to be baptized. Our missionaries had taught the family of the divinity of Christ, the sacred appearance of God the Father and His Beloved Son to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1820, and the Restoration of the true Church upon the earth. To each point the missionaries bore fervent testimony, and the Holy Ghost confirmed to the mother and children that it was all true. They wished to be baptized.

The father, however, was skeptical. He felt no such spiritual confirmation. Long-held beliefs and traditions filled his mind with doubt. I met with him to discuss his misgivings and the desire of his wife and children to be baptized. Though he did not wish to keep them from making their own choices, he was deeply troubled by the conflict he felt between his beliefs and family traditions and this message of the Restoration. As our conversation drew to a close, I bore my witness to him. It included my testimony of what the missionaries had taught. When I was explaining the divine nature of this Church, the Lord's words from the Doctrine and Covenants came into my mind, and I testified that this is "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30).

My friend was startled. This declaration troubled him, and in disbelief he said, "How can you possibly claim such a thing? My church has many more members than yours; my church is much larger and more influential than yours; and furthermore, the history and traditions of my church go back much further than Joseph Smith. How can you possibly claim that yours is the only true church?"

His reaction is similar to that of many when first hearing such a testimony—one that could be experienced by some who are listening to this conference. During these proceedings, those who participate through prayer, the spoken word, and music will be testifying of what they know to be true. Their witnesses will include:

- The reality of God, the divinity of His Beloved Son, and the doctrines of Christ.
- The divine calling of prophets, seers, and revelators, with special emphasis given to the first prophet of this dispensation, Joseph Smith, and the Lord's prophet today, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

These witnesses will point us to:

- Revealed truths about the purposes of life, our origin and destiny, and
- The holy scriptures, often referencing the Book of Mormon as another testament of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost can help us know

To some, these testimonies will be troubling, at variance with what they think or believe. They may ask, "How can you possibly claim such a thing? How can you know?"

To you with such questions, I say, Before reacting, before closing your mind, before finding fault because of a word, please listen and consider this inspired insight. I quote: "'Words do not convey meanings; they call them forth.' I speak out of the context of my experience, and you listen out of the context of yours, and that is why communication is difficult" (David O. McKay, quoted by Lowell L. Bennion, in Conference Report, Apr. 1968, 94; or *Improvement Era*, June 1968, 90).

This is a phenomenon of mortality and lies at the heart of one's skepticism. But amid differing views on spiritual matters, there comes to us from scripture the wonderful and comforting promise "*Ye may know*." Though our backgrounds are different, we are all children of the same Heavenly Father. He has provided a way to bridge our differences, a way *each of us may know*. This way is through the power and sure witness of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, sent forth by God to reveal all needful things. He teaches and testifies with divine power and clarity. His witness may go unheard or unheeded, forsaken or denied, but it is never misunderstood. "The Holy Ghost is a revelator" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 328). That which is received of

Him has a more powerful effect upon the soul than anything else received in any other way. A millennium of experience through sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, and all the powers of the universe combined cannot approach the sublime and complete experience of one brief moment under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is a spirit personage. He has power to speak to the spirit of every man and woman, boy and girl. His message is conveyed with absolute certainty. This revealed knowledge constitutes a personal testimony and witness of the truth. (See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966–73], 1:756.)

Said the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Yea, behold, I will tell you in *your mind* and in *your heart*, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon *you* and which shall dwell in *your heart*."

"Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation" (D&C 8:2–3; italics added).

How perfect and complete! How extraordinary! How wonderful!

"Ask, and it shall be given you"

Different though our lives may be, there can come to each of us the same sure anchor—the *truth* from God. It is absolute, infinite, and available. As Jesus said:

"The word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

"And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit" (D&C 84:45–46).

He further explained: "Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. . . . The Spirit of truth is of God" (D&C 93:24–26).

And finally the Lord urges, "Ask of God; ask, and it shall be given you" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:12).

Skeptical friend receives a sure witness

Now for the rest of the story. You recall that my friend asked, "How can you possibly claim such a thing? How can you possibly claim that yours is the only true church?"

The answer came, not from me but through me: "I am not claiming it," I said. "I am quoting it. Jesus Christ said it. Don't argue with me. If you wish to take issue, pray and talk with Heavenly Father about it."

The conversation came to a close, he gave permission for his family members to be baptized, and we parted.

Some weeks later, as I was leaving a stake conference, I saw two men coming toward me, shouldering their way through the crowd. One of them was the same man of whom I have spoken. The first thought that crossed my mind was, "Oh no, here comes an argument!"

As he approached, he extended his hand and asked, "Do you remember me?"

"I certainly do," I said, "and I want you to know that this is still the only true and living Church."

Before more could be said, his handshake tightened and he replied, "I know! I have prayed about it as you said. The Lord has told me by the power of His Spirit that it is all true. I was baptized last weekend and ordained a priest. Today I am baptizing my friend here, for he also knows it is true."

My personal witness

Such is the purpose of witnesses; such is the power of the Holy Ghost; such is the anchor of truth. To the things which have been and will yet be testified of, I now add my witness that "*ye may know*." God lives! We are His children,

and He loves us. Jesus Christ is His Beloved Son, our Redeemer, and the Savior of the world. The Father and Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, answered his prayers, and gave him instructions. Other heavenly ministrants came to him thereafter, restoring what had been lost. They included Moroni bringing forth the Book of Mormon; John the Baptist restoring the priesthood of Aaron; Peter, James, and John conferring upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the higher priesthood and holy apostleship; Moses with the keys of the gathering of Israel; Elias with the gospel of Abraham; and Elijah with the power to seal mothers, fathers, and children together as eternal families. The Lord's gospel has been restored and His earthly kingdom reestablished, which He has named The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see D&C 115:3-4; 3 Nephi 27:7-8).

If you find this or any other declaration of this conference unsettling, take up the matter with your Heavenly Father in prayer. "Ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:6). For "if ye . . . ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth . . . unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost *ye may know the truth* of all things" (Moroni 10:4-5; italics added).

This is my witness—all of this is true! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Come, Follow Me."

President Hinckley

Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, has just spoken to us, and then this chorus of talented and gifted young people has sung "Come, Follow Me."

We shall now hear from Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy.

Elder Earl C. Tingey

Honor the Sabbath day

Good morning, brothers and sisters. My subject is the Sabbath day, specifically as it relates to shopping on Sunday.

From the beginning, God has instructed prophets to teach the covenant people to honor the Sabbath day. God rested from His creative labors on the seventh day.¹ This day was blessed and sanctified as a holy day.

The fourth commandment to Moses was to "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."²

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that "Sabbath observance was a sign between ancient Israel and their God whereby the chosen people might be known."³

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recognize Sunday as the Sabbath in commemoration of the fact that Christ came forth from the grave on Sunday, and the Apostles commenced meeting thereafter on the first day of the week.⁴

"Keep thyself unspotted from the world"

On Sunday, August 7, 1831, the Lord revealed the following to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;

"Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;

"But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.

"And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full."⁵

In a recent regional training meeting for priesthood leaders, President Gordon B. Hinckley expressed concern that members of the Church may have a tendency to take on the ways of the world. He said: "We don't adopt them immediately, but we slowly take them on, unfortunately. . . . I wish I had the power to convert this whole Church to the observance of the Sabbath. I know our people would be more richly blessed of the Lord if they would walk in faithfulness in the observance of the Sabbath."⁶

Do not shop on Sunday

A very important aspect of properly observing the Sabbath concerns shopping on Sunday. Unfortunately many commercial businesses and establishments are open on Sunday. The world sees no conflict in Sunday shopping. But we of the Church have been counseled and taught by prophets to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world."⁷ We should not shop on Sunday.

President Hinckley continued with the following instruction to priesthood leaders: "There isn't anybody in this Church who has to buy furniture on Sunday. There really isn't. There isn't anybody in this Church who has to buy a new automobile on Sunday, is there? No. There isn't anybody in this Church who, with a little care and planning, has to buy groceries on Sunday. No. . . . You don't need ice cream to be bought on Sunday. . . . You don't need to make Sunday a day of merchandising. . . . I don't think we need to patronize the ordinary business merchants on the Sabbath day. Why do they stay open? To get customers. Who are those customers?

Well, they are not all nonmembers of this Church. You know that and I know that."⁸

In the book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament, the people were taught to observe the Sabbath with the following instruction: "And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day."⁹

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve has taught: "Modern-day prophets have encouraged us not to shop on Sunday. . . . Those of us who shop on the Sabbath cannot escape responsibility for encouraging businesses to remain open on that day. Essential services must be provided, but most Sabbath transactions could be avoided if merchants and customers were determined to avoid doing business on the Lord's day."¹⁰

Brothers and sisters, let's not shop on Sunday. One way we avoid this is by planning ahead. Fill up the gas tank on Saturday. Acquire the needed groceries for the weekend on Saturday. Don't you be the means of causing someone to work on Sunday because you patronize their establishment. Of course, we know that there are essential businesses that must be open on Sunday. These are emergency, medical, transportation, and some forms of protective services, such as police and fire. We are grateful for those persons who staff these essential public establishments and afford us protection and comfort.

In many countries of the world and in many states of the Union, shopping on Sunday is not done or is prohibited by law. We as a community of Saints should use our influence in a positive way to encourage other citizens to not shop on Sunday. We should start with ourselves. If we will not shop on Sunday, businesses which open on Sunday will have no financial reason to remain open on Sunday. It's really that simple.

I often drive through small rural communities of Utah on a Sunday afternoon as I return home from stake conference assignments. I observe that almost always the tractors are idle and the fields are empty. I thank God for the faith of the humble farmers. When I enter the cities, I see the parking lots of many stores filled with cars on a Sunday, and I am saddened that the Lord's law is being broken. The justification for and reason often cited by the owners and operators of such businesses is to be competitive, to conform to corporate policy, and so on.

I well remember an interview President Spencer W. Kimball once had with a faithful Church member. It went like this: "What is your occupation?" And [the man] said, 'I operate a service station.' And I asked, 'Do you operate on the Sabbath?' His answer was, 'No, I do not.' 'Well, how can you get along? Most service station operators seem to think they must open on the Sabbath.' 'I get along well,' he said. 'The Lord is good to me.' 'Do you not have stiff competition?' I asked. 'Yes, indeed,' he replied. 'Across the street is a man who keeps open all day Sunday.' 'And you never open?' I asked. 'No, sir,' he said, 'and I am grateful, and the Lord is kind, and I have sufficient for my needs.'"¹¹

Our heritage of Sabbath observance

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. We know we live in the world, but we are taught to not be of the world. Like ancient Israel, who also were a covenant people, we should encourage the proper observance of the Sabbath day by not shopping on Sunday. Let this become a sign with our God by which we shall be known.

This is our heritage. In this dispensation, from the days of our pioneer forefathers, we have been so taught. I recall a talk given by President Hinckley several years ago wherein he said:

"May I take you back 142 years when there was, of course, no tabernacle here, nor temple, nor Temple Square. On July 24, 1847, the pioneer company of our people came into this valley. An advance group had arrived a day or two earlier. Brigham Young arrived on Saturday. The next day, Sabbath services were held both in the morning and in the afternoon. There was no hall of any kind in which to meet. I suppose that in the blistering heat of that July Sunday they sat on the tongues of their wagons and leaned against the wheels while the Brethren spoke. The season was late, and they were faced with a gargantuan and immediate task if they were to grow seed for the next season. But President Young pleaded with them not to violate the Sabbath then or in the future."¹²

Can we possibly imagine how tempting it must have been for our pioneer forefathers to break the Sabbath day? Their survival depended on the food they could grow and harvest. Yet their leaders counseled them to exercise faith in the promises of the Lord and to respect the Sabbath day.

Blessings for honoring the Sabbath

What are the promises and blessings of the Lord to those who honor the Sabbath day by not shopping on Sunday? The 59th section of the Doctrine and Covenants and the 26th chapter of Leviticus in the Old Testament give similar promises: The fulness of the earth is yours; the land will be blessed with rain and will yield its increase; there will be peace in the land; and God will magnify His faithful people, have respect for them, and establish His covenant with them.¹³

As another blessing—and a warning—I think of the counsel of President George Albert Smith when he said, "Much of the sorrow and distress that is

afflicting . . . mankind is traceable to the fact that they have ignored [God's] admonition to keep the Sabbath day holy."¹⁴

A measure of the depth of conversion

In conclusion, and appropriate to this beautiful Easter season, our observance of the Sabbath is an indication of the depth of our conversion and our willingness to keep sacred covenants. Elder Mark E. Petersen has said:

"Our observance or nonobservance of the Sabbath is an unerring measure of our attitude toward the Lord personally and toward his suffering in Gethsemane, his death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead. It is a sign of whether we are Christians in very deed, or whether our conversion is so shallow that commemoration of his atoning sacrifice means little or nothing to us."¹⁵

I bear humble witness of the sanctity of the Sabbath day and of our need to resolve not to shop on Sunday. It is an element of our faith and obedience to eternal principles. It is a sign between our God and His chosen people. It is a true law and commandment of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Moses 3:3; Genesis 2:2–3.
2. Exodus 20:8.
3. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 658; see also Nehemiah 13:15–22; Isaiah 56:1–8; Jeremiah 17:19–27; Ezekiel 46:1–7; Exodus 31:12–17.
4. See John 20:1–19; Luke 24:1–12; Mark 16:1–9; Matthew 28:1–6; Acts 20:7.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9–13.
6. Heber City–Springville Utah regional conference, priesthood leadership session, 13 May 1995.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9; James 1:27.
8. Heber City–Springville Utah regional conference, priesthood leadership session, 13 May 1995.

9. Nehemiah 10:31.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 21.
11. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 227.
12. In Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 51.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:16–19; Leviticus 26:2–6, 9.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1935, 120.
15. In Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 72; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 49.

President Hinckley

Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing “How Firm a Foundation.” Following this we will hear from Sister Chieko Okazaki, first counselor in the general Relief Society presidency.

The chorus and congregation sang “How Firm a Foundation.”

Sister Chieko N. Okazaki

We are all one in Christ

My dear brothers and sisters, aloha! In February I rejoiced with you when the number of members outside the United States edged ever so slightly past the number of members inside the United States. That slight shift is an important symbol of the international nature of the Church. I thought of Paul’s statement to the Galatians: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). This week I celebrate the 54th anniversary of my baptism. People like me who are converts know the promise of Paul: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Brothers and sisters, today I want to talk about the beautiful oneness that we share in the gospel. I just returned from the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Tonga, and Fiji three weeks ago, where Sister Susan Warner and I participated in leadership training. Earlier assignments have taken me to Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Samoa, Korea, and Japan.

In all these places we worked hard and long. People have said, “Oh, you must have been so tired.” On the contrary, there was a feeling of being borne up “as on eagles’ wings” (D&C 124:18) because we have seen the daughters of Zion “awake, and arise . . . and put on [their] beautiful garments” (Moroni 10:31) in response to the good news of the gospel. We taught, but—and this is the point I want to stress—we also learned.

The most important lesson was that we are truly all one in Christ Jesus. We are one in our love of the Savior. We are one in our testimonies of the gospel. We are one in faith, hope, and charity. We are one in our conviction that the Book of Mormon is the inspired word of God. We are one in supporting President Hinckley and the other General Authorities. We are one in loving each other.

Are we perfect in any of these things? No. We all have much to learn. Are we exactly the same in any of these things? No. We are all at different points on our journey back to our Father in Heaven. Did the Jews and Greeks whom Paul addressed in his epistle to the Galatians stop being Jews and Greeks when

they were baptized? Did the men stop being men and the women stop being women? No. But they had all “been baptized into Christ” and had “put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27).

Nephi explains the same principle in these terms: The Savior “*inviteth . . . all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . and all are alike unto God*” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Cultures differ, but gospel is the same

God has given us many gifts, much diversity, and many differences, but the essential thing is what we know about each other—that we are all His children. Our challenge as members of the Church is for all of us to learn from each other, that we may all love each other and grow together.

The doctrines of the gospel are indispensable. They are essential, but the packaging is optional. Let me share a simple example to show the difference between the doctrines of the Church and the cultural packaging. Here is a bottle of Utah peaches, prepared by a Utah homemaker to feed her family during a snowy season. Hawaiian homemakers don’t bottle fruit. They pick enough fruit for a few days and store it in baskets like this for their families. This basket contains a mango, bananas, a pineapple, and a papaya. I bought these fruits in a supermarket in Salt Lake City, but they might have been picked by a Polynesian homemaker to feed her family in a climate where fruit ripens all year round.

The basket and the bottle are different containers, but the content is the same: fruit for a family. Is the bottle right and the basket wrong? No, they are both right. They are containers appropriate to the culture and the needs of the people. And they are both appropriate for the content they carry, which is the fruit.

Now, what is the fruit? Paul tells us, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). In the sisterhood of Relief Society, in the brotherhood of priesthood quorums, in the reverent coming together to partake of the sacrament, the fruit of the Spirit unites us in love, joy, and peace whether the Relief Society is in Taipei or Tonga, whether the priesthood quorum is in Montana or Mexico, and whether the sacrament meeting is in Fiji or the Philippines.

All over the world, as brothers and sisters in the gospel, we can learn from each other, grow closer together, and increase in love for each other. Our unity grows from what we have in common all around the world. They are the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, our faith in the Savior, our testimonies of the scriptures, our gratitude for guidance from living prophets, and our sense of ourselves as a people striving to be Saints. These are the principles of the gospel.

Let us be sensitive to the unchanging and powerful core principles of the gospel. Let us understand that they matter most. Let us build firm foundations on these principles. Then when the rains fall and the floods come, our house will be “founded upon a rock” and it will not fall (Matthew 7:25).

Then, building on that firm foundation, let us rejoice with each other, listen to each other, learn from each other, and help each other apply those principles as we deal with our different circumstances, different cultures, different generations, and different geographies.

Learning from our differences

For six years now I have been listening to the Relief Society women of the Church. I have learned from all of them. I have learned from divorced mothers who are struggling to raise their children alone. I have learned from women who

long to be married but are not, from women who yearn for children but cannot bear them, from women who are at risk from emotional and physical abuse in their homes. I have learned from women who work in their homes and women who work outside their homes. I have learned from women who endure chemical dependencies, experiences of childhood sexual abuse, and chronic illness.

Not many of these women thought they were giving me a gift. Most of them thought they were asking for help. But all of them blessed me as I listened and learned from them.

Speaking the language of the Spirit

When I was called to the Relief Society general presidency six years ago this month, President Hinckley counseled me: "You bring a peculiar quality to this presidency. You will be recognized as one who represents those beyond the borders of the United States and Canada and, as it were, an outreach across the world to members of the Church in many, many lands. They will see in you a representation of their oneness with the Church." He gave me a blessing that my tongue might be loosed as I spoke to the people.

President Hinckley, I want to bear witness to the Lord before you and this congregation that your counsel and your blessing have been literally fulfilled.

I do not speak Korean or Spanish or Tongan. But when I received my assignment to go among the Relief Society sisters and their priesthood leaders in lands where those languages are spoken, I was filled with a great desire to speak to them in their own language. I drew strength from President Hinckley's words of comfort and blessing. With the help of the Church Translation Department and good coaches who spent hours working with me, I was blessed to deliver my addresses in Spanish, Korean, and Tongan as I went among those people. I could feel the Spirit carrying my words to their hearts, and I could feel "the fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22) bringing back to me their love, their joy, and their faith. I could feel the Spirit making us one.

Brothers and sisters, whether your fruits are peaches or papaya, and whether you bring them in bottles or in baskets, we thank you for offering them in love. Father in Heaven, may we be one and may we be Thine (see D&C 38:27), I pray in the sacred name of our Savior Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Who says the women of this Church don't have a powerful voice? Sister Chieko Okazaki, first counselor in the general Relief Society presidency, has spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Which way do you face?

As I face this congregation, I sense the responsibility entrusted to me. As you face the General Authorities and officers of the Church, you also bear re-

sponsibility. We are all accountable for acting upon the truths that are taught.

Facing you, I am reminded of military days long ago when our platoon heard shouts from a sergeant: "Attention!" "Right face!" "Left face!" "About

face!" We learned to respond to those orders with instant precision. In retrospect, I don't recall ever having heard his command to "face upward." Yet scriptures tell us to "look to God and live."¹

My topic today relates to the first of the Lord's Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."² This commandment may be better known than obeyed. May I share a suggestion that I have found useful in testing my own allegiance to this commandment? When confronted with a challenging choice, I ask myself, "Which way do you face?"

Life without looking to God

Sadly, many individuals don't know where to find God, and exclude Him from their lives. When spiritual needs arise, they may look to the left, the right, or round about. But looking to other people on the same level cannot satisfy spiritual shortages. When the immortal spirit is starved, hunger persists for something more filling. Even when material success comes, there is a hollow ache if living well falls short of living worthily. Inner peace cannot be found in affluence accompanied by spiritual privation.

Invitation to come to the Lord

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints invite all to come unto Christ and enjoy the spiritual feast that His gospel provides. The Saints savor a sweet spiritual nourishment that sustains them through life. This sustenance comes because they have made covenants to take upon themselves the name of the Lord and strive to obey His precepts. Strength comes in recognizing and in being grateful for the Lord's gifts of immortality and the opportunity for eternal life.

Loyal citizens

These gifts are available to all. Citizens of many countries claim membership in the Church. Regardless of their flag or form of government, they find that allegiance to the Lord does not preclude their being loyal citizens of their nations. Fidelity to God enables one to develop a more profound patriotic allegiance and become a better citizen.

In addition to their national citizenship, members of the Church are also citizens of God's kingdom.³ Their commitment to it, however, may be variable. The great majority seek "first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness."⁴ Some allow their allegiance to God and His kingdom to slip below that of other interests in life. They have not yet determined which way they face.⁵

Representatives of the Lord

I perceived such confusion in the mind of a newspaper reporter who asked one of our leaders when a representative of such-and-such a country would become a General Authority. While that question was being answered, I thought about our beloved General Authorities born in the countries of Asia; of Europe; of North, Central, and South America; and of the islands of the sea. Though these Brethren come from many nations and speak several tongues, not one of them was called to represent his native country. Presiding quorums of the Church are not representative assemblies. Each leader has been called to face the people as a representative of the Lord, not the other way around.

General Authorities are "called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority."⁶ They are called as "especial witnesses"⁷ unto *all* the world, to teach and testify of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁸

Obeying commandments of the Lord

No matter where we live or in what position we serve, all of us need to determine which way we face. God's commandments serve as a standard against which priorities can be measured. Our respect for the first commandment fashions our feelings for all the others. Consider the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy, for example.⁹ We live in a time when many people throughout the world have transferred their allegiance on the Sabbath from places of worship to places of amusement. Again I ask, "Which way do you face?"¹⁰

Scriptures give us encouragement to do right:

"If thou turn away . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, . . . and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, . . .

"Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord."¹¹

Self-esteem is also earned by obedience to God's commandments regarding chastity.¹² Yet in our day those commands have been attacked and trivialized. The morality of self-discipline with appropriate "denial or restraint has been popularly depicted as unhealthy and dehumanizing." The truth is, "it is dehumanizing to define ourselves by our desires alone."¹³ Each human being is a child of God—created in His image—with natural appetites to control.

If we break God's first commandment, we cannot escape retribution. If we allow any other person or cause to come before allegiance to Him, we will reap a bitter harvest. Paul foresaw "destruction" for those "whose God is their belly."¹⁴ (I might include all forms of anatomical affection.) Any who choose to serve "the creature more than the Creator"¹⁵ deprive themselves of spiritual reward.

Thus, our priorities should be honestly evaluated in terms of that first commandment. If change in direction is needed, we may want to issue a self-command to "about face!" Doing so would please the Lord, who said, "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations."¹⁶

Trees reach up for the light and grow in the process. So do we as sons and daughters of heavenly parents. Facing upward provides a loftier perspective than facing right or facing left. Looking up in search of holiness builds strength and dignity as disciples of Deity.¹⁷

Facing our families

Facing upward is crucial for successful parenting. Families deserve guidance from heaven. Parents cannot counsel children adequately from personal experience, fear, or sympathy.¹⁸ But when parents face children as would the Creator who gave them life, parents will be endowed with wisdom beyond that of their own. Wise mothers and fathers will teach members of their family how to make personal decisions based upon divine law.¹⁹ They will teach them that "this life is the time . . . to prepare to meet God."²⁰ They will teach them that decisions of a moral and spiritual character *cannot* be based on freedom to choose without accountability to God for those choices.²¹ With that understanding, parents and children will be rewarded with strength of character, peace of mind, joy, and rejoicing in their posterity.²²

Facing our neighbors

Similarly, relationships with neighbors, friends, and associates will be enhanced as we approach them with "the pure love of Christ."²³ A desire to emulate the Lord provides powerful motivation for good. Our craving for compassion will

cause us to act in accord with the Golden Rule.²⁴ By so doing we will find joy in feeding the poor, clothing the naked, or doing volunteer work of worth.

Service to neighbors takes on new stature when we first look to God. In the Church, when priesthood and auxiliary leaders face their congregations, quorums, and classes as would the Lord, they learn that it does not matter *where* they serve, but *how*. Position in the Church does not exalt anyone, but faithfulness does. On the other hand, aspiring to a visible position—striving to become a master rather than a servant—can destroy the spirit of the worker and the work.

Occasionally confusion exists regarding servants and masters. The Bible reports that a group of men “had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest” among them. Jesus said, “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and *servant of all*.”²⁵

Was Jesus asking His disciples to respond to random requests from the crowd or to serve tables?²⁶ No! He was asking them to serve in *His* way. The people were not to be masters of His disciples. The *Lord* is their Master.

In rendering service to others, which way do we face? From the right or the left, we can only push or pull. We can lift only from a higher plane. To reach it we don’t look sideways; we look up to our Master. Just as we must look to God to *live* well, so we must look to God to *serve* well.

Attitudes of effective disciples

If we are called to positions of leadership, we are accountable to the Savior for the acts we perform in that office. Those actions are shaped by attitudes, and attitudes are elevated while lowering our heads in humble prayer. So state words in the hymn “Before Thee, Lord, I Bow My Head”:

Look up, my soul; be not cast down.
Keep not thine eyes upon the ground.
Break off the shackles of the earth.
Receive, my soul, the spirit’s birth.
And now as I go forth again
To mingle with my fellowmen,
Stay thou nearby, my steps to guide,
That I may in thy love abide.²⁷

Praying helps us to face trials in life. Prayer centers our attitudes precisely. With that focus we do not wander to the right or left through land mined with traps of temptation. Disciples do not flirt with danger at the jagged edge of disaster. Experienced mountain climbers do not lean toward the dangerous edge but toward safety, with ropes and other safeguards to secure them to those they trust. So it is with us. When we climb mountainous challenges of life, we should lean toward our Master and be yoked with Him, clinging tightly to the iron rod of the gospel, to family, and to trusted friends.

President David O. McKay taught this about edges: “Many of us through selfishness are lingering near the edge of the animal jungle where Nature’s law demands us to do everything with self in view.”²⁸

The Lord said, “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”²⁹ I have learned that such faith gives emancipating power. Facing God first lets us decide firmly what we shall not do; then we are free to pursue what we ought to do.

Recently President Gordon B. Hinckley declared: “Love of God is the root of all virtue, of all goodness, of all strength of character, of all fidelity to do right. Love the Lord your God, and love His Son, and be ever grateful for their love for us. Whenever other love fades, there will be that shining, transcendent, everlasting love of God for each of us and the love of His Son, who gave His life for us.”³⁰

Brothers and sisters, race, nationality, occupation, or other interests need not stand in the way. All can look to the Lord. All can place Him first in their lives. Those who do so and remain faithful will qualify for His sublime promise: "Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am."³¹ This glorious destiny can be ours. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Alma 37:47; see also Psalm 5:3; Alma 5:19; 37:37.
2. Exodus 20:3; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:17–19.
3. See Ephesians 2:19.
4. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
5. See Joel 3:14.
6. Articles of Faith 1:5.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 107:25.
8. What they speak "when moved upon by the Holy Ghost" represents the will of the Lord, the mind of the Lord, and the word of the Lord (Doctrine and Covenants 68:4).
9. Among the many, see Exodus 20:8; 31:15; 35:2; Leviticus 23:3; Jarom 1:5; Mosiah 13:16; 18:23; Doctrine and Covenants 68:29.
10. See 1 Kings 18:21.
11. Isaiah 58:13–14.
12. Some of the many are Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; Matthew 5:28; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 3 Nephi 12:28; Doctrine and Covenants 42:24; 59:6.
13. Report of the Ramsey Colloquium, *Wall Street Journal*, 24 Feb. 1994, A-18.
14. Philippians 3:19.
15. Romans 1:25.
16. Ezekiel 14:6.
17. The importance of looking up to the Lord is also emphasized in a vision to the Prophet Joseph Smith, dated January 21, 1836:
"I saw the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb, who are now upon the earth, who hold the keys of this last ministry, in foreign lands, standing together in a circle, much fatigued, with their clothes tattered and feet swollen, with their eyes cast downward, and Jesus standing in their midst, and they did not behold Him. The Savior looked upon them and wept" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 107).
18. See Proverbs 3:5.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21, which teaches that any blessing from God is obtained by obedience to that law upon which the blessing is predicated.
20. See Alma 34:32.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
22. The Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 9:22 adds this insight: "When thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy."
23. Moroni 7:47.
24. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12).
25. Mark 9:34–35; italics added. Another gospel writer phrased that truth in a similar way: "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). In these scriptures, the word *servant* comes from the Greek noun *diakonos*, which means "one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master." *Diakonos* is the Greek word from which the English word *deacon* is derived.
26. See Acts 6:2.

27. *Hymns*, no. 158.
28. In Conference Report, Apr. 1957, 7. President James E. Faust issued this solemn warning:
"Living on the edge can also mean being perilously close to the Bottomless Pit. . . .
"Some of you may think that you will discover your strengths and abilities by living on the edge. . . . There will always be enough risks that will come to you naturally without your having to seek them out" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 46).
29. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
30. Address delivered at Ricks College regional conference, 29 Oct. 1995; reported in *Church News*, 2 Mar. 1996, 2.
31. Doctrine and Covenants 93:1. He has also given many other promises, among which are:
"Blessed are you; for as you now behold me and know that I am, even so

shall ye come unto me and your souls shall live" (D&C 45:46).

"I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

The chorus sang "High on the Mountain Top."

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "High on the Mountain Top."

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

President Boyd K. Packer

Youth can avoid unseen dangers

These marvelous young people in this choir are typical of the young people that we meet all over the Church. How we love them. How grateful we are for you, our youth. *Nothing* is more precious than our children, our youth. And it is to you, our youth, that I speak.

Several years ago in Africa I learned how dangerously invisible crocodiles can be. I then warned our youth about unseen spiritual crocodiles lying in wait to destroy them.

Those invisible dangers have greatly increased in number, and now there are many kinds of them.

Some of them are like land mines hidden about in a field you must cross on

your way to maturity. Neighborhoods and schools, which once were safe, are no longer secure. Fortunately you have within you a spiritual power much like a mine detector. If you learn how it works, it will warn you of the presence of unseen crocodiles and mines, and you can avoid trouble.

Regulations of the Word of Wisdom

Three years after the organization of the Church, a revelation came which described our day in these prophetic words: "Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving

unto you this word of wisdom by revelation" (D&C 89:4).

The Word of Wisdom put restrictions on members of the Church. To this day those regulations apply to every member and to everyone who seeks to join the Church. They are so compelling that no one is to be baptized into the Church without first agreeing to live by them. No one will be called to teach or to lead without accepting them. When you want to go to the temple, you will be asked if you keep the Word of Wisdom. If you do not, you cannot go to the house of the Lord until you are fully worthy.

We know that young people generally don't like restrictions. Believe it or not, we were young once and we remember.

A resistance to anything that limits one's conduct has almost taken over society. Our whole social order could self-destruct over the obsession with freedom disconnected from responsibility, where choice is imagined to be somehow independent of consequences.

Young people, you must understand that there is something of colossal importance to justify the restrictions imposed by the Word of Wisdom!

While the revelation came first as a "greeting; not by commandment or constraint" (D&C 89:2), when members of the Church had had time to be taught the import of the revelation, succeeding Presidents of the Church declared it to be a commandment. And it was accepted by the Church as such.

"A principle with promise"

The Word of Wisdom was "given for a principle with promise" (D&C 89:3). That word *principle* in the revelation is a very important one. A principle is an enduring truth, a law, a rule you can adopt to guide you in making decisions. Generally principles are not spelled out in de-

tail. That leaves you free to find your way with an enduring truth, a principle, as your anchor.

Members write in asking if this thing or that is against the Word of Wisdom. It's well known that tea, coffee, liquor, and tobacco are against it. It has not been spelled out in more detail. Rather, we teach the principle together with the promised blessings. There are many habit-forming, addictive things that one can drink or chew or inhale or inject which injure both body and spirit which are not mentioned in the revelation.

Everything harmful is not specifically listed; arsenic, for instance—certainly bad, but not habit-forming! He who must be commanded in all things, the Lord said, "is a slothful and not a wise servant" (D&C 58:26).

In some cultures, native drinks are claimed to be harmless because they are not specifically mentioned in the revelation. Yet they draw members, particularly men, away from their families to parties which certainly offend the principle. Promises made in the revelation will be denied to the careless or the reckless.

Stay on the safe side

Obedience to counsel will keep you on the safe side of life.

The story is told of a king who was choosing between two drivers for his coach. He ordered each of them to drive his coach down a steep, winding road cut into a high cliff.

The first driver came down slowly, hugging the wall of the cliff. The second driver demonstrated great talent and ability. He raced down the mountain, with the coach so close at times that half the wheel was off the edge of the cliff.

The king was very thoughtful, then wisely chose the first man to drive his coach. It is best to stay on the safe side of things.

Use moderation in matters of health

The Word of Wisdom is “adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints” (D&C 89:3). It is buttressed by other scriptures. They teach that the good things of the earth “are made for the benefit and the use of man, . . . yea,” the Lord said, “for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul, . . . to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion” (D&C 59:18–20).

Young people, learn to use moderation and common sense in matters of health and nutrition, and particularly in medication. Avoid being extreme or fanatical or becoming a faddist.

For example, the Word of Wisdom counsels us to eat meat sparingly (see D&C 89:12). Lest someone become extreme, we are told in another revelation that “whoso forbiddeth to [eat meat] is not ordained of God” (D&C 49:18).¹

Another scripture counsels, “Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; . . . cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated” (D&C 88:124).

The promise of health

Honor the principle of the Word of Wisdom, and you will receive the promised blessings. “All saints,” the revelation promises, “who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments,” are promised that they “shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones” and “shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint” (D&C 89:18, 20).

The Word of Wisdom does not promise you perfect health, but it teaches how to keep the body you were born with in the best condition and your mind alert to delicate spiritual promptings.

I remember a blessing I received when I was serving in the military. It included counsel that’s good for every young person: “You have been given a body of such physical proportions and fitness as to enable your spirit to function through it. . . . You should cherish this as a great heritage. Guard [it] and protect it. Take nothing into it that shall harm the organs thereof because it is sacred. It is the instrument of your mind and [the] foundation of your character.” That counsel had great influence on me.

The promise of health for living the standard of the revelation is not limited to members of the Church. Tell your nonmember friends about the Word of Wisdom and urge them to live it.

The promise of revelation

And then there is a greater blessing promised in the Word of Wisdom. Those who obey it are promised that they “shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:19). This is the personal revelation through which you can detect invisible crocodiles or hidden mines or other dangers.

When you were confirmed a member of the Church, you had conferred upon you the gift of the Holy Ghost. “Know ye not,” Paul wrote, “that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

And the Lord said, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

The promise of redemption

There’s a final promise in the revelation. Speaking again of those who keep and do and obey these commandments,

the Lord said, "I . . . give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:21). That is a remarkable promise.

To understand it, we must turn to the time of Moses. The Israelites had been enslaved for 400 years. Moses came as their deliverer. He called forth plagues upon Egypt. The Pharaoh agreed each time to free the Israelites, but each time he reneged on his promise. Finally "the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go. . . . All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die" (Exodus 11:1, 5).

Moses told the Israelites to "take . . . a lamb . . . without blemish, a male of the first year. . . . Neither shall ye break a bone thereof" (Exodus 12:3, 5, 46; see also John 19:33).

They were to prepare the lamb as a feast and "take of the blood, and strike it on the . . . door post of the houses. . . . For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land . . . : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you. . . . And this day . . . ye shall keep . . . by an ordinance for ever" (Exodus 12:7, 12-14). "When your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? . . . ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover" (Exodus 12:26-27).

Surely, young people, you see the prophetic symbolism in the Passover. Christ was "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36), the Firstborn, male, without blemish. He was slain without breaking His bones, even though the soldiers were sent to do it.

But it is not from mortal death that we shall be spared in such a passover if we walk in obedience to these commandments, for each of us in time shall die. But there is spiritual death which you need not suffer. If you are obedient,

that spiritual death will pass over you, for "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," the revelation teaches (1 Corinthians 5:7).

While the Word of Wisdom requires strict obedience, in return it promises health, great treasures of knowledge, and that redemption bought for us by the Lamb of God, who was slain that we might be redeemed.

The law of sacrifice was fulfilled with the Crucifixion. The Lord instituted the sacrament in its place. That is the ordinance we shall keep forever! Young people, attend your meetings and partake of the sacrament.

Surely the Word of Wisdom was given so that you may keep the delicate, sensitive, spiritual part of your nature on proper alert. Learn to "listen" to your feelings. You will be guided and warned and taught and blessed.

Go forward with faith

Even though young life is always filled with uncertainties, young people, do not fear the future!

Your young dreams can be realized. All of your worthy, natural physical and emotional desires can be satisfied. You can find a companion to whom you can offer a body free from addiction, from depressants, from stimulants, and a mind sensitive to spiritual guidance and impressions.

You can be sealed together for time and for all eternity in a marriage covenant and express that love freely, which has as its consummate purpose the begetting of life, of children, of family, of happiness.

If you are one who's been wandering off course, now is the time to return. You can, you know. Young people, go forward with faith. You'll be led by the Spirit as was Nephi, "not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do" (1 Nephi 4:6).

Keep the Word of Wisdom. Seek worthy companions. Attend church faithfully. Never fail daily to seek for help through prayer. And I promise you that the way will be easier and you shall have a composure of mind and a confident attitude toward life and the future. You shall be warned of dangers and shall be guided through the whisperings of the Holy Spirit.

I bear witness that this revelation is a powerful protection to all members of the Church, particularly to you, the youth of the Church, as you face a life full of so many troubles and danger and uncertainties. But, young members of the Church, have faith. The Lord will be with you; you will be guided. I bear witness of Him and of His sacrifice and of His Atonement and of His love for you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. The context for verse 18 is verse 19: "For, behold, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air [are] ordained for the use of man for food." Section 49 was specifically directed to members of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing (the Shakers) to cor-

rect some of their erroneous doctrines. One of their beliefs was not to eat flesh-meat or fish.

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, has been our concluding speaker for this session of the conference.

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour," and the benediction will be given by Elder J. Richard Clarke of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The chorus sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder J. Richard Clarke offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 166th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 1996, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Ricks College combined choirs, under the direction of Kevin Brower and Richard Robison, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to the second general session of the 166th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watch-

ing in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders Russell M. Nelson, Gene R. Cook, and Jay E. Jensen are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos H. Amado, Kenneth Johnson, and V. Dallas Merrell are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by the Ricks College combined choirs, under the direction of Brothers Kevin Brower and Richard Robison, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will begin this session by singing "The Morning Breaks." The in-

vocation will be offered by Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy.

The choir sang "The Morning Breaks."
Elder William R. Bradford offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "I Stand All Amazed at the Love Jesus Offers Me." President James E. Faust will then present the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "I Stand All Amazed."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell

M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Because of his appointment to serve as president of Brigham Young University, we extend an honorable release to Bishop Merrill J. Bateman as Presiding Bishop, along with his counselors Bishop H. David Burton and Bishop Richard C. Edgley. Those who wish to join with us in a vote of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Merrill J. Bateman, Dallas N. Archibald, Dieter F.

Uchtdorf, and Bruce C. Hafen. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: L. Edward Brown, Sheldon F. Child, Quentin L. Cook, William Rolfe Kerr, Dennis E. Simmons, Jerald L. Taylor, Francisco Viñas, and Richard B. Wirthlin. Those in favor, please signify. Opposed, if any, may also so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain H. David Burton as Presiding Bishop, with Richard C. Edgley as First Counselor and Keith B. McMullin as Second Counselor. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently con-

stituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. We invite the new Seventies to take their places on the stand at this time.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your loving and prayerful support.

President Monson

Thank you, President Faust. We welcome all of the Brethren newly sustained.

Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will now read the report of the Church Audit Committee. Then Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1995.

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1995

Ted E. Davis

The Church Audit Committee is independent of all Church officers, employees, operations, and departments, including the Church Auditing Department, and reports directly to the First Presidency. We have access to all records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibility. We have reviewed the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over receipts and expenditures of funds and that safeguard assets of the Church and its controlled organizations, including budgeting, accounting, and reporting, and the auditing systems and reports, for the year ended December 31, 1995.

Expenditures of Church funds for the year were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the

Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under the direction of the Appropriations and Budget Committees.

The Church Auditing Department, which is separate from the Church Audit Committee, is conducting an audit of the financial activities of the Church and its affiliated companies for the year ended December 31, 1995, in compliance with recognized professional auditing standards. It also performs financial audits, operational audits, and audits of computerized information systems for all Church operations. Its staff consists of certified public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors.

The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church operations and departments and reports its findings directly to the First Presidency.

Incorporated businesses owned or controlled by the Church maintain their own accounting and reporting systems in compliance with accepted business practice and are audited by the Church Auditing Department or independent public accounting firms. Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education are audited by independent public accounting firms. The Church Auditing Department has established audit procedures for audits of local ecclesiastical units and also monitors local unit audit results and local unit expenditures.

Based on our review of financial and control policies and procedures and our review of all audit reports issued in 1995 and responses thereto, the Church Audit Committee is of the opinion that in all material respects, Church funds received and expended during the year ended December 31, 1995, have been controlled and accounted for in accordance with established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee
Ted E. Davis, chairman
Donald D. Salmon
James B. Jacobson

The Church Statistical Report for 1995

F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 1995.

Church units

Stakes	2,150
Districts	699
Missions	307
Wards and branches	22,697
Nations and territories with organized wards or branches	159

Church membership

Total membership	9,340,898
Eight-year-old children of record baptized during 1995 . . .	71,139
Converts baptized during 1995 . .	304,330

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	48,631
----------------------------------	--------

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Victor L. Brown, an emeritus General Authority; *Doris T. Sill*, widow of Elder Sterling W. Sill, an emeritus General Authority; *Wendell J. Ashton*, former managing director of the Church Public Communications Department and general secretary of the Deseret Sunday School Union; *Mark B. Garff*, former chairman of the Church Building Committee; *Rex E. Lee*, past president of Brigham Young University and former solicitor general of the United States; *George W. Romney*, former United States secretary of housing and urban development.

President Monson

Thank you, brethren.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder David B. Haight

Amazing growth of the Church

I hope you had a burning in your heart and a quickening of your soul as you heard those statistics regarding the growth of the Church. Today is the anniversary of the organization of the Church 166 years ago today in the Peter Whitmer farmhouse in Fayette, New York. Just imagine what has happened since then! As we sang "I Stand All Amazed" (*Hymns*, no. 193), I thought about those in attendance in that farmhouse. They would "stand all amazed" if they could see what has happened to that little organization since its humble beginning on April 6, 1830. And the world in general would "stand all amazed" if they too realized our growth.

I'm glad the opening song was "The Morning Breaks" (*Hymns*, no. 1). Those words were written by Parley P. Pratt and were printed in the first issue of the *Millennial Star*, published in Manchester when that first group of missionaries sent by the Prophet Joseph Smith arrived in England. Those words were carefully penned by Parley P. Pratt so that the people out in the world would have some understanding as to who they were. As we sing those words, "The morning breaks, the shadows flee; lo, Zion's standard is unfurled!" we can envision that standard up on the flagpole, blowing in the wind. We can almost see that flag of freedom and liberty declaring the Restoration of the gospel to all the world. What a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect upon how the gospel has spread throughout the world during the 166 years since the Church was organized.

Our eighth generation

Brother F. Michael Watson has just read the statistical report to us. I want to make an addition to that report. Just within the last 30 minutes, my new great-

granddaughter was born. So, Michael, you can raise that number by one!

Elder LeGrand Richards put together a book titled *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, which has become a missionary tool throughout the world. In that book he wrote of an incident that happened to Dr. Andrew D. White, former president of Cornell University in New York and later the United States ambassador to Germany.

While he was United States foreign minister to Russia in 1892, Dr. White had an occasion to spend some time with Count Leo Tolstoi. Leo Tolstoi was a Russian statesman, writer, and social reformer. (I want you to remember that—social reformer. He had grown up in czarist Russia and had some idea and understanding as to how a country and a people could be oppressed.)

During their visit, Leo Tolstoi said to Dr. White, "I wish you would tell me about your American religion."

Dr. White explained that there were a number of religions in America.

Count Tolstoi said, "I want to know about the *American* religion. . . . The Church to which I refer . . . is commonly known as the Mormon Church."

Dr. White said, "I know very little concerning them."

Count Tolstoi said, "Dr. White, I am greatly surprised. [They] teach the people not only of Heaven and its attendant glories, but how to live so that their social and economic relations with each other are placed on a sound basis. . . . If Mormonism is able to endure, unmodified, until it reaches the third and fourth generations, it is destined to become the greatest power the world has ever known" (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, rev. ed. [1966], 435–36).

I'm just reminding all of you here today that the little great-granddaughter born to us today is part of the eighth

generation of people in our family who have believed and accepted the gospel that we declare to be right and to be true.

Feelings when called 26 years ago

A short time ago I stood in a family circle while the husband of one of our granddaughters blessed their new little son, Mark. As he blessed little Mark, he prayed that Mark would someday go on a mission and, when he returned, find a sweet, young companion and be sealed in the temple. As he pronounced these blessings upon little Mark, I had the desire that he might know what I know and feel what I feel about some of the spiritual blessings that have entered into my life. I desired that his life would also be filled with spiritual experiences similar to one I had 26 years ago today when I was called to be an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. On that same day, Elder Boyd K. Packer was called to the Quorum of the Twelve.

I remember the details well. I was called to the First Presidency's office to meet with President Joseph Fielding Smith. His name would be presented the next day for sustaining as the new President and prophet of the Church, just as we have done today with President Hinckley. Harold B. Lee was to be sustained as the First Counselor and N. Eldon Tanner as the Second Counselor. They spent a few moments with me, extending the call, and then reminded me that the next morning my name would be read in the conference.

After that call was extended to me, I walked down the granite steps of the Administration Building. I felt amazement and wonder. *How could this happen? How could this come to me?* As I walked around the block, I thought and wondered about the changes that would come into my life now. *How would I ever measure up to the responsibility that would now rest upon me? How could I go*

out and represent this great and glorious organization out in the world?

I was so overcome with my feelings as I walked around the block that I didn't want to meet anyone I knew. I just wanted to find my wife, Ruby, and tell her what had happened. I went up to the ninth floor of the Hotel Utah, where Ruby was visiting with some family. I remember knocking on the door and opening it just a couple of inches so I could motion for her to come out. Of course, she wondered what was happening and came out into the hall.

I took her by the hand, and as we walked along the hallway, all I could do was squeeze her hand. I was so overcome with what had happened that I had trouble even getting the words out to tell her about it. Finally she stopped me and said, "Well, say something." Then I looked at her, put my hands on her shoulders, and told her what had happened. She started to cry. The two of us stood there with our arms around one another and people walking by wondering who those silly boobs were crying in the hallway. But we didn't pay any attention to the traffic because something momentous was happening to us. Our lives had been changed.

On the next day, a day like this, my name was read to be sustained and I was asked to come up and take one of these red chairs. I did so in all amazement. And then the Tabernacle Choir sang "O Divine Redeemer." I thought my heart would break in the pleading of those words: "Remember not, remember not, O Lord, my sins."

Witness to the revelation on priesthood

I would hope someday that our great-grandson Mark and others of our posterity would have similar spiritual experiences and that they would feel the spiritual power and influence of this gospel. I hope that Mark and others will have opportunities such as I had when I

was in the temple when President Spencer W. Kimball received the revelation regarding the priesthood. I was the junior member of the Quorum of the Twelve. I was there. I was there with the outpouring of the Spirit in that room so strong that none of us could speak afterward. We just left quietly to go back to the office. No one could say anything because of the powerful outpouring of the heavenly spiritual experience.

Just a few hours after the announcement was made to the press, I was assigned to attend a stake conference in Detroit, Michigan. When my plane landed in Chicago, I noticed an edition of the *Chicago Tribune* on the newsstand. The headline in the paper said, "Mormons Give Blacks Priesthood." And the subheading said, "President Kimball Claims to Have Received a Revelation." I bought a copy of the newspaper. I stared at one word in that subheading—*claims*. It stood out to me just like it was in red neon. As I walked along the hallway to make my plane connection, I thought, *Here I am now in Chicago walking through this busy airport, yet I was a witness to this revelation. I was there. I witnessed it. I felt that heavenly influence. I was part of it.* Little did the editor of that newspaper realize the truth of that revelation when he wrote, "... Claims to

Have Received a Revelation." Little did he know, or the printer, or the man who put the ink on the press, or the one who delivered the newspaper—little did any of them know that it was truly a revelation from God. Little did they know what I knew because I was a witness to it.

God lives. He is our Father. We are His children. He loves us. Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Savior, our Redeemer. He is our advocate with the Father. He is the one who died and suffered great agony, great humiliation, and great pain for us. The Restoration of the gospel is true. Someday we'll know of the greatness of the Prophet Joseph Smith. All this work is true. I leave you my love and my witness, and I pray that you will live and raise your own families in such a way that you will be part of the great army needed to carry the message of hope and salvation to all the world. I leave my love and witness with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to our beloved Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Richard G. Scott, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will now speak to us.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Variety amid constancy

Recently I stood on the north shore of a beautiful Pacific island gazing out to sea at daybreak. I was fascinated by the regularity with which the gigantic waves consistently moved forward to break on the shoreline. It reminded me of the constancy of the plan of the Lord, with its fixed, eternal law, and the security of enduring justice and the tenderness

of mercy when earned by obedience. I noticed that each wave would crest at a different point on the horizon to find its unique path to shore. Some cascaded over rocks, leaving rivulets of foaming, white water. Others burst on the shore in individual patterns. They slid up the moistened sand with playful frothy edges, then bubbled and swirled as they receded.

I thought of the unending variety of possibilities the Lord has provided for us. We have so much freedom, so many opportunities to develop our unique personalities and talents, our individual memories, our personalized contributions. Since there would be no further opportunity to observe the majestic sea, I tried to imagine the glorious panorama the brilliant sun would later create. As I watched this magnificent scene in reverence, a window formed in the clouds; the glistening rays of the rising sun broke through the overcast sky, transforming everything with its luminescence, its color, its life. It was as if the Lord wanted to share an additional blessing, a symbol of the light of His teachings that gives brilliance and hope to everyone it touches. Tears of gratitude formed for this wondrous world in which we live, for the extraordinary beauty our Heavenly Father so freely shares with all who are willing to see. Truly, life is beautiful.

Appreciate the beauty of life

Do you take time to discover each day how beautiful your life can be? How long has it been since you watched the sun set—the departing rays kissing the clouds, trees, hills, and lowlands good night, sometimes tranquilly, sometimes with exuberant bursts of color and form?

What of the wonder of a cloudless night when the Lord unveils the marvels of His heavens—the twinkling stars, the moonlight rays—to ignite our imagination with His greatness and glory?

How captivating to watch a seed planted in fertile soil germinate, gather strength, and send forth a tiny, seemingly insignificant sprout. Patiently it begins to grow and develop its own character, led by the genetic code the Lord has provided to guide its development. With care it surely will become what it is destined to be: a lily, crowned with grace and beauty; a fragrant spearmint plant; a peach; an avocado; or

a beautiful blossom with unique delicacy, hue, and fragrance.

When last did you observe a tiny rosebud form? Each day it develops new and impressive character, more promise of beauty until it becomes a majestic rose.

You are one of the noblest of God's creations. His intent is that your life be gloriously beautiful regardless of your circumstances. As you are grateful and obedient, you can become all that God intends you to be.

Joy in life depends on trust in God

Sadness, disappointment, and severe challenge are *events* in life, not life itself. I do not minimize how hard some of these events are. They can extend over a long period of time, but they should not be allowed to become the confining center of everything you do. The Lord inspired Lehi to declare the fundamental truth, "Men are, that they might have joy."¹ That is a conditional statement: "they *might* have joy." It is not conditional for the Lord. His intent is that each of us finds joy. It will not be conditional for you as you obey the commandments, have faith in the Master, and do the things that are necessary to have joy here on earth.

Your joy in life depends upon your trust in Heavenly Father and His holy Son, your conviction that their plan of happiness truly can bring you joy. Pondering their doctrine will let you enjoy the beauties of this earth and enrich your relationships with others. It will lead you to the comforting, strengthening experiences that flow from prayer to Father in Heaven and the answers He gives in return.

Perspective and patience

A pebble held close to the eye appears to be a gigantic obstacle. Cast on the ground, it is seen in perspective. Likewise, problems or trials in our lives

need to be viewed in the perspective of scriptural doctrine. Otherwise they can easily overtake our vision, absorb our energy, and deprive us of the joy and beauty the Lord intends us to receive here on earth. Some people are like rocks thrown into a sea of problems. They are drowned by them. Be a cork. When submerged in a problem, fight to be free to bob up to serve again with happiness.

You are here on earth for a divine purpose. It is not to be endlessly entertained or to be constantly in full pursuit of pleasure. You are here to be tried, to prove yourself so that you can receive the additional blessings God has for you.² The tempering effect of patience is required.³ Some blessings will be delivered here in this life; others will come beyond the veil.

The Lord is intent on your personal growth and development. That progress is accelerated when you willingly allow Him to lead you through every growth experience you encounter, whether initially it be to your individual liking or not. When you trust in the Lord, when you are willing to let your heart and your mind be centered in His will, when you ask to be led by the Spirit to do His will, you are assured of the greatest happiness along the way and the most fulfilling attainment from this mortal experience. If you question everything you are asked to do, or dig in your heels at every unpleasant challenge, you make it harder for the Lord to bless you.⁴

Your agency, the right to make choices, is not given so that you can get what you want. This divine gift is provided so that you will choose what your Father in Heaven wants for you. That way He can lead you to become all that He intends you to be.⁵ That path leads to glorious joy and happiness.

Live with joy amid adversity

Learn from inspiring individuals who have made peace with their challenges

and live with joy amid adversity. A lovely woman with an aggressive terminal disease consistently found joy in life. She understood the plan of happiness, had received the temple ordinances, and was doing her best to qualify for the promised blessings. Her personal journal records:

"It is a beautiful fall day. I picked up the mail and sat down on the swing. I was so happy and content in the warm sun, the sweet smell of nature and the trees around me. I just sat and gloried in the fact that I am still alive on this beautiful earth. . . . The Lord is so good to me. How I thank him that I am still here and feeling so good. I am soooooo happy I just want to shout and dance through this beautiful house as the sun streams into the big windows. I love being alive."

A valiant mother courageously fighting a debilitating illness spent untold hours laboriously completing a large, challenging needlepoint work of art. It was a gift to a couple experiencing trials. For the couple it is a priceless treasure, a constant reminder of the precious fruits of resolute effort in the face of adversity, an enduring message of hope bound in the bonds of pure love and willing sacrifice.

Find joy in what you *do* have

Children teach us how to find joy even under the most challenging circumstances. Children haven't yet learned to be depressed by concentrating on the things they don't have. They find joy in what is available to them. I remember a small boy playing along a riverbank. He had tied a piece of fishing line to the ends of two discarded soft-drink cans. He threw one can over a limb, then filled it with water. He would pull on the other can, then let it go. The weight of the first can would draw the second one up as it fell. He laughed and danced with glee.

Simple, rejuvenating experiences surround us. They can be safety valves to

keep the tension down and the spirit up. Don't concentrate on what you don't have or have lost. The Lord promised the obedient to share all that He possesses with them. You may temporarily lack here, but in the next life, if you prove yourself worthy by living valiantly, a fullness will be your blessing.

Find the compensatory blessings in your life when, in the wisdom of the Lord, He deprives you of something you very much want. To the sightless or hearing impaired, He sharpens the other senses. To the ill, He gives patience, understanding, and increased appreciation for others' kindness. With the loss of a dear one, He deepens the bonds of love, enriches memories, and kindles hope in a future reunion. You will discover compensatory blessings when you willingly accept the will of the Lord and exercise faith in Him.⁶

To the afflicted people of Alma, the Lord said:

"I will also ease the burdens . . . that even you cannot feel them upon your backs . . . ; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

"And . . . the burdens . . . were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord."⁷

Being creative will help you enjoy life

Attempt to be creative for the joy it brings. After their noble husbands were called home, Sisters Camilla Kimball, Amelia McConkie, and Helen Richards learned to paint. They not only leave legacies of art, but they will never see a sunset, a face, or a tree the same again. They now perceive subtle nuances of color and form and rejoice in the abounding beauty around them.

Select something like music, dance, sculpture, or poetry. Being creative will help you enjoy life. It engenders a spirit of gratitude. It develops latent talent, sharpens your capacity to reason, to act, and to find purpose in life. It dispels loneliness and heartache. It gives a renewal, a spark of enthusiasm, and zest for life.

Service—a key to happiness

Willing service to others is a key to enduring happiness. President Kimball said: "God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another mortal that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other."⁸

I know of a woman who was joyously happy. Each morning she would ask her Father in Heaven to lead her to someone she could help. That sincere prayer was answered time and again. The burdens of many were eased and their lives brightened. She was blessed continually for being an instrument directed by the Lord.

Difficulty can be turned to growth

I know that every difficulty we face in life, even those that come from our own negligence or even transgression, can be turned by the Lord into growth experiences, a virtual ladder upward.⁹ I certainly do not recommend transgression as a path to growth. It is painful, difficult, and so totally unnecessary. It is far wiser and so much easier to move forward in righteousness. But through proper repentance, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to His commandments, even the disappointment that comes from transgression can be converted into a return to happiness.

Make a list of things you can do for happiness, such as:

- Ponder the scriptures to understand the plan of happiness.
- Pray with faith in Jesus Christ.

- Love and serve others.
- Receive the temple ordinances.

Return to bless others.

- Listen to the prophet and obey his counsel.
- Be grateful for what you have.
- Smile more.

Your list will provide keys to contentment and joy.

Challenge is temporary, happiness eternal

A famous Brazilian song repeats a falsehood many believe: Sadness never ends, but happiness does. I witness that with faith in the Savior and obedience to His teachings, happiness never ends, but sadness does.

No matter how difficult something you or a loved one faces, it should not take over your life and be the center of all your interest. Challenges are growth experiences, temporary scenes to be played out on the background of a pleasant life. Don't become so absorbed in a single event that you can't think of anything else or care for yourself or for those who depend upon you. Remember, much like the mending of the body, the healing of some spiritual and emotional challenges takes time.

The Lord has said, "Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days."¹⁰ As you are patient, you will come to understand what the statement "I am with thee" means. God's love brings peace and joy.

Your faith in Jesus Christ gives life enduring meaning. Remember you are on a journey to exaltation. Sometimes you have experiences that yield more happiness than others, but it all has purpose with the Lord.¹¹

As a witness of the Savior, I exhort you to forgive any you feel may have of-

fended you. If there is transgression, repent of it, that the Master may heal you.

Thank your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son for the plan of happiness and the gospel principles upon which it is based. Be grateful for the ordinances and the covenants they have provided. I solemnly testify they have power to crown your life with peace and joy, to give it purpose and meaning. You will learn that sadness and disappointment are temporary. Happiness is everlastingly eternal because of Jesus Christ. I solemnly witness that He lives, that He loves you, and that He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:25.
2. See Abraham 3:25.
3. See Mosiah 3:19.
4. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:26-32.
6. See Orson F. Whitney, quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 98.
7. Mosiah 24:14-15.
8. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.
9. See Isaiah 40:31.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 24:8.
11. See Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 177.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Scott lives the sermon he just delivered.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord," and Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

Elder F. Burton Howard

Playing hide-and-seek in the car

When my wife and I were first married, my parents lived in another state. During a break in our university schedule, we decided to go visit them.

We made sandwiches, packed the car, and prepared a bed in the backseat for our young son so that he could rest during the 10-hour trip. After a full day in the car, we were beginning to get on each other's nerves. The preschooler never slept and seemed to gather energy as the day wore on. We knew that if he would just close his eyes and be quiet for a while, he would fall asleep.

After sundown, with two hours of travel still to go, we decided to play a game. The purpose of the game was to try to get an exhausted youngster to sleep. We called it hide-and-seek. Have you ever tried to play hide-and-seek in a car? Let me tell you how we did it. We said to the small boy in back, "Let's play hide-and-seek." He enthusiastically agreed. We said, "Close your eyes and don't open them until we call you. We need time to hide."

The game started. A front-seat passenger would crouch down in the seat and 10 or 15 seconds later would call, "OK." Our son would bound over the seat and say, "Aha, I found you!" We would say, "Next time we will hide better. Close your eyes again." A minute or more would go by. Then we would call, and again he would energetically climb over the seat to find us. Finally we said, "We have a really good place to hide this time. It will take longer. Close your eyes and we will call you."

A minute, two minutes, five minutes went by. We drove along in silence. The tranquillity was marvelous. We must have traveled 15 miles before we began to whisper quiet congratulations to ourselves on the success of our devious game. Then, from out of the backseat,

came the sobbing voice of a heartbroken little boy. "You didn't call me, and you said you would."

"You didn't do what you agreed to do." What a terrible accusation. It was a defining moment in our lives. We knew that we could never play that game again.

Live up to commitments

Church members commit to do many things. We agree to serve one another, to mourn with those that mourn, to comfort those that stand in need of comfort. We promise to visit each other. We make covenants. We agree to share the gospel and do vicarious work for the dead. And just like that incident in the car so many years ago, we sometimes fail to do what we have agreed to do.

Our justifications are many. We say we will do it later. We have something more important to do right now. We don't feel well or we don't feel qualified or we don't want to be fanatical about it.

When I think of those who want to postpone performance until another time, I remember a question someone once asked at a stake conference. A man said, "Brother Howard, do you know why we can never get more than 83 percent home teaching in the Church?" I said, "No, why?" He said, "Because no one wants to go on Halloween and New Year's Eve."

When I hear someone say they can't serve because they don't feel well, I remember a stake I once visited in Mexico. The stake president spoke about a lesson he learned from his wife. He said that a week before the conference, he had scheduled some home teaching visits but came home from work and didn't feel well. He told his wife that he guessed he wouldn't go home teaching because he was sick. Her reply to him was, "Go sick!" And he went.

I once talked with a man who said, "I know I could do a little more, but no one wants to be a fanatic." His statement reminded me of a definition I heard once: "A fanatic is a person who does what he thinks the Lord would do if only He had all the facts." But He who really does know all things isn't a fanatic; neither are those who do what He would have them do.

When I listen to people say they have something more important to do, I wonder what it could possibly be. What could be more important than keeping a commitment we have made with the Lord?

As I travel the Church I often ask stake presidents what their concerns are and what they perceive to be their greatest need. Frequently the reply is, "We have wonderful people. Some of them just need to be more committed and more dedicated. They need to be more anxiously engaged in the work."

The Church does have many needs, and one of them is for more people who will just do what they have agreed to do, people who will show up for work and stay all day, who will quietly, patiently, and consistently do what they have agreed to do—for as long as it takes, and who will not stop until they have finished.

The commitment of Abraham's servant

One of my heroes has always been the servant of Abraham who was sent to find a wife for Isaac. We do not know his name. We do not know much about his life, but we know a great deal about his character. It was he who governed everything that Abraham had. He was trustworthy and he was trusted. The day came when Abraham put into the care of this servant the most important matter of all—the exaltation of his son.

He wanted Isaac to be an heir of the covenant which he had made with the

Lord. He knew that the blessings of that covenant could not be realized if Isaac didn't marry a good and worthy woman who believed in God. No woman in the land of Canaan was capable of being the mother of Israel. So Abraham asked his servant to promise that he would not permit his son to marry a Canaanite. Instead Abraham sent him to the land of his fathers to find a wife for Isaac.

The servant accepted the commitment and set out on his journey. He traveled many days. He must have encountered trials and hardships. When he finally arrived at his destination, he found many young women there. He devised a test to see which of them was foreordained to be Isaac's wife. By exercising his faith, he met Rebekah and arrived at the home of her family and was befriended by them. They invited him to dinner. After days in the desert, and despite his hunger and thirst, this faithful servant said, "I will not eat, until I have told mine errand" (Genesis 24:33).

So it was. He explained the purpose of his journey and his oath to Abraham. One simple statement conveyed his faithfulness and humility. "I am Abraham's servant," he said (Genesis 24:34). The kinsfolk wanted a 10-day celebration. The servant replied, "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master" (Genesis 24:56).

Many would have tarried. Others would have justified unwinding a little by saying that the journey had been long or that they were tired or hungry or thirsty. Some, not wanting to appear too zealous, would have stayed.

A few, not understanding the significance of the errand, might have tried to talk Abraham out of the assignment, claiming that it was foolishness to travel so far in search of a wife. Some would not have had the faith necessary to discover which of all of the young women of the city was the chosen one. Yet this ser-

vant did. He knew how to magnify his calling and accomplish that which he had promised his master. He understood a very important truth. Promises are not just pretty words. Promises have eternal consequences.

A covenant-keeping people

We are a covenant people. If there is a distinguishing feature about members of the Church, it is that we make covenants. We need to be known as a covenant-keeping people as well. Making promises is easy, but to follow through and do what we have promised is another matter. That involves staying the course, being constant and steadfast. It means keeping the faith and being faithful to the end despite success or failure, doubt or discouragement. It is drawing near to the Lord with all our hearts. It is doing whatever we promise to do with all

our might—even when we might not feel like it.

I once attended a funeral service with Elder M. Russell Ballard. A statement he made there has remained with me to this day. He said, “Life isn’t over for a Latter-day Saint until he or she is safely dead, with their testimony still burning brightly.” “Safely dead”—what a challenging concept. Brothers and sisters, we will not be safe until we have given our hearts to the Lord—until we have learned to do what we have promised.

May we do so is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to listen to Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

We all welcome these newly sustained Brethren and their wives to the sweet association enjoyed by the General Authorities and their families.

A handful of meal and a little oil

In response to King Ahab’s great wickedness, the Lord, through the prophet Elijah, sealed the heavens, that neither dew nor rain should fall throughout all the land of Israel. The drought that ensued and the famine that followed affected Elijah himself as well as untold others in the process.

Ravens did bring Elijah bread and meat to eat, but unless ravens carry more than I think they do, this was not a gourmet meal. And ere long the brook Cherith, near which he hid and from which he drank, ran dry. And so it went for three years.

As the prophet prepared for a final confrontation with Ahab, God commanded Elijah to go to the village of Zarephath, where, He said, He had commanded a widow woman to sustain him.

As he entered the city in his weary condition, he met his benefactress, who was undoubtedly as weak and wasted as he. Perhaps almost apologetically the thirsty traveler importuned, “Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” As she turned to meet his request, Elijah added even more strain to the supplication. “Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand [also].”

Elijah’s pitiful circumstances were obvious. Furthermore, the widow had been prepared by the Lord for this request. But in her own weakened and dispirited condition, the prophet’s last entreaty was more than this faithful little

woman could bear. In her hunger and fatigue and motherly anguish she cried out to the stranger, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks [which tells us how small her fire needed to be], that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

But Elijah was on the Lord's errand. Israel's future—including the future of this very widow and her son—was at stake. His prophetic duty made him more bold than he might normally have wanted to be.

"Fear not," he said to her, "but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

Then this understated expression of faith—as great, under these circumstances, as any I know in the scriptures. The record says simply, "And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah." Perhaps uncertain what the cost of her faith would be not only to herself but to her son as well, she first took her small loaf to Elijah, obviously trusting that if there were not enough bread left over, at least she and her son would have died in an act of pure charity. The story goes on, of course, to a very happy ending for her and for her son.¹

An appeal for the disadvantaged

This woman is like another widow whom Christ admired so much—she who cast her farthing, her two mites, into the synagogue treasury and thereby gave more, Jesus said, than all others who had given that day.²

Unfortunately the names of these two women are not recorded in the scrip-

tures, but if I am ever so privileged in the eternities to meet them, I would like to fall at their feet and say, "Thank you. Thank you for the beauty of your lives, for the wonder of your example, for the godly spirit within you prompting such 'charity out of a pure heart.'"³

Indeed I wish to do something a little more immediate in their behalf today. I wish to speak for the widow, the fatherless, the disadvantaged and down-trodden, the hungry, the homeless, and the cold. I wish to speak for those God has always loved and spoken of in an urgent way.⁴ I wish to speak of the poor.

Amulek's discourse to the Zoramites

There is a particularly reprehensible moment in the Book of Mormon in which a group of vain and unchristian Zoramites, after climbing atop their Rameumptom and declaring their special standing before God, immediately proceed to cast the poor from their synagogues, synagogues these needy had labored with their own hands to build. They were cast out, the revelation says, simply because of their poverty. In a penetrating scriptural line that forever speaks to the real plight and true pain of the impoverished, the Book of Mormon says, "They were poor as to things of the world; and also *they were poor in heart*." Indeed they were "poor in heart, *because of their poverty as to the things of the world*."⁵

Directly countering the arrogance and exclusivity which the Zoramites had shown these people, Amulek gives a stirring sermon on the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Teaching that Christ's gift would be "infinite and eternal," an offering to every man, woman, and child who would ever live in this world, he also bore witness of the mercy of such a gift. He listed all the ways and all the places in which people should pray for that atoning mercy, "for your welfare," he said, "and also for the welfare of those who are around you."⁶

But this masterful discourse on the Atonement is not finished. With great directness, Amulek says of these fervent prayers, "Do not suppose that this is all; for after ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have [it], to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith."⁷ If this is the message to those who had so little, what must it mean for us?

King Benjamin's discourse

Amulek uses here precisely the same theo-logic that King Benjamin had used 50 years earlier. After teaching the people of Zarahemla of the Fall of Adam and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, Benjamin saw his congregation literally fall to the ground, viewing themselves in a state of great need, viewing themselves, he said, as less than the dust of the earth. (The difference between this response and that of the Rameumptom set goes without saying.)

"And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified."⁸

With these people so teachably humble, and with mercy, that loveliest of words, on every lip and tongue, King Benjamin says of the Atonement and the remission of sins:

"If God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, . . . O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another."

"Succor those that stand in need of your succor; . . . administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need."

"Are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have?"

"For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins," King Benjamin concludes, "ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants."⁹

Caring the way the Savior cared

We may not yet be the Zion of which our prophets foretold and toward which the poets and priests of Israel have pointed us, but we long for it and we keep working toward it. I do not know whether a full implementation of such a society can be realized until Christ comes, but I know that when He did come to the Nephites, His majestic teachings and ennobling spirit led to the happiest of all times, a time in which "there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift."¹⁰ That blessed circumstance was, I suppose, achieved on only one other occasion of which we know—the city of Enoch, where "they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them."¹¹

The Prophet Joseph Smith had such a grand view of our possibilities, a view given him by the revelations of God. He knew that the real task was in being more Christlike—caring the way the Savior cared, loving the way He loved, "every man seeking the interest of his neighbor," the scripture says, "and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God."¹²

That was what Jacob in the Book of Mormon had taught—that “after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.”¹³

I pay tribute to all of you, to all who do so much and care so deeply and labor with “the intent to do good.” So many are so generous. I know that some of you are struggling to make ends meet in your own lives and still you find something to share. As King Benjamin cautioned his people, it is not intended that we run faster than we have strength, and all things should be done in order.¹⁴ I love you, and your Heavenly Father loves you for all you are trying to do.

Look for ways to help others

Furthermore, I know that a talk in general conference is not going to cut through the centuries of temporal inequity that have plagued humankind, but I also know that the gospel of Jesus Christ holds the answer to every social and political and economic problem this world has ever faced. And I know we can each do something, however small that act may seem to be. We can pay an honest tithe and give our fast and freewill offerings, according to our circumstances. And we can watch for other ways to help. To worthy causes and needy people, we can give time if we don't have money, and we can give love when our time runs out. We can share the loaves we have and trust God that the cruse of oil will not fail.

“And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both

male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.”¹⁵

How much that passage from the first chapter of Alma sounds like the wonder that was Nauvoo. Said the Prophet Joseph in that blessed time: “Respecting how much a man . . . shall give . . . we have no special instructions . . . ; he is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever he finds them.”¹⁶

Remember what the Book of Mormon taught us. It is difficult enough to be poor in material goods, but the greater pain is in the heavy heart, the dwindling hope, the damaged dreams, the parental anguish, the childhood disappointment that almost always attend such circumstances.

Neighbors save the Hendricks family

I began with a story of diminishing cornmeal. May I conclude with another. Amidst the terrible hostilities in Missouri that would put the Prophet in Liberty Jail and see thousands of Latter-day Saints driven from their homes, Sister Drusilla Hendricks and her invalid husband, James, who had been shot by enemies of the Church in the Battle of Crooked River, arrived with their children at a hastily shaped dugout in Quincy, Illinois, to live out the spring of that harrowing year.

Within two weeks the Hendrickses were on the verge of starvation, having only one spoonful of sugar and a saucerful of cornmeal remaining in their possession. In the great tradition of LDS women, Drusilla made mush out of it for James and the children, thus stretching its contents as far as she could make it go. When that small offering was consumed by her famished family, she

washed everything, cleaned their little dugout as thoroughly as she could, and quietly waited to die.

Not long thereafter the sound of a wagon brought Drusilla to her feet. It was their neighbor Reuben Allred. He said he had a feeling they were out of food, so on his way into town he'd had a sack of grain ground into meal for them.

Shortly thereafter Alexander Williams arrived with two bushels of meal on his shoulder. He told Drusilla that he'd been extremely busy but the Spirit had whispered to him that "Brother Hendricks' family is suffering, so I dropped everything and came [running]." ¹⁷

May God, who has blessed all of us so mercifully and many of us so abundantly, bless us with one thing more. May He bless us to hear the often silent cries of the sorrowing and the afflicted, the downtrodden, the disadvantaged, the poor. Indeed may He bless us to hear the whispering of the Holy Spirit when any neighbor anywhere "is suffering," and to "drop everything and come running." I pray in the name of the captain of the poor, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 1 Kings 17:1-24.
2. See Mark 12:41-44.
3. 1 Timothy 1:5.

4. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:11.
5. Alma 32:3-4; italics added.
6. See Alma 34:14, 17-27.
7. Alma 34:28.
8. Mosiah 4:2.
9. Mosiah 4:21, 16, 19, 26.
10. 4 Nephi 1:2-3.
11. Moses 7:18.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 82:19.
13. Jacob 2:19.
14. See Mosiah 4:27.
15. Alma 1:30.
16. *Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, 732.
17. Drusilla Dorris Hendricks, "Historical Sketch of James Hendricks and Drusilla Dorris Hendricks," Historical Department, Archives Division, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, typescript, 19-23.

President Monson

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

The choir will now sing "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," after which Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session.

The choir sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Faith of the pioneers

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, it's a great privilege for me to stand at this pulpit and welcome into the ranks of the General Authorities these new Brethren. We've come together in this historic Tabernacle and across the world "to speak one with another con-

cerning the welfare of [our] souls"¹ and to "feast upon the words of Christ."²

I speak to you today of the faith of our pioneer forefathers. We can attribute much of the remarkable progress of the Church and of this state of Utah to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We stand in awe of their resolve and tenacity in holding fast to their convic-

tions despite the obstacles they had to overcome.

Faith in the Savior

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the foundation principle of the gospel and the basis of all righteousness. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that "faith is the assurance . . . of the existence of things . . . not seen."³ The scriptures define faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."⁴

We delight in our faith in our Savior today. We testify to the world that "the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."⁵ As members of the Lord's Church and as faithful advocates of His restored gospel, we declare soberly that God lives, that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. Tomorrow is Easter, a day to ponder the mission of Jesus Christ, the First-born Son of our Heavenly Father. The Atonement, including the Resurrection of the Savior, provides immortality and the possibility of eternal life for all of our Father's children. How grateful we should be for these blessings.

Faith in the prophets

We declare gladly to all who have "ears to hear"⁶ that the Lord, "knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon [His] servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments"⁷ to restore the fullness of the gospel that the Saints of earlier days had.

We testify "from the top of the mountains"⁸ that President Gordon B. Hinckley is God's prophet on earth today. Because of our faith in our prophet, Latter-day Saints echo the words of the Apostle Peter: "We have therefore a

more sure knowledge of the word of prophecy, to which word of prophecy ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light which shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."⁹ The light of divine revelation shines forth from a living prophet to brighten a darkened world.

Restoration and growth of the Church

From the beginning of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in America, religious freedom has allowed the Church to flourish. Roots sunk deep into the rich soil of obedience and sacrifice have borne good fruit. Generations of faithful members have forged a firm foundation. From this base of strength "shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth."¹⁰ President Joseph F. Smith, who came across the plains as a boy and who knew much of adversity in his life, declared his testimony as follows:

"The kingdom of God is here to grow, to spread abroad, to take root in the earth, and to abide where the Lord has planted it by His own power and by His own word, in the earth, never more to be destroyed or to cease, but to continue until the purposes of the Almighty shall be accomplished, every whit that has been spoken of by the mouths of the holy prophets since the world began."¹¹

President Hinckley noted that "the church is growing in a marvelous and wonderful way. It is spreading over the Earth in a miraculous manner." He explained that one of the reasons for this growth is that "we have a demanding religion. We have great expectations concerning our people. We have standards that we expect them to live by, and that is one of the things that attracts people to this church: It stands as an anchor in a world of shifting values."¹²

Pioneers' faith built the foundation

The exciting global growth of the Church has focused our attention on the prophesied glorious future of the kingdom. At the same time that we look ahead with optimism, we should pause and look back on the faith of our humble pioneer forefathers. Their faith built the foundation on which the Church continues to flourish.

During February of this year, citizens in Nauvoo and communities across Iowa commemorated the 150th anniversary of the exodus of the Saints. In 1846 more than 10,000 left the thriving city that had been built on the banks of the Mississippi River. With faith in prophetic leaders, those early Church members left their "City Beautiful" and struck off into the wilderness of the American frontier. They did not know exactly where they were going, precisely how many miles lay ahead, how long the journey would take, or what the future held in store for them. But they *did know* they were led by the Lord and His servants. Their faith sustained them. They hoped "for things which [were] not seen, which are true."¹³ Like Nephi of old, they were "led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [they] should do."¹⁴

Fearing more of the mob violence that had claimed the lives of the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum on June 27, 1844, Brigham Young, leading the Church as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, announced in September 1845 that the Saints would leave Nauvoo in the spring of 1846. Most of those in Nauvoo believed fully that when Brigham Young announced that they must leave, they were hearing what the Lord wanted them to do. They responded in faith to the direction of the Lord. Throughout the fall and winter months of 1845-46, Church members set about vigorously making preparations for the journey.

Faith of Lydia Knight

When Newel Knight informed his wife, Lydia, that the Saints would have to leave Nauvoo and move yet again, she responded with tenacious faith, saying, "Well, there's nothing to discuss. Our place is with the Kingdom of God. Let us at once set about making preparations to leave."¹⁵ Brother Knight had moved his family several times already as many of the Saints had moved from New York to Ohio to Missouri and to Illinois. Lydia Knight's devoted submission to what she knew was God's will typifies powerfully the faith of those heroic early Saints. With their faith in mind, the words of a familiar hymn take on added meaning:

Faith of our fathers, living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;
Oh, how our hearts beat high with
joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word.
Faith of our fathers, holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death!¹⁶

Faith amid trials

Though winter's chill was not yet past, heightened fears of mob attacks and swirling rumors of government intervention compelled President Young to set things in motion to get the Saints under way. He directed the first company of pioneer families to leave Nauvoo on February 4, 1846, a cold winter day. They drove their laden wagons and their livestock down Parley Street—a street that became known as the "Street of Tears"—to a landing where they were ferried across the river to Iowa. Chunks of ice floating in the river crunched against the sides of the flatboats and barges that carried the wagons across the Mississippi. A few weeks later, temperatures dropped even further and wagons could cross the river more easily over a bridge of ice.

Sister Wirthlin and I visited Nauvoo in early March this year. The weather was

bitterly cold. As we stood in the chilling wind, looking out across the broad expanse of the Mississippi, we felt a deeper sense of appreciation and gratitude for those Saints as they left their beloved city. We wondered how they ever survived. What a sacrifice to leave behind so much for the uncertain future that lay ahead! No wonder so many tears were shed as the fleeing pioneers drove their wagons rumbling down Parley Street to cross the river with no hope of ever returning to their "City Beautiful."

Once across the river, they camped temporarily at Sugar Creek before starting their trek west toward the Rocky Mountains. The journey, which historian H. H. Bancroft described as a migration without "parallel in the world's history,"¹⁷ had begun.

When President Brigham Young joined the departing pioneers at their campsite in Iowa on February 15, 1846, the Lord revealed to him to begin organizing a modern "Camp of Israel." On the first of March the advance company began its push westward across Iowa. Hardships caused by cold, snow, rain, mud, sickness, hunger, and death challenged the faith of these hardy pioneers. But they were determined to follow their leaders and to do, no matter the cost, what they believed fervently to be the will of God. Their faith was challenged, and for some it faltered in especially difficult times. But it did not fail them. Many were sustained by the assurances they had received in temple ordinances performed in the Nauvoo Temple.

Pioneer mothers' selfless sacrifice

One of the more difficult hardships endured by many of the sisters was delivering their babies under harsh, extreme conditions along the trail. Eliza R. Snow wrote that as the pioneers "journeyed onward, mothers gave birth to offspring under almost every variety of

circumstances imaginable, except those to which they had been accustomed; some in tents, others in wagons—in rainstorms and in snowstorms." Sister Snow went on to record in her journal that she "heard of one birth which occurred under the rude shelter of a hut, the sides of which were formed of blankets fastened to poles stuck in the ground, with a bark roof through which the rain was dripping. Kind sisters stood holding dishes to catch the water . . . , thus protecting the [little one] and its mother from a showerbath [on its entrance to] the stage of human life."¹⁸

What a sacrifice these good sisters made! Some mothers lost their own lives in childbirth. Many babies did not survive. My wife's grandmother, Elizabeth Riter, was born at Winter Quarters in the back of a covered wagon during a rainstorm. Fortunately both the mother and the newborn infant survived. With great love for the woman who gave life to her, Elizabeth often lovingly recounted how an umbrella was held over her mother throughout the ordeal to shield her from the water leaking through the wagon's cover.

Let us never forget the faith of our fathers and the selfless sacrifice of our mothers, those pioneering Saints who set such an inspiring example of obedience. Let us remember them as we strive to be valiant servants in our work to "invite all to come unto Christ"¹⁹ and "be perfected in him."²⁰

Service repays debt of gratitude

Some 44 years ago my father spoke from this pulpit and explained how an appreciation of our heritage can strengthen and enliven our service in the kingdom. Referring to his own pioneer grandparents, he said:

"Because of the faith of these forefathers of mine, I am here, living in [these] peaceful valleys, in the shadows of great

mountains, and above all, within hearing of the voice of latter-day prophets.

"So, I owe to them . . . a debt of gratitude, . . . a debt that can best be paid in service to this great cause."²¹

Now as we see the kingdom expand throughout the world, an ever smaller percentage of Church members live in the valleys of Utah, in the shadows of our beautiful mountains. But today modern communication technology allows Saints throughout the world to be "within hearing of the voice of latter-day prophets."

As it was with my father, so it is for all of us. We who have been blessed to know the fulness of the restored gospel owe a debt of gratitude to those who have gone before us, who have given so much to build the kingdom into the worldwide miracle that it is today. Our debt of gratitude to our forebears is a "debt that can best be paid in service to this great cause."

Serve courageously and faithfully

No matter who we are—no matter our talents, abilities, financial resources, education, or experience—we all can serve in the kingdom. He who calls us will qualify us for the work if we will serve with humility, prayer, diligence, and faith. Perhaps we feel inadequate. Maybe we doubt ourselves, thinking that what we have to offer the Lord personally is too slight to even be noticed. The Lord is well aware of our mortality. He knows our weaknesses. He understands the challenges of our everyday lives. He has great empathy for the temptations of earthly appetites and passions. The Apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Hebrews that the Savior is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" because He "was in all points tempted like as we are."²²

President Thomas S. Monson taught the importance of being willing to serve in this great cause when he asked:

"Are we sufficiently in tune with the Spirit that when the Lord calls, we can hear, as did Samuel, and declare, 'Here am I'? Do we have the fortitude and the faith, whatever our callings, to serve with unflinching courage and unshakable resolve? When we do, the Lord can work His mighty miracles through us."²³

President James E. Faust has reassured us that whatever our abilities, faithful service not only is acceptable to the Lord, but also qualifies us for great blessings bestowed by Him, blessings that enrich and expand our lives. President Faust explained that "this church does not necessarily attract great people but more often makes ordinary people great. . . . A major reason this church has grown from its humble beginnings to its current strength is the faithfulness and devotion of millions of humble and devoted [members] who have only five loaves and two small fishes to offer in the service of the Master. They have largely surrendered their own interests and in so doing have found 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.'"²⁴

Be dedicated to the Lord's work

With the Lord to strengthen us, "we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things."²⁵ He encourages us to "be not weary in well-doing, for [we] are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."²⁶ May we be faithful in fulfilling the duties of whatever calling we have in the kingdom. Let us pay heed to the "small things" that make all the difference. Let us be faithful in keeping the commandments as we have made sacred covenants to do. As our heritage and our growth clearly show, we are indeed "laying the foundation of a great work."

Let us dedicate ourselves to doing the Lord's work to the best of our abilities. May we honor the faith of our fathers by giving our own faithful service

to this great cause. May we "follow the prophet"²⁷ and by so doing "come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God,"²⁸ I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moroni 6:5.
2. 2 Nephi 32:3.
3. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 1.
4. Hebrews 11:1.
5. 2 Nephi 32:3.
6. Matthew 11:15.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17.
8. Isaiah 42:11.
9. Joseph Smith Translation, 2 Peter 1:19; cf. King James Version, 2 Peter 1:19.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 65:2.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1902, 2.
12. Quoted in *Deseret News*, 26 Feb. 1996, A2.
13. Alma 32:21.
14. 1 Nephi 4:6.
15. Quoted in *Church News*, 10 Feb. 1996, 3.
16. "Faith of Our Fathers," *Hymns*, no. 84.
17. Herbert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah* (1889), 217.
18. Quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:45.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 20:59.
20. Moroni 10:32.
21. Joseph L. Wirthlin, *A Heritage of Faith*, comp. Richard Bitner Wirthlin (1964), 47.
22. Hebrews 4:15–16.
23. In Conference Report, Oct. 1992; 66–67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 48; see 1 Samuel 3:4.
24. In Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 4–5; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 5–6.
25. Articles of Faith 1:13.

26. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.

27. "Follow the Prophet," *Children's Songbook*, 110–11.

28. Jacob 1:7.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time. The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. Those desiring to attend the broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the splendid Ricks College combined choir. My, how we have been blessed by their beautiful music as we have listened to them this afternoon.

The choir will now sing in closing "Our Father, by Whose Name," and following the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Our Father, by Whose Name."

The benediction was offered by Elder Marlin K. Jensen.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 166th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 6, 1996. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Brigham Young University combined men's choir. Mack J. Wilberg and Ronald J. Staheli directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session. These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world. I think that is tremendously significant in the light of the fact that today is the birthday of the Church. The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands is rolling forth to fill the earth.

We note that Elders M. Russell Ballard, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, and David E. Sorensen are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Loren C. Dunn, Ronald E. Poelman, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, and Augusto A. Lim are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Elders Glenn L. Pace and John E. Fowler are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

We announce that during this afternoon's session, H. David Burton, Richard

C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin were sustained as the Presiding Bishopric. Merrill J. Bateman, Dallas N. Archibald, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Bruce C. Hafen were called as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and the following were called as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: L. Edward Brown, Sheldon F. Child, Quinton L. Cook, William Rolfe Kerr, Dennis E. Simmons, Jerald L. Taylor, Francisco J. Viñas, and Richard B. Wirthlin.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a Brigham Young University combined men's choir, under the direction of Brothers Mack J. Wilberg and Ronald J. Staheli, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall now begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," following which Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder Joe J. Christensen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now favor us with "Lead, Kindly Light," following which Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light."

Elder Robert D. Hales

The powerful example of Abinadi

The Savior said, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). I would like to tell you a story, brethren—a true story about a man named Abinadi. Abinadi was a prophet who preached repentance to a wicked people and a wicked king. He preached boldly and courageously, knowing that he was putting his own life in jeopardy because of his words.

Wicked King Noah angrily ordered his priests to kill Abinadi. King Noah said, "Away with this fellow, and slay him; . . . for he is mad."

But when the priests tried to lay their hands on Abinadi, he withstood them, saying: "Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver. . . . I must fulfil the commandments wherewith God has commanded me."

The people of King Noah were afraid to touch Abinadi because the Spirit of the Lord was with him. "His face shone with exceeding luster," and he spoke "with power and authority from God." Abinadi declared that he would finish the message that God had sent him to deliver—and then it wouldn't matter what King Noah and the people did to him. (See Mosiah 13:1–9.)

When Abinadi concluded his message, King Noah demanded that he deny the words he had spoken—or he would be put to death. But Abinadi refused.

The firmness of Abinadi's faith is found in this poignant entry in the sacred record: "And now, when Abinadi had said these words, he fell, having suffered death by fire; yea, having been put to death because *he would not deny the commandments of God*, having sealed the truth of his words by his death." (See Mosiah 17:6–20; italics added.)

My brethren of the priesthood, what a powerful example Abinadi should be to all of us! He courageously obeyed the Lord's commandments—even though it cost him his life!

Follow the example of obedience

Prophets of all dispensations have willingly put their lives on the line and, with courage, have done the will and proclaimed the word of God.

The Prophet Joseph Smith went "like a lamb to the slaughter" (D&C 135:4), never wavering as he fulfilled the Lord's commandments.

And think of our Savior's example. He taught us how to live by the way He lived. Think of His tender compassion as He worked miracles and as He cared for the poor and the afflicted. He humbly chose to be obedient to His Father's commandments—and He endured to the end, fulfilling His divine mission and completing the atoning sacrifice for all mankind.

Brethren, as bearers of the priesthood of God, let us follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and His prophets, past and present. It may not be required of us to give our lives as martyrs, as did many of the prophets. What is required is our obedience to the Lord's commandments and our faithfulness to the covenants we have made with Him.

To young Aaronic Priesthood holders

May I talk directly to you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood for a moment? The Aaronic Priesthood is the preparatory priesthood. It prepares you for the higher priesthood—the Melchizedek Priesthood. As bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood, you must learn to obey the Lord's commandments. Honor your mother and father, keep the Sabbath day holy, do not take the Lord's name in vain,

honor womanhood, be chaste, do not lie or steal, live the Word of Wisdom, and pay an honest tithing and a generous fast offering. If you keep these commandments and others, you will be richly blessed.

Officiate worthily in the sacrament

You young deacons, teachers, and priests: Are you worthy to officiate in the preparation, passing, and blessing of the sacrament? These are sacred responsibilities. The bread and water are emblems of our Savior's flesh and blood; they represent His atoning sacrifice.

Think of that for a moment. The sacrament that you administer each week is in remembrance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The wondrous gift of the Atonement overcomes physical death unconditionally, and it is infinite because it is for all who have lived or will ever live in mortality. Through the Atonement, we are all redeemed from the Fall of Adam and will be resurrected.

However, for the full blessings of the Atonement to take effect in our lives and allow us to return to live with our Heavenly Father, we must repent of our sins and be faithful in obeying the commandments of God. Thus, the redemptive blessings of repentance and forgiveness are an important part of the Atonement, but they are conditional upon our faithfulness in obeying the commandments and the ordinances of God.

Oh, how the Lord blesses worthy bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood who bless and pass the sacrament to faithful members of the Church in His memory! And how He blesses those who partake of the sacrament worthily! If you are worthy to participate in the administration of the sacrament, you will be worthy to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood at the appropriate time and enter the temple to take upon yourselves covenants with the Lord.

Mission, education, and friends

Young men, prepare to serve as missionaries. Going on a mission teaches you to live the law of consecration. It may be the only time in your life when you can give to the Lord all your time, talents, and resources. In return, the Lord will bless you with His Spirit to be with you. He will be close to you and strengthen you.

Work hard to obtain an education and to learn technical skills that will allow you to be self-sufficient and support your family.

Cultivate good friends who do not try to make you choose between their ways and the Lord's ways. Be the kind of friend who makes it easier for others to obey the commandments when they are with you.

Obedience is a lifetime effort

Now, to you brethren who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, as well as the Aaronic Priesthood holders: As you know, keeping the Lord's commandments is a lifetime effort! Let us be faithful and courageous in keeping His commandments, as we have covenanted to do.

The Savior declared: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Some may ask, Why did the Lord give us commandments? In premortal councils He determined that we, His spirit children, would be given commandments by which to live during our mortal lives. Jehovah, the firstborn spirit child of our Heavenly Father, said:

"We will go down, . . . and we will make an earth whereon these [God's other spirit children] may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon" (Abraham 3:24-26).

Commandments guide and protect us

These commandments are loving instructions provided by God our Father for our physical and spiritual well-being and happiness while in mortality. Commandments allow us to know the mind and will of God regarding our eternal progression. And they test our willingness to be obedient to His will.

The commandments are not a burden or a restriction. Every commandment of the Lord is given for our development, progress, and growth. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

"God has designed our happiness. . . . He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 256).

How I love the commandments of the Lord! They guide and protect us and allow us to return back into the presence of our Heavenly Father. If we faithfully obey the commandments, we are promised the blessings of eternal life. Eternal life, "the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7), is to be exalted and to live with Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in all the eternities to come. He dearly wants us to return to Him.

We don't need to wait, however, until the next life to receive many of the promised blessings. In this life the obedient may enjoy peace of mind, happiness, and "joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

Obedience brings spiritual light

Living the commandments brings us into harmony with Deity; we become *one* in purpose with the Father and the Son.

When we are *one* with God, we walk with spiritual light. Our diligence in keeping the commandments allows the Holy Ghost to dwell within us. We are given the gift of personal revelation. This is a spiritual light that protects us and serves as a beacon, guiding us in righteous ways. It dispels the darkness of the adversary. So powerful is this light that it can reach us even when we are drawn into a black hole of sin so deep and so dark that we believe no spiritual light could ever penetrate.

Do you remember being afraid of the dark when you were a child? When you became frightened, you probably turned on the light or lit a candle—in fact, you lit every light in the house! When your parents came home later in the evening, they would ask, "Why is every light in the house on?" And then they would proceed to give you a lecture, I am sure, about the family budget and the cost of electricity.

You have learned, however, that by turning on an electric light or by lighting a candle, there was no more darkness, no more fear. You learned a simple law of nature, which is also a spiritual law: Light and darkness cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Satan and his disciples cannot tolerate the spiritual light of the gospel; they must immediately depart. Satan cannot command you to do anything. With the priesthood you can command him to depart in your thoughts and in your actions.

When we live the commandments, our countenance is surrounded by gospel light. With this spiritual light we no longer wander in the strange and darkened paths of the adversary, becoming lost, discouraged, depressed, and fearful. Walking in the light of the gospel, we will not lose sight of our eternal goals.

Brethren, choosing to live the commandments frees us from the shackles of sin and allows us to experience true hap-

piness. There is no joy in sin. As the prophet Alma taught his son, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Fear God, not man

It takes courage to keep the commandments. To fail to do so because of peer pressure is to have the fear of man—to be more afraid of what man thinks about us than what God thinks about us. I have never understood why someone would have a greater concern about man's opinion than about God's opinion.

To know and keep the commandments, we must know and follow the Savior and the prophets of God. We were all blessed recently to receive an important message from modern prophets, entitled "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). This proclamation warns us what will happen if we do not strengthen the family unit in our homes, our communities, and our nations. Every priesthood holder and citizen should study the proclamation carefully.

Prophets must often warn of the consequences of violating God's laws. They do not preach that which is popular with the world. President Ezra Taft Benson taught that "popularity is never a test of truth" ("Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet," in *1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [1981], 29).

Why do prophets proclaim unpopular commandments and call society to repentance for rejecting, modifying, and even ignoring the commandments? The reason is very simple. Upon receiving revelation, prophets have no choice but to proclaim and reaffirm that which God has given them to tell the world. Prophets do this knowing full well the price they may have to pay. Some who choose not to live the commandments make every effort to defame the character of the prophets and demean their personal integrity and reputation. In response the prophets remain silent and merely turn

the other cheek. The world may see this as weakness, but it is one of the greatest strengths a man can have—to be faithful, unyielding, and unwavering to that which he knows to be true, accepting whatever consequences may follow.

God's commandments do not change

Each of us is free to accept or reject the commandments, but none of us is free to modify them to suit our personal preferences. Priesthood leaders do not have the right to change revealed principles and commandments just for the sake of being popular with the world. Nor do prophets have the authority to alter God's commandments in order to make them more palatable to those who are weak in their resolve to live worthily.

On one occasion a Church leader was confronted by a grieving parent who wanted one of God's commandments softened to accommodate a wayward child who had been disciplined by the Church. In his grief the parent had suggested that the Church leader was unchristian in denying the child the full benefits of membership in the Church.

The Church leader shared the sorrow of the parents and the child, but he remained loyal to the commandments of the Lord. In response to the accusation of not being a Christian, the leader said, "If I were to attempt to change the commandments, at that very moment I would no longer be following Christ's teachings."

Rationalization that God should change His commandments to accommodate our transgressions leads to spiritual darkness, which only the light of the gospel can remove. To the woman taken in adultery, Christ did not soften the commandment to not commit adultery. Rather, He counseled her to "sin no more" (John 8:11). He promises all of us forgiveness through repentance. It is we who must change, not the commandments.

Study, teach, testify, and obey

Dear brethren of the priesthood, we must never forget for a moment that the covenants we have made to keep—the promises we have made with the Lord and with our Heavenly Father—are the most important decisions we have made in our lives. Let us study and ponder the scriptures and listen to the counsel of living prophets. Let us teach and testify of the truthfulness of the commandments in our homes and elsewhere as directed by the Spirit. Let us reflect our love of the Lord by being obedient to the commandments and reaping the promised blessings both in this life and in the

life to come. “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17).

I testify that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. May we remember who we are and act accordingly, that we may gain the riches of eternity for ourselves, our families, and our friends, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve has spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder W. Eugene Hansen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder W. Eugene Hansen

My beloved brethren, I feel the awesome responsibility of this evening as I respond to the assignment of the First Presidency to speak to the priesthood of the Church.

Here in the Tabernacle there is a perceptible spirit of warmth and love and brotherhood which is characteristic and typical of the priesthood of God. Also I sense that as you meet in dedicated buildings throughout the world, you too will feel that same spirit and brotherhood.

A great dispensation

This is a great time to be living in the world, “the dispensation of the fulness of times” (Ephesians 1:10; see also D&C 27:13).

A humble boy’s prayer was the beginning of this dispensation as the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph and vested in him the divine commission to assist in ushering in this special period of time.

Ancient prophets, servants of God, have visited the earth for the purpose

of restoring precious priesthood keys—keys of authority and responsibility given them by the Lord at an earlier time (see D&C 27).

This is the restored Church of Christ. Our Savior, the Only Begotten Son of God, stands at the head of this Church. He established it nearly 2,000 years ago.

Rattlesnakes and wayward sheep

At the priesthood session of conference, I am always impressed with the number of young men of Aaronic Priesthood age who are here, many with their fathers, some with grandfathers, others with priesthood leaders. You young men bring with you the special, vibrant, enthusiastic spirit of the youth of our time. So I would like to direct my remarks to you for the next few minutes.

First, an experience that I had as a youth which helped teach me an important lesson. It occurred when I was quite young—to be more specific, a boy of 10 or 11. I was herding our flock of sheep in the mountains of northern Utah to the east of East Garland. My grandfather

had entrusted me with the sheep as we were moving them up the mountain to the summer range. I had just watered them in a small mountain stream and bedded them down for a short rest before going on.

While they were settled, I went about to explore the terrain and check the route ahead. I was a couple of hundred yards up the canyon when I heard a sound that chilled me to the bone. Once you have heard a rattlesnake, a very poisonous reptile, you'll never forget the sound.

Cautiously I moved toward that sound. To my surprise I observed not one but three rattlers just a few yards away. They were on a rocky knoll that had been warmed by the spring sun. While the sight of three rattlers in a bunch intrigued me, because you seldom see more than one at a time, it also concerned me since the sheep would need to pass this way.

Before long the sheep roused and started moving up the canyon. As they came closer, the snakes seemed to sense the intruders and slithered down the incline toward the creek.

Fearing the danger, I immediately turned my sheep up the hill away from the direction the snakes were moving. I was successful for a time, but then a couple of sheep broke away from the flock. As they did so, the entire flock seemed determined to follow those two errant old ewes, and there was no stopping them. You may have heard the characterization "They all followed like a bunch of sheep." Well, that's what happened here. To make matters worse, they were moving directly toward the location of the rattlers.

I had hoped that the natural instinct of the sheep would keep them at a safe distance. But some of the flock were pushed directly into the path of the snakes. And there was no escape for

the unfortunate ones that sustained the strikes of those disturbed reptiles.

It was a sad young shepherd who had to report to his grandfather a short time later the loss of two of his prized ewes. The experience of that day provided a very forceful illustration to me of what can happen when the sheep ignore their shepherd.

I was there as the shepherd. I perceived the danger and was trying my best to protect my sheep. But as a few started to go in the wrong direction, others were determined to follow. Though only two of the flock were lost, it was a loss that need not have been.

Heed spiritual shepherds

Unfortunately, in life we all too often see the results of those who ignore the attempts of spiritual shepherds to guide their paths past hazards and dangers that may be unperceived at the time.

Parents, bishops, grandparents, Scoutmasters, advisers, and genuine friends often can provide spiritual shepherding. Note that I refer to genuine friends in the category of spiritual shepherds. Notice also that I did not include peers in that group. I readily acknowledge that peers in some cases can be and are an influence for good.

Resist negative peer pressure

A genuine friend who has another's best interest at heart may often be the one who encourages or provides the strength in a weak moment to prevent that person from making a serious mistake. In so doing he or she helps prevent the sorrow and sadness, the embarrassment and loss of self-respect that nearly always accompany sin. But unfortunately, so many times there are situations where peer influence has a definite negative effect.

We read and hear of so many surveys and interviews where youth disclose that it was the influence and pressure of peers that led them to immoral and foolish behavior. Satan knows this. He is an expert at deceit. I suppose he should be; he's had plenty of practice. He is aware of the tremendous influence a group of peers can have on an individual.

There is a compelling desire to belong—to be one of the group. If he can get just one person to influence others to choose the wrong way for whatever reason, Satan wins. Often the easiest and simplest nudging is that “everyone is doing it” or “it’s the cool thing” or “how do you know it’s bad if you haven’t tried it?”

Don’t be deceived. Don’t be influenced with this kind of enticement. Keep your eyes above the crowd. Be your own person. You have been taught correct principles. Stick with those principles.

Do not try to justify “a little sin”

There is no neutral area between good and evil. If you are on the devil’s turf, get off it as fast as you can. As strong as Nephi was, I can’t forget his humble prayer: “O Lord, wilt thou . . . make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?” (2 Nephi 4:31).

Some foolishly try to justify conduct they know is wrong with, “It’s such a little sin; it won’t matter.” While it may be true that the particular conduct is not at the top of the scale, the more dangerous part is the road that it puts you on. “Little wrongs” just seem to have a way of leading into “bigger wrongs.”

The words of the American clergyman Harry Emerson Fosdick provide further instruction here: “The tragic evils of our life are so commonly unintentional. We did not start out for that poor, cheap goal. That aim was not in our minds at all. . . . Look to the road you are walking on! He who picks up one end of a stick picks up the other. He who

chooses the beginning of a road chooses the place it leads to” (*Living under Tension* [1941], 110–11).

Remain strong and faithful

Now, my young brethren, you know what is right. You have been taught well. You have the Holy Ghost. Your challenge is to remain strong and faithful. Keep your bodies and minds clean and pure. Make the decision early to get on the right road and then stay there. Your Heavenly Father loves you. He has confidence in you. He wants you to be happy. He has provided a pattern for you to follow (see D&C 52:14). That pattern is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the greatest blessings of this dispensation is the presence of living prophets to provide direction and guidance. President Gordon B. Hinckley is our beloved prophet today. He loves you. Listen to his counsel:

“Prove your strength, show your independence, by saying no when enticement from peers comes your way. Your own strength will add strength to those who are weak. Your own example will give determination to others” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 48).

“You can determine the kind of life you will have in your thirties or forties by what you do in your teens” (quoted in *Ensign*, Dec. 1995, 66).

I pray you will make the decisions that will result in true happiness.

This is the true Church of Jesus Christ. This is His work. Of that I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

W. Eugene Hansen has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President James E. Faust

Things to know before serving a mission

My beloved brethren, the responsibility of speaking to the priesthood of the Church is overwhelming. I feel honored to be numbered one of you. It is a great blessing to hold the priesthood of God. I earnestly seek your faith and prayers.

This evening I would like to speak to you wonderful young men about 10 things that I would like my son or my grandson to know before he leaves on his mission.

Your call comes from the Lord

First, you will be under call from the Lord Jesus Christ. What a marvelous thing it is to have the confidence of the Lord, your bishop, your stake president, all of the General Authorities, and President Hinckley to honor you with a call. You will be a servant of the living God and an ambassador of the Church.

Most of our missionaries are young and inexperienced in the ways of the world. Nevertheless, the Lord said, "He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all."¹

Despite our shortcomings and our inadequacies, we need to be reminded that the God who calls us to serve is the "possessor of all things; for all things are subject unto him, both in heaven and on the earth, the life and the light, the Spirit and the power, sent forth by the will of the Father through Jesus Christ, his Son. But no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin."²

Respect and obey your mission president

Second, your mission president is the Lord's representative. Do not criticize or demean him, privately or pub-

licly. If you will respect his authority, be obedient, humble, teachable, and follow the mission rules, you will be a successful missionary. For instance, one of the hardest rules to follow is to get up in the morning when your mission president directs. Many young men think the best time to sleep is in the morning. I'm grateful to my obedient senior companion, Elder William Grant Bangerter, who would set the alarm clock to get up early. When the alarm went off, it would jangle my nerves. In the winter it was dark, damp, and cold, and we never had any hot water for bathing or showering. He would cheerfully shower in that cold water; I would start to shiver as soon as he got out of the shower. I could not do anything but follow his example, but I have to confess that I was not quite as cheerful because my teeth were chattering.

Hard work is important

Third, hard work is more important than intellect. Remember the Lord's words in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Wherefore, I call upon the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised, to thrash the nations by the power of my Spirit;

"And their arm shall be my arm, and I will be their shield and their buckler; and I will gird up their loins, and they shall fight manfully for me."³

President Ezra Taft Benson once said: "One of the greatest secrets of missionary work is *work*. If a missionary works, he will get the Spirit; if he gets the Spirit, he will teach by the Spirit; and if he teaches by the Spirit, he will touch the hearts of the people; and he will be happy. There will be no homesickness, no worrying about families, for all time and talents and interests are centered on the work of the ministry. That's the secret—work, work, work.

There is no satisfactory substitute, especially in missionary work."⁴

One of the Brethren reported being in a missionary testimony meeting when a young elder, who was not given much to speaking, said, "I am enjoying my work. I guess that is all I can expect. I can't enjoy what I don't do!"

When President N. Eldon Tanner presided over the West European Mission some years ago, his slogan was "Have a good time." One day he said to a group of missionaries in Germany, "I would like you all to have a good time." After the meeting, one of the missionaries came up to him and said, "President Tanner, I don't think that it is quite fair for you to tell the missionaries to have a good time. You know, the only way they can have a good time is to do their work." President Tanner said, "Well, go have a good time."⁵

Forget yourself in the Lord's service

Fourth, forget yourself in His service. The Lord said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."⁶ If you will lose yourself in missionary service, you will find indescribable joy.

Nothing you do as a missionary should get in the way of your important message: not your dress, your hair length, or your attitude; not your deportment; and not your girlfriend at home. I do not wish to be insensitive to the natural affections between a fine young man and a lovely young woman. However, if a missionary receives a letter from his girlfriend stating that her affections for him have changed (we used to call that a "Dear John letter"; some of us have gotten those), I commend the good counsel given some years ago by Elder LeGrand Richards, who said, "There's a new group of girls every year! And the new group is just as good as the old group."

You young men are properly concerned about finding your place in this

unsettled world. However, when you are called as a full-time representative of the Lord, you should "serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day."⁷

Never permit contention

Fifth, never permit contention in your companionships. Some of your missionary companions will be your life's dearest friends. Be the kind of companion you would like to be with. Be unselfish in your relationship with your companions. When there is contention, the Spirit of the Lord will depart, regardless of who is at fault.

Each of us is an individual with unique strengths and talents, different from any other person in the world. Each of us has weaknesses. In a harmonious companionship there is teamwork—where one is weak, the other is strong. As a boy I learned to drive a team of horses. If one horse was balky, the other could not pull the load alone. So it is in a missionary companionship. Each must pull his share of the load.

Keep clean, healthy, and neat

Sixth, keep your body clean and healthy and your living quarters clean. It is very important that you eat properly and get adequate sleep so that you can maintain good health. If you become ill, not only can you not do the work, but you will also become a burden on your companion. Remember also that keeping your person and your living quarters neat and clean is conducive to enjoying the Spirit.

As a representative of the Lord, your personal appearance is very important. You, the Church, and your message will be judged in part by your cleanliness and neatness. People will be reluctant to invite you into their homes if you are unkempt.

Love and serve the people

Seventh, learn to love and serve the people among whom you work. You should pray daily for them that the Lord will fill you with love as you serve them. If you do not love them, you will have difficulty teaching them.

A lonely young Persian student was in Munich, struggling to find meaning to life in postwar Europe. He heard a knock at the door one day, and two Mormon missionaries stood before him. He was not the least interested in religion. The only thing that interested him about these two young men was their accent. He had mastered four languages, but English was not one of them.

He invited them in, but as soon as they began their discussion he cautioned, "I don't want to hear about God, nor how your religion got started. I only want to know one thing: what do you people do for one another?"

He waited as the elders exchanged glances. Finally one of them said softly, "We love one another."

Nothing the missionary could have said would have been more electrifying than this simple utterance, for the Holy Ghost immediately bore witness that these missionaries were true servants of the Lord. Shortly thereafter, he was baptized into the Church.⁸

Study and teach from the scriptures

Eighth, study, ponder, and teach from the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon and the New Testament. Know the truth so well that you can state it clearly. B. H. Roberts wrote, "To be known, the truth must be stated and the clearer and more complete the statement is, the better the opportunity will the Holy Spirit have for testifying to the souls of men that the work is true."⁹ You cannot convert people beyond your own conversion. The Book of Mormon, to-

gether with your testimony of it, are powerful instruments of conversion.

Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy acquaints us with a strong testimony of the converting power of the Book of Mormon: Sister Celia Cruz Ayala of the Puerto Rico San Juan Mission decided to give the Book of Mormon to a friend. She wrapped it in attractive paper and set out to deliver her present.

On the way she was attacked by a bandit who stole her purse and with it the wrapped copy of the Book of Mormon. A few days later she received this letter:

"Mrs. Cruz:

"Forgive me, forgive me. You will never know how sorry I am for attacking you. But because of it, my life has changed and will continue to change. That book [the Book of Mormon] has helped me in my life. The dream of that man of God has shaken me. . . . I am returning your five pesos for I can't spend them. I want you to know that you seemed to have a radiance about you. That light seemed to stop me [from harming you, so] I ran away instead.

"I want you to know that you will see me again, but when you do, you won't recognize me, for I will be your brother. . . . Here, where I live, I have to find the Lord and go to the church you belong to.

"The message you wrote in that book brought tears to my eyes. Since Wednesday night I have not been able to stop reading it. I have prayed and asked God to forgive me, [and] I ask you to forgive me. . . . I thought your wrapped gift was something I could sell. [Instead,] it has made me want to make my life over. Forgive me, forgive me, I beg you.

"Your absent friend."¹⁰

Such is the conversion power of the Book of Mormon.

Now I would counsel you young men as you enter your missionary service to forget the mysteries. Speaking of the mysteries reminds me of the man who

got up to talk and said, "I will now proceed to expound upon that which the Lord has not yet seen fit to reveal!" Mysteries include those matters that are speculative. They are things which have not been revealed or are beyond our understanding. It is the plain, simple truth confirmed by the Spirit that converts when accompanied by the testimony of a humble servant of the Lord.

Be prepared for Lucifer's opposition

Ninth, you must know that Lucifer will oppose you, and be prepared for his opposition. Do not be surprised. He wants you to fail. Discouragement is one of the devil's tools. Have courage and go forward. Recognize that the gospel has been preached with some pain and sorrow from the very beginning of time. Do not expect that your experience will be otherwise. President Wilford Woodruff recounted the difficulties of early missionary work:

"In my early missions, when preaching in the Southern States—Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky—I have waded swamps and rivers and have walked seventy miles or more without eating. In those days we counted it a blessing to go into a place where there was a Latter-day Saint. I went once 150 miles to see one; and when I got there he had apostatized, and tried to kill me. Then, after travelling seventy-two miles without food, I sat down to eat my meal with a Missouri mobocrat, and he damning and cursing me all the time. . . . In those days we might travel hundreds and hundreds of miles and you could not find a Latter-day Saint."¹¹

Your testimony is your strongest arrow

Tenth, your own personal testimony is the strongest arrow in your quiver. I have often related that in the early days of the missionary work in Brazil, where

we now have over half a million members of the Church, we did not have the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, or the Doctrine and Covenants translated into the Portuguese language. All we had were the Bible, a few tracts, our personal testimonies concerning the Restoration of the gospel and the Joseph Smith story, and our testimony of the living prophet. The harvest was not great. However, some of those who were baptized have for three generations remained faithful because they were touched by the powerful testimonies of humble missionaries almost 60 years ago.

Now, you cannot be responsible for whether or not those you teach will accept your testimony and join the Church. Do not feel that you must obtain a quota of baptisms to be successful. An old saying teaches that you can count the number of seeds in a single apple, but you can't count the number of apples in a single seed. The harvest is the Lord's. Your responsibility is to thrust in the sickle. The Doctrine and Covenants clearly records what is required of those who enter into the waters of baptism: "

"All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church."¹²

If you have the Holy Spirit resting upon you, and you speak by that Spirit the words of the Lord as contained in the holy scriptures and as outlined by His living prophets, God will ratify your message in the hearts of those who are hearing you.

Now, my dear young friends, missionary work is not easy. In fact, it is often quite difficult, but the Lord is the greatest paymaster in the world. Dedicated missionary service is one of life's most fulfilling experiences. This is in large measure because of the divine agency which flows so richly from the Lord to His humble and obedient servants to bless the lives of others. I know this because I have seen it manifested in the lives of thousands and have felt it in my own life.

May the priesthood of God be prepared and worthy for any calls that may come, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 50:26.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 50:27–28.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 35:13–14.
4. Mission presidents' seminar, Aug. 1982; quoted in *Missionary Guide* (1988), 32; italics added.
5. See N. Eldon Tanner, "Have a Good Time," in Rick Walton and Fern Oviatt, sel., *Stories for Mormons* (1983), 73.
6. Matthew 10:39.

7. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
8. Adapted from an untitled article by Russ Price, in Stan Miller and others, comps., *Especially for Mormons*, 5 vols. (1987), 5:186.
9. *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (1909), 2:vii.
10. See F. Burton Howard, "My Life Has Changed," *Church News*, 6 Jan. 1996, 16.
11. In *Journal of Discourses*, 12:12.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

President Thomas S. Monson

We are all enlisted

What a vast audience is attending this general priesthood meeting this evening. The Apostle Peter aptly described you: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."¹

In the Sunday School of our youth, we often sang the hymn:

We are all enlisted till the conflict is
o'er;

Happy are we! Happy are we!

Soldiers in the army, there's a bright
crown in store;
We shall win and wear it by and by. . . .

Dangers may gather—why should we
fear?

Jesus, our Leader, ever is near.
He will protect us, comfort, and cheer.
We're joyfully, joyfully marching to
our home.²

Our duty in the battle for souls

Brethren, when we contemplate the wonderful world in which we live and then realize the tumultuous times which

beset us, joyful are we to know that Jesus, our leader, ever is near. We live in a world of waste. Too often our natural resources are squandered. We live in a world of want. Some enjoy the lap of luxury, yet others stare starvation in the face. Food, shelter, clothing, and love are not found by all. Unrelieved suffering, unnecessary illness, and premature death stalk too many. We live in a world of wars. Some are political in nature, while others are economic by definition. The greatest battle of all, however, is for the souls of mankind.

Our Captain, even the Lord Jesus Christ, declared:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. . . .

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!"³

He called fishermen at Galilee to leave their nets and follow Him, declaring, "I will make you fishers of men."⁴ And so He did. He sent His beloved Apostles into all the world to proclaim His glorious gospel. And He issues a call to each of us to "come join the ranks."⁵ He provides our battle plan, with the admonition, "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."⁶ I love and cherish the noble word *duty*.

President John Taylor cautioned us, "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty."⁷

Another President, even George Albert Smith, said, "It is your duty first of

all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of His holy Priesthood to [so] magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows in such a way that the people will be glad to follow you."⁸

Priesthood: the perfect plan of service

How does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it.

We have accepted the call; we have been ordained; we bear the priesthood.

President Stephen L. Richards spoke often to holders of the priesthood and emphasized his philosophy pertaining to it. He declared, "The Priesthood is usually simply defined as 'the power of God delegated to man.'" He continues: "This definition, I think, is accurate. But for practical purposes I like to define the Priesthood in terms of service and I frequently call it 'the perfect plan of service.'"⁹

You may well ask, "Where does the path of duty lie?" Brethren, I believe with all my heart that two markers define the path: the *duty to prepare* and the *duty to serve*. Let us elaborate on these two markers.

Our duty to prepare

First is the *duty to prepare*. The Lord counseled us, "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith."¹⁰

Preparation for life's opportunities and responsibilities has never been more vital. We live in a changing society. Intense competition is a part of life. The role of husband, father, grandfather, provider, and protector is vastly different from what it was a generation ago. Preparation is not a matter of *perhaps* or *maybe*. It is a mandate. The old phrase "Ignorance is bliss" is forever gone. Preparation precedes performance.

All of us who hold the priesthood are now, or surely will be, teachers of truth. The Lord advised:

"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand, . . .

"That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you."¹¹

Our duty to serve

Second is the *duty to serve*.

The First Presidency, composed of Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose, in February 1914 declared, "Priesthood is not given for the honor or aggrandizement of man, but for the ministry of service among those for whom the bearers of that sacred commission are called to labor."¹²

Now some of you may be shy by nature or consider yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord's work, and when we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help. Remember that whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.

"I never can learn Spanish!"

At times the Lord needs a little help to assist some as to the validity of this truth. I recall when I served as chairman of the Church Missionary Committee that I received a telephone call from a member of the presidency of the Missionary Training Center at Provo, Utah. He advised that a particular young man called to a Spanish-speaking mission was having difficulty applying himself to his language study and had declared,

"I never can learn Spanish!" The leader asked, "What do you recommend we do?"

I thought for a moment, then suggested, "Place him tomorrow as an observer in a class of missionaries struggling to learn Japanese, and then advise me of his reaction."

My caller responded within 24 hours with the report, "The missionary was only in the Japanese language class one-half day when he called me and excitedly said, 'Place me back in the Spanish class! I know I can learn *that* language.'" And he did.

Youth serve widows at Thanksgiving

While the formal classroom may be intimidating at times, some of the most effective teaching and learning takes place other than in the chapel or the classroom.

Many of you hold the Aaronic Priesthood. You are preparing to become missionaries. Begin now to learn in your youth the joy of service in the cause of the Master. Could I share with you an example of such service.

Following Thanksgiving time a few years ago, I received a letter from a widow whom I had known in the stake where I served in the presidency. She had just returned from a dinner sponsored by her bishopric. Her words reflect the peace she felt and the gratitude which filled her heart:

"Dear President Monson,

"I am living in Bountiful now. I miss the people of our old stake, but let me tell you of a wonderful experience I have had. In early November, all the widows and older people received an invitation to come to a lovely dinner. We were told not to worry about transportation, since this would be provided by the older youth in the ward.

"At the appointed hour, a very nice young man rang the bell and took me and another sister to the stake center. He stopped the car, and two other young

men walked with us to the building. Inside, they escorted us to the tables, where seated on each side of us was either a young woman or a young man. We were served a lovely Thanksgiving dinner and afterward provided a choice program.

"Then the young men took us home. It was such a nice evening. Most of us shed a tear or two for the love and respect we were shown.

"President Monson, when you see young people treat others like these young people did, I feel the Church is in good hands."

There came to mind the words from the Epistle of James: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."¹³

I add my own commendation: God bless the leaders, the young men, and the young women who so unselfishly brought such joy to the lonely and such peace to their souls. Through their own experience, they learned the meaning of service and felt the nearness of the Lord.

Home teaching—a divine service

In 1962, having returned home from presiding over the Canadian Mission of the Church, I received a telephone call from Elder Marion G. Romney. He advised me that the First Presidency had named me as a member of the Adult Correlation Committee of the Church, which committee had the specific assignment to work on the preparation of a new concept—even home teaching. Thus began a most interesting and rewarding experience for me. Each phase of our work, when completed, was reviewed by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. In the spring of 1963 our work was done and a number of us were called to serve on a new committee—the Priesthood Home Teaching Committee—and assigned to go among

the stakes of the Church, teaching and encouraging its implementation.

President David O. McKay met with all of the General Authorities of the Church and with the representatives of the committee. He counseled those assembled: "Home teaching is one of our most urgent and most rewarding opportunities to nurture and inspire, to counsel and direct our Father's children. . . . It is a divine service, a divine call. It is our duty as Home Teachers to carry the divine spirit into every home and heart."

In 1987 President Ezra Taft Benson counseled the brethren attending the general priesthood meeting: "Home teaching is not to be undertaken casually. A home teaching call is to be accepted as if extended to you personally by the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁴ He quoted the familiar passage from section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein the Lord declared to the priesthood:

"Watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church . . . ;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."¹⁵

"And visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties."¹⁶

A report card of home teaching

Recently our grandchildren received their report cards. They displayed them with satisfaction to their parents and to us. Tonight I would like all of the priesthood to mark their own grade on the report card of home teaching. Are you ready? *Yes* or *No* answers are sufficient.

1. Are you assigned as a home teacher?

2. Do home teachers visit your home at least once per month?

3. Do home teachers prepare and present a gospel message?

4. Do home teachers inquire concerning each member of the family—even those members who may be away at school or serving on missions?

5. What lesson did the home teachers bring to your home last month?

6. Did the home teachers join with your family in prayer during their visit?

7. Did you go home teaching last month?

The quiz could continue, but I sense the questions have been adequate to prompt a mental review and to motivate improved performance.

I am aware that we at headquarters authorized some modifications in the home teaching effort where priesthood numbers were very few—even to permitting a wife to accompany her husband when another companion from the priesthood was not available. But these exceptions were to be just that: *exceptions—not the rule*. We urge that an active bearer of the Melchizedek Priesthood have assigned with him a teacher or a priest or a prospective elder, complying with the scripture, “And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also.”¹⁷ This is priesthood home teaching as it generally is meant to function.

Johann Denndorfer's home teachers

Should we feel the assignment too arduous or time-consuming, let me share with you the experience of a faithful home teacher and his companion in what was then East Germany.

Brother Johann Denndorfer had been converted to the Church in Germany, and following World War II he found himself virtually a prisoner in his own land—the land of Hungary in the city of Debrecen. How he wanted to visit

the temple! How he desired to receive his spiritual blessings! Request after request to journey to the temple in Switzerland had been denied, and he almost despaired. Then his home teacher visited. Brother Walter Krause went from the northeastern portion of Germany all the way to Hungary. He had said to his home teaching companion, “Would you like to go home teaching with me this week?”

His companion said, “When will we leave?”

“Tomorrow,” replied Brother Krause.

“When will we come back?” asked the companion.

“Oh, in about a week—if we get back then!”

And away they went to visit Brother Denndorfer. He had not had home teachers since before the war. Now, when he saw the servants of the Lord, he was overwhelmed. He did not shake hands with them; rather, he went to his bedroom and took from a secret hiding place his tithing that he had saved from the day he became a member of the Church and returned to Hungary. He presented the tithing to his home teachers and said: “Now I am current with the Lord. Now I feel worthy to shake the hands of servants of the Lord!”

Brother Krause asked him about his desire to attend the temple in Switzerland. Brother Denndorfer said: “It’s no use. I have tried and tried. The government has even confiscated my Church books, my greatest treasure.”

Brother Krause, a patriarch, provided Brother Denndorfer with a patriarchal blessing. At the conclusion of the blessing, he said to Brother Denndorfer, “Approach the government again about going to Switzerland.” And Brother Denndorfer submitted the request once again to the authorities. This time approval came, and with joy Brother Denndorfer went to the Swiss Temple and

stayed a month. He received his own endowment, his deceased wife was sealed to him, and he was able to accomplish the work for hundreds of his ancestors. He returned to his home renewed in body and in spirit.

And what about the home teachers who undertook this historic and inspired visit to their brother, Johann Denndorfer?

Knowing personally each member of this human drama, I wouldn't be a bit surprised to learn that on the way from Debrecen, Hungary, to their home in East Germany, they sang aloud: "Dangers may gather—why should we fear? Jesus, our Leader, ever is near. He will protect us, comfort, and cheer. We're joyfully, joyfully marching to our home."¹⁸

Brethren of the priesthood, may all of us remember our duty to prepare and our duty to serve, that we may merit the Lord's approbation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."¹⁹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Peter 2:9.
2. "We Are All Enlisted," *Hymns*, no. 250.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10, 15–16.
4. Matthew 4:19.
5. *Hymns*, no. 250.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
7. In *Journal of Discourses*, 20:23.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 14.
9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 46.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 88:78, 80.

12. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 4:304.

13. James 1:27.

14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 60; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 48.

15. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–55.

16. Doctrine and Covenants 20:51.

17. Doctrine and Covenants 84:106.

18. *Hymns*, no. 250.

19. Matthew 25:21.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 in the morning. Those wishing to attend should be in their places by 9:15.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening. Having said that, I am afraid I am going to forget. If I show up in the middle of the morning session, you will know why.

We are very grateful to this wonderful choir, which has provided stirring music tonight. Thank you, brethren, very much.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "More Holiness Give Me," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Andrew W. Peterson of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A blessed people, a great brotherhood

We have had a wonderful meeting. The Spirit of the Lord has been with us. I hope that each of us has gained much from what we have heard.

We are a blessed people. Where else in all the world can men and boys, each ordained to the holy priesthood, meet together as we do tonight. We are a vast congregation of hundreds of thousands—yes, of millions, bound together in a

great brotherhood. It is a tremendous and remarkable thing. I hope each of us treasures that which we have.

A week ago tonight this Tabernacle was filled with beautiful and bright young women. It was the annual Young Women conference of the Church, and I was asked to speak. A number of those in attendance and particularly the girls said, "We wish you would tell the boys the same thing. They need to know what you've told us." Well, I'm not going to tell you quite the same thing. If you wish to read it, it will be in the May issue of the *Ensign* magazine.

A dream of young Joseph F. Smith

I wish to begin this evening by reading a dream which President Joseph F. Smith had as a young man. As some of you know, President Joseph F. Smith was the sixth President of the Church. He served from 1901 to 1918, a period of 17 years.

He was the son of Hyrum Smith, who was the brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was born at Far West, Missouri, on November 13, 1838. When the Saints were driven out of Missouri, he was brought to Illinois as an infant. His father was killed in Carthage Jail at the time the Prophet Joseph was murdered. As a boy not yet 6 years of age, he heard a knock on the window of his mother's home in Nauvoo. It was a horseman to tell his mother that her husband had been killed at Carthage that afternoon. What a sobering and terrible experience that was for a little boy.

At the age of 9 this fatherless lad drove an ox team with his mother across the plains to this valley. At the age of 15 he was called on a mission to Hawaii. He made his way to San Francisco and there worked in a shingle mill to earn enough money to get to the islands.

Hawaii was not a tourist center then. It was peopled largely by the native Hawaiians. They were, for the most part,

poor but generous with what they had. He learned to speak their language and to love them. He never lost his love for the Hawaiian people, nor did they for him. I give you this as background for the dream which he had when he was serving there as a very young man. I quote his words:

"I was very much oppressed, once, [when I was] on a mission. I was almost naked and entirely friendless, except the friendship of a poor, benighted . . . people. I felt as if I was so debased in my condition of poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge, just a boy, that I hardly dared look a . . . man in the face.

"While in that condition I dreamed [one night] that I was on a journey, and I was impressed that I ought to hurry—hurry with all my might, for fear I might be too late. I rushed on my way as fast as I possibly could, and I was only conscious of having just a little bundle, a handkerchief with a small bundle wrapped in it. I did not realize just what it was, when I was hurrying as fast as I could; but finally I came to a wonderful mansion. . . . I thought I knew that was my destination. As I passed towards it, as fast as I could, I saw a notice, 'Bath.' I turned aside quickly and went into the bath and washed myself clean. I opened up this little bundle that I had, and there was a pair of white, clean garments, a thing I had not seen for a long time, because the people I was with did not think very much of making things exceedingly clean. But my garments were clean, and I put them on. Then I rushed to what appeared to be a great opening, or door. I knocked and the door opened, and the man who stood there was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He looked at me a little reprovingly, and the first words he said: 'Joseph, you are late.' Yet I took confidence and [replied]:

"Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!"

"He clasped my hand and drew me in, then closed the great door. I felt his

hand just as tangible as I ever felt the hand of man. I knew him, and when I entered I saw my father, and Brigham [Young] and Heber [C. Kimball], and Willard [Richards], and other good men that I had known, standing in a row. I looked as if it were across this valley, and it seemed to be filled with a vast multitude of people, but on the stage were all the people that I had known. My mother was there, and she sat with a child in her lap; and I could name over as many as I remember of their names, who sat there, who seemed to be among the chosen, among the exalted. . . .

"[When I had this dream,] I was alone on a mat, away up in the mountains of Hawaii—no one was with me. But in this vision I pressed my hand up against the Prophet, and I saw a smile cross his countenance. . . .

"When I awoke that morning I was a man, although only a boy. There was not anything in the world that I feared [after that]. I could meet any man or woman or child and look them in the face, feeling in my soul that I was a man every whit. That vision, that manifestation and witness that I enjoyed at that time has made me what I am, if I am anything that is good, or clean, or upright before the Lord, if there is anything good in me. That has helped me out in every trial and through every difficulty" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 542–43).

The core of that meaningful dream is found in the reproof given by Joseph Smith to young Joseph F. Said the Prophet, "Joseph, you are late."

Replied Joseph F., "Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!"

The result of that dream was that a boy was changed into a man. His declaration "I am clean" gave him self-assurance and courage in facing anyone or any situation. He received the strength that comes from a clear conscience fortified by the approbation of the Prophet Joseph.

Be ye clean

There is something in this for every man and boy assembled in this vast congregation tonight.

Are you beset with doubts and fears? Has discouragement pulled you down? Do you need added wisdom and strength to go forward with your life?

I call to mind the words of Tennyson's Sir Galahad: "My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure" (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Sir Galahad").

Everything looks better when there is cleanliness. In Joseph F. Smith's dream, he could look into the eyes of the Prophet and say, "I am clean." Can you, my brethren, each of you tonight? We have a saying that used to be heard more commonly: "Cleanliness is next to godliness."

Spring-cleaning as a boy

When I was a boy living here in Salt Lake City, most homes were heated with coal stoves. Black smoke belched forth from almost every chimney. As winter came to a close, black soot and grime were everywhere, both inside and outside of the house.

There was a ritual through which we passed each year, not a very pleasant one, as we viewed it. It involved every member of the family. It was known as spring-cleaning. When the weather warmed after the long winter, a week or so was designated as cleanup time. It was usually when there was a holiday and included two Saturdays.

My mother ran the show. All of the curtains were taken down and laundered. Then they were carefully ironed. The windows were washed inside and out, and oh, what a job that was in that big two-story house.

Wallpaper was on all of the walls, and Father would bring home numerous cans of wallpaper cleaner. It was like bread dough, but it was a pretty pink in

color when the container was opened. It had an interesting smell, a pleasant, refreshing kind of smell. We all pitched in. We would knead some of the cleaning dough in our hands, climb a ladder, and begin on the high ceiling and then work down the walls. The dough was soon black from the dirt it lifted from the paper. It was a terrible task, very tiring, but the results were like magic. We would stand back and compare the dirty surface with the clean surface. It was amazing to us how much better the clean walls looked.

All of the carpets were taken up and dragged out to the backyard, where they were hung over the clothesline, one by one. Each of us boys would have what we called a carpet beater, a device made of light steel rods with a wooden handle. As we beat the carpet, the dust would fly, and we would have to keep going until there was no dust left. We detested that work. But when all of it was done and everything was back in place, the result was wonderful. The house was clean, our spirits renewed. The whole world looked better.

Spring-cleaning our lives

This is what some of us need to do with our lives. Isaiah said:

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

"Learn to do well. . .

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:16-18).

"Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord" (D&C 133:5). Thus has He spoken to us in modern revelation. Be clean in body. Be clean in mind. Be clean in language. Be clean in dress and manner.

Keep sacred, marvelous bodies clean

I speak particularly to the boys, but I hope the men will also listen and hear. We all constantly need reminding. Our bodies are sacred. They were created in the image of God. They are marvelous, the crowning creation of Deity. No camera has ever matched the wonder of the human eye. No pump was ever built that could run so long and carry such a heavy duty as the human heart. The ear and the brain constitute a miracle. The capacity to pick up sound waves and convert them into language is almost beyond imagination. Look at your finger and contemplate the wonder of it. Clever men have tried to match it but have never fully succeeded. These, with others of our parts and organs, represent the divine, omnipotent genius of God, who is our Eternal Father.

I cannot understand why anyone would knowingly wish to injure his body. And yet it happens around us every day as men and boys drink alcoholic beverages and use illegal drugs. What a scourge these are. For a little temporary lift, they take into their systems that which robs them of self-control, becomes habit-forming, is terribly expensive, enslaves, and yields no good.

I think of a young man who was recently convicted of automobile homicide because he killed an innocent victim while driving drunk. He was a young man of great potential. There is no telling what he might have become, but today he sits in prison, not only in the misery of his surroundings but also in the torture of his conscience. Our Father in Heaven, who loves us, has reminded us of the evils of these things and has warned us against them.

Stay away from alcohol, my brethren. Never get involved in a so-called beer bust. Do not get entrapped with illegal drugs. They could destroy you. They

could make of you a slave, and the cravings that would follow would impoverish you in getting money to buy more drugs to satisfy those cravings.

You hold the priesthood of God. You are someone special. You have had bestowed upon you a power sacred and divine. It is totally wrong for you to partake of alcohol or drugs that are forbidden by the law.

Be clean in mind

Be clean in mind, and then you will have greater control over your bodies. It was said of old, "As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Unclean thoughts lead to unclean acts.

I remember going to President McKay years ago to plead the cause of a missionary who had become involved in serious sin. I said to President McKay, "He did it on an impulse." The President said to me, "His mind was dwelling on these things before he transgressed. The thought was father to the deed. There would not have been that impulse if he had previously controlled his thoughts."

Be morally clean

The finger of the Lord wrote on the tablets of stone, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). I believe that fornication is included within that term.

Of course you are tempted. It seems as if the whole world has become obsessed with sex. In a very beguiling and alluring way, it is thrown at you constantly. You are exposed to it on television, in magazines and books, in videos, even in music. Turn your back on it. Shun it. I know that is easy to say and difficult to do. But each time that you do so, it will be so much the easier the next time. What a wonderful thing it will be if someday you can stand before the Lord and say, "I am clean."

The Lord has given a commandment in our time that applies to each of us. He

has said, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly." And with this He has given a promise: "Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God" (D&C 121:45). I believe He is saying that if we are clean in mind and body, the time will come when we can stand confidently before the Lord just as Joseph F. Smith stood before the Prophet Joseph and said, "I am clean." There will be a feeling of confidence, and there will also be smiles of approval.

As a holder of the priesthood, you cannot, you must not be led into the vicious trap of immoral behavior. Of course you are to socialize with young women, to date, to have fun of a wholesome kind in a hundred ways. But there is a line which you must not cross. It is the line that separates personal cleanliness from sin. I need not get clinical in telling you where that line is. You know. You have been told again and again. You have a conscience within you. Stay on the Lord's side of the line.

Be clean in language

Be clean in language. There is so much of filthy, sleazy talk these days. I spoke to the young women about it. I speak to you also. It tells others that your vocabulary is so extremely limited that you cannot express yourself without reaching down into the gutter for words. Dirty talk is unbecoming any man who holds the priesthood, be he young or old.

Nor can you as a priesthood holder take the name of the Lord in vain. Said Jehovah to the children of Israel, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

That commandment, engraved by the finger of the Lord, is as binding upon us as it was upon those to whom it was originally given. The Lord has said in modern revelation, "Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and

must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit" (D&C 63:64).

A filthy mind expresses itself in filthy and profane language. A clean mind expresses itself in language that is positive and uplifting and in deeds that bring happiness into the heart.

Be clean in dress and manner

Be clean in dress and manner. I do not expect you to look like missionaries all of the time. But let me say that the clean and conservative dress and grooming of our missionaries has become as a badge of honor recognized wherever they go. The age in which we are living now has become an age of sloppy dress and sloppy manners. But I am not so concerned about what you wear as I am that it be clean. Remember Joseph F. Smith's dream. As he was hurrying toward the mansion, he had a little bundle wrapped in a handkerchief. When he bathed himself and opened it, he found that it contained clean clothing. Whenever you administer to or pass the sacrament, look your very best. Be sure of your personal cleanliness.

I urge you to be clean in manner, to be courteous, to be respectful, to be honest, to be young men and older men of integrity.

It is amazing what courtesy will accomplish. It is tragic what a lack of courtesy can bring. We see it every day as we move in the traffic of the cities in which we live. A moment spent in letting someone else get into the line does good for the one who is helped, and it also does good for the one who helps. Something happens inside of us when we are courteous and deferential toward others. It is all part of a refining process which, if persisted in, will change our very natures.

On the other hand, anger over a little traffic problem, with swearing and filthy gestures, demeans those who make them and offends those at whom they are

aimed. To practice the kind of self-discipline which can control one's temper in the little things that happen almost every day is an expression of emotional cleanliness.

Be honest

Honesty—what a precious jewel this is. Again this is a manifestation of cleanliness in thought and action. Insurance adjusters can tell you of false claims made by so many who dishonestly try to get compensation to which they are not entitled. Cheating is so common a phenomenon in school.

"Thou shalt not steal. . . . Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:15, 17). These mandates are likewise among the commandments written by the finger of the Lord on the tablets of stone. I am always pained when I read in a newspaper of some who are members of this Church who have been involved in a scam operation designed to take from others through dishonest means that which they covet for themselves.

Said the Lord, "Let all things be done in cleanliness before me" (D&C 42:41). I believe that includes a proscription against any kind of dishonesty.

Purify yourselves before the Lord

Brethren, have I belabored the point? I hope not. If so, it is only because I feel so strongly concerning the obligations placed upon us by the Lord. He expects His people to be clean from the sins of the world.

If any here have been guilty of any of these, let us repent forthwith. Confess to the Lord, and if the sin is egregious, confess to your bishop. He will help you. There can be repentance and there can be forgiveness. The Lord has stated, "Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice" (D&C 110:5).

In that revelation which is known as the "Olive Leaf," the Lord stated:

"And I give unto you, who are the first laborers in this last kingdom, a commandment that you assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves, and prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean;

"That I may testify unto your Father, and your God, and my God, that you are clean from the blood of this wicked generation; that I may fulfil this promise, this great and last promise, which I have made unto you" (D&C 88:74-75).

In conclusion I return to where I started with the dream of a poor boy who was sleeping alone on a mountain and

saw a mansion toward which he hurried. Before entering, he stopped to cleanse himself and dress himself in clean garments. He was reproved for being late. He replied, "Yes, but I am clean!" The Prophet Joseph smiled, and Joseph F. Smith, that young missionary, eventually succeeded to the office of prophet and President himself. What a testimony. God bless us to walk with clean hands and pure hearts and be worthy of His smile of approbation, I humbly ask in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder Andrew W. Peterson offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 166th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 7, 1996. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful Easter morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 166th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is a magnificent spring morning here in the valley of the mountains.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Dallin H. Oaks, John K. Carmack, and Joseph C. Muren are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Robert E. Wells, Hugh W. Pinnock, F. Melvin Hammond, and John M. Madsen are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission, wherever you may be. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, with John Longhurst at the organ,

opened these services by singing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today."

The choir will now sing "Thy Holy Word," following which Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Thy Holy Word."

President Thomas S. Monson

The two great commandments

During the later Judean ministry of the Lord, "a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

"He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

"And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

"And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."

"But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?"

"And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side."

"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side."

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,"

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

"And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."¹

Times change, the years roll by, circumstances vary—but the Master's counsel to the lawyer applies to you and to me just as surely as though we heard His voice speaking directly to us this Easter morn.

How to fulfill the first commandment

How might we fulfill today the first part of the divine commandment to love the Lord our God?

The Lord declared: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"²; "Come, follow me"³; "I have set an example for you"⁴; "I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do."⁵ What, indeed, did He do?

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He brought to fulfillment the prophecies of the ages. Shepherds came with haste to adore Him. Wise men from the East came bearing for Him precious gifts; the meridian of time had dawned.

With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment, a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the promised Messiah—even Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The holy scriptures inform us that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”⁶ He was baptized by John.⁷ He “went about doing good.”⁸ At Nain He raised from death to life the widow’s son and presented him to her.⁹ At Bethesda He took compassion on the crippled man who had no hope to get to the pool of promise. He extended His hand; He lifted him up. He healed him from his infirmity.¹⁰

Then came the Garden of Gethsemane with its exceeding anguish. He wrought the great Atonement as He took upon Himself the sins of all. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Then came the cruel cross of Golgotha. In His final hours of mortality, He brought comfort to the malefactor, saying, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”¹¹ He remembered His mother in that eloquent sermon of love personified: “When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”¹² He died—the Great Redeemer died!

How to become like the Savior

Two questions, spoken at an earlier time, roll as thunder to the ears of each of us: “What think ye of Christ?”¹³ and “What shall [we] do . . . with Jesus?”¹⁴ I proffer these three suggestions:

1. *Learn of Him.* “Learn of me,” He pleaded, “for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”¹⁵

2. *Believe in Him.* The writer of the proverb urged: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”¹⁶ His is the only name under heaven whereby we might be saved.

3. *Follow Him.* He brought reality to the word *compassion*. He showed us the way. He marked the path we should follow. Selfless service characterized His life.

By learning of Him, by believing in Him, by following Him, there is the capacity to become like Him. The countenance can change, the heart can be softened, the step can be quickened, the outlook enhanced. Life becomes what it should become. Change is at times imperceptible, but it does take place.

The Savior’s love of neighbor

The Savior’s entire ministry exemplified love of neighbor, the second part of that lesson given to the inquiring lawyer—spoken of as the “royal law.”¹⁷

A blind man healed, the daughter of Jairus raised, and the lepers cleansed—all were neighbors of Jesus. Neighbor also was the woman at the well. He, the perfect man, standing before a confessed sinner, extended a hand. She was the traveler; He was the Good Samaritan. And so the caravan of His kindness continued.

Flight diverted for a mercy mission

What about our time and place? Do neighbors await our love, our kindness, our help?

A few years ago I read a Reuters news service account of an Alaska Airlines nonstop flight from Anchorage to Seattle, carrying 150 passengers, which was diverted to a remote town on a mercy mission to rescue a badly injured boy. Two-year-old Elton Williams III had severed an artery in his arm when he fell

on a piece of glass while playing near his home in Yakutat, 450 miles south of Anchorage. Medics at the scene asked the airline to evacuate the boy. As a result, the Anchorage-to-Seattle flight was diverted to Yakutat.

The medics said the boy was bleeding badly and probably would not live through the flight to Seattle, so the plane flew 200 miles to Juneau, the nearest city with a hospital. The flight then went on to Seattle, with the passengers arriving two hours late, most missing their connections. But none complained. In fact, they dug into their pocketbooks and took up a collection for the boy and his family.

Later, as the flight was about to land in Seattle, the passengers broke into a cheer when the pilot said he had received word by radio that Elton was going to be all right. Surely love of neighbor was in evidence.

Lost opportunities to love neighbors

A man was asked one day, "Who is your next-door neighbor?"

He said, "I don't know his name, but his children run across my lawn and his dog keeps me awake at night!"

Another man, in a different mood, wrote silently one night in his journal: "I thought the house across the street was empty until yesterday. Black crepe on the door made me aware that someone had been living there."

A poet set to verse the sorrow of opportunities forever lost:

Around the corner I have a friend,
In this great city that has no end;
Yet days go by, and weeks rush on,
And before I know it, a year is gone,
And I never see my old friend's face,
For Life is a swift and terrible race.
He knows I like him just as well
As in the days when I rang his bell
And he rang mine.
We were younger then,

And now we are busy, tired men:
Tired with playing a foolish game,
Tired with trying to make a name.
"To-morrow," I say, "I will call on Jim,
Just to show that I'm thinking of him."
But to-morrow comes—and to-morrow
goes,
And the distance between us grows
and grows.

Around the corner!—yet miles away . . .
"Here's a telegram, sir,"
"Jim died to-day."

And that's what we get, and deserve in
the end:
Around the corner, a vanished friend.¹⁸

A small boy and a telephone operator

Long years ago I was touched by a story which illustrated love of neighbor between a small boy named Paul and a telephone operator he had never met. These were the days many will remember with nostalgia but which a new generation will never experience.

Paul related the story:

"When I was quite young, my father had one of the first telephones in our neighborhood. I remember that the shiny receiver hung on the side of the box. I was too little to reach the telephone, but I used to listen with fascination when Mother would talk to it. Then I discovered that somewhere inside the wonderful device lived an amazing person. Her name was 'Information, Please,' and there was nothing she did not know. 'Information, Please' could supply anybody's number and the correct time.

"I learned that if I stood on a stool, I could reach the telephone. I called 'Information, Please' for all sorts of things. I asked her for help with my geography, and she told me where Philadelphia was. She helped me with my arithmetic, too.

"Then there was the time that Petey, our pet canary, died. I called 'Information, Please' and told her the sad story.

She listened and then said the usual things grown-ups say to soothe a child. But I was unconsolated. 'Why is it that birds should sing so beautifully and bring joy to all families, only to end up as a heap of feathers, feet up, on the bottom of the cage?' I asked.

"She must have sensed my deep concern, for she said quietly, 'Paul, always remember that there are other worlds in which to sing.' Somehow I felt better.

"All this took place in a small town near Seattle. Then we moved across the country to Boston. I missed my friend very much. 'Information, Please' belonged to that old wooden box back home, and I somehow never thought of trying to call her. The memories of those childhood conversations never really left me; often in moments of doubt and perplexity I would recall the serene sense of security I had then. I appreciated now how patient, understanding, and kind she was to have spent her time on a little boy.

"Later, when I went west to college, my plane made a stop in Seattle," Paul continued. "I called 'Information, Please,' and when, miraculously, I heard that familiar voice, I said to her, 'I wonder if you have any idea how much you meant to me during that time?'"

"'I wonder,' she said, 'if you know how much your calls meant to me. I never had any children, and I used to look forward to your calls.' I told her how often I had thought of her over the years, and I asked if I could call her again when I came back west.

"'Please do,' she said. 'Just ask for Sally.'

"Only three months later I was back in Seattle. A different voice answered, 'Information,' and I asked for Sally. 'Are you a friend?' the woman asked.

"'Yes, a very old friend,' I replied.

"'Then I'm sorry to have to tell you. Sally has only been working part-time the last few years because she was ill.

She died five weeks ago.' But before I could hang up, she said, 'Wait a minute. Did you say your name was Paul?'"

"'Yes,' I responded.

"'Well, Sally left a message for you. She wrote it down. Here it is—I'll read it. *Tell him I still say there are other worlds in which to sing. He'll know what I mean.*"

"I thanked her and hung up," said Paul. "I did know what Sally meant."

Sally, the telephone operator, and Paul, the boy—the man—were in reality good Samaritans to each other.

There are indeed other worlds in which to sing. Our Lord and Savior brought to each of us the reality of this truth. To the grieving Martha He comforted:

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."¹⁹

"Follow thou me"

If we truly seek our Lord and Savior, we shall surely find Him. He may come to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old by the lakeside He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words, "Follow thou me,"²⁰ and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands, and to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and they shall learn in their own experience who He is.

On this Easter Sabbath we remember loved ones who have gone from our midst. Cherished memories of happy days, followed by lonely nights, long years, and pensive thoughts, turn our hearts to Him who promised: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”²¹ “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you . . . ; that where I am, there ye may be also.”²²

The Savior of the world

He who taught us to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our strength, and with all our minds, and our neighbors as ourselves, is a Teacher of truth—but He is more than a teacher. He is the Exemplar of the perfect life—but He is more than an exemplar. He is the Great Physician—but He is more than a physician. He is the literal Savior of the world, the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One of Israel, even the risen Lord, who declared: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . . I am the light and the life of the world.”²³ “I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.”²⁴

This Easter morning, as His witness, I testify to you that He lives and that through Him, we too shall live. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 10:25–37.
2. John 14:21.
3. Luke 18:22.
4. 3 Nephi 18:16.

5. 3 Nephi 18:24.
6. Luke 2:52.
7. See Matthew 3:13–16.
8. Acts 10:38.
9. See Luke 7:11–15.
10. See John 5:2–9.
11. Luke 23:43.
12. John 19:26–27.
13. Matthew 22:42.
14. Matthew 27:22.
15. Matthew 11:29.
16. Proverbs 3:5–6.
17. James 2:8.
18. Charles Hanson Towne, “Around the Corner,” in Hazel Felleman, sel., *Poems That Live Forever* (1965), 128.
19. John 11:25–26.
20. John 21:22.
21. John 14:27.
22. John 14:2–3.
23. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 110:4.

The choir sang “He Died! the Great Redeemer Died.”

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung “He Died! the Great Redeemer Died.”

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

The sacrament and a green footlocker

During 1995 we experienced many commemorations marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. For those of us who are veterans of this terrible conflict, these commemorations have been times of thoughtful reflection.

It is interesting what memories stay with us year after year, long after the historic event happened. For example, while I was watching a recent TV documentary on the war, suddenly into my mind came an old green footlocker. Let me explain why the green footlocker left such an indelible impression on me.

As I entered the mission field, I was blessed to be assigned to a very special senior companion. We had the privilege of laboring together for almost a year before a transfer occurred. With World War II raging, we knew at the end of our missions we would soon be called into military service. We both agreed that when we returned home we would try to enlist in the navy and hope that somehow our paths might cross as we served. Much to our surprise, on the first Sunday as marines we ran into each other at a Church service. Both of us had volunteered for the Marine Corps!

When we completed our boot camp, we were both assigned to the Second Marine Division and were blessed to have our companionship last nearly three more years. After the battle was over on the island to which our division was assigned, we were able to obtain a tent for our Church services. We made benches, a pulpit, and a sacrament table out of any piece of lumber we could find. Under the sacrament table we placed that special green footlocker. The footlocker was carried from island to island as the Second Marine Division completed its orders. The contents included a wooden plate, a wooden sacrament tray, a card containing the sacrament prayers, and several boxes of small paper cups.

When the battle was over and the island secured, many of the veterans in our division were rotated back home, including our Church leadership. My missionary companion was sustained as our group leader, and I was called to be his first assistant. The contents of the green footlocker represented all we held dear. As we gathered each week on the Lord's day, opened our footlocker, and used the contents to prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament, it was a spiritual and uplifting experience that renewed our faith and gave us hope for the days ahead. That special hour together each week

removed us from the trials and hardships of everyday life.

Even though the island had been secured, air raids continued. Soon our tent chapel was filled with many holes caused by shrapnel tearing through it. Because of the frequent tropical rains, it was uncomfortable to sit in a tent with so many holes in it. We determined that our meetings deserved better quarters, and through the efforts of the members of the Church from the marines, the army, the navy, and the air corps we were able to obtain enough material to construct our own chapel on the island. Now the green footlocker was placed beneath the table in a dedicated building where we could meet and worship together.

When our duties on the island were complete, we boarded a ship and moved on to another assignment. Our green footlocker remained in the chapel for others to use. I don't know its final destination, but I will always fondly remember that green footlocker.

Reminders of Jesus' supreme sacrifice

Our Father in Heaven understood the need for His children to be reminded of the promises He has made to us if we would obey His laws. In making such covenants, the Lord offered blessings in exchange for obedience to particular commandments. A plan was laid out for us from the very beginning. The central figure in His plan of salvation is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His atoning sacrifice for all mankind is the centerpiece of the history of our Father in Heaven's children here on earth.

Each of us who accepts the divine plan must accept the role of our Savior and covenant to keep His laws that our Father has developed for us. As we accept Christ in spirit and in deed, we may win our salvation. We read in the scriptures, "Wherefore, thou shalt do all that

thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore" (Moses 5:8).

Is it any wonder that the Lord, from the very beginning, wanted to keep His plan firmly fixed in the minds of His children here on earth? Among the laws given to Adam and Eve, the law of sacrifice was instituted to remind them of the great event that would occur in the meridian of time:

"And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and [they] should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

"And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

"And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth" (Moses 5:5-7).

From that time onward until the Savior came to earth, whenever the priesthood was present, man offered sacrifices to remind him of the time when the Son of Man would come to earth to make the supreme sacrifice for all of us.

Christ instituted the sacrament

The blessing of the Atonement of our Lord and Savior is that each of us has the privilege of enjoying immortality and eternal life. Shortly before His Crucifixion, in the upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus ate the Last Supper with His chosen Twelve. The book of Matthew gives us an account of what occurred at this special last supper:

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:26-29).

President Joseph F. Smith said this of the institution of the sacrament: "It was instituted by the Savior in the place of the law of sacrifice which was given to Adam, and which continued with his children down to the days of Christ, but which was fulfilled in his death, he being the great sacrifice for sin, of which the sacrifices enjoined in the law given to Adam were a similitude" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 202).

The Restoration and the sacrament

Shortly after Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the priesthood from heavenly messengers in 1829, they were shown in revelation how they should proceed to organize the Church again on earth. Doctrine and Covenants 20 gives the reason for this specific date:

"The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, it being regularly organized and established agreeable to [all] the laws of [the] country, by the will and commandments of God, in the fourth month, . . . on the sixth day of the month which is called April" (D&C 20:1).

Peter Whitmer Sr. offered his home for the organization that was scheduled for Tuesday, April 6, 1830, in accordance with previously received revelations. At the appointed hour, somewhere around 60 people assembled to witness the formal organization of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The meeting was simple. Joseph Smith, then 24 years of age, called the group to order and designated five associates—Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Peter Whitmer Jr., Samuel H. Smith, and David Whitmer—to join him to meet New York's legal requirements for the incorporation of a religious society. After kneeling in solemn prayer, Joseph asked those present if they were willing to accept him and Oliver as their teachers and spiritual advisers. Everyone raised their hands to the affirmative. Although they had previously received the Melchizedek Priesthood, Joseph and Oliver ordained each other to the office of elder. They did this to signify that they were elders in the newly organized Church. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered next. The Restoration of the gospel clarified the use and meaning of the sacrament, which through dark periods of the Apostasy had suffered many perversions. By revelation the members of the Church were counseled, "It is expedient that the church meet together often to partake of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus" (D&C 20:75).

Renew covenants worthily

With the partaking of the sacrament, we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior and obligate ourselves to keep His commandments by covenant. This makes the partaking of the sacrament a renewal of the covenants we made at the time of baptism into the Church. Thus, by the sacrament we declare repeatedly, ordinarily weekly, our allegiance to the plan of salvation and its obligations and blessings.

As we come to our sacrament meeting, we should prepare ourselves to partake of the sacrament worthily. Paul counseled us:

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28–29).

President Brigham Young, speaking of the sacrament, said, "Its observance is as necessary to our salvation as any other of the ordinances and commandments that have been instituted in order that . . . people may be sanctified" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 171).

Our sacramental promises

As members of the Church we should delight in the privilege of partaking of the sacrament and thereby affirming our faith in our Lord and Savior and our allegiance to the Church of Jesus Christ. In addition, the Lord promises that if we will keep our covenants, we will always have His Spirit to be with us. President David O. McKay has reminded us in these words of our obligation to prepare to partake of the sacrament weekly:

"My brethren and sisters, do we always stop to think, on that sacred Sabbath day when we meet together to partake of the sacrament, that we witness, promise, obligate ourselves, in the presence of one another, and in the presence of God, that we will do certain things? Note them.

"The first: We are willing to take upon ourselves the name of the Son. In so doing we choose him as our leader and our ideal; and he is the one perfect character in all the world.

"The second: That we will always remember him. Not just on Sunday, but on Monday [and the other days of the week], in our daily acts, in our self-control. . . .

"The third: We promise to ' . . . keep his commandments which he has given . . . '—tithing, fast offerings, the Word of Wisdom, kindness, forgiveness, love. The obligation of a member of the Church of Jesus Christ is great, but it is as glorious

as it is great, because obedience to these principles gives life, eternal life. . . .

“Order, reverence, attention to divine promises—the promise to enter into the fold of Christ, to cherish virtues mentioned in the gospel of Christ, to keep them ever in mind, to love the Lord wholeheartedly, and to labor, even at the sacrifice of self, for the brotherhood of man—these and all kindred virtues are associated with the partaking of the sacrament. It is good to meet together and especially to renew our covenants with God in that holy sacrament” (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 146–47).

Attend sacrament meeting faithfully

That old green footlocker will always have a special place in my heart because even in one of the most trying periods of my life, I was able to receive spiritual renewal for the days ahead as I would partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Over the many, many years as I have had the privilege of attending sacrament meetings, whether in times of peace or conflict, periods of joy or sorrow, periods of stress or relative ease, partaking of the sacrament has been a time of thoughtful reflection on the blessings the Lord has given to me and a time to covenant with Him to live closer to His law and His gospel.

I encourage each of you to be faithful in your attendance at sacrament meeting. The Lord has promised that if you will partake of the sacrament worthily, He will bless you with the peace of mind that can only come from knowing that you are participating in His divine plan. I also promise each of you that you will receive the special blessings He has promised you here on earth and in the eternities to come, according to your faithfulness. This is my witness to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “That Easter Morn.”

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve has just addressed us. The Tabernacle Choir then sang “That Easter Morn.”

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.” We shall then hear from Elder Carlos E. Asay of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.”

Elder Carlos E. Asay

We of the Seventy extend a warm welcome to the nine men who joined our ranks yesterday. We also extend to them hands of fellowship and the promise of support in the months and years ahead.

Stay on the true course

On this beautiful and sacred Easter morning, one’s thoughts center in Christ. And one’s inclination is to speak of His

Atonement and the “hope for a better world” (Ether 12:4). However, “the [full] merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” are not claimed by thoughts or words alone; they are the reward of those who are sure, steadfast, and always abounding in good works (2 Nephi 2:8).

I do, therefore, choose to speak with you concerning the imperative need to stay on the true course leading to eternal

life. Such steadiness of direction requires three continuing actions: (1) the reaffirmation of the desired goal, (2) an assessment of current position, and (3) the initiation of needed course corrections. These actions harmonize with the renewal of life associated with Christ's Resurrection and the fresh beginnings linked to this season of the year when the woes of wintertime are melted by the sunshine of spring.

These actions are also in harmony with the Apostle Paul's admonition, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Many of us receive an annual physical checkup and see our dentists twice a year. Some of us try to watch our diet, get the proper amount of rest, and exercise daily. All of this is done so that we might lengthen our days in mortality and enjoy a fulness of life.

I wonder, however, if we are paying sufficient attention to the spiritual aspects of our lives. Are we conducting frequent "spiritual checkups" to assess our standing before God and to determine whether we are on the path leading to eternal life? Alma asked: "Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble?" (Alma 5:27). These and other questions might be used to obtain readings of our spiritual temperature and pulse rate.

Reaffirm and focus on eternal goals

The ultimate goal of every clear-thinking person is to live after the manner of happiness in this world and, following death and resurrection, "dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41). "Happiness," said the Prophet Joseph Smith, "is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue,

uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 255-56).

It must be remembered that "wickedness never was happiness" and never will be. Those who seek happiness in doing iniquity are seeking something "contrary to the nature of God" and "contrary to the nature of happiness" (Alma 41:10-11).

The need to remain focused on eternal goals is illustrated in the biblical account of Jesus walking on the sea and Peter's desire to do the same. Peter progressed over the water so long as he looked to Christ. But when he diverted his gaze away from the Master and allowed fear and doubt to enter in, he began to sink.

If we, like Peter, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and our eternal destination, we too may "walk triumphantly over the swelling waves of disbelief, and unterrified amid the rising winds of doubt" (Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* [1994], 313; see also Matthew 14:24-31).

We must not allow the things of the world to blinker our vision of the eternal destination. Nor must we permit the "voices in the world" to lead us off course (1 Corinthians 14:10). Rather, we must allow the hope of Christ's glory and of eternal life to rest in our minds forever (see Moroni 9:25). We must reaffirm the goal that matters most and press toward it, "looking forward with an eye of faith" (Alma 32:40).

Assess current position

Once we have reaffirmed our goal and focused our eyes and hearts upon it, we must make an assessment of our current position. At a critical time in United States history, when a famed debate raged in Congress, Daniel Webster said:

"Mr. President, when the mariner has been tossed about for many days in

thick weather on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun to take his latitude and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course. Let us imitate this prudence and before we float on the waves of this debate refer to the point from which we departed, that we may at least be able to conjecture where we now are" (quoted in Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, Oct. 1961, 78).

Mariners obtained their bearings by using a sextant. This instrument enabled men to measure the angular distance of the sun or the stars from the horizon in finding the position of a ship. Those who failed to look up and make needed course corrections often perished in deep waters, whereas the wise seaman who used the sextant in fixing position according to the light from celestial sources usually reached safe harbors.

The storms of life beat consistently against our "hulls." Therefore, from time to time we too must take our latitude and ascertain how far the elements have driven us off the true course.

In 1916, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith declared: "The world is drifting. . . . Many things are tolerated today that would not have been tolerated for a moment twenty years ago. New problems have arisen with which we must now contend that we never dreamed of even in the days of my youth" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 71).

Eighty years later the slippage from traditional Christian moorings continues. Today we speak of the moral drift from gospel standards. We hear of some who belittle marriage, call divorce good, and promote relationships without natural affections. We observe some who are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). Has any of this caused us to relax rules or compromise the commandments? If so, what is it doing to us, our children, and the people around us?

Said one insightful man, "If the temperature of the bath water rises one degree every fifteen minutes, how will the bather know when to scream?" (Marshall McLuhan). Failure on our part to fix position and take a firm stand in terms of rules, covenants, and expectations will result in a gradual float into dangerous waters and a conditioning to the rising heat of wickedness around us, and eventually all of us, especially our children, will get burned.

We need not and must not flounder on the sea of popular opinions or drift with the waves of immorality. God is among us, and He has provided us with precious sextants to assess our spiritual latitude.

One sextant was described by Elder Boyd K. Packer in these words: "Each of us has a sextant in our mind infinitely more refined and precise than that of any mariner. It functions on the principle of light from celestial sources as well. If we will set that sextant in our mind to the words *ordinance* and *covenant*, and then look up, light will come through. Then you will know how to fix your position and plot your course" (Regional Representatives' seminar, 3 Apr. 1987; italics added).

Alma spoke of another sextant. He suggested the need to focus our minds and hearts on the word of Christ and then look to God. By so doing we will not only find the right latitude but also set our course toward "a far better land of promise"—even eternal life. (See Alma 37:44–47.)

A third sextant provided us by a loving Father in Heaven comes in the form of living prophets. A prophet issues warnings, proclaims the truth, boldly calls people to repentance, and invites all to live more fully the gospel of Christ.

There is the warning, "They who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles,

shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:14; italics added).

An assessment of one's current position, in relationship to the ultimate goal of eternal life, can and must be obtained by looking toward the light which comes from God through personal revelation, the scriptures, and the words of living prophets.

The Psalmist said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet" (Psalm 119:59). Of the prodigal son it is written, "He came to himself" (Luke 15:17). We too must think on our ways, come to ourselves, and turn our feet toward God, who is our goal.

Initiate course corrections

If the assessment of current position reveals the slightest deviation from the right course leading to eternal life or the slightest drift from the mainstream of our faith, we must make immediate course corrections.

One tormented soul cried out:

I wish that there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,
And never be put on again.

[Louisa Fletcher, "The Land of Beginning Again," in Hazel Felleman, sel., *Best Loved Poems of the American People* (1936), 102]

There is a land of beginning again. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Course correction, along with a forgiveness of sins, is made possible to the repentant soul who comes unto Christ. But it requires faith, courage, and high resolve.

Stay on the true course

Mortality is not a pleasure cruise on some luxury liner. It is a voyage fraught

with challenges and constant buffetings of winds and waves. As James A. Michener wrote: "A ship, like a human being, moves best when it is slightly athwart the wind, when it has to keep its sails tight and attend its course. Ships, like men, do poorly when the wind is directly behind, pushing them sloppily on their way so that no care is required in steering or in the management of sails; the wind seems favorable, for it blows in the direction one is heading, but actually it is destructive because it induces a relaxation in tension and skill. What is needed is a wind slightly opposed to the ship, for then tension can be maintained, and juices can flow and ideas can germinate, for ships, like men, respond to challenge" (*Chesapeake* [1978], 445; see also D&C 123:16).

Whoever you are, wherever you live, and whatever you are doing, there will be challenges, for this is a time of testing. However, you must stay on the true course if you want to obtain happiness here and reach the safe harbor hereafter. There is no slight or insignificant deviation from the right way. One degree off latitude in the beginning becomes many degrees off course in the end.

If a "large ship is benefited . . . by a very small helm in the time of a storm, by being kept workways with the wind and the waves," so are we benefited by keeping our hands on the wheels, resisting ill winds, and steering our course toward the desired port of eternal life (D&C 123:16). Such is done by reaffirming our goal, assessing our current position, and making needed course corrections.

"Be up and doing"

This is the season of renewal and fresh beginnings. It is a time when our tears for the crucified Christ are wiped away by the sure knowledge of the resurrected Savior of all mankind. It is a time when "we talk of Christ, . . . rejoice in

Christ," and remind ourselves that "it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do*" (2 Nephi 25:23, 26; italics added).

Therefore, we must "be up and doing" (Alma 60:24) and make an honest appraisal of ourselves as members of family units, members of the Church, and professed Christians. The living Christ invites us to come unto Him and to become more like Him. Is this not the object and essence of the holy Atonement?

Let us worship Him in spirit and in truth and celebrate His triumph over sin

and death by looking to God and following the straight course to eternal happiness with even greater resolve and steadfastness.

For this I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Carlos E. Asay of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Create and convey a legacy of testimony

Hearts were touched by the proclamation on the family read by President Hinckley last fall (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102) because we want for our families what God wants for them: that they will live in love and righteousness. But in our thoughtful moments we know that we will need help. We will need to invite the powers of heaven to guide our families in days when we are not there and to face spiritual dangers we may not foresee.

Our families can be given a gift to know what God would have them do and to learn it in a way that will encourage them to do it. God has provided such a guide. It is the Holy Ghost. We cannot give that to our family members as a companion, but they can earn it. The Holy Ghost can be their constant companion only after they have been faithful and after they have received the ordinances of baptism and the laying on of hands by those with proper authority. But even before baptism, a child or an adult can have the Holy Ghost testify to their hearts of sacred truth. They must

act on that testimony to retain it, but it will guide them toward goodness, and it can lead them to accept and keep the covenants which will in time bring them the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We would, if we could, leave our families a legacy of testimony that it might reach through the generations.

What we can do to create and transmit that legacy comes from an understanding of how testimony is instilled in our hearts. Since it is the Holy Ghost who testifies of sacred truth, we can do at least three things to make that experience more likely for our families. First, we can teach some sacred truth. Then we can testify that we know what we have taught is true. And then we must act so that those who hear our testimony see that our actions conform with what we said was true. The Holy Ghost will then confirm to them the truth of what we said and that we knew it to be true.

Testimony of John Bennion

That is how a legacy of testimony is created, preserved, and transmitted in a family. It isn't easy, but ordinary people

have done it. Like many of you, I had such ancestors. One was my great-grandfather John Bennion. We cannot duplicate what he did because the world has changed, but we can learn from it.

He was a convert to the Church from Wales. He, his wife, and his children came into the Salt Lake Valley in one of the early companies of pioneers. We know something of his life because after that time he kept a journal, making a short entry nearly every day. We have the journals from 1855 to 1877. They were published in one bound volume because his descendants hoped to transmit that legacy of testimony. My mother was one of them. Her last labor before she died was to transform the daybooks in which he'd written into a manuscript for publication.

His short entries don't have much preaching in them. He doesn't testify that he knew Brigham Young was a prophet. He just records having answered "yes" every time the prophet called him on a mission from "over Jordan" to the Muddy mission, then on to a mission back to Wales. He also answered "yes" to the call to ride into the canyons to track Johnston's army and the call to take his family south when the army invaded the valley. There is even a family legend that the reason he died so close to the day when Brigham Young was buried was to follow the prophet one more time.

The fact that he wrote every day makes clear to me that he knew his ordinary life was historic because it was part of the building of Zion in the latter days. The few entries which record his testimony seem to appear when death took a child. His testimony is to me more powerful because he offered it when his soul was tried.

Here is his record of one of those times. His daughter Elizabeth died in his arms. He reported her burial and the location of her grave in a few lines. But

then the next day, November 4, 1863, this is the entire entry:

"Wednesday. Repairing up the stable my little children prattling around me but I miss my dear Lizzy. I pray the Lord to help me to indure faithfull to his cause to the end of my days, that I may be worthy to receive my children back into the family circle, who have fallen asleep in Christ in the days of their innocence: Ann, Moroni, Esther Ellen & Elizabeth, blessed & happy are they because of the atonement of Jesus Christ."

All the elements are there. He taught the truth. He testified that it was true. He lived consistent with his testimony and prayed that he might endure faithful until he could be united with his dear family. I feel his love and a desire to be included in that circle.

Gain our own testimonies first

We must find other ways to convey our legacy of testimony, but the process of teaching, testifying, and living the truth will be the same.

The scriptures, living prophets, and common sense tell us where to begin. We need to start with ourselves as parents. No program we follow or family tradition we create can transmit a legacy of testimony we do not have. We must start where Alma started so that our descendants can know that we testified from the same ground from which he testified. Here are his words as recorded in the Book of Mormon. It is what we must be able to say:

"And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

"Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed

many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me" (Alma 5:45-46).

As we gain that assurance, most settings we will be in with our families will be good ones to create a legacy of testimony. Some of the best are already familiar to us. Here are some ways to make those common settings more likely to invite the experiences which bring testimony to our families.

Hold weekly family home evening

First, plan for our weekly family night to be a setting for the bearing of testimony. Be sure that some truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is taught simply and plainly so that even a child could understand. A child could do the teaching. The child may choose to end with a testimony, if that is the way we end our teaching. A shy child may not easily bear testimony in larger settings but may in the safety of our homes. And the Holy Ghost will testify to those who hear and to the child who testifies.

Read scriptures as a family

Second, read the scriptures aloud together as a family. It may take unusual determination and inspiration to find a time and a setting. But reading and hearing the words of life from the scriptures will invite the Holy Ghost to confirm their truth. The Savior said it this way: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

From this pulpit years ago, President Marion G. Romney recounted reading the Book of Mormon aloud, alternating paragraphs with his young son, he on the bottom level of a double-decker bed and

his son on the upper. He thought his son was catching a cold but then learned that the tears came from his son feeling testimony that the book was true. And because they read together, both were blessed. (See Conference Report, Apr. 1949, 41.)

Pray as a family

Third, kneel together in humble prayer as a family, each having the opportunity to be voice. There may be times when the prayer seems rote and when those not praying let their minds wander. But there will be other priceless moments when someone will petition in faith for real needs and the Holy Ghost will touch hearts with testimony. I don't remember as much of my mother's teaching as I do her prayers for us. I could feel her love, and the Spirit confirmed in my heart that she loved Heavenly Father and the Savior and that her prayers would be answered. She brought blessings down on our heads then, and the memory of her prayers still does.

Fast and pay generous fast offerings

Fourth, fast and allow your children to fast once a month before the meeting in which they will partake of the Lord's Supper, hear others bear testimony, and perhaps themselves feel prompted to testify. The spiritual blessing will be even greater for them if they know that their choice to overcome their physical desires for food is making possible the caring for the poor. That can't happen unless we pay a generous fast offering with a joyful heart. It can if we do. And the likelihood will be greatly increased that they will feel the Spirit confirm that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ if we have first taught and testified that the Savior always organizes His disciples to care for the poor and the needy among them.

Receive home teachers; give blessings

We could extend the list of things to do to invite the confirmation of the Holy Spirit. For instance, the warmth and confidence with which we receive home teachers can allow our children to feel confirmation that they come as God's servants. The giving of priesthood blessings as children start a school year or leave home invites the Spirit at a time when hearts are humble and thus receptive to the whisperings of the Spirit.

Respond to tragedy with faith

Some of the greatest opportunities to create and transmit a legacy of testimony cannot be planned. Tragedy, loss, and hurt often arrive unanticipated. How we react when we are surprised will tell our families whether what we have taught and testified lies deep in our hearts. Most of us will have taught our children of the power of the Savior to carry us through whatever befalls us. These words are from the Book of Mormon:

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12).

When tragedy strikes or even when it looms, our families will have the opportunity to look into our hearts to see whether we know what we said we knew. Our children will watch, feel the Spirit confirm that we lived as we preached, remember that confirmation, and pass the story across the generations.

Grandmother Eyring's faith in adversity

I have one such story in my legacy. Grandmother Eyring learned from a doctor in his office that she would die of stomach cancer. My father, her oldest

son, had driven her there and was waiting for her. He told me that on the way home she said, "Now, Henry, let's be cheerful. Let's sing hymns." They sang "O My Father" (*Hymns*, no. 292) and "Come, Come, Ye Saints," where the last verse begins, "And should we die before our journey's through" (*Hymns*, no. 30).

I wasn't there, but I imagine they sang loudly—they didn't have very melodious voices—with faith and no tears. She spent part of her last months in the home of her oldest child, her daughter. Aunt Camilla told me that Grandma complained only once, and then it was not really a complaint but just to say that it hurt.

Now, there are many people who have been cheerful and brave in the face of death. But it means far more to her family when the person has taught and testified of the power of the Savior to succor, of the sureness of the Resurrection, and of the hope of eternal life. The Spirit confirmed to me that Grandma's peace and her courage were signs that her testimony was true, and because of that, all was well, all was well.

Hope for those who reject testimony

Sadly, each of us knows that even teaching, testifying, and living true to that testimony may not pass on the legacy. Great and good parents have done that and then seen their families or some in their families reject that testimony. There is reason for us to have great hope and optimism. It comes first from our testimony of the nature of our Heavenly Father: He loves our family members; He is their Heavenly Father as well as ours. It also comes from our testimony of the mission of Jesus Christ: He paid the price to redeem them. And it comes from our testimony of the restoration of priesthood keys. Because of that, the power is on the earth again to make covenants with God which seal families together—covenants which God honors.

That is why we must not despair. As we offer the legacy of testimony to our families, some may not receive it. It may even seem to skip over generations. But God will reach out to offer the legacy again and again. More than we can imagine, our faithful effort to offer to our family the testimony we have of the truth will be multiplied in power and extended in time.

We have all seen evidence of that in families we have known. I saw it in South America as I looked into the faces of missionaries. Hundreds of them passed by me, shaking my hand and looking deeply into my eyes. I was nearly overwhelmed with the confirmation that these children of Father Lehi and of Sariah were there in the Lord's service because our Heavenly Father honors His promises to families. To nearly his last breath, Lehi taught and testified and tried to bless his children. Terrible tragedy came among his descendants when they rejected his testimony, the testimonies of other prophets, and of the scriptures. But in the eyes and faces of those missionaries I felt confirmation that God has kept His promises to reach out to Lehi's covenant children and that He will reach out to ours.

I testify that I know that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and that He loves us and that He knows us. I know that Jesus Christ lives and that we will be resurrected and can be sanctified because of His sacrifice. I testify that we can know the truth by the power of the Holy Ghost. I know that we can live together in families in eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God. I pray that we may, with all our hearts for all our lives, offer testimony of the truth to our families. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Henry B. Eyring, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, has just addressed us.

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Cecil O. Samuelson of the Seventy.

A one-half hour video production, *The Lamb of God*, will be broadcast following this session for those across the nation. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Announcement of a new meeting hall

Now, my brothers and sisters, if I may say a few words. First I'd like to say that it's wonderful to see all of you gathered in the Tabernacle this Easter morning. You're a wonderful sight. It is a remarkable thing to contemplate the many more who are assembled in more than 3,000 halls in various parts of the world.

I regret that many who wish to meet with us in the Tabernacle this morning are unable to get in. There are very many

out on the grounds. This unique and remarkable hall, built by our pioneer forebears and dedicated to the worship of the Lord, comfortably seats about 6,000. Some of you seated on those hard benches for two hours may question the word *comfortably*.

My heart reaches out to those who wish to get in and could not be accommodated. About a year ago I suggested to the Brethren that perhaps the time has come when we should study the feasibility of constructing another dedicated

house of worship on a much larger scale that would accommodate three or four times the number who can be seated in this building.

We recognize, of course, that we can never build a hall large enough to accommodate all the membership of this growing Church. We've been richly blessed with other means of communication, and the availability of satellite transmission makes it possible to carry the proceedings of the conference to hundreds of thousands throughout the world.

But there are still those in large numbers who wish to be seated where they can see in person those who are speaking and participating in other ways. The structure we envision will not be a sports arena. It will be a great hall with fixed seating and excellent acoustics. It will be a dedicated house of worship, and that will be its primary purpose. It will be fashioned in such a way that only a portion or the entire hall may be used, according to need. It will accommodate not only religious services but will serve other Church purposes, such as the presentation of sacred pageants and things of that kind. It will also accommodate some community cultural events that will be in harmony with its purpose.

The architectural and engineering studies have not gone far enough for us to make a detailed announcement, but the results thus far are encouraging, and we're hopeful that they will materialize.

Gratitude for sustaining and for leaders

Now for a moment I wish to speak of a personal matter. It was a year ago at this conference when in a solemn assembly you raised your hands to sustain me in this great and sacred calling. My heart swells with gratitude for your expressions of confidence. I am humbled, I am overwhelmed by your words of kindness, loyalty, and love. I think I understand, in a measure at least, the magnitude of this responsibility. I have no desire other than

to do that which the Lord would have done. I am His servant, called to serve His people. This is His Church. We are only custodians of that which belongs to Him.

I am deeply grateful for the two good and able men who stand at my side as counselors and who have been so loyal and helpful. I am grateful for my Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Nowhere else will you find a more dedicated and able body of men who love the Lord and seek to do His will. I am likewise grateful for the Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric. I am grateful for the Area Authorities, for stake presidents and bishops and those who preside over quorums, for faithful mission presidents and temple presidents. I am thankful for the auxiliary organizations and for the strength and capacity and dedication of those who preside over the Relief Society, the Young Women, the Sunday School, and the Primary organizations.

Gratitude for faithful members

I am thankful for every member of this Church who walks in faith and faithfulness. We are all in this together as Latter-day Saints bound by a common love for our Master, who is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. We are a covenant people who have taken upon ourselves His holy name.

The Church is the stronger or the weaker as each member is strong or weak in his or her faith and performance.

During this past year I have traveled extensively. I am determined that while I have strength, I will get out among the people at home and abroad to express my appreciation, to give encouragement, to build faith, to teach, to add my testimony to theirs and at the same time to draw strength from them. I thank all of those who are assisting in this.

I intend to keep moving with energy for as long as I can. I wish to mingle with

the people I love. Recently I have met with many of our youth, thousands of them. These have been wonderfully reassuring experiences. It is an inspiration to look into the eyes of young men and women who love the Lord, who want to do the right thing, who want to build lives that are productive and fruitful of great good. They are working hard to develop skills that will bless them and the society of which they will become a part. They are serving missions for the Church in unprecedented numbers. They are clean, bright, able, and happy. Surely the Lord must love those of this choice generation of youth who learn and serve in His Church. I love them, and I want them to know that. Life is not easy for them. I think that never before has evil been presented in so attractive and beguiling a manner by those who with sinister designs seek to grow wealthy on the tragedies of lives that become blighted and marred as they partake of these evil goods.

I salute fathers and mothers who are loyal to one another and who nurture their children in faith and love. There has been a wonderful response to the proclamation on the family, which we issued last October (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). We hope you will read it and reread it.

This work is growing across the world in a remarkable and wonderful way. The Lord is opening the doors of the nations. He is touching the hearts of the people. The equivalent of 100 new stakes of Zion are coming into the Church each year. This brings with it significant challenges. As has been widely noted, we have passed the line where we now have more members of the Church outside the United States than we have in the United States.

Thank you, my brothers and sisters, for the goodness of your lives. I thank you for your efforts in trying to measure up to the very high standards of this, the Lord's Church. Thank you for your faith.

Thank you for your sustaining hands and hearts. Thank you for your prayers.

As everyone here knows, there is only one reason for any of us serving. And that is to assist our Father in Heaven in His declared work and glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His sons and daughters (see Moses 1:39).

The Savior's victory over death

There is one grand key in this vast divine program, and that is the redemption of mankind by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that of which I now wish to speak briefly.

This is Easter morning. This is the Lord's day, when we celebrate the greatest victory of all time, the victory over death.

Those who hated Jesus thought they had put an end to Him forever when the cruel spikes pierced His quivering flesh and the cross was raised on Calvary. But this was the Son of God, with whose power they did not reckon. Through His death came the Resurrection and the assurance of eternal life. None of us can fully understand the pain He bore as He prayed in Gethsemane and subsequently hung in ignominy between two thieves while those who looked at Him taunted Him and said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save" (Matthew 27:42; Mark 15:31).

With sorrow unspeakable, those who loved Him placed His wounded, lifeless body in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Gone was hope from the lives of His Apostles, whom He had loved and taught. He to whom they had looked as Lord and Master had been crucified and His body laid in a sealed tomb. He had taught them of His eventual death and resurrection, but they had not understood. Now they were forlorn and dejected. They must have wept and wondered as the great stone was rolled to seal the burial place.

The Jewish Sabbath passed. Then came a new day, a day that ever after

was to be the Lord's day. In their sorrow, Mary Magdalene and the other women came to the tomb. The stone was no longer in place. Curiously they looked inside. To their astonishment the tomb was empty.

Distraught and fearful, Mary ran to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved. She cried, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him" (John 20:2).

They came running, and their fears were confirmed. Disconsolate, they looked and then "went away again unto their own home" (John 20:10).

"But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

"And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

"And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

"And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

"Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:11-17).

She who had loved Him so much, she who had been healed by Him was the first to whom He appeared. There fol-

lowed others, even, as Paul declares, up to 500 brethren at one time (see 1 Corinthians 15:6).

Now the Apostles understood what He had tried to teach them. Thomas, on feeling of His wounds, declared, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

Testimonies of the risen Lord

Can anyone doubt the veracity of that account? No event of history has been more certainly confirmed. There is the testimony of all who saw and felt and spoke with the risen Lord. He appeared on two continents in two hemispheres and taught the people before His final ascension. Two sacred volumes, two testaments speak of this most glorious of all events in all of human history. But these are only accounts, the faithless critic says. To which we reply that beyond these is the witness and the testimony, borne by the power of the Holy Ghost, of the truth and validity of this most remarkable event. Through the centuries, untold numbers have paid with the sacrifice of their comforts, their fortunes, their very lives for the convictions they carried in their hearts of the reality of the risen, living Lord.

And then comes the ringing testimony of the Prophet of this dispensation that in a wondrous theophany he saw and was spoken to by the Almighty Father and the Risen Son. That vision, glorious beyond description, became the wellspring of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with all the keys, authority, and power found therein, and the sustaining comfort to be found in the testimony of its people.

The assurance of immortality

There is nothing more universal than death, and nothing brighter with hope and faith than the assurance of immortality. The abject sorrow that comes with death, the bereavement that follows the

passing of a loved one are mitigated only by the certainty of the resurrection of the Son of God that first Easter morning.

What meaning would life have without the reality of immortality? Otherwise life would become only a dismal journey of "getting and spending," only to end in utter and hopeless oblivion.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

The pain of death is swallowed up in the peace of eternal life. Of all the events in the chronicles of humanity, none is of such consequence as this.

Contemplating the wonder of the Atonement wrought in behalf of all mankind, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared in words descriptive and beautiful:

"Let the mountains shout for joy, and all ye valleys cry aloud; and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King! And ye rivers, and brooks, and rills, flow down with gladness. Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord; and ye solid rocks weep for joy! And let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together, and let all the sons of God shout for joy! And let the eternal creations declare his name forever and ever! And again I say, how glorious is the voice we hear from heaven, proclaiming in our ears, glory, and salvation, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life; kingdoms, principalities, and powers!" (D&C 128:23).

The Savior shines through all darkness

Whenever the cold hand of death strikes, there shines through the gloom and the darkness of that hour the triumphant figure of the Lord Jesus Christ, He, the Son of God, who by His matchless and eternal power overcame death. He is the Redeemer of the world. He gave His life for each of us. He took it up again and became the firstfruits of them that slept. He, as King of Kings, stands

triumphant above all other kings. He, as the Omnipotent One, stands above all rulers. He is our comfort, our only true comfort, when the dark shroud of earthly night closes about us as the spirit departs the human form.

Towering above all mankind stands Jesus the Christ, the King of glory, the unblemished Messiah, the Lord Emmanuel. In the hour of deepest sorrow we draw hope and peace and certitude from the words of the angel that Easter morning, "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said" (Matthew 28:6). We draw strength from the words of Paul, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ . . . all [are] made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

I stand all amazed at the love Jesus
offers me,
Confused at the grace that so fully
he proffers me.
I tremble to know that for me he
was crucified,
That for me, a sinner, he suffered,
he bled and died.
Oh, it is wonderful that he should
care for me
Enough to die for me!
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!
["I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, no.
193]

He is our King, our Lord, our Master, the living Christ, who stands on the right hand of His Father. He lives! He lives, resplendent and wonderful, the living Son of the living God. Of this we bear solemn testimony this day of rejoicing, this Easter morning, when we commemorate the miracle of the empty tomb, in the name of Him who rose from the dead, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

Elder Cecil O. Samuelson offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 166th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 7, 1996. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 166th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We note that Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, Dallas N. Archibald, and F. David Stanley are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall. Elders Harold G. Hillam, Vaughn J. Featherstone, L. Lionel Kendrick, and Lino Alvarez are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop and accompanied by Richard Elliott, will provide the music for this session.

The choir will begin this service by singing "He Is Risen!" The invocation will be offered by Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy.

The choir sang "He Is Risen!"

Elder John H. Groberg offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "How Great the Wisdom and the Love." Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

I add my warm welcome to the newly sustained Seventies, promising them friendship as we now company one another through the years which lie ahead.

Today's Sinai of secularism

First, brothers and sisters, some brief samples illustrating the challenge of making our way through today's Sinai of secularism, and then a focus on how inspired children help in that trek.

All about us we see the bitter and abundant harvest from permissiveness. A perceptive person has acknowledged:

"The struggle to live ethically without God has left us not with the just and moral order we imagined but with disorder and confusion.

"Something has gone radically wrong with secularism. The problem has more than its share of irony, for secularism, in the end, has converted itself into a kind of religion. . . .

"... Now the transition is complete: the state has become the church" (Peter Marin, "Secularism's Blind Faith," *Harper's Magazine*, Sept. 1995, 20).

The more what is politically correct seeks to replace what God has declared correct, the more ineffective approaches to human problems there will be, all reminding us of C. S. Lewis's metaphor about those who run around with fire extinguishers in times of flood. For instance, there are increasing numbers of victims of violence and crime, yet special attention is paid to the rights of criminals. Accompanying an ever increasing addiction to pornography are loud alarms against censorship. Rising illegitimacy destroys families and threatens the funding capacities of governments; nevertheless, chastity and fidelity are mocked. These and other consequences produce a harsh cacophony. When Nero fiddled as Rome burned, at least he made a little music! I have no hesitancy, brothers and sisters, in stating that unless checked, permissiveness, by the end of its journey, will cause humanity to stare in mute disbelief at its awful consequences.

Ironically, as some people become harder, they use softer words to describe dark deeds. This too is part of being sedated by secularism! Needless abortion, for instance, is a "reproductive health procedure," which is an even more "spongy expression" than "termination of pregnancy" (George McKenna, "On Abortion: A Lincolnian Position," *Atlantic Monthly*, Sept. 1995, 52, 54). *Illegitimacy* gives way to the wholly sanitized words *nonmarital birth* or *alternative parenting* (see Ben J. Wattenberg, *Values Matter Most* [1995], 173).

Tares masquerading as wheat

Church members will live in this wheat-and-tares situation until the Millennium. Some real tares even masquerade as wheat, including the few eager individuals who lecture the rest of us

about Church doctrines in which they no longer believe. They criticize the use of Church resources to which they no longer contribute. They condescendingly seek to counsel the Brethren whom they no longer sustain. Confrontive, except of themselves, of course, they leave the Church, but they cannot leave the Church alone (see Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 17; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 14). Like the throng on the ramparts of the "great and spacious building," they are intensely and busily preoccupied, pointing fingers of scorn at the steadfast iron-rodgers (see 1 Nephi 8:26–28, 33). Considering their ceaseless preoccupation, one wonders, Is there no diversionary activity available to them, especially in such a large building—like a bowling alley? Perhaps in their mockings and beneath the stir are repressed doubts of their doubts. In any case, given the perils of popularity, Brigham Young advised that this "people must be kept where the finger of scorn can be pointed at them" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 434).

Therefore, brothers and sisters, quiet goodness must persevere even when, as prophesied, a few actually rage in their anger against that which is good (see 2 Nephi 28:20). Likewise the arrogance of critics must be met by the meekness and articulateness of believers. If sometimes ringed by resentment, we must still reach out, especially for those whose hands hang down (see D&C 81:5). If our shortcomings as a people are occasionally highlighted, then let us strive to do better.

Oases of the Restoration

Besides, the exhilarations of discipleship exceed its burdens. Hence, while journeying through our Sinai, we are nourished in the Bountiful-like oases of the Restoration. Of these oases some of our first impressions may prove to be more childish than definitive. When we

brush against such lush and verdant vegetation, its fragrance is inevitably upon us. Our pockets are stuffed with varied and lush fruits, and we are filled with glee. There is no way to describe it all. In our appreciation, little wonder some of us mistake a particular tree for the whole of an oasis, or a particularly refreshing pool for the entirety of the Restoration's gushing and living waters. Hence, in our early exclamations there may even be some unintended exaggerations. We have seen and partaken of far too much; hence, we "cannot [speak] the smallest part which [we] feel" (Alma 26:16).

Strength of family and friends

In addition to these oases, the Lord has made further and "ample provision" for our journey, including families, neighbors, and fellow servants (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 220). Each of these is given to strengthen, edify, instruct, comfort, and inspire us while we are "knit together in love" (Colossians 2:2). Therefore, we experience the contagion of commitment in these interlacings of our lives.

Some 12 years ago there was a tennis match with two LDS physicians and a nonmember medical student from Brazil. With no intervening communication, last month in Curitiba, Brazil, Valentim Gonçalves stood by me again, not on a tennis court but instead in a regional conference to translate for me. Thanks to his innate goodness and the good work of others, ophthalmologist Valentim is not only a member but is a stake president in Curitiba. Valentim and his special wife, sealed in the temple, have been blessed with three lovely children. This remarkable rendezvous added to my already appreciative wonder over the workings of the hand of the Lord (see D&C 59:21).

Children often show the way

Inspired children often show the way through the wilderness. One reason they are able to do so is implicit in the searching question asked by King Benjamin: "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Children often have the "thoughts and [the] intents of [their] heart[s]" focused on the Master. Though not full of years, such children are full of faith! Too young for formal Church callings, they have been "called to serve" as exemplifiers, doing especially well when blessed with "goodly parents" (1 Nephi 1:1).

Just as the scriptures assure, "little children do have words given unto them many times" (Alma 32:23). For example, the resurrected Jesus revealed things to the Nephite children, who then taught adults and their parents "even greater" things than Jesus had taught (3 Nephi 26:14).

Three-year-old Nate Barker

It has been a privilege to seal several adopted children to Nan and Dan Barker, now of Arizona. Some time ago Nate, then just over three, said, "Mommy, there is another little girl who is supposed to come to our family. She has dark hair and dark eyes and lives a long way from here."

The wise mother asked, "How do you know this?"

"Jesus told me, upstairs."

The mother noted, "We don't have an upstairs," but quickly sensed the significance of what had been communicated. After much travail and many prayers, the Barker family were in a sealing room in the Salt Lake Temple in the fall of 1995, where a little girl with dark hair and dark eyes, from Kazakhstan,

was sealed to them for time and eternity. Inspired children still tell parents “great and marvelous things” (3 Nephi 26:14).

Three-year-old Benjamin Ballam

Benjamin Ballam is the special spina bifida child of Michael and Laurie Ballam. He has been such a blessing to them and many others. Also spiritually precocious, Benjamin is a constant source of love and reassurance. Having had 17 surgeries, resilient Benjamin knows all about hospitals and doctors. Once, when an overwhelmed attendant became vocally upset—not at Benjamin, but over stressful circumstances—little three-year-old Benjamin exemplified the words of another Benjamin about our need to be childlike and “full of love” (Mosiah 3:19). Little Benjamin reached out, tenderly patted the irritated attendant, and said, “I love you anyway.” A similar episode occurred recently in an Israeli hospital, where little Benjamin, going through a necessary but very painful procedure, used the same loving words to reassure a physician. No wonder, brothers and sisters, in certain moments we feel children are our spiritual superiors.

Young Jacob and Andrew Clark

Joseph and Janice Clark were blessed with two sons, Jacob and Andrew. Five years ago, Joseph was stricken suddenly and, in effect, became a hospitalized quadriplegic. There, supine Joseph’s sons would often be cradled in his arms. Joseph would always smile even when he could not speak audibly. In the eyes of the world, his was a catastrophic illness. Nevertheless, Joseph, his saintly wife, and their two boys, with strong support from parents and families, coped remarkably for five years. Because they trusted God as to what was really going on, like Job they did not “[charge] God foolishly” (Job 1:22).

Amid all the incessant and difficult problems, many of us watched Janice and Joseph apply King Benjamin’s words by showing that they were “willing to submit” to what had been inflicted upon them (Mosiah 3:19). Radiant Joseph died recently. The very day after his death, prescient, nine-year-old Jacob, who knew firsthand of his father’s loving and out-reaching nature, said, “Mom, I’ll bet Dad already has a lot of friends in heaven!” A few days later, seven-year-old Andrew struggled with a computer assignment at school but later reported to his mother, “I just thought of Dad, and he helped me.”

Four-year-old Mayara Fernanda dos Santos

A four-year-old Brazilian girl, Mayara Fernanda dos Santos, suffering from leukemia and on oxygen, was blessed recently by Elder Claudio Costa and myself in Curitiba, Brazil. After the blessing, empathetic little Mayara smilingly wiped a tear from her anxious mother’s cheek. Instinctively wise beyond her years, Mayara knows how to “comfort those that stand in need of comfort,” including her precious parents, who are willing to wait upon the Lord (Mosiah 18:9).

Seven-year-old Jared Ammon

Elder Craig Zwick and I shared a precious moment in Fortaleza, Brazil, where we were privileged to bless a special seven-year-old boy who was dying of leukemia. His names—Jared Ammon—tell you much about his parents and family. Accompanied by a thoughtful mission and stake president, there was scarcely room for the four of us to stand beside the bed in the tiny room where Jared Ammon’s faithful 14-year-old sister held him in her arms. His stomach was so severely swollen. When the stake presi-

dent lifted the oxygen mask to ask if he would like a blessing, Jared said, "Yes, please." It was a privilege to bless him and to call him to serve beyond the veil. Tears flowed, for the Spirit was strong. The oxygen mask was then lifted again, and Jared Ammon was asked if there was anything else we could do for him. Jared meekly requested that we sing for him "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301). Weepingly, we responded to a submissive Jared Ammon's last request, and two hours later he was released from this life.

Before emplaning the next day, we went to the viewing at the chapel. His wonderful parents were full of faith, composed, and reverently "willing to submit" (Mosiah 3:19). The sister who held Jared plans to serve a mission later on this side of the veil while Jared serves on the other.

Become as a child

Brothers and sisters, no wonder the divine direction is for each of us to be-

come "as a child" (Mosiah 3:19). Such saintliness will sustain us as we cross our Sinai, including in those moments when we must "be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Such submissive stillness is necessary because the process of consecration is not one of explanation. Only "after the trial of [our] faith" does the full witness come; meanwhile, often "a little child shall lead [us]" (Ether 12:6; Isaiah 11:6).

I gladly testify to the truth of this work, and I witness to the wonder of it all, as we are led so ably by President Hinckley. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

President Faust

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder W. Mack Lawrence of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Joseph, the man and the prophet

On this beautiful Easter Sunday, I have chosen to speak about the Prophet Joseph Smith and to emphasize some lesser-known aspects of his life that further affirm his prophetic calling.

During my college studies at BYU, I was introduced to the *History of the Church*, an edited compilation of the writings of Joseph Smith and others. After I graduated from law school, I carefully read all seven volumes. I also pursued personal research in original records in Illinois, where the Prophet Joseph lived the last five years of his life.

The man I came to know in this way was not the man I had imagined. When I was a boy, growing up in the Church,

I imagined the Prophet Joseph to be old and dignified and distant. But the Joseph Smith I met in my reading and personal research was a man of the frontier—young, emotional, dynamic, and so loved and approachable by his people that they often called him "Brother Joseph." My studies strengthened my testimony of his prophetic calling. What a remarkable man! At the same time, I could see that he was mortal and therefore subject to sin and error, pain and affliction.

Acquired knowledge rapidly

Overarching the Prophet Joseph's entire ministry were his comparative youth, his superficial formal education,

and his incredibly rapid acquisition of knowledge and maturity. He was 14 at the First Vision and 17 at the first visit from the angel Moroni. He was 21 when he received the golden plates and just 23 when he finished translating the Book of Mormon (in less than 60 working days). Over half of the revelations in our Doctrine and Covenants were given through the Prophet while he was 25 or younger. He was 26 when the First Presidency was organized and 30 when the Kirtland Temple was dedicated. He was just over 33 when he escaped his imprisonment in Missouri and resumed leadership of the Saints gathering in Nauvoo. He was 38½ when he was martyred.

Endured many mortal afflictions

Joseph Smith had more than his share of mortal afflictions. When he was about seven, he suffered an excruciatingly painful surgery. Pieces of bone in his leg were chipped away without anesthetic. He was on crutches most of the next three years. Because of the poverty of his family, he had little formal education and as a youth was compelled to work long hours to help put food on the family table. The first three children of Joseph and his beloved Emma died at birth. A later child also died at birth and another in early childhood. Only four of Joseph and Emma's nine birth children survived childhood. They also adopted twins, and one of these died as an infant.

Joseph was attacked physically on many occasions. He was often hounded by false charges. He was almost continually on the edge of financial distress. In the midst of trying to fulfill the staggering responsibilities of his sacred calling, he had to labor as a farmer or merchant to provide a living for his family. He did this without the remarkable spiritual gifts that sustained him in his prophetic calling. The Lord had advised him, "In temporal labors thou shalt not have

strength, for this is not thy calling" (D&C 24:9).

Acknowledged imperfections

Speaking of his teen years following the First Vision, Joseph wrote, "I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God." He hastened to add that this behavior did not include "any great or malignant sins" since "a disposition to commit such was never in my nature" (Joseph Smith—History 1:28).

Joseph's candor about his shortcomings is evident in the fact that one of the first revelations he recorded in writing and published to the world was a crushing rebuke he received from the Lord. The first 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon translation were lost because 22-year-old Joseph yielded to entreaties and loaned them to Martin Harris. "Behold," the Lord declared, "how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men" (D&C 3:6). The Lord told Joseph to repent or he would be stripped of his prophetic role (see D&C 3:10–11). Four later revelations, also published by the Prophet, command him to "repent and walk more uprightly" (D&C 5:21), speak of his having "sinned" (D&C 64:7; see also D&C 90:1), and rebuke him for not keeping the commandments (see D&C 93:47).

The Prophet Joseph had no role models from whom he could learn how to be a prophet and leader of the Lord's people. He learned from heavenly messengers and from the harvest of his unique spiritual gifts. He had to rely on associates who had no role models either. They struggled and learned together, and the Prophet's growth was extremely rapid.

When Joseph warned the Saints against mortal imperfections, he did not raise himself above them, and they loved him for it. He cautioned a group of Saints newly arrived in Nauvoo against the tendency to be dissatisfied if everything was not done perfectly right. "He said he was but a man and they must not expect him to be perfect," an associate recorded. "If they expected perfection from him, he should expect it from them, but if they would bear with his infirmities and the infirmities of the brethren, he would likewise bear with their infirmities" (*The Papers of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, 2 vols. [1992], 2:489).

Cheerful and playful

Joseph had a "native cheery temperament" (Joseph Smith—History 1:28). He delighted in the society of his friends. "He would play with the people," one acquaintance recalled, "and he was always cheerful and happy" (Rachel Ridgeway Grant, in "Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Young Woman's Journal*, Dec. 1905, 551). He loved little children and often frolicked with them in a manner shocking to some accustomed to the exaggerated sobriety of other ministers. These warm, human qualities caused some to deny Joseph's prophetic role, but they endeared him to many who knew him. Our records contain numerous adoring tributes like that of an acquaintance who said, "The love the saints had for him was inexpressible" (Mary Alice Cannon Lambert, in "Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Young Woman's Journal*, Dec. 1905, 554).

Resolute in his duty

Despite his familiar and friendly style, the Prophet Joseph Smith was resolute in doing his duty. During a meeting to consider disciplining a man who had rejected the counsel of the Presidency and the Twelve, he declared: "The Saints need not think because I am famil-

iar with them and am playful and cheerful, that I am ignorant of what is going on. Iniquity of any kind cannot be sustained in the Church, and it will not fare well where I am; for I am determined while I do lead the Church, to lead it right" (*History of the Church*, 5:411). On another occasion he wrote, "I am a lover of the cause of Christ and of virtue chastity and an upright steady course of conduct & a holy walk, I despise a hypocrite or a covenant breaker" (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee [1984], 246).

Physically strong and courageous

All of his life, Joseph Smith lived on the frontier, where men had to pit their brute strength against nature and sometimes against one another. He was a large man, strong and physically active. He delighted in competitive sports, including pulling sticks—a test of physical strength (see *History of the Church*, 5:302).

Our archives contain many recollections of his wrestling with friends and acquaintances. On one Sabbath he and Brigham Young preached to the Saints in Ramus, Illinois, about a day's ride from Nauvoo. On Monday, before departing Ramus, Joseph matched his wrestling prowess against a man someone described as "the bully of Ramus" (see Joseph Smith Journal, 13 Mar. 1843, recorded by Willard Richards, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives). Joseph threw him. I am glad our current conference schedules do not provide the local members opportunity to test the visiting authorities in this manner.

Like most other leaders on the frontier, Joseph Smith did not shrink from physical confrontation, and he had the courage of a lion. Once he was kidnapped by two men who held cocked pistols to his head and repeatedly threatened to shoot him if he moved a muscle. The Prophet endured these threats for a time and then snapped back, "Shoot

away; I have endured so much persecution and oppression that I am sick of life; why then don't you shoot, and have done with it, instead of talking so much about it?" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:167; see also *History of the Church*, 5:440).

Unwavering in his divine calling

The Prophet Joseph Smith experienced severe opposition and persecution throughout his life, but in the midst of all of this he never wavered from his divine calling. During a public sermon in Nauvoo, he declared:

"The burdens which roll upon me are very great. My persecutors allow me no rest, and I find that in the midst of business and care the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Although I was called of my Heavenly Father to lay the foundation of this great work and kingdom in this dispensation, and testify of His revealed will to scattered Israel, I am subject to like passions as other men, like the prophets of olden times" (*History of the Church*, 5:516).

In a sermon preached a little over a month before he was martyred, he declared, "I never told you I was perfect—but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught" (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [1980], 369).

An honorable life

The event that focused anti-Mormon hostilities and led directly to the Martyrdom was the action of Mayor Joseph Smith and the city council in closing a newly established opposition newspaper in Nauvoo. Mormon historians—including Elder B. H. Roberts—had conceded that this action was illegal, but as a young law professor pursuing original research, I was pleased to find a legal basis for this action in the Illinois law of 1844. The amendment to the United States Constitution that extended the guarantee of

freedom of the press to protect against the actions of city and state governments was not adopted until 1868, and it was not enforced as a matter of federal law until 1931. (See Dallin H. Oaks, "The Suppression of the *Nauvoo Expositor*," *Utah Law Review* 9 [1965], 862–902.) We should judge the actions of our predecessors on the basis of the laws and commandments and circumstances of their day, not ours.

As students at the University of Chicago, historian Marvin S. Hill and I were intrigued with the little-known fact that five men went to trial in Illinois for the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. For over 10 years we scoured libraries and archives across the nation to find every scrap of information about this trial and those involved in it. We studied the actions and words of Illinois citizens who knew Joseph Smith personally, some who hated him and plotted to kill him, and others who loved him and risked their lives to witness the trial of his accused assassins. Nothing in our discoveries in the original court records or in the testimony at the lengthy trial disclosed anything that reflected dishonor on the men who were murdered. (See Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy* [1975].)

Innocent of charges against him

The accessibility of Illinois court records led to another untouched area of research on Joseph Smith—his financial activities. Joseph I. Bentley, then a law student at Chicago, and I discovered numerous records showing the business activities of Joseph Smith. As we explained in our article, this was a period following a nationwide financial panic and depression. Economic conditions in frontier states like Illinois were ruinous. The biographers of an Illinois contemporary, Abraham Lincoln, have described his financial embarrassments during this decade, when business was precarious,

many obligations were in default, and lawsuits were common. The enemies of Joseph charged him with fraud in various property conveyances, mostly in behalf of the Church. A succession of court proceedings that extended for nearly a decade examined these claims in meticulous detail.

Finally, in 1852, long after the Saints' exodus from Illinois (so there was no conceivable political or other cause for anyone to favor the Prophet), a federal judge concluded this litigation with a decree that found no fraud or other moral impropriety by the Prophet. (See Dallin H. Oaks and Joseph I. Bentley, "Joseph Smith and Legal Process: In the Wake of the Steamboat *Nauvoo*," *Brigham Young University Law Review* [1976], 735–82.) Independent of that decree, as one who has examined the hundreds of pages of allegations and evidence in these proceedings, I testify to the Prophet's innocence of the charges against him.

As one familiar with early Illinois property law and as a lawyer enjoying the benefit of over 100 years of hindsight, I can readily see where Joseph and his fellow Church leaders and members were seriously disadvantaged by poor legal advice in some of the controversies just described. Bad legal advice may have been one of the causes for Brigham Young's well-publicized negative opinions of lawyers. I have often chuckled at his 1845 declaration that he "would rather have a six-shooter than all the lawyers in Illinois" (*History of the Church*, 7:386).

Men who knew Joseph best and stood closest to him in Church leadership loved and sustained him as a prophet. His brother Hyrum chose to die at his side. John Taylor, also with him when he was murdered, said, "I testify before God, angels, and men, that he was a good, honorable, virtuous man . . . —that his private and public character was unimpeachable—and that he lived and died

as a man of God" (*The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham [1987], 355; see also D&C 135:3). Brigham Young declared, "I do not think that a man lives on the earth that knew [Joseph Smith] any better than I did; and I am bold to say that, Jesus Christ excepted, no better man ever lived or does live upon this earth" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:332).

Testimony of the Prophet Joseph

Like other faithful Latter-day Saints, I have built my life on the testimony and mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In all of my reading and original research, I have never been dissuaded from my testimony of his prophetic calling and of the gospel and priesthood restoration the Lord initiated through him. I solemnly affirm the testimony Joseph Smith expressed in the famous Wentworth letter of 1842:

"The standard of truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*Times and Seasons*, 1 Mar. 1842, 709; in *History of the Church*, 4:540).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. In addition to the sources cited in the text, see Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (1984); Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (1989); "Joseph Smith," in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 3:1331–39; David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (1995), 54; Richard Kigel, *The Frontier Years of Abe Lincoln* (1986), 175–76.

Elder W. Mack Lawrence

Privilege to hear the word of God

Greetings, my brothers and sisters everywhere. What a great privilege it is to be in the presence of God's living prophet and to receive from him, and others who have been called by the Lord, the inspired words of counsel, testimony, and admonition that have been delivered in this wonderful conference. I testify that what we have heard from them has been "the will of the Lord, . . . the mind of the Lord, [and] the voice of the Lord" and, as the scriptures declare, is "the power of God unto salvation" (D&C 68:4).

In this respect I am reminded of a declaration made at the conclusion of conference many years ago by Elder Marion G. Romney of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "We have heard enough truth and direction in this conference," he declared, "to bring us into the presence of God if we would follow it" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1954, 132-33).

Responsibility to live by the word of God

Please note that it is insufficient to just *hear* the word of God in gatherings such as this conference. In order to have God's word impact our lives—to receive the promised blessings—we must *follow* it. Indeed the Lord has proclaimed, "For you shall *live* by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God" (D&C 84:44; italics added).

We have heard God's words at this conference, and now our responsibility is to live by them. At the conclusion of our last general conference President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "I will be a better man if I will put into my life the things of which I have been reminded in this conference, and I would like to suggest that each of you will be a better man or

woman if you will put into your lives something of what you have heard in this great conference" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 120; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 89).

By following this counsel, we strengthen our conversion to Christ and His gospel and, in this sense, become more committed to keeping covenants and commandments and to doing our duty in the Church. This, in my opinion, is the solution to one of the major challenges that I have observed during the years in which I have served in my present and other leadership callings.

Whenever I have asked stake presidents about their biggest challenge or concern, they repeatedly say, "To have the Saints committed and converted so they will be faithful in keeping their covenants and fulfilling their callings." I have given that challenge a lot of prayerful consideration. Certainly Latter-day Saints do not lack opportunities to hear the word of God, but unfortunately they are often dilatory in the follow-through and the application in living the word.

Commitment is the fruit of conversion

What is it that gives us a testimony and a desire to serve the Lord "with all [our] heart, might, mind and strength" (D&C 4:2) and to "be diligent in keeping the commandments of the Lord"? (1 Nephi 4:34).

As I have pondered this and prayed about it, I have concluded that the problem lies in a lack of conversion and commitment: *conversion* to Christ, His gospel, and His Church; and, subsequently, *commitment* to the covenants and individual callings one may have received to serve and strengthen others. In this regard it is of interest to consider Christ's words to Peter: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke

22:32). Thus, commitment seems to be an outgrowth or fruit of conversion.

In order to receive a fulness of promised blessings in our lives and to be fully effective in our callings, we must become converted. Would any of us truly do any less than our very best in keeping a covenant or commandment, fulfilling an assignment, or in following Christ if we were truly converted in our hearts?

Not casual or complacent

A truly converted follower of Christ—one who merits the designation of disciple or Saint—could not be casual or complacent in his or her approach to service in the Church nor in keeping covenants and commandments. Such a one would surely follow the Lord's admonition to "learn his [or her] duty, and to act . . . in all diligence" (D&C 107:99).

What does it mean to be converted? President Harold B. Lee said, "Conversion must mean more than just being a 'card carrying' member of the church with a tithing receipt [or] a temple recommend." One who is converted "strive[s] continually to improve inward weaknesses and not merely the outward appearances" (*Church News*, 25 May 1974, 2).

Not going through the motions

One who is converted and committed will not simply "go through the motions" in fulfilling a Church service assignment. A converted home teacher will not be satisfied with just making a visit to one of his assigned families so he can report to his quorum leader that his home teaching is "completed" or "done." A converted Primary teacher would not be content to merely "give" a lesson but would want to teach by the Spirit, thereby making a real difference in the impressionable lives of the children entrusted to his or her care.

Not fulfilling quotas or assignments

Truly converted Latter-day Saints do not go to the temple because of a quota they are expected to fulfill, but out of a sincere desire to perform sacred and saving ordinances in behalf of deceased ancestors—or even complete strangers—who cannot do the work for themselves. We do not serve others or fulfill assignments for statistical or reporting purposes, but in a spirit of love and a commitment to Christ and our Father in Heaven.

In this respect, consider the counsel of President Hinckley, given in a leadership training meeting:

"There is much more to be achieved than statistical improvement," President Hinckley said. "More importantly, *we should be concerned with the spiritual dimension of our people and the enlargement of this dimension.* There is a tendency in all of us to ask for better statistical performance. There is a tendency to *impose quotas behind which usually lies imposition of pressure* to achieve improved statistics. *In the work of the Lord there is a more appropriate motivation than pressure. There is the motivation that comes of true conversion.* When there throbs in the heart of an individual Latter-day Saint a great and vital testimony of the truth of this work, he [meaning, of course, men and women] will be found doing his duty in the Church. He will be found in his sacrament meetings. He will be found in his priesthood meetings. He will be found paying his honest tithes and offerings. He will be doing his home teaching. He will be found in attendance at the temple as frequently as his circumstances will permit. He will have within him a great desire to share the Gospel with others. He will be found strengthening and lifting his brethren and sisters. [In other words, he will be committed.] *It is conversion that makes the difference*" (Regional Representatives' seminar, 6 Apr. 1984; italics added).

Take steps toward true conversion

Brothers and sisters, if you are not presently enjoying the blessings that come from conversion and commitment, I urge you to take the necessary steps to bring about this change in your heart. Perhaps my appeal is much the same as that extended by the prophet Alma when he said to the people of his day: "And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren [and sisters] of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" (Alma 5:14).

This "mighty change in your hearts" is what conversion is all about. President Joseph Fielding Smith said, "People are converted by their hearts being penetrated by the Spirit of the Lord when they humbly hearken to the testimonies of the Lord's servants" (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 2 vols. [1953], 1:40).

I emphasize again what I stated at the commencement of my remarks: it is insufficient to *hear* the word of God as declared in this conference or in other places of worship. In order to make it effective—to receive the promised blessings—we must *follow* it; or, as President Smith noted, we must "*hearken* to the testimonies of the Lord's servants."

May I humbly admonish each of you to evaluate your present state of conversion and commitment. I invite you to have a personal interview with yourself in which you ask how effective you are in your present calling to serve. Consider how fully you are keeping the commandments and acting upon the counsel given you by the prophets and other divinely called leaders of the Church—yes, including your stake president and bishop. Do you have to be reminded of your duty, or are you a committed self-starter and finisher?

"Have ye spiritually been born of God?"

Let us return to Alma's question: "Have ye spiritually been born of God?" It is noteworthy that Alma concluded his admonition to the people of his day by bearing testimony of how his personal conversion was obtained:

"Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?"

"Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have *fasted and prayed* many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me" (Alma 5:45–46; italics added).

That same spirit of revelation—the spirit of conversion, if you will—is available to each of us as we diligently seek for it through fasting, prayer, obedience, and searching the scriptures (see Alma 17:2–3).

Be doers of the word

May we go from this conference with a renewed desire to be more fully converted and committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. May we follow the admonition of the Apostle James to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

I believe in Jesus Christ with all my soul. May we understand and follow His teachings as found in the holy scriptures. This is His divine Church. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord ushered in the fulness of the gospel in this last dispensation of time. President Gordon B. Hinckley is our true and living prophet. This is my testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder W. Mack Lawrence of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Praise to the Man." El-

der Rulon G. Craven of the Seventy will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

Elder Rulon G. Craven

Meeting with repentant members

My brothers and sisters, it has been a wonderful experience to work with the Saints who love their Heavenly Father and love one another. We have witnessed their valiancy and their challenges as they face the trials of life.

During the past years I have at times been asked by the Brethren to meet with repentant members of the Church and interview them for the restoration of their temple blessings. This has always been a spiritually moving experience to restore the blessings of those wonderful people who have repented. I have asked some of them the question, "What happened in your life that caused you to temporarily lose your membership in the Church?" With tear-filled eyes they answered, "I didn't obey the basic principles of the gospel: prayer, attending church regularly, serving in the Church, and studying the gospel. I then gave in to temptations and lost the guidance of the Holy Spirit." It is always a special experience for me to meet these repentant souls and to feel with them the miracle of forgiveness and the joy of being reunited with the Saints and the Holy Spirit.

Turn away from temptation

Temptation is a necessary part of our earthly experience. The Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith explains the

reason why we are tempted: "It must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet" (D&C 29:39).

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi explains the consequences of yielding to temptation: "The temptations of the devil . . . blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost" (1 Nephi 12:17).

To blind the eyes is *not* to see or acknowledge the consequences of our actions. To harden the heart is to *ignore* or not be willing to accept counsel. To be led into the broad roads is to give in to worldly enticements and lose the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Brigham Young stated: "Many think that the Devil has rule and power over both body and spirit. Now, I want to tell you that he does not hold any power over man, only so far as the body overcomes the spirit that is in a man, through yielding to the spirit of evil. . . . The spirit is influenced by the body, and the body by the spirit" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 69-70).

Temptation is like a magnetic force which holds a metal object in its power. It loses its magnetic force and power when you turn away from it. So we must

turn away from temptation; then it will lose its power.

Road signs for dealing with temptation

Our minds, throughout the day, are continually active. We choose the avenues of thought that our mind travels. Allowing worldly thoughts to enter your mind can lead to unrighteous acts. As we travel the highways of life, our physical senses are continually bombarded with billboards, posters, magazines, videos, movies, et cetera, that entice and tempt the mind and, if allowed, create mental pictures that are not becoming to a Latter-day Saint.

When evil thoughts arise—Stop! Think! Control your mind! Visualize a large EXIT sign in your mind's eye. Immediately change your thoughts. Get off of that avenue of thinking.

When unrighteous feelings and desires well up inside of you, the Holy Ghost will prompt NO. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Stop! Think! Visualize a WRONG WAY sign in your mind. Immediately change or erase those thoughts leading to wrong, unrighteous feelings and evil fantasies that can become addictive to mind and body.

When tempted to choose an unrighteous act or entertain unrighteous thoughts, look down the road ahead and contemplate the inevitable consequences of that act. Stop! Think! Visualize a STOP sign in your mind. Put on your mental brakes. Immediately change your thinking to something different and something uplifting.

To overcome temptation, you and I must control our thoughts. *Exit* from your mind bad thoughts. Avoid the *wrong way* of unrighteous thoughts. *Stop* thoughts that lead to behavior unbecoming to a Latter-day Saint. You do not have to yield to temptation! Discipline what you allow your eyes to see, your ears to hear, your mouth to speak, and your hands to touch.

Consequences of yielding to temptation

Yielding to temptation can lead to the addiction of both body and spirit. Addiction can be overpowering and lead to enslavement, and enslavement leads to loss of freedom and inner peace.

When persons allow themselves to succumb to temptation, they are acting against counsel—the counsel of the Holy Ghost, the counsel of our prophet leaders, the counsel of sound doctrine, the counsel of covenants, and often the counsel of those who love them most. They then separate themselves from the friendship and love of others and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Overcoming temptation develops strength

As eternal beings living this earthly experience, we will not be free from temptation. Temptation implies an inner struggle to do that which is right. The person who thinks continually in a sensual and carnal manner cannot undergo inner spiritual development. His or her sensual thinking prevents spiritual growth.

Elder George Q. Cannon said: "Unless [individuals] were exposed to temptation they never could know themselves, their own powers, their own weaknesses nor the power of God. If Satan had no power to tempt mankind, they would be in a state where they could neither know good nor evil; they could not know happiness nor misery. All their powers would lie dormant, for there would be nothing to arouse them. They would be destitute of that experience which prepares men to become like God, their Eternal Father" (*Gospel Truth*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist, 2 vols. in 1 [1987], 109).

Through our obedience to gospel principles, the enticements of the world lessen in our lives. With each right choice we make, we spiritually empower ourselves. The accumulation of right choices

builds inner spiritual strength and divine character. We should expect temptation, for without temptations there would be little education and little character improvement.

How to overcome temptation

It is a frightening realization that the powers of evil will increase in the world. This brings us to the questions, What can we do? Is there a way to escape from the powers of evil? Yes, there is.

Members of the Church can overcome temptation by (1) obedience to the guiding principles and doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ, (2) following the counsel of our prophets and leaders, and (3) living in such a way that our lives are constantly influenced by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Train your mind to obey gospel principles and covenants. Stay on the highway of daily personal and family prayer, the avenue of studying the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets, the road of serving in the Church, and be willing

to get off the wrong road daily and on the right road leading to eternal life. Your greatest protection against temptation is an active and vibrant testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which binds us to our Heavenly Father. Our greatest example of overcoming temptation is the Savior. "He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them" (D&C 20:22).

My brothers and sisters, I know this work is true. I know prophets travel the earth today. I know that Jesus is the Christ and that God does live in the heavens. As we draw near to our Heavenly Father in obedience and righteousness, He will draw near to us. He will bless us, perfect us, and protect us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Rulon G. Craven of the Seventy.

Sister Susan L. Warner, second counselor in the Primary general presidency, will now speak to us.

Sister Susan L. Warner

Memories of spiritual feelings

My dear brothers and sisters, I remember as a little girl driving across the Nevada desert with my family to attend general conference in this Tabernacle. Automobiles did not have air-conditioning, so we traveled at night with a canvas water bag tied to the front of the car in case the radiator boiled over. I remember standing outside this building, singing the hymns of Zion in the darkness of the morning, waiting for the large wooden doors to open. I remember secretly hoping that I wouldn't be seated behind one of the wide, round pillars, or worse, a lady wearing a large hat. Though I was scarcely tall enough to see, I remember the feel-

ings that came over me as everyone rose when the prophet entered. Those feelings of excited reverence are spiritual feelings that return each time I enter this building or hear our leaders speak in general conference. I remember what I have received and heard. I remember what I know and what I have felt.

Each of us has memories of spiritual feelings. Some of us remember spiritual feelings from our earliest childhood. Some of us may have memories of feelings when we first discovered the Lord's true Church. Almost all have spiritual feelings connected with the love of mother, father, brothers, and sisters. We may remember feelings of love and belonging that have come while serving

in the kingdom with our fellow Saints. We may remember feeling spiritually renewed on a Sabbath evening after attending church, studying the gospel together, and sharing testimonies. We may remember earnest feelings that have accompanied fervent prayer, or the comfort of the Holy Ghost in times of trial or sadness. We may remember the sorrow and the joy of deep repentance—of feeling forgiven and cleansed. We may remember profound feelings of gratitude for the Savior's atoning gift of love to us.

Results of remembering spiritual feelings

Remembering our spiritual feelings draws us to our Heavenly Father and to His Son, Jesus Christ. It gives us a sense of our true identity. It reminds us of what the prophets have recently proclaimed to the entire world, that "each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Recalling spiritual feelings reminds us of who we really are.

It is no wonder that over and over in the scriptures we are instructed, counseled, and commanded, "O remember, remember." This repeated invitation emphasizes the important connection between our recollection of spiritual feelings in our past and our faithfulness in the present. Through John the Apostle, the Lord gave this message: "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard" (Revelation 3:3).

Satan wants us to remember lies

Satan wants us to be slow to remember what we have received and heard. He wants us to minimize and even forget the quiet witnesses of the Spirit that have told us who we really are. Part of Satan's evil design is to give our children

mistaken ideas of who they are—lies for them to remember.

An elementary school principal reported to me that even our young schoolchildren see and hear the defilement of sacred things. In television programs, videos, and popular music they are exposed to evil things that desensitize them, making sin seem normal and acceptable.

Like all of us, our children are subtly and constantly encouraged to believe that life has no sacred purpose and that living selfishly is natural and commendable. Under such influences, children may grow up without understanding that they have a Father in Heaven who loves them, that their bodies are sacred temples, and that obedience brings good and happy feelings.

Build spiritual foundations in families

We can help counteract these influences in our families when we follow the counsel of our prophets and, in a spirit of love, study the scriptures together, pray, and hold regular family home evenings where we share experiences and bear testimony to one another.

To help us teach our children and youth, our leaders have provided *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 1990) and "My Gospel Standards," which is found on the back of the booklet *My Achievement Days* (1995). When we talk about these things in our families, share our feelings, and learn together at home, we build in each family member, young and old, a rich reserve of doctrinal knowledge and spiritual feelings which will come to their remembrance again and again.

Enos, in the Book of Mormon, records his remembrance: "I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart" (Enos 1:3). Enos had been given a reserve of doctrine and feelings to draw upon. He

gratefully said of his father, "He taught me . . . in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it" (Enos 1:1).

One widely recognized expert in helping troubled youth said that the young people who most readily and completely come back after losing their way are those who have a foundation of standards and spirituality to which they can return. They are strengthened by their spiritual memories, and for them repentance feels like coming home.

Children come into this world pure and open and eager to learn. It is our happy privilege and solemn responsibility to lovingly teach them plain and simple gospel truths, provide opportunities for them to feel the Spirit, and help them identify and recognize their own spiritual feelings. Heavenly Father said to Father Adam, "Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children" (Moses 6:58).

Families' efforts are never wasted

In our family we have tried to hold early-morning scripture study. But we were often frustrated when one son complained and had to be coaxed out of bed. When he finally came, he would often put his head right down on the table. Years later, while serving his mission, he wrote home in a letter: "Thank you for teaching me the scriptures. I want you to know that all those times I acted like I was sleeping, I was really listening with my eyes closed."

Parents and teachers, our efforts to help our children establish a heritage of rich spiritual memories are never wasted. Sometimes the seeds we plant may not bear fruit for years, but we may take comfort in the hope that someday the children we teach will remember how they have "received and heard" the things of the Spirit. They will remember what they know and what they have felt. They will

remember their identity as children of Heavenly Father, who sent them here with a divine purpose.

What we should remember

Each week all over the world, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints come together and remember who they are. "I am a child of God," sing Primary children in many languages. Young women everywhere repeat, "We are daughters of our Heavenly Father who loves us" (*Young Women Leadership Handbook* [1992], 4). Young men remember when they serve and perform their duties as worthy Aaronic Priesthood bearers. And when we partake of the sacrament, all of us remember as we witness our willingness to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and covenant to always remember Him.

I recall a day when one of our children was leaving for school with his friend. I waved good-bye and called out, "Remember who you are." As they walked away, I overheard the friend ask, "Why does your mother always say that to you? What does she mean?" I heard our son's quick reply, "She means, 'Be good.'" He was exactly right. We remember who we are by doing good, and we do good when we remember who we are.

We are to remember to keep His commandments in all things (see 1 Nephi 15:25), remember to search the scriptures diligently (see Mosiah 1:7), remember the words our parents have taught us (see Alma 57:21), remember the counsel of the prophets and apostles (see Jude 1:17), remember the awfulness of transgression (see 2 Nephi 9:39), remember that the Lord is merciful unto all who believe on His name (see Alma 32:22), and remember that He came to redeem us (see Helaman 5:9).

I join with children around the world, bearing my testimony in this Primary song and remembering what we

have received and heard, what we know and feel:

I belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
I know who I am. I know God's plan.
I'll follow him in faith.
I believe in the Savior, Jesus Christ.
I'll honor his name.
I'll do what is right; I'll follow his light.
His truth I will proclaim.

["The Church of Jesus Christ," *Children's Songbook*, 77]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Sister Susan L. Warner, second counselor in the Primary general presidency, has just spoken to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Visiting starving people in Africa

Brothers and sisters, this has been another glorious conference. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to be with me as I now have the privilege to speak to you.

In February Sister Ballard and I attended a multistake conference in Johannesburg, South Africa. We were impressed with the faith and the special spirit of the members.

Visiting the African continent brought back memories of my earlier assignments to East and West Africa. I thought once again of the special fast by Church members worldwide in 1985. It provided approximately six million dollars to relieve suffering and hunger primarily in drought-stricken Ethiopia. Brother Glenn L. Pace and I witnessed firsthand the fruits of generous contributions by Church members when the First Presidency assigned us to go to Africa, assess the needs of the people, and recommend how to make the best use of these special funds.

We visited refugee camps in that arid country. The land was as barren as any I had ever seen. We visited Red Cross centers and field hospitals where the desperately ill were being cared for. Such dreadful, pitiful suffering broke

our hearts. We saw sick mothers lying on cots trying to feed and comfort their children, many of whom had the sunken eyes and pencil-thin arms and legs of those in the advanced stages of starvation. This was one of the most heart-wrenching experiences of my life. I had never seen anything that touched my heart so deeply as the anxious yearning for food and nourishment that I saw there.

Many people are starving spiritually

Brothers and sisters, even as people in Ethiopia were starving physically because of the lack of food, far too many people in the world are starving spiritually. Sadly, most of them have no idea where to find real spiritual nourishment. They wander to and fro—another form of pathetic refugees. Those who yearn for true spiritual light and knowledge can find it only through the power of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit enlightens and gives understanding of the eternal purpose of life. By the Spirit, Church members know the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true. We should, therefore, feel compelled to share our spiritual knowledge with all of our Father's children by inviting them to pull a chair up to the

Lord's table and feast on the words of Christ.

"Come unto the Holy One of Israel," wrote the great Book of Mormon prophet Jacob, "and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness."¹ Later Nephi urged his followers to "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."²

Cultivate spiritual strength in ourselves

God's chosen prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, recently said:

"Every member of this church is an individual man or woman, boy or girl. Our great responsibility is to see that each is 'remembered and nourished by the good word of God' (Moroni 6:4), that each has opportunity for growth and expression and training in the work and ways of the Lord. . . .

"This work is concerned with people, each a son or daughter of God. In describing its achievements we speak in terms of numbers, but all of our efforts must be dedicated to the development of the individual."³

For The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to fulfill its divine mission to assist in bringing "to pass the immortality and eternal life of man,"⁴ *all* members need to generate an appetite for gospel sustenance. We must "hunger and thirst after righteousness"⁵ before we can be filled. We need to cultivate spiritual strength within ourselves before we can ever hope to engender it in others.

Individual, personal testimony of gospel truth, particularly of the divine life and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, is essential to our eternal life. "And this is life eternal," said the Savior, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."⁶ In other words, life eternal is predicated upon our own individual, personal knowl-

edge of our Father in Heaven and His Holy Son. Simply knowing about them is not enough. We must have personal, spiritual experiences to anchor us. These come through seeking them in the same intense, single-minded way that a hungry person seeks food.

Once again quoting President Hinckley:

"The gaining of a strong and secure testimony is the privilege and opportunity of every individual member of the Church. The Master said, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself' (John 7:17).

"Service in behalf of others, study, and prayer lead to faith in this work and then to knowledge of its truth. This has always been a personal pursuit, as it must always be in the future."⁷

Invite others to the spiritual feast

We must fortify ourselves before we can ever hope to offer spiritual nourishment to others. Once we have nourished ourselves with the good word of Christ and feasted personally at His table so that our testimony is strong and vibrant, we are obligated to join with the missionaries in a balanced effort to invite others—beginning with our families—to the spiritual banquet. As the Lord said to His beloved Apostle Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."⁸ And again speaking to Peter, the Savior asked: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."⁹

If we are obedient to the Savior's command given to Peter, we will focus our attention on the spiritual growth and development of those for whom we are responsible. Feeding the Lord's sheep requires each of us to awaken our inter-

est in others. The duty to invite others to partake of the gospel feast does not rest only on the shoulders of the missionaries. That sober and significant duty belongs to each member of the Church, for "it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor."¹⁰

Today our prophet is calling for enthusiastic and dynamic love for our Heavenly Father's children. He asks us to see the spiritual hunger around us and to respond by willingly sharing our abundance. No power on earth can accomplish as much as one righteous man or woman or boy or girl.

Build faith at home

The home and family have vital roles in cultivating and developing personal faith and testimony. The family is the basic unit of society; the best place for individuals to build faith and strong testimonies is in righteous homes filled with love. Love for our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ is greatly enhanced when the gospel is taught and lived in the home. True principles of eternal life are embedded in the hearts and souls of young and old alike when scriptures are read and discussed, when prayers are offered morning and night, and when reverence for God and obedience to Him are modeled in everyday conduct. Just as the best meals are home cooked, the most nourishing gospel instruction takes place at home. Strong, faithful families have the best opportunity to produce strong, faithful members of the Church.

The recent proclamation to the world on the family, issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, makes very clear that the family is ordained of God. The proclamation warns that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

The Church's supporting role

The family is where the foundation of personal spiritual growth is built and nurtured; the Church, then, is the scaffolding that helps support and strengthen the family. While the Church is secondary to the family in teaching gospel principles, much spiritual learning and growth come through the Church. For example, carefully planned sacrament meetings should be a spiritual feast in which we worship and learn of our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Bishops, if your sacrament meetings are less than a banquet of spiritual nourishment, I urge you to invite suggestions from your ward council, especially the sisters, on ways to make every sacrament meeting a more reverent, spiritual experience. Let the council also help teach our members that the chapel is a special place in our buildings where we come in a spirit of respect for God and reverence for His holy Son. Let the quiet, peaceful promptings of the Holy Spirit abide in our worship services, causing spiritual enlightenment and nourishment to flow into our lives.

Teaching at home and at church

Whether we are teaching in the home or in the Church, we must keep a clear vision of the gospel's eternal purpose. Not long ago I experienced the kind of faith and spiritual strength the gospel provides when an 18-year-old sister, who was fighting for her life in a battle with cancer, asked me for a blessing. She said: "Brother Ballard, I am not afraid to die. I would like to live. There are things I would still like to accomplish in this life, but I know that Jesus is my Savior and my Redeemer. During these past few years He has become my best friend. I trust Him, and I trust you as His representative. Whatever He wants for me, I am prepared."

We pled for a miracle but at her request left the matter with Heavenly Father. She died shortly thereafter with the peace of the Lord attending her and her faithful family.

Brothers and sisters, we should teach revealed principles and inspired doctrine in our homes and in our Church meetings. Every parent and class instructor should be well prepared to teach the gospel by the power of the Spirit to ensure that testimonies are renewed and understanding of life and life eternal is fortified.

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles ask leaders to emphasize constantly, in priesthood quorums, auxiliaries, and stake and ward councils, the preeminence of the home and family. That is where scriptures are studied and prayers are offered regularly so all family members will strive to follow the Savior in all things.

The temple is the ultimate feast

Leaders also need to emphasize that all adult members of the Church should strive to become worthy to receive the ordinances of the temple. Members should identify their ancestors and perform the sacred temple ordinances for them.

Parents and leaders need to do everything possible to prepare each young man to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and the ordinances of the temple and to serve a full-time mission. Likewise, young women need to prepare to make and keep sacred covenants and receive temple ordinances. Making and keeping sacred covenants in the house of the Lord is the most delicious course at the Lord's table. It is the ultimate, satisfying spiritual feast of the gospel of Jesus Christ in mortality; it has eternal consequences. Our living prophet has expressed his great vision of those who qualify for temple ordinances, keep temple covenants, and serve regularly in the house of the Lord:

"We would be a better people," President Hinckley said. "There would be little or no infidelity among us. Divorce would almost entirely disappear. So much of heartache and heartbreak would be avoided. There would be a greater measure of peace and love and happiness in our homes. There would be fewer weeping wives and weeping children. There would be a greater measure of appreciation and of mutual respect among us. And I am confident the Lord would smile with greater favor upon us."¹¹

The Savior offers untold bounty

Through His prophet, God has promised to replace the spiritual hunger that plagues mankind with untold bounty from His own table. All He asks is that we come unto Christ and then do all we can, through our families and with the support of the Church, to help all of our Father's children succeed spiritually in this critical journey of mortality.

"Behold," said the Lord, "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."¹²

I testify to you that Jesus is the Christ. He lives and invites everyone to partake of the joyful feast of the gospel. Joseph Smith is the prophet of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. May we all be blessed, my beloved brothers and sisters, with an increased desire to seek after and feast on the things of the Spirit, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 9:51.
2. 2 Nephi 32:3.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 72-73; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 52-53.
4. Moses 1:39.
5. Matthew 5:6.
6. John 17:3.

7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 53.
8. Luke 22:32.
9. John 21:17.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 88:81.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
12. Revelation 3:20.

President Faust

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Ricks College combined choirs, the BYU combined men's choir, the Mormon Youth Chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given during this conference; the doctors, the Church Health

Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to the local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Go Forth in Faith." The benediction will be offered by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

This has been a wonderful conference. The Spirit of the Lord has been with us. We have heard much of wisdom and inspiration. Our testimonies of this divine work have been strengthened. Many of us, I hope, have resolved within our hearts to live more fully the principles of the gospel.

Surely we have been blessed in the talks that have been given. The prayers have been inspiring, and the music has been wonderful. We are so greatly blessed with dedicated musicians in the Church. They add so substantially to the spirit of the conference. Every choir and chorus has performed exceptionally well.

Praise for the Tabernacle Choir

I wish to say a particular word about this Tabernacle Choir, which has sung

to us today. I came across a letter written by Wilford Woodruff and his counselors, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, under date of February 11, 1895, 101 years ago. It was addressed to the choir at that time. It reads:

"We desire to see this choir not only maintain the high reputation it has earned at home and abroad, but become the highest exponent of the 'Divine Art' in all the land; and the worthy head, example and leader of all other choirs and musical bodies in the Church, inspiring musicians and poets with purest sentiment and song and harmony, until its light shall shine forth to the world undimmed, and nations shall be charmed [by] its music."

The letter goes on: "This choir is and should be a great auxiliary to the

cause of Zion. By means of its perfection in the glorious realm of song, it may unstop the ears of thousands now deaf to the truth, soften their stony hearts, and inspire precious souls with a love for that which is divine. Thus removing prejudice, dispelling ignorance and shedding forth the precious light of heaven to tens of thousands who have been, and are still, misled concerning us" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965-75], 3:267-68).

Such has been the responsibility resting upon this choir for more than a century. Personnel changes have occurred through the years, but the quality of performance has only improved. This choir is one of the great treasures of the Church. I think it is one of the great treasures of America. I regard it as the outstanding choir in all the world. May it continue its great mission of providing lofty and inspiring music at home and abroad. I thank, in behalf of the entire Church, the officers, directors, organists, and members of this dedicated body of talented and gifted musicians who give so generously of their time.

60 Minutes interview

Now I think I might venture to mention another matter. Months ago I was invited to be interviewed by Mike Wallace, a tough senior reporter for the CBS *60 Minutes* program, which is broadcast across America to more than 20 million listeners each week.

I recognized that if I were to appear, critics and detractors of the Church would also be invited to participate. I knew we could not expect that the program would be entirely positive for us.

On the other hand, I felt that it offered the opportunity to present some affirmative aspects of our culture and message to many millions of people. I concluded that it was better to lean into

the stiff wind of opportunity than to simply hunker down and do nothing. It has been an interesting experience. The program's crews have photographed hours of eyeball-to-eyeball interview (if you'll pardon that expression), dialogue, and formal talks in various settings. They have interviewed other members of the Church, as well as our critics. From all of this I assume they have distilled a presentation of about a quarter of an hour.

We have no idea what the outcome will be—that is, I don't. We will discover this this evening when it is aired in this valley. If it turns out to be favorable, I will be grateful. Otherwise, I pledge I'll never get my foot in that kind of trap again. In the Salt Lake City area it will be released at 6:00 P.M., and in many other areas across the nation at 7:00 P.M. local time.

"Remember . . . thy church, O Lord"

In the prayer of dedication at the Kirtland Temple, which prayer was received by revelation according to the Prophet, he petitioned the Lord in these words:

"Remember all thy church, O Lord, . . . that the kingdom, which thou hast set up without hands, may become a great mountain and fill the whole earth;

"That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 109:72-73).

We are witnessing the answer to that remarkable pleading. Increasingly the Church is being recognized at home and abroad for what it truly is. There are still those, not a few, who criticize and rebel, who apostatize and lift their voices against this work. We have always had them. They speak their piece as they walk across the stage of life, and then they are soon forgotten. I suppose we always will have them as long as we are trying to do the work of the Lord. The

honest in heart will detect that which is true and that which is false. We go forward, marching as an army with banners emblazoned with the everlasting truth. We are a cause that is militant for truth and goodness. We are a body of Christian soldiers "marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before" ("Onward, Christian Soldiers," *Hymns*, no. 246).

Everywhere we go, we see great vitality in this work. There is enthusiasm wherever it is organized. It is the work of the Redeemer. It is the gospel of good news. It is something to be happy and excited about.

Brothers and sisters, let us now return to our homes with increased resolution in our hearts to live the gospel more fully, to serve with greater diligence, and to stand for truth with enthusiasm and without fear. As a servant of the Lord, I leave my blessing upon you. May you be happy as you walk with faith, I humbly pray, in the name of Him whom we all love and serve, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Go Forth in Faith."
Elder Merrill J. Bateman offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Ricks College combined choirs. Kevin Brower and Richard Robison conducted, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

At the general priesthood session a Brigham Young University combined men's choir provided the music. Mack J. Wilberg and Ronald J. Staheli conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

A

- Asay, Elder Carlos E.**80
 Stay on the true course; Reaffirm and focus on eternal goals; Assess current position; Initiate course corrections; Stay on the true course; "Be up and doing"

B

- Ballard, Elder M. Russell**110
 Visiting starving people in Africa; Many people are starving spiritually; Cultivate spiritual strength in ourselves; Invite others to the spiritual feast; Build faith at home; The Church's supporting role; Teaching at home and at church; The temple is the ultimate feast; The Savior offers untold bounty

C

- Church Audit Committee Report for 1995**.....27
Church Statistical Report for 1995.....28
Craven, Elder Rulon G.105
 Meeting with repentant members; Turn away from temptation; Road signs for dealing with temptation; Consequences of yielding to temptation; Overcoming temptation develops strength; How to overcome temptation

E

- Eyring, Elder Henry B.**84
 Create and convey a legacy of testimony; Testimony of John Bennion; Gain our own testimonies first; Hold weekly family home evening; Read scriptures as a family; Pray as a family; Fast and pay generous fast offerings; Receive home teachers; give blessings; Respond to tragedy with faith; Grandmother Eyring's faith in adversity; Hope for those who reject testimony

F

- Faust, President James E. (Saturday morning session)**.....3
 "The rising up of my church"; Follow the Brethren; Only those with authority may lead; Apostasy and return of Oliver Cowdery; "By their fruits ye shall know them"; Respect domains of authority; Apostasy and return of Thomas B. Marsh; Five fundamental truths of authority

Faust, President James E. (priesthood session) 56
Things to know before serving a mission; Your call comes from the Lord; Respect and obey your mission president; Hard work is important; Forget yourself in the Lord’s service; Never permit contention; Keep clean, healthy, and neat; Love and serve the people; Study and teach from the scriptures; Be prepared for Lucifer’s opposition; Your testimony is your strongest arrow

G

General Authorities Present 1
General Priesthood Session 48

H

Haight, Elder David B. 29
Amazing growth of the Church; Our eighth generation; Feelings when called 26 years ago; Witness to the revelation on priesthood

Hales, Elder Robert D. 49
The powerful example of Abinadi; Follow the example of obedience; To young Aaronic Priesthood holders; Officiate worthily in the sacrament; Mission, education, and friends; Obedience is a lifetime effort; Commandments guide and protect us; Obedience brings spiritual light; Fear God, not man; God’s commandments do not change; Study, teach, testify, and obey

Hansen, Elder W. Eugene 53
A great dispensation; Rattlesnakes and wayward sheep; Heed spiritual shepherds; Resist negative peer pressure; Do not try to justify “a little sin”; Remain strong and faithful

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) 65
A blessed people, a great brotherhood; A dream of young Joseph F. Smith; Be ye clean; Spring-cleaning as a boy; Spring-cleaning our lives; Keep sacred, marvelous bodies clean; Be clean in mind; Be morally clean; Be clean in language; Be clean in dress and manner; Be honest; Purify yourselves before the Lord

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session) 114
Praise for the Tabernacle Choir; *60 Minutes* interview; “Remember . . . thy church, O Lord”

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) 88
Announcement of a new meeting hall; Gratitude for sustaining and for leaders; Gratitude for faithful members; The Savior’s victory over death;

Testimonies of the risen Lord; The assurance of immortality; The Savior shines through all darkness

Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. 38

A handful of meal and a little oil; An appeal for the disadvantaged; Amulek's discourse to the Zoramites; King Benjamin's discourse; Caring the way the Savior cared; Look for ways to help others; Neighbors save the Hendricks family

Howard, Elder F. Burton..... 36

Playing hide-and-seek in the car; Live up to commitments; The commitment of Abraham's servant; A covenant-keeping people

L

Lawrence, Elder W. Mack 102

Privilege to hear the word of God; Responsibility to live by the word of God; Commitment is the fruit of conversion; Not casual or complacent; Not going through the motions; Not fulfilling quotas or assignments; Take steps toward true conversion; "Have ye spiritually been born of God?" Be doers of the word

M

Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 93

Today's Sinai of secularism; Tares masquerading as wheat; Oases of the Restoration; Strength of family and friends; Children often show the way; Three-year-old Nate Barker; Three-year-old Benjamin Ballam; Young Jacob and Andrew Clark; Four-year-old Mayara Fernanda dos Santos; Seven-year-old Jared Ammon; Become as a child

McMullin, Bishop Keith B. 7

The law of witnesses; Bearing witness to a skeptical father; The Holy Ghost can help us know; "Ask, and it shall be given you"; Skeptical friend receives a sure witness; My personal witness

Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 60

We are all enlisted; Our duty in the battle for souls; Priesthood: the perfect plan of service; Our duty to prepare; Our duty to serve; "I never can learn Spanish!" Youth serve widows at Thanksgiving; Home teaching—a divine service; A report card of home teaching; Johann Dendorfer's home teachers

Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session) 72

The two great commandments; How to fulfill the first commandment; How to become like the Savior; The Savior's love of neighbor; Flight diverted for a mercy mission; Lost opportunities to love neighbors;

A small boy and a telephone operator; "Follow thou me"; The Savior of the world

Music, Summary of Conference	116
-------------------------------------------	------------

N

Nelson, Elder Russell M.	16
--------------------------------------	-----------

Which way do you face? Life without looking to God; Invitation to come to the Lord; Loyal citizens; Representatives of the Lord; Obeying commandments of the Lord; Facing our families; Facing our neighbors; Attitudes of effective disciples

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	97
-----------------------------------	-----------

Joseph, the man and the prophet; Acquired knowledge rapidly; Endured many mortal afflictions; Acknowledged imperfections; Cheerful and playful; Resolute in his duty; Physically strong and courageous; Unwavering in his divine calling; An honorable life; Innocent of charges against him; Testimony of the Prophet Joseph

Okazaki, Sister Chieko N.	14
---------------------------------------	-----------

We are all one in Christ; Cultures differ, but gospel is the same; Learning from our differences; Speaking the language of the Spirit

P

Packer, President Boyd K.	21
---------------------------------------	-----------

Youth can avoid unseen dangers; Regulations of the Word of Wisdom; "A principle with promise"; Stay on the safe side; Use moderation in matters of health; The promise of health; The promise of revelation; The promise of redemption; Go forward with faith

Perry, Elder L. Tom	76
----------------------------------	-----------

The sacrament and a green footlocker; Reminders of Jesus' supreme sacrifice; Christ instituted the sacrament; The Restoration and the sacrament; Renew covenants worthily; Our sacramental promises; Attend sacrament meeting faithfully

Priesthood Session, General	48
------------------------------------------	-----------

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	25
-----------------------------------------	-----------

Saturday Morning Session	2
---------------------------------------	----------

Scott, Elder Richard G.	31
Variety amid constancy; Appreciate the beauty of life; Joy in life depends on trust in God; Perspective and patience; Live with joy amid adversity; Find joy in what you <i>do</i> have; Being creative will help you enjoy life; Service—a key to happiness; Difficulty can be turned to growth; Challenge is temporary, happiness eternal	
Summary of Conference Music	116
Sunday Afternoon Session	93
Sunday Morning Session	71
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	26

T

Tingey, Elder Earl C.	11
Honor the Sabbath day; “Keep thyself unspotted from the world”; Do not shop on Sunday; Our heritage of Sabbath observance; Blessings for honoring the Sabbath; A measure of the depth of conversion	

W

Warner, Sister Susan L.	107
Memories of spiritual feelings; Results of remembering spiritual feelings; Satan wants us to remember lies; Build spiritual foundations in families; Families’ efforts are never wasted; What we should remember	
Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	42
Faith of the pioneers; Faith in the Savior; Faith in the prophets; Restoration and growth of the Church; Pioneers’ faith built the foundation; Faith of Lydia Knight; Faith amid trials; Pioneer mothers’ selfless sacrifice; Service repays debt of gratitude; Serve courageously and faithfully; Be dedicated to the Lord’s work	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS



CONFERENCE REPORT APR 1996
SKU 3305646 87747
\$4.00

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-sixth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 5 and 6, 1996

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-sixth
Semiannual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
October 5 and 6, 1996

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Report of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1996, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 5 and 6, 1996. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 5, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goaslind, Harold G. Hillam, and Earl C. Tingey

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*¹ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Dallas N. Archibald, Carlos E. Asay, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Cree-L Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:*² Lino Alvarez, L. Edward Brown, C. Max Caldwell, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Rulon G. Craven, Julio E. Dávila, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, In Sang Han, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, John M. Madsen, James O. Mason, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Bruce D. Porter, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Dennis E. Simmons, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen

¹Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi was excused.

²Elder Augusto A. Lim was excused.

Tai, Jerald L. Taylor, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, Richard B. Wirthlin, and Lowell D. Wood

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1996, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 166th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We welcome all who are participating here in the Tabernacle; in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders L. Tom Perry, F. Enzo Busche, and Robert K. Dellenbach are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders W. Eugene Hansen, William R. Bradford, Glenn L. Pace, and Andrew W. Peterson are in attendance.

All of the General Authorities are here except Elders Yoshihiko Kikuchi and Augusto A. Lim, who are serving as presidents of the Tokyo and Manila temples, respectively.

We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We express appreciation for the beautiful tropical flowers which have been provided by the Jamaica Kingston Mission.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The chorus opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks." They will now favor us with "I Stand All Amazed." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder James O. Mason of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "I Stand All Amazed."

Elder James O. Mason offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

In the spirit of that beautiful prayer offered by Brother Mason, may I say a few words in opening the conference. And we shall then hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We have gathered here in the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. Others are joining us in thousands of other halls and in their homes across America and across the world. We are deeply grateful for the means of communication afforded us by which we can speak to you and in most cases you can hear and see us. We feel of your warmth, your brotherhood, your faith, your sustaining prayers. Thank you, one and all.

A letter reports blessings of conference

Following a previous conference we received a letter from England. May I read it? The writer says:

"This last weekend, just a short while after our 40th wedding anniversary, we had the great pleasure to gather our children and grandchildren together to watch the general conference broadcast in our own home. . . .

"We had the wonderful blessing of being able to stand and raise our arms to the square as a family and sustain a living prophet, his counselors, together with the Quorum of the Twelve, and in our own home too!

"We give you our report: the voting was unanimous and in the affirmative, with not a single abstaining or dissenting voice.

"Our family of three sons have served honorable missions, to their great credit. Upon returning home they married fine and honorable young ladies in the temple, and together they are raising ten beautiful children. All the adults serve in leadership positions, and my wife and I are also delighted to be serving on a Church service mission. . . . How sweet have been the Lord's blessings to all of our family.

"All our family thank you for the inspiring instruction and uplifting talks that were given, and without hesitation

we tell you that the tears flowed freely as we truly sat at the feet of the Lord's servants. As we basked in the joy of having your presence in our home, we felt empty when the broadcast finished; it was like saying good-bye to loved ones. We all knelt down in prayer and felt the warm assurance of the Spirit all around us."

Prayer that messages will meet needs

It is an awesome responsibility to say a few words as we begin the conference. You have gathered to be encouraged, to be inspired, to be lifted and directed as members of the Church. We are all assembled together as believers in this, the cause of Christ. Each of us is His servant in building His kingdom in anticipation of the time when He will come as King of kings and Lord of lords.

You have gathered to be helped with your temporal concerns, your failures, and your victories. You have come to hear the word of the Lord taught by those who, not of their own choosing, have been called as teachers in this great work.

You have prayed that you might hear things that will help you with your problems and add strength to your faith. I assure you that we have prayed also. We have prayed for inspiration and direction. There is a constant prayer in our hearts that we will not fail the great trust the Lord has placed in us and the trust which you have placed in us. We have prayed that we might be prompted to say those words which will build faith and testimony and which will become answered prayers for those who will hear.

We are reassured by the word of the Lord that "he that preacheth [by the Spirit] and he that receiveth [by the Spirit], understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together" (D&C 50:22).

Sacrifice and legacy of the pioneers

One hundred and fifty years ago our people were leaving Nauvoo and threading their way across the prairies of Iowa. None of us, I am confident, can appreciate the measure of sacrifice which they made in leaving their comfortable homes to brave the tempests of the wilderness on a journey that would not end until they reached this valley of the Great Salt Lake. Their suffering was immeasurable. They died by the hundreds for this cause of which each one of us is a part.

I was in Palmyra this past summer, and in Nauvoo, and in Council Bluffs, Iowa, which they had called Kanessville out of respect and love for a loyal friend. I stood where the Grand Encampment assembled when they reached the Missouri River. I have been over the trail from the Missouri to this valley a number of times. For me it is always a sacred experience. I am so deeply grateful for our inheritance. We shall remember it in a special way next year when we commemorate the arrival of our pioneer forebears in this valley.

Ours is the blessing to live in a better season. The terrible persecutions of the past are behind us. Today we are looked upon with respect by people across the world. We must always be worthy of that respect. We must earn it, or we will not have it. We will be reminded of that principle during this conference.

Promises to those who listen

I invite you to listen, listen if you will by the power of the Spirit, to the speakers who will address you today and tomorrow as well as this evening. If you will do so, I do not hesitate to promise that you will be uplifted, your resolution to do what is right will be stronger, you will find solutions to your problems and your needs, and you will be led to thank the Lord for what you have heard.

We have become as a great family spread across this vast world. We speak different tongues. We live under a variety of circumstances. But in the heart of each of us beats a common testimony: You and I know that God lives and is at the helm of this His holy work. We know that Jesus is our Redeemer, who stands at the head of this Church which carries His name. We know that Joseph Smith was a prophet and is a prophet who stands at the head of this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. We know that the priesthood was restored upon his head and that it has come down to us in this day in an unbroken line. We know that the Book of Mormon is a true testament of the reality and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our testimony of these and other matters will be strengthened, our faith will be deepened as we participate together in this great and sacred convocation.

For this I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Boyd K. Packer

Jesus calls the Twelve Apostles

In the course of organizing His Church, Jesus "went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he

named apostles."¹ They were called from the ordinary paths of life.

Peter was the first called, and the Lord said to him, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be

loosed in heaven.”² This same sacred authority is inherent in the ordination of every Apostle.

Paul taught that the apostles and prophets were called “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” and he declared that these offices would endure “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”³

The Apostasy and the Restoration

The Apostles in time were gone and, with them, the keys. Paul had prophesied of men being “carried about with every wind of doctrine.”⁴

And so it was; instead of unity of faith, there came division and disunity.

It was in this circumstance that young Joseph Smith prayed to know which of all the churches was true and which he should join.

Joseph’s vision of the Father and the Son opened this dispensation. Then came the restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the same organization that existed in the primitive Church, built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets.⁵

Some suppose that the organization was handed to the Prophet Joseph Smith like a set of plans and specifications for a building, with all of the details known at the beginning. But it did not come that way. Rather, it came a piece at a time as the Brethren were ready and as they inquired of God.

The Melchizedek Priesthood, the consummate authority given to man from God, was restored under the hands of Peter, James, and John. By them, the Lord said:

“I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them;

“Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times.”⁶

The First Presidency was in place by 1833; then two years later, in February of 1835, came the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. And that is as it should be. The First Presidency came first in sequence and stands first in authority. And true to the pattern, it was made of men called from the ordinary pursuits of life.

Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators

With the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve in place, with the offices of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric revealed, the proper order of things prevails. But there is a difference. Perhaps President J. Reuben Clark said it best:

“Some of the General Authorities [the Apostles] have had assigned to them a special calling; they possess a special gift; they are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators, which gives them a special spiritual endowment in connection with their teaching of [this] people. They have the right, the power, and the authority to declare the mind and will of God to his people, subject to the overall power and authority of the President of the Church. Others of the General Authorities are not given this special spiritual endowment . . . ; the resulting limitation . . . applies to every other officer and member of the Church, for none of them is spiritually endowed as a prophet, seer, and revelator.”⁷

Furthermore, President Clark said that among those of the Twelve and the Presidency, “only the President of the Church, the Presiding High Priest, is sustained as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator for the Church, and he alone has the right to receive revelations for the Church, either new or amendatory, or to give authoritative interpretations of

scriptures that shall be binding on the Church, or change in any way the existing doctrines of the Church."⁸

It took a generation of asking and receiving before the order of things as we know it today was firmly in place. Each move to perfect that order has come about in response to a need and in answer to prayer. And that process continues in our day.

The ministry of the Twelve

"The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations."⁹

Where the First Presidency cannot go, the Twelve are sent "to unlock the door of the kingdom in all places."¹⁰ They are commissioned to go to all the world, for the word *Apostle* means "one [who is] sent forth."¹¹

"Wherefore," the Lord said, "in whatsoever place ye shall proclaim my name an effectual door shall be opened unto you, that they may receive my word."¹² And He promised, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers."¹³

The Twelve Apostles "are called to be . . . special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world."¹⁴ Each carries that certain witness that Jesus is the Christ. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that "every member of the Church should have the impressions on his soul made by the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Son of God indelibly pictured so that they cannot be forgotten."¹⁵

From Nephi we know that "angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost."¹⁶ Mormon told us that "the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the

covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men." Mormon further explained that angels accomplish their ministry "by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men."¹⁷

Apostles have the gift of discernment

There is a power of discernment granted "unto such as God shall appoint . . . to watch over [his] church."¹⁸ To discern means "to see."

President Harold B. Lee told me once of a conversation he had with Elder Charles A. Callis of the Quorum of the Twelve. Brother Callis had remarked that the gift of discernment was an awesome burden to carry. To see clearly what is ahead and yet find members slow to respond or resistant to counsel or even rejecting the witness of the apostles and prophets brings deep sorrow.

Nevertheless, "the responsibility of leading this church" must rest upon us until "you shall appoint others to succeed you."¹⁹

Warning to wrongful critics

The Lord warned us of those few in the Church "who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house."²⁰

"Thy voice," the Lord commanded the Twelve, "shall be a rebuke unto the transgressor; and at thy rebuke let the tongue of the slanderer cease its perverseness."²¹

Some few within the Church openly, or perhaps far worse in the darkness of anonymity, reproach their leaders in the wards and stakes and in the Church, seeking to make them "an offender for a word,"²² as Isaiah said. To them the Lord said:

"Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned . . . but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them.

"But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves. . . .

" . . . Because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house.

"Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them.

"They shall not have right to the priesthood, nor their posterity after them from generation to generation."²³

That terrible penalty will not apply to those who try as best they can to live the gospel and sustain their leaders. Nor need it apply to those who in the past have been guilty of indifference or even opposition if they will repent, confess their transgressions, and forsake them.²⁴

Unity of First Presidency and Twelve

Recently President Hinckley reminded the Brethren that, while we are men called from the ordinary pursuits of life, there rests upon us a sacred ministry. And we take comfort in what the Lord said to the original Twelve: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you."²⁵

While each feels his own limitation, there is strength in unity. Never in the history of the Church have the Brethren of the First Presidency and the Twelve been more united.

Each week we meet together in the temple. We open the meeting by kneeling in prayer, and we close with prayer. Every prayer is offered in the spirit of submission and obedience to Him who called us and whose servants and witnesses we are.

The Lord requires that "every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same" and that "the decisions of these quorums . . . are to be made in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity."²⁶ This we earnestly strive to do.

We know that we hold the power of the priesthood "in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation."²⁷ We think of those who have preceded us in these sacred offices, and at times we feel their presence.

We are overcome with what the Lord said of those who hold these sacred callings: "Whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation."²⁸

Heed the counsel of the Lord's servants

During a very difficult time, the Lord gave the sternest warning that I know of in all scripture. It had to do with the building of the Nauvoo Temple. The Saints knew from experience that to proceed to build a temple would bring terrible persecution, so they delayed. The Lord extended the time and said, "If you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God."²⁹

Often overlooked in that revelation is a marvelous promise: "If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place."³⁰

Remember this promise; hold on to it. It should be a great comfort to those struggling to keep a family together in a society increasingly indifferent to, and even hostile toward, those standards which are essential to a happy family.

The promise is a restatement of what the Lord told the multitude: "Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants."³¹

I repeat the promise that those who hearken to the voice of these men whom the Lord has raised up "shall not be moved out of their place."³²

But the promise was followed with this caution: "But if they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest."³³

A special witness that Jesus is the Christ

The most precious thing we have to give is our witness of the Lord, our testimony of Jesus Christ.

I certify to you that the 14 men with whom I share the ordination are indeed Apostles. In declaring this, I say no more than the Lord has taught, no more than may be revealed to anyone who seeks with a sincere heart and real intent for an individual witness of the Spirit.

These men are true servants of the Lord; give heed to their counsel. So, too, with the Seventy, who as especial witnesses carry an apostolic responsibility, and the Bishopric, worthy men of God. So, too, with the brethren and sisters across the world who are called to lead,

who have earned that knowledge precious above all else.

There are limits to what the Spirit permits us to say.³⁴ And so I close with my witness, my special witness, that Jesus is the Christ, that through a prophet-president He presides over this, "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth."³⁵ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 6:12-13.
2. Matthew 16:19.
3. Ephesians 4:12-13.
4. Ephesians 4:14.
5. See Articles of Faith 1:6; Ephesians 2:20.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 27:12-13.
7. J. Reuben Clark Jr., "When Are Church Leader's Words Entitled to Claim of Scripture?" *Church News*, 31 July 1954, 9-10.
8. *Church News*, 31 July 1954, 10.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 107:33.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 112:17; see also Doctrine and Covenants 107:35; 124:128.
11. Bible Dictionary, "Apostle," 612.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 112:19.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.
15. Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Twelve Apostles* (address to seminary and institute faculty, 18 June 1958), 6.
16. 2 Nephi 32:3.
17. Moroni 7:31-32.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 46:27.
19. Declaration of the Twelve Apostles, reporting March 1844 meeting of the Twelve, Brigham Young Papers, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 112:26.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 112:9.
22. Isaiah 29:21; see also 2 Nephi 27:32.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 121:16-17, 19-21.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:43.

25. John 15:16.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 107:27, 30.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 112:31.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 68:4.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 124:32.
30. Doctrine and Covenants 124:45.
31. 3 Nephi 12:1.
32. Doctrine and Covenants 124:45.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 124:46.
34. See Alma 12:9.
35. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.

The chorus sang "Though Deepening Trials."

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, and the chorus has sung "Though Deepening Trials."

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy will now address us.

Elder L. Aldin Porter

The First Vision changed the world

One hundred seventy-six years ago, an event occurred which lies at the very foundation of the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days. It is, in my judgment, the most significant event that has occurred in this world since the Son of God walked forth from the tomb a resurrected being. I refer to that first heavenly vision that came to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Let me read his words:

"It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

"After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God."

He then described a few moments of severe spiritual anguish, convincing him that the forces of evil were real and powerful. Then he continued:

"I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the

sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

"It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"¹

That single event changed the future of the world. The appearance of the Father and the Son to the young prophet ushered in the dispensation of the fullness of times. It exemplified God's love for His children and changed the world forever.

Testimony comes by revelation

How can one know of a surety that Joseph Smith actually saw and conversed with the Father and the Son? How can one ascertain the truthfulness of our bold assertion that God speaks to the world today through His prophets? God has provided a way.

Speaking of the supernal glory of that First Vision, President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: "Much has been written, much will be written, in an effort to

explain it away. The finite mind cannot comprehend it. But the testimony of the Holy Spirit, experienced by countless numbers of people all through the years since it happened, bears witness that it is true, that it happened as Joseph Smith said it happened, that it was as real as the sunrise over Palmyra, that it is an essential foundation stone, a cornerstone, without which the Church could not be 'fitly framed together.'²

I repeat: the testimony of the Holy Spirit bears witness that it is true. That testimony is the means, in most instances, by which God reveals truth to mankind. It is not a new or strange phenomenon but is as old as the human race. The scriptures are replete with examples of God communicating with man. By revelation Adam and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses and all of the faithful former-day Saints came to know of sacred things.

Nephi of ancient days taught this principle to his people. He said:

"And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men.

"But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught."³

The Holy Spirit does not teach the proud, the unteachable, the indolent, or the doubter. A deep desire for truth and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will prepare one's heart to be taught spiritual things.

The Spirit empowers missionaries

The Lord Jesus Christ directs His work on the earth by revelation through the Holy Spirit. The power of this reve-

latory Spirit moves and motivates an army of more than 52,000 missionaries who take the gospel message to the four corners of the earth. When they are successful in their work, it is because of the witness they bear, a witness accompanied and confirmed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord describes His emissaries as weak, unlearned, and despised. But He promises that through their efforts He will "thrash the nations by the power of [His] Spirit."⁴

When President Hinckley returned from the British Isles last fall, he told us of an interview he had with a member of the British Broadcasting Company Radio Services. The reporter asked President Hinckley, "How do you expect people to listen to these callow youth?" President Hinckley had to explain to some of us that *callow* meant immature, inexperienced, and lacking sophistication. Then he pointed out to this reporter that "people do receive them and listen to them. They are wholesome. They are bright, they are alert, they are . . . clean."⁵

And then at the general conference priesthood session held in October of last year, he said, speaking of the missionaries: "They are a miracle. . . . They speak out of their hearts with personal conviction. Each is . . . an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their power comes not of their learning in the things of the world. Their power comes of faith and prayer and humility."⁶

Jesus' commandment to preach the gospel to all nations is obeyed as the servants of God bear testimony, in humility, across the earth. And the Lord responds to their sacrifices and bears witness of their words by revelation.

Too many deny the spirit of prophecy

Some years ago I enjoyed a stake conference assignment as a junior companion to Elder LeGrand Richards, who had, under the influence of this directing

Spirit, reorganized a stake presidency. We were driving home; he was very pensive. After a rather long period of silence, I asked him if there was something he would like to teach me. Quietly he said, "We have too many in the Church who deny the spirit of prophecy and of revelation." That was it—he said no more about it. As I reminisced about the calling of the new stake president that day, it occurred to me then that this Church could not function for even one day without the spirit of prophecy and revelation.

But ours is a day of dwindling faith and increasing skepticism about sacred things. Our time reminds me of the period just prior to the coming of the resurrected Savior to this continent. They were very dark days.

Mormon recorded the roots of the problems that beset Nephite society when he said, "And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation."⁷

Later Mormon continues: "And because of their iniquity the church had begun to dwindle; and they began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation; and the judgments of God did stare them in the face."⁸

Revelation continues today

We boldly assert that the spirit of revelation rests upon the Lord's living prophets, seers, and revelators.

President Spencer W. Kimball from this very pulpit bore his testimony when he said: "I say, in the deepest of humility, but also by the power and force of a burning testimony in my soul, that from the prophet of the Restoration to the prophet of our own year, the communi-

cation line is unbroken, the authority is continuous, and light, brilliant and penetrating, continues to shine. The sound of the voice of the Lord is a continuous melody and a thunderous appeal."⁹

When the appointed servants of this Church speak under the influence of the Holy Ghost as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ, their words are carried by the power of the Spirit to those whose hearts are open to revelation.

When, with heavenly power, that witness comes to a person, he or she will soon understand that personal sacrifice is its constant companion. The spiritual witness of these sacred things and the demands of sacrifice inevitably walk the road together. In time, one comes to understand the necessity of this and is filled with gratitude that it is so.

Spirit reveals most important knowledge

The most important knowledge to be gained in this life is that which comes by revelation through the Holy Spirit. This is not to belittle in any way information available in a multitude of disciplines or fields of study. But any of it individually or all of it together can never equal the importance of receiving the personal witness, borne on the wings of the Spirit, of sacred things. That witness brings light and certainty and peace.

I raise my voice and state again that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son. This certain knowledge is independent of all mortal men, for this conviction has come to me by the Holy Spirit, as promised.

The kingdom of God on earth continues to move forward with dedicated missionary and member alike having the conviction confirmed by the Holy Ghost that Joseph Smith saw God our Father and His Son Jesus Christ. It moves forward empowered by the assurance in the heart of each faithful member, individually, that those who lead us do so with the spirit of prophecy and revelation.

We must never lose this precious gift. We must pay whatever price of faith and obedience is required to retain this great blessing.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:14–17.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 52.
3. 2 Nephi 33:1–2.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 35:13.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 51.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 51.
7. Helaman 4:12.
8. Helaman 4:23.

9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1977, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1977, 78.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” We shall then hear from Sister Virginia H. Pearce, first counselor in the general Young Women presidency.

The chorus and congregation sang “Now Let Us Rejoice.”

Sister Virginia H. Pearce

Hoping we will be active and faithful

Several months ago my husband performed the baptism of a dear friend. As I sat in the service, my mind and heart raced over her years of preparation for that single event—the principles carefully taught, constantly observed, and quietly accepted, the acknowledgment of God’s hand in life events, the sweet confirmation of the Spirit as difficult but right choices were made. My mind recalled the past and rejoiced in the present, and I couldn’t help but anticipate the future. I hoped with all my heart that this good woman would remain actively connected to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the rest of her life—that she would continue to learn and live the gospel and experience the fulness of its blessings.

This morning, as I remember those hopes, I think about the 375,469¹ others who were baptized last year. And then I think of the rest of us, the roughly nine million who have stepped into the waters

of baptism sometime in the past. Though our stories are individual, each of us came to that ordinance having been taught the true doctrines of the kingdom, having felt the Spirit, having understood how the doctrines fit into the context of our lives, and having demonstrated a willingness to try always to live those truths.

It seems too hard to think about the possibility, even the probability, that not all of us will continue to “cling to the Church and live its principles.”² Many of us will leave and never return to this happy fellowship. Some of us will leave for a time and find our way back with a heightened sense of gratitude for participation in the kingdom of God on earth. The reality of life is that each of us is daily at risk for drifting or even marching into inactivity.

Church classes foster growth

There are so many things in place to help us remain active. This morning I

would like to talk about just one of them. I would like to suggest that the ordinary Church classroom is a powerful setting for steady and continued growth in the gospel.

Sunday School, priesthood, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, seminary, and institute classes may be held in dedicated buildings, under a tree, or in a home. But each class is part of a plan for lifelong gospel learning. We can have great expectations for the power of those learning hours! Church classes provide a place where we can repeatedly experience the very things that brought us into the waters of baptism, where we learn doctrine and receive the ratifying witness of its truth, where we come to understand how doctrine is applied in the reality of our daily lives and accept the challenge to change our behavior accordingly.

Teach, understand, and apply doctrine

The fundamental curriculum for all classes in the Church is the scriptures³—they contain the unchanging doctrines of the kingdom of God. These truths are what brought us into the Church. If we fail to continue learning them, we may not stay. “You shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom . . . that ye may be prepared in all things.”⁴

Elder Boyd K. Packer said, “True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior.”⁵ How do we know which doctrine to teach each week? It is stated in the lesson objective. But how do we come to *understand* the doctrine in a way that it will change our attitudes and behavior?

In order to really understand, we have to see the way doctrine is applied. In the lesson manuals, the suggested stories, examples, activities, and games are intended to help the learners understand doctrine in real-life settings.

Because the daily life of people varies so much in the 160 different coun-

tries where we have organized classes, the stories and examples in the manuals may sometimes confuse the learners. Teachers can prayerfully make adaptations, always taking care that the learning activities chosen truly reflect the doctrine.

A teacher's goal is greater than just delivering a lecture about truth. It is to invite the Spirit and use techniques which will enhance the possibility that the learner will discover the truth for herself and then be motivated to apply it.

Learn and enhance teaching skills

Although some seem to be born teachers, teaching skills can successfully be learned. Where can you go as a teacher to enhance your skills? Could you watch and learn from others? Perhaps approach an admired teacher, asking him to observe and offer suggestions? What about your Primary presidency, if you are a Primary teacher, or your Sunday School presidency, if you teach Sunday School? Asking your ward teacher development coordinator for regular and specific help would put you in touch with a multitude of resources.⁶ We don't have to struggle alone in this Church. There is help everywhere. We can prayerfully and courageously seek to learn and practice new techniques.

Church classes affect Church activity

I had a conversation once with a young man I cannot forget. His story of activity, complete inactivity, and a return to activity included the description of two classrooms. He said: “When I was about 15, I started to have a lot of questions about the Church. I thought maybe there would be a chance to talk about my questions at church, but it didn't happen. In priesthood it seemed like most of the time everybody talked about the game the night before. Sunday School was about the same—maybe a little lesson

thrown in during the last five minutes where the teacher asked questions, and it was kind of 'guess-the-right-answer-from-the-manual-time.'"

Well, other things happened—late Saturday nights, a switch to an earlier meeting schedule—and soon the young man's attendance dropped to nothing. Several years passed by until he found himself in church again. This time his face lit up as he described his Sunday School class:

"The teacher was this unimpressive-looking guy, but he was so excited about what he was teaching. He didn't waste a minute. He asked important questions. Everyone had their scriptures. They looked up verses, shared ideas. They listened to each other. They talked about problems at school and how they fit in with the lesson. You could tell that the people in the class were all different, but they had one amazing thing in common—they were all interested in learning the gospel. After five minutes, I knew that this was a good place for me."

How to help class members learn

What a difference in those experiences! Can you imagine hundreds of thousands of classrooms every Sunday, each with a teacher who understands that "the learning has to be done by the pupil. Therefore it is the pupil who has to be put into action. When a teacher takes the spotlight, becomes the star of the show, does all the talking, and otherwise takes over all of the activity, it is almost certain that he is interfering with the learning of the class members."⁷

A skilled teacher doesn't think, "What shall I do in class today?" but asks, "What will my students do in class today?"; not, "What will I teach today?" but rather, "How will I help my students discover what they need to know?"⁸ The skilled teacher does not want students who leave the class talking about how

magnificent and unusual the teacher is. This teacher wants students who leave talking about how magnificent the gospel is!

Create trust and safety in class

Learning occurs best in an atmosphere of trust and safety. This means that each person's questions and contributions are respected. When we feel safe and included, we can ask questions that will help us to understand the gospel. We can share insights and faith that might help someone else.⁹ We can stumble without embarrassment as we try to apply the lessons taught. Conversely, when we feel that we must protect and defend ourselves or seem more righteous than we are, our energy is used counterproductively and our learning and the learning of others is severely limited. Maintaining a climate of trust and safety is a responsibility the teacher and the learners share.

The beginning, middle, and end of class

I have heard Sister Janette Beckham, Young Women general president, talk simply about teaching a class. She says:

"It is the teacher's responsibility to introduce the lesson and help lay the groundwork. The middle part belongs to the students where they participate and work toward understanding and application. Then the teacher must watch the time, because she owns the last few minutes of class. She has a responsibility to clarify and summarize the doctrine taught so that learners will not leave confused about the message. Then she can bear personal testimony of the principle under discussion."¹⁰

A successful Young Women class

In conclusion, will you come with me into a classroom of 12- and 13-year-old

young women. Listen as you hear the learners discover doctrine. Notice the experience the teacher provides for the learners so that they can connect the doctrine to the reality of their lives. Feel the accompanying witness of the Spirit:

Our teacher moves her chair closer into the semicircle of five girls. "We have a guest waiting outside," she begins. "It is Sister Jonas. She has agreed to show us her tiny baby and tell us how she feels about being a new mother. As you watch this new little baby, would you also notice his mother—how she treats the baby, what she does, what she says. We'll talk about her visit after she leaves."

Sister Jonas comes in, spends seven or eight minutes talking about her baby and answering questions. The girls thank her, and she leaves the classroom.

"The baby was darling, wasn't he?" our teacher responds to the delighted hum of the class. "But what did you notice about the mother?"

A minute of silence and then a response: "Well, she was happy." Another: "She kind of rocked back and forth the whole time she was holding him." A few more responses, and then Katie slowly begins, "She—ummm—she talked really quietly."

"Could you say more about that?" the teacher coaxes.

"Well, her voice reminds me of my mother's voice when she called from the hospital to tell us we had a new baby sister last year."

The teacher, turning to the other girls: "What do you think? Did anyone else notice her voice?"

The girls become more thoughtful and begin to reply with words like "reverence," "heaven," "love."

The teacher: "I think I understand. I believe those words come to our minds because we are recognizing a great gift from our Heavenly Father. He loves us and trusts us so much that He is willing

to share His creative powers with us. We feel such gratitude and reverence for this trust. Motherhood is a *divine* role."

After this clear statement of doctrine and testimony, our teacher moves on to an activity where the girls identify qualities their own mothers exhibit that show an understanding of the divinity of motherhood. "Could each of you prepare for motherhood right now by practicing one of these very virtues—maybe being more patient, kinder, or more positive this week?"

Each girl talks about her choice. Our teacher bears personal testimony. The closing prayer is offered.

A simple class. No sensational stories. No scholarly class members—just ones who come prepared to participate. No extraordinarily gifted teacher—just one who prayerfully prepares and uses techniques that allow her to help class members understand and apply true doctrine.

Strengthen each other through classes

I telephoned our newly baptized friend last week to ask how things were going for her. Her response was enthusiastic: "My husband and I have been called to teach the 15- and 16-year-olds, and I'm learning so much!" I felt reassured and excited. What better place than a classroom—for her and for each of us!

President Hinckley encourages us: "We are all in it together, all of us, and we have a great work to do. Every teacher can be a better teacher than he or she is today."¹¹ I would add: Every learner can be a better learner than he or she is today. And every classroom can be a better classroom.

I pray that we will continue to hold on to one another through effective classroom learning. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 28; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 21.
2. "Cling to the Church and live its principles and I do not hesitate to promise you that your lives will be happy, that your accomplishments will be significant, and that you will have reason to get on your knees and thank the Lord for all He has done for you in giving to you the marvelous and wonderful opportunities that you have" (Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in *Church News*, 3 Aug. 1996, 2).
3. See *Instructions for Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders on Curriculum* (1994), 1.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:77, 80.
5. "True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17).
6. See *Teaching—No Greater Call* (1978); *Instructions for Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders on Teacher Development* (1993); *Teach One Another* (videocassette, 1990).
7. *Teaching the Gospel: A Handbook for CES Teachers and Leaders* (1994), 14.

8. *Teaching the Gospel*, 13.

9. See Romans 1:11–12.

10. Unpublished talk.

11. "We are all in it together, all of us, and we have a great work to do. Every teacher can be a better teacher than he or she is today. Every officer can be a better officer than he or she is today. Every father can be a better father, every mother can be a better mother, every husband can be a better husband, every wife a better wife, every child a better child. We are on the road that leads to immortality and eternal life and today is a part of it. Let us never forget it" (Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in *Church News*, 4 Nov. 1995, 2).

Additional references: 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Jacob 1:19; Alma 1:26; 29:8; Doctrine and Covenants 42:12; 43:8; 50:22; 88:122.

President Hinckley

The women who speak in these conferences add a certain luster. Thank you, Sister Pearce, for your message.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder David B. Haight

I'm honored to be here, to be part of this great conference. I'm glad that the First Presidency saw fit to have me back on the program. As we get older we have some limitations. I understand mine, and sometimes we can learn to sort of plow around them. If our vision starts getting a little weaker, I've found that we can compensate by doing other things and plowing around that little weakness and maybe strengthening some others. But out of all of that, I want you to know of my love for the gospel and for my knowledge of its truthfulness.

"Now let us rejoice"

We were singing a great song as the intermediate hymn, "Now Let Us Rejoice," written by W. W. Phelps (*Hymns*, no. 3). That was written following an incident in Independence, Missouri, where Brother Phelps was the editor of a little newspaper. He had a printing press, and the people who were unfriendly toward the Church decided to do away with it, and the mob broke in and burned the building and destroyed the printing press. They burned some 200 homes of

the Saints in showing their displeasure over the people following this movement. In that despair W. W. Phelps wrote those words, "Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation. No longer as strangers on earth need we roam," bringing hope to the people and encouragement. With hope that those things will happen in our lives, we move on because of the truthfulness of what we are attempting to do.

The Lord's influence on His Apostles

I want all of you to know that I know that the work that we do is the gospel of our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, as taught by Him when He was upon the earth, when He called Apostles and the disciples followed Him and He carried on His ministry in teaching them. I've often reflected upon the experience of when John and Andrew, these two young men, were introduced to the Savior by John the Baptist and they followed the Savior and stayed with Him that day, as it is recorded by John (see John 1:39). They were in His presence. They would have shaken hands with Him. They would have known the inflection in His voice. They would have heard Him testify who He is, that He came to do the will of the Father. They would have been in that holy presence. After having that experience, Andrew had to share it with somebody, so he found his brother Simon and took him to Jesus. Because of that feeling that Andrew had in his heart—that he had to share what he knew and what he felt and what he had seen—he shared it with his own brother as he brought him to the Savior. The holiness and personal influence of the Savior made an ordinary Simon into an extraordinary Apostle. (See John 1:35–42.)

Prophets are called of God

I have been impressed with all of the prophets since the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith—he who by revelation

received the message, the visit from God the Father and His Son, as Brother Aldin Porter has explained to us in detail this morning. I know that in order to usher in this work, that visitation took place, giving the Prophet Joseph Smith the vision and the determination and the ability to withstand all that he did in order to help bring about the Restoration. Heavenly messengers and revelations came to the Prophet Joseph Smith to help usher in this great work, which we declare to all the world and that I know to be true. I know that the prophets who have followed since the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith were all called of God.

The influence of President McKay

It is always thrilling to me to read more of the lives of those wonderful men. One of those I would like to mention this morning was President David O. McKay, who came into my life as the first prophet to teach and influence me personally.

I was called to be a stake president in California just before President McKay was sustained in a solemn assembly as the President of the Church and as our prophet. My wife, Ruby, and I drove to Salt Lake to be in attendance at that conference. I felt of that spirit, of that leadership, and of the direction that President McKay gave to the Church at that time. Later on I invited him to come to California to dedicate a Church building that we had just finished. That was in the days when we would raise half the money to buy the land and half the money to pay for a building—not like it is today, but where we felt a real ownership in the Church property and in buildings. President McKay came as a result of my invitation, which surprised me. We met him at the train and were pleased to have him in our home. That gave me a new vision of the magnitude and the breadth and the importance of the mission that we have here upon the earth to fulfill.

The influence of President Kimball

Later President Spencer W. Kimball became a great influence in my life. I am mentioning only a few Church Presidents because of the shortness of time here this morning. How President Kimball taught us! In his wonderful manner, he taught from the scriptures and discussed principles and policy and doctrine in a way that would help lift our hearts and souls. He told a story of a young soldier who had gone into the army. He had written a letter home to his parents saying that he had been at the shooting range learning how to handle a rifle and that he had been taught how to handle a hand grenade. In writing home, this young man said, "In learning how to handle a hand grenade, we were throwing duds, ones that weren't real." Then he said, "When we were throwing duds, I was able to get 35 feet away, but today they gave us the real thing and I got 80 feet away." President Kimball could touch our lives in a way that helped us see and understand things to be done.

President Hinckley on 60 Minutes

I want to remind you that six months ago, following conference on Sunday, we went home to listen to a television program. We were concerned for President Gordon B. Hinckley. (I had the privilege and the honor to watch him for a number of years before he became our prophet and leader. I watched the careful way that he carried on the affairs of the Church that had been his while he was a counselor to three Presidents.) President Hinckley was to appear on a nationwide television program, and we wondered how it would come across. We knew of the importance of it and what it would mean to us. We knew of the work and the hours of prayer and meditation and study that our prophet and leader had done in being prepared for this exposure which

would reach, according to the information we have received, some 35 million people. You will remember, as I remember now, the anticipation and the wonderment of how this would come across.

After that program was over, my heart was beating fast, and I felt it would burst. I was filled with joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for the way our prophet and our leader had handled the interrogation by one who had a reputation of attempting to ask questions that might be difficult to handle. What a joy it was for us to witness how our prophet and our leader had been blessed and magnified! As I watched his face on the television (and I'm sure you would have had the same reaction), I realized that a vast number of people were seeing what a prophet of God looked like: a kind, good, and handsome man, clean and intelligent. You could see the outstanding character, the personality of our prophet and leader, who would be exposed to that vast audience of people. And then when the interrogator asked President Hinckley, "Do you really believe that story that heavenly beings appeared to that young boy in that grove of trees? Do you really believe that to be true?" And here our prophet just instantly said, "Of course I do. Isn't it great?"

Those words have been ringing through my ears ever since that happened: "Of course I do. Isn't it great?" He made that pronouncement with such confidence and with that wonderful personality he has, declaring it to all of the world. We want President Hinckley to know that since that time, missionary activity in the United States in the area where people who heard that program reside has picked up, and member activity has picked up too. More people have become interested in the Church because they have seen a living prophet in the flesh stand before that immense audience and declare to the world, "Of

course I do. Isn't it great?" We would hope and pray that the missionaries throughout the world would have that same feeling and that same understanding and that same determination—to want to so declare this message of hope and salvation and eternal life to all the world.

I thank the Lord every day for the health and determination I have to make the best use of every hour I have upon the earth to help in the spreading of this work. I leave you my love, my witness, and my own deep knowledge and conviction that it is true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Thomas S. Monson

Christ heals at the pool of Bethesda

One of the most famous art galleries in the world is the National Gallery of Art, situated adjacent to Trafalgar Square in the city of London, England. The gallery has on display many priceless masterpieces.

Just a few weeks ago my wife, Frances, and I visited the National Gallery and admired the display of inspired genius which met our gaze and touched our hearts. A large painting occupied most of the wall of one room. It was an incomparable piece by the renowned Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, completed in the year 1670 and titled *Christ Healing the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda*. The centuries have not dimmed its beauty, dulled its appeal, nor diminished its impact.

I could not avert my eyes, nor could I transfer my thoughts. I was carried back through time as I saw the crippled man lying on his crude crutch with his arms extended and his hands upturned as he appealed to the Savior of the world. The words and thoughts expressed in the book of John coursed through my mind. I share them with you this morning:

The chorus sang "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold."

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Haight, for your wonderful remarks. Brother Haight recently had his 90th birthday. He's a demonstration that age is only a state of mind.

The chorus has sung "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker.

"Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

"In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

"For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

"And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

"The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

"Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

"And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked."¹

At length, after pondering this scripture, I left the reverie of the room; however, the impact of that masterpiece was indelibly impressed on my soul.

I have thought since of the majesty of the Master's command, the tenderness of His heart, and the incredible joy His act had brought to the afflicted man.

Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest.
Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the mem'ry find
A sweeter sound than thy blest name,
O Savior of mankind!²

Follow the Savior

Do we remember the question posed by one Pontius Pilate as he spoke to those who would shed the blood of Jesus and thus end His mortal life? "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified."³ And so He was.

The question each of us must answer is the same: *What shall I do with Jesus?* He Himself has provided us the answer: "Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do."⁴

The mortal mission of our Lord was foretold by the holy prophets, as was His birth. For generations, enlightened mankind in the Old and the New World anxiously sought the fulfillment of prophecies uttered by righteous men inspired of Almighty God.

Then came that heavenly pronouncement to the "shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. . . . For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."⁵ Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He

blessed the sick; He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life. He provided for you and for me the greatest gift we shall ever receive: the Atonement and all that it conveys. He willingly died that we might forever live.

Listen to the Savior

From time to time the question has been posed, "If Jesus appeared to you today, what questions would you ask of Him?"

My answer has always been, "I would not utter a word. I would listen to Him."

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter by the shores of beautiful Galilee, He said, "Follow me."⁶ To Philip of old came the call, "Follow me."⁷ To Levi who sat at receipt of customs came the instruction, "Follow me."⁸ And to you and to me, if we but listen, shall come that same beckoning invitation, "Follow me."

"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."⁹ Have we? Of Him it was said that He "went about doing good."¹⁰ Do we?

His beloved Apostles noted well His example. He lived "not to be ministered unto, but to minister";¹¹ not to receive, but to give; not to save His life, but to pour it out for others. It has been said, "If they would see the star that should at once direct their feet and influence their destiny, they must look for it, not in the changing skies [of] outward circumstance, but each in the depth of his own heart and after the pattern provided by the Master."¹²

Peter heals a lame man

Reflect for a moment on the experience of Peter at the Gate Beautiful of the temple. One sympathizes with the plight of the man lame from birth who each day was carried to the temple gate

that he might ask alms of all who entered. That he asked alms of Peter and John as they approached him indicates he regarded them no differently from others who must have passed him each day. I love Peter's simple and direct instruction: "Look on us."¹³ The lame man gave heed to them.

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

"And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up. . . .

". . . He . . . stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple."¹⁴

The rich young man

Not all who approached the Master abided by His divine direction:

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

"And Jesus said unto him, . . .

"Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

"And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

"And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."¹⁵

Randy Spaulding's faithful parents

Some time ago I received a touching letter from Randy Spaulding, who lived in northern Utah. The letter explained the composition of his family and then

the gradual onset of an illness that took his father from a healthy, strong individual to a weak and crippled middle-aged man. The father's physical condition deteriorated until he could not work, could not walk, became confined to a wheelchair, and was almost helpless.

Randy told how the family and ward members have taken over the care of the farm and have provided much help to the family. Father can no longer speak; Mother is his constant provider of care—yet neither of them has uttered or written those words, "Why us?"

Let me return to Randy Spaulding's actual words. He wrote: "One morning as I was thinking about the mundane things of life and hurrying out the door to begin the day, I happened to notice my father sitting in the corner of the room reading his scriptures. I stopped and went over to speak to him. I noticed the difficult circumstances he was under. With his right hand, he was trying to hold up his head enough to see me and read the Book of Mormon. I learned that at one of the most trying times, he still had enough faith to read about a God of love, a God of miracles who heals and makes us whole, and a God of life—eternal life. My father still believes. Oh, how I long to take him back in time to the Pool of Bethesda and to ask our Master if He would please have mercy on us, so that my father, also, could take up his bed and walk."

His letter continued: "That day I returned to my bedroom and thanked my Heavenly Father for a father and mother second to none."

The Lord will bless the humble

Let us remember that it was not the waters of Bethesda's pool which healed the impotent man. Rather, his blessing came through the touch of the Master's hand. From the beautiful Psalm we learn: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire

of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."¹⁶

He has heard, and He indeed has blessed you and yours. An angel wife and mother who, without stint, sacrifices her own comfort for the blessing of her eternal companion; neighbors with hands that help, hearts that feel, and whose feet and talents all come quickly to rescue—are manifested blessings of the Lord's promises. Though Bethesda beckons, the Lord has heard. Said He: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, even as you desire of me so it shall be unto you."¹⁷

President Harold B. Lee comforted us with these words: "[Those] who have been denied blessings . . . in this life—who say in their heart, *if I could have done, I would have done, or I would give if I had, but I cannot for I have not*—the Lord will bless you as though you had done, and the world to come will compensate for those who desire in their hearts the righteous blessings that they were not able to have because of no fault of their own."¹⁸

On every side there are those who suffer pain, who endure debilitating illness, who battle the demon of depression. Our hearts go out to all. Our prayers ascend in their behalf. Hands that help are extended.

"Living what we pray for"

I love the sentiment contained in the words of the poem entitled "Living What We Pray For":

I knelt to pray when day was done
And prayed, "O Lord, bless everyone;
Lift from each saddened heart the pain,
And let the sick be well again."
And then I woke another day
And carelessly went on my way;
The whole day long, I did not try
To wipe a tear from any eye.
I did not try to share the load
Of any brother on the road;

I did not even go to see
The sick man, just next door to me.
Yet, once again, when day was done,
I prayed, "O Lord, bless everyone."
But as I prayed, into my ear
There came a voice that whispered
clear:

"Pause now, my son, before you pray;
Whom have you tried to bless today?
God's sweetest blessings always go
By hands that serve Him here below."
And then I hid my face and cried,
"Forgive me, God, I have not tried.
Let me but live another day,
And I will live the way I pray."

Mary Watson and Kathleen McKee

When I read the phrase from this poem "I hid my face and cried," the hallowed halls of memory prompt me to share a tender, personal account with you.

Long years ago, when I served as a bishop, I received notification that Mary Watson, a member of my ward, was a patient in the county hospital. When I went to visit her, I discovered her in a large room with so many beds that it was difficult to single her out. As I identified her bed and approached her, I said, "Hello, Mary."

She replied, "Hello, Bishop."

I noticed that a patient in the bed next to Mary Watson covered her face with the bedsheet.

I gave Mary Watson a blessing, shook her hand, and said, "Good-bye," but I could not leave her side. It was as though an unseen hand were resting on my shoulder, and I felt within my soul that I was hearing these words: "Go over to the next bed where the little lady covered her face when you came in." I did so. I have learned in my life never to postpone a prompting.

I approached the bedside of the other patient, gently tapped her shoulder, and carefully pulled back the sheet

which had covered her face. Lo and behold! She too was a member of my ward. I had not known she was a patient in the hospital. Her name was Kathleen McKee. When her eyes met mine, she exclaimed through her tears, "Oh, Bishop, when you entered that door, I felt you had come to see me and bless me in response to my prayers. I was rejoicing inside to think that you would know I was here, but when you stopped at the other bed, my heart sank, and I knew that you had not come to see me."

I said to Kathleen McKee: "It does not matter that I didn't know you were here. It is important, however, that our Heavenly Father knew and that you had prayed silently for a priesthood blessing. It was He who prompted me to intrude on your privacy."

A blessing was given; a prayer was answered. I bestowed a kiss on her forehead and left the hospital with gratitude in my heart for the promptings of the Spirit. It would be the last time I was to see Kathleen McKee in mortality—but not the last time I heard from her.

Upon her death, the hospital called with this message: "Bishop Monson, Kathleen McKee died tonight. She made arrangements that we were to notify you, should she pass away. She left for you a key to her basement apartment."

Kathleen McKee had no immediate family. With my sweet wife accompanying me, I visited her humble apartment. I turned the key in the door, opened it, and switched on the light. There in her immaculate two-room apartment, I saw a small table with a note resting beneath an Alka-Seltzer bottle. The note, written in her own hand, said: "Bishop, my tithing is in this envelope, and the Alka-Seltzer bottle contains coins covering my fast offering. I am square with the Lord." The receipts were written.

The sweetness of the night has not been forgotten. Tears of gratitude to God filled my very soul.

Caring and seeing with the heart

A message in a birthday card which I received a few weeks ago, from parents who last year lost a beautiful daughter to cancer, expresses this profound thought: "And what is as important as knowledge?" asked the mind.

"Caring and seeing with the heart," answered the soul."

This expression describes Bethesda's blessing. Of this divine truth I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 5:2-9.
2. "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," *Hymns*, no. 141.
3. Matthew 27:22.
4. 2 Nephi 31:12.
5. Luke 2:8, 11.
6. Matthew 4:19.
7. John 1:43.
8. Luke 5:27.
9. Luke 2:52.
10. Acts 10:38.
11. Matthew 20:28.
12. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1971, 171; or *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 131.
13. Acts 3:4.
14. Acts 3:6-8.
15. Mark 10:17-22.
16. Psalm 10:17.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 6:8.
18. *Ye Are the Light of the World* (1974), 292; italics added.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has been our concluding speaker.

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television, radio stations, and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will sing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." The benediction will be given by Elder Jerald L. Taylor of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

Elder Jerald L. Taylor offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1996, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Primary children's choir from the stakes in Sandy and Draper, Utah, under the direction of Sister Kay Asay, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We welcome you to the second general session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of the Church.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders Richard G. Scott, Angel Abrea, and Lowell D. Wood are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall. Elders Charles Didier, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Cecil O. Samuelson, and Bishop Keith B. McMullin are attending

the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by a Primary children's choir from the stakes in Sandy and Draper, Utah, under the direction of Sister Kay Asay, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing a medley of "To Think about Jesus," "I Thank Thee, Dear Father," "For Thy Bounteous Blessings," and "Stand for the Right." The invocation will be offered by Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy.

The choir sang a medley of "To Think about Jesus," "I Thank Thee, Dear Father," "For Thy Bounteous Blessings," and "Stand for the Right."

Elder Bruce D. Porter offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly." President Thomas S. Monson will then present the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has asked that I, Brother Monson, now present to you the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elder Carlos E. Asay and that he be designated as an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and released as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Earl C. Tingey as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

With gratitude for their service as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders W. Mack Lawrence, Rulon G. Craven, Joseph C. Muren, Graham W. Doxey, Jorge A. Rojas, Julio E. Dávila, Han In Sang, Stephen D. Nadauld, and Sam K. Shimabukuro. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

Those who may wish to join us in releasing with a vote of thanks Elder Stephen D. Nadauld as first counselor in the Young Men general presidency and Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone as second counselor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain as counselors to Jack H. Goaslind, the president of the Young Men, Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone as first counselor in the Young Men general presidency and Elder F. David Stanley as second counselor. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your loving and prayerful support.

President Faust

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Doctrinal teachings concerning *desire*

Brothers and sisters, the scriptures offer us so many doctrinal diamonds. And when the light of the Spirit plays upon their several facets, they sparkle with celestial sense and illuminate the path we are to follow.

Exemplifying this happy reality are the doctrinal teachings concerning *desire*, which relates so directly to our moral agency and our individuality. Whether in their conception or expression, our desires profoundly affect the use of our moral agency. Desires thus become real determinants, even when, with pitiful naïveté, we do not really want the consequences of our desires.

Desire denotes a real longing or craving. Hence, righteous desires are much more than passive preferences or fleeting feelings. Of course our genes, circumstances, and environments matter very much, and they shape us significantly. Yet there remains an inner zone in which we are sovereign unless we abdicate. In this zone lies the essence of our individuality and our personal accountability.

Therefore, what we insistently desire, over time, is what we will eventually become and what we will receive in eternity. "For I [said the Lord] will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:9; see also Jeremiah 17:10). Alma said, "I know that [God] granteth unto men according to their desire . . . ; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men . . . according to their wills" (Alma 29:4). To reach this equitable end, God's canopy of mercy is stretched out, including "all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of [the gospel], who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom; For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, accord-

ing to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:8-9).

God thus takes into merciful account not only our desires and our performance, but also the degrees of difficulty which our varied circumstances impose upon us. No wonder we will not complain at the final judgment, especially since even the telestial kingdom's glory "surpasses all understanding" (D&C 76:89). God delights in blessing us, especially when we realize "joy in that which [we] have desired" (D&C 7:8).

However, in contrast to God's merciful plan for our joy and glory, Satan "[desires] that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27).

Acknowledge responsibility for desires

Mostly, brothers and sisters, we become the victims of our own wrong desires. Moreover, we live in an age when many simply refuse to feel responsible for themselves. Thus, a crystal-clear understanding of the doctrines pertaining to desire is so vital because of the spreading effluent oozing out of so many unjustified excuses by so many. This is like a sludge which is sweeping society along toward "the gulf of misery and endless wo" (Helaman 5:12). Feeding that same flow is the selfish philosophy of "no fault," which is replacing the meek and apologetic "my fault." We listen with eager ear to hear genuine pleas for forgiveness instead of the ritualistic "Sorry. I hope I can forgive myself."

Some seek to brush aside conscience, refusing to hear its voice. But that deflection is, in itself, an act of choice, because we so desired. Even when the light of Christ flickers only faintly in the darkness, it flickers nevertheless. If one averts his gaze therefrom, it is because he so desires.

Like it or not, therefore, reality requires that we acknowledge our responsibility for our desires. Brothers and sisters, which do we really desire, God's plans for us or Satan's?

Righteous desires

Whenever spiritually significant things are under way, righteous desires are present. Meek desire characterized those awaiting baptism at the waters of Mormon. With their baptismal commitments spelled out specifically, "they . . . exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts" (Mosiah 18:11). The Nephite multitude, enraptured by the presence of the resurrected Jesus, knelt in humble and intensive prayer, yet "they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire" (3 Nephi 19:24).

No wonder desires also determine the gradations in outcomes, including why "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14; see D&C 95:5).

It is up to us. God will facilitate, but He will not force.

Righteous desires need to be relentless, therefore, because, said President Brigham Young, "the men and women, who desire to obtain seats in the celestial kingdom, will find that they must battle every day" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:14). Therefore, true Christian soldiers are more than weekend warriors.

Absence of desire

The absence of any keen desire—merely being lukewarm—causes a terrible flattening (see Revelation 3:15). William R. May explained such sloth: "The soul in this state is beyond mere sadness and melancholy. It has removed itself from the rise and fall of feelings; the very root of its feelings in desire is dead. . . . To be a man is to desire. The

good man desires God and other things in God. The sinful man desires things in the place of God, but he is still recognizably human, inasmuch as he has known desire. The slothful man, however, is a dead man, an arid waste. . . . His desire itself has dried up" ("A Catalogue of Sins," quoted in *Christian Century*, 24 Apr. 1996, 457).

This sad condition is yet another variation of the "sorrowing of the damned" (Mormon 2:13).

Even a spark of desire can begin change. The prodigal son, sunk in despair, nevertheless desired and "came to himself," determining that "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:17–18).

Educating our desires

What we are speaking about is so much more than merely deflecting temptations for which we somehow do not feel responsible. Remember, brothers and sisters, it is our own desires which determine the sizing and the attractiveness of various temptations. We set our thermostats as to temptations.

Thus, educating and training our desires clearly requires understanding the truths of the gospel, yet even more is involved. President Brigham Young confirmed, saying, "It is evident that many who understand the truth do not govern themselves by it; consequently, no matter how true and beautiful truth is, you have to take the passions of the people and mould them to the law of God" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:55).

"Do you," President Young asked, "think that people will obey the truth because it is true, unless they love it? No, they will not" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:55). Thus, knowing gospel truths and doctrines is profoundly important, but we must also come to love them. When we love them, they will move us and help our desires and outward works to become more holy.

Each assertion of a righteous desire, each act of service, and each act of worship, however small and incremental, adds to our spiritual momentum. Like Newton's Second Law, there is a transmitting of acceleration as well as a contagiousness associated with even the small acts of goodness.

Fortunately for us, our loving Lord will work with us, "even if [we] can [do] no more than desire to believe," providing we will "let this desire work in [us]" (Alma 32:27). Therefore, declared President Joseph F. Smith, "the education then of our desires is one of far-reaching importance to our happiness in life" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 297). Such education can lead to sanctification until, said President Brigham Young, "holy desires produce corresponding outward works" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:170). Only by educating and training our desires can they become our allies instead of our enemies!

Dissolve wrong desires; strengthen good ones

Some of our present desires, therefore, need to be diminished and then finally dissolved. For instance, the biblical counsel "let not thine heart envy sinners" is directed squarely at those with a sad unsettlement of soul (Proverbs 23:17). Once again, we must be honest with ourselves about the consequences of our desires, which follow as the night, the day. Similarly, faced with life's so-called bad breaks, the natural man desires to wallow in self-pity; therefore this desire must go too.

But dissolution of wrong desires is only part of it. For instance, what is now only a weak desire to be a better spouse, father, or mother needs to become a stronger desire, just as Abraham experienced divine discontent and desired greater happiness and knowledge (see Abraham 1:2).

Our merciful and long-suffering Lord is ever ready to help. His "arm is lengthened out all the day long" (2 Nephi 28:32), and even if His arm goes ungrasped, it was unarguably there! In the same redemptive reaching out, our desiring to improve our human relationships usually requires some long-suffering. Sometimes reaching out is like trying to pat a porcupine. Even so, the accumulated quill marks are evidence that our hands of fellowship have been stretched out too!

It is up to us. Therein lies life's greatest and most persistent challenge. Thus, when people are described as "having lost their desire for sin," it is they, and they only, who deliberately decided to lose those wrong desires by being willing to "give away all [their] sins" in order to know God (Alma 22:18).

Parents assist in educating desires

Unquestionably, parents have such a profound role in assisting in the educating of our desires, especially when parents combine explanation and exemplification! Even so, given our responsibilities for our own desires, we should not be surprised that Adam and Eve, such superb parents who conscientiously taught all things to their children, still lost some of them! Lehi and Sariah made the same effort, doing so "with all the feeling of a tender parent" (1 Nephi 8:37). Yet they experienced the same thing with Laman and Lemuel, who "understood not the dealings of the Lord" (Mosiah 10:14). Fixing responsibility for such recalcitrance where it should be, the Prophet Joseph Smith observed: "Men who have no principle of . . . truth, do not understand the word of truth when they hear it. The devil taketh away the word of truth out of their hearts, because there is no desire for righteousness in them" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 96).

Nevertheless, conscientious and able parents will do all they can do to exemplify and explain. Besides, righteous parents are teaching more than they now realize. The later applications of and the grateful expressions for earlier parental influence are often delayed, and often for a long time.

With true desire, we can then really plead:

More holiness give me, . . .
 More patience in suffering,
 More sorrow for sin,
 More faith in my Savior, . . .
 More tears for his sorrows,
 More pain at his grief,
 More meekness in trial,
 More praise for relief.
 ["More Holiness Give Me," *Hymns*,
 no. 131]

Begin now to train desires

Brothers and sisters, a loving God will work with us, but the initiating particle of desire which ignites the spark of resolve must be our own!

It all takes time. Said the Prophet Joseph: "The nearer man approaches

perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with Him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 51).

Thus the work of eternity is not done in a moment, but, rather, in "process of time." Time works for us when our desires do likewise!

May God help us so to train our desires, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder M. Russell Ballard, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Bruce C. Hafen, who was sustained at April conference as a new member of the Seventy.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Faith in every footstep

This year, 1996, we have enjoyed a great centennial celebration of statehood in Utah that has given our citizens an opportunity to reflect upon the important accomplishments of the past 100 years. In 1997 the Church will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley. During the sesquicentennial year, Church members worldwide will have the opportunity to focus their attention on the pioneer trek from Nauvoo to the Salt Lake Valley. The theme for the sesquicentennial celebration is "Faith in Every Footstep."

Sacrifices of pioneers

This August I walked in the footsteps of our pioneers along the Mormon Trail through Wyoming and Utah. I wondered why our dedicated ancestors suffered so terribly and yet willingly faced such tremendous obstacles. Perhaps one reason they sacrificed and endured was to leave a legacy of faith for all of us to help us feel our urgent responsibility to move forward in building up the Church throughout the world. We need the same dedication today in every one of our footsteps as the pioneers had in theirs.

President Joseph F. Smith, who walked the pioneer trail to Utah as a nine-year-old boy, said in the April 1904 general conference, "I firmly believe [that] the divine approval, blessing and favor of Almighty God . . . has guided the destiny of His people from the organization of the Church until the present . . . and guided us in our footsteps and in our journeyings into the tops of these mountains."¹ Our pioneer ancestors sacrificed virtually all they had, including their lives in many cases, to follow a prophet of God to this chosen valley.

Plan sesquicentennial celebrations

Next year's celebration will honor pioneers worldwide, in addition to the Utah pioneers. As chairman of the Church sesquicentennial committee, I ask you stake and ward leaders to place the Church sesquicentennial celebration on your next council meeting agenda. Please study the guidelines sent to you in January 1995 and the additional information sent in intervening months. In your councils, choose the activities that will be appropriate and important to ensure a spiritually fulfilling experience for your members in 1997.

Magnitude of the pioneer trek

The vast majority of the Utah pioneers got their first glimpse of the sagebrush, sego lily, salt-flat desert landscape of this Great Salt Lake Valley on foot. Some even arrived barefoot after having suffered extreme hardships in traversing over 1,300 miles of prairie, desert, and mountain wilderness. Before the railroad reached the Utah Territory in 1869, approximately 70,000 pioneers, 9,600 wagons, and 650 handcarts made the trek from Winter Quarters in present-day Iowa and Nebraska to the Salt Lake Valley.² Each pioneer who walked from the Mississippi River to the Great Salt Lake took millions of steps to travel that

distance. Under favorable circumstances, the trek took a little more than three months. Traveling 15 miles in a day was considered a good day. In total, billions of footsteps of faith were taken by our pioneers.

On the trail a loving attachment frequently developed between a pioneer and his ox team. Joseph F. Smith related: "My team leaders' names were Thom and Joe—we raised them from calves, and they were both white. Thom was trim built, active, young, and more intelligent than many a man. Many times while traveling sandy or rough roads, on long, thirsty drives, my oxen were lowing with the heat and fatigue. I would put my arms around Thom's neck and cry bitter tears! That was all I could do. Thom was my favorite and best and most willing and obedient servant and friend."³

Visions of the Saints' destination

The pioneer exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, began February 4, 1846. Nearly four years earlier, in August of 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith shared his foreknowledge of the trek west: "I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some [would live to] build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains."⁴

Brigham Young received a vision of Joseph Smith in which Joseph showed him a mountain and an ensign upon its peak. Joseph said, "Build under the point where the colors fall and you will prosper and have peace."⁵ The identification of this mountain peak, as the Saints entered Salt Lake Valley in July 1847, confirmed to President Young that the pioneers had found their destina-

tion, their Zion, in the tops of the mountains.

We know this conical, dome-shaped mountain today as Ensign Peak. It rises above the valley floor just north of where we now sit.

The exodus from Nauvoo and across the prairies, rivers, and mountains to the Salt Lake Valley was a migration of major proportions. Near Mount Pisgah, one of the communities the Saints established in Iowa, Wilford Woodruff recorded: "I stopped my carriage [and] had a most splendid view. I could stand and gaze to the east, west, north, and south and behold the Saints pouring out . . . from the hills and dales . . . with their teams, wagons, flocks, and herds by hundreds and thousands . . . until it looked like the movements of a great nation."⁶

Difficulty and length of the trek

As the pioneers traveled across Iowa, their worries centered on food and forage, wood and fire, and ceaseless snow, rain, and mud. "A broken axle or a missing ox became a crisis."⁷ Tragic illness overcame many who were wet, chilled, weak, and malnourished.

The 265-mile trek from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters took 131 days. By comparison, the trek from Winter Quarters to the Salt Lake Valley, which was about four times the distance, approximately 1,032 miles, took only 111 days.⁸

Peter and Jenetta McBride

Perhaps the most memorable pioneer stalwarts were the Saints who made the journey in handcart companies. These companies brought nearly 3,000 pioneers west between 1856 and 1860.⁹ In 1856, two handcart companies, with 1,075 pioneers under the leadership of James G. Willie and Edward Martin, left later in the year than planned, and they encountered early winter storms in present-day Wyoming.¹⁰ Peter Howard Mc-

Bride, then but a boy of six years, was a member of the Martin Company. His father, after helping push handcarts through the icy river, died in the snow and freezing cold that night. Peter's mother was sick; his older sister, Jenetta, watched out for the younger children. Her shoes had worn out, and her feet left bloody tracks in the snow. On the banks of the Sweetwater River, the wind blew their tent down during the night. Everyone scampered out as the snow covered the tent—everyone except little Peter. According to his account: "In the morning I heard someone say, 'How many are dead in this tent?' My sister said, 'Well, my little brother must be frozen to death in that tent.' So they jerked the tent loose, sent it scurrying over the snow. My hair was frozen to the tent. I picked myself up and came out quite alive, to their surprise."¹¹

Jens Neilson

We find one of the most touching stories of sacrifice, faith, and loving charity in the life of Jens Neilson, who was a member of the Willie Handcart Company. Jens, a relatively prosperous Danish farmer, heeded the call to bring his family to Zion. In Iowa he wrote that he had let all of his money go to the Church except enough to buy a handcart and stock it with 15 pounds of belongings per person. Jens wrote, "Obedience is better than sacrifice."¹²

The people for whom Jens was responsible were himself; his wife, Elsie; their six-year-old son, Neils; and a nine-year-old girl, Bodil Mortensen, whom Jens offered to take to Utah. In the early Wyoming blizzard, temperatures plummeted below zero. The Neilsons had consumed their last pound of flour days before, but somehow they made it over the treacherous Rocky Ridge, urged on by their indomitable courage and unconquerable faith. Tragically, 13 of the company died at Rock Creek and were

buried in shallow, snow-covered graves—among them, Jens and Elsie's son, Neils, and young Bodil Mortensen.

President Hinckley describes this portion of the trail as "a trail of tragedy, a trail of faith, a trail of devotion, a trail of consecration, even the consecration of life itself."¹³

Jens arrived at Rock Creek, 11 miles beyond Rocky Ridge, with both feet frozen. He was unable to walk another step and pleaded with Elsie, "Leave me by the trail in the snow to die, and you go ahead and try to keep up with the company and save your life." Elsie, with her unfaltering pioneer courage, replied, "Ride, I can't leave you, I can pull the cart."¹⁴ Such was the strength and the faith of many pioneer women on the trail.

Margaret McNeil

A cow helped provide necessary nourishment on the trail for the family of my great-grandmother Margaret McNeil as she came to Zion from Scotland. As a 12-year-old, it was Margaret's task to arise early and get breakfast for the family and milk her cow. She would then drive the cow on ahead of the company to let it feed in the grassy places. She wrote:

"The cow furnished us with milk, our chief source of food. . . . Had it not been for the milk, we would have starved. . . .

"One night our cow ran away from [the] camp, and I was sent to bring her back. I was not watching where I was going and was barefooted. All of a sudden I began to feel I was walking on something soft. I looked down to see what it could be, and to my horror found that I was standing in a bed of snakes, large ones and small ones. At the sight of them I became so weak I could scarcely move; all I could think of was to pray, and in some way I jumped out of them. The Lord blessed and cared for me.

"We arrived in Ogden, Utah, on the fourth day of October [1859], after a journey of hardships and hunger. . . . I walked every step of the way across the plains."¹⁵

The Lord's protective hand

President Joseph F. Smith, who took part in the westward trek and in the first 70 years of hardship in this valley, shared this precious overview of the Lord's protective hand over His Latter-day Saints:

"Our good friends from the east used to come out here in the early days and upbraid us. They said, 'Why, it is the fulfillment of the curse of God upon you. You have been driven away from the rich lands of Illinois and Missouri, into a desert, into a salt land.' I said, 'Yes, we have salt enough here to save the world, thank God, and we may find use for it by and by.'"¹⁶

There was a time when there wasn't feed for livestock and the beef was so lean there wasn't enough fat to even make decent soap. "Just then the Lord sent a handful of alfalfa seed into the valley, and Christopher Layton planted it, watered it, and it matured; and from that little beginning, Utah can now produce a richer crop of hay than Illinois or Missouri can do."¹⁷

Walk in the footsteps of the pioneers

Truly the Lord encourages us to walk in faith to the edge of the light and beyond—into the unknown. After the trial of our faith, He once again shines the light ahead of us, and our journey of faith in every footstep continues. Now it has swelled into billions and billions of footsteps throughout the world. In my 20 years as a General Authority, I have seen the worldwide expansion of the Church, and I marvel at the results of the work of our pioneers in every country where they, through their faith and sacrifice, established the Church. I share the feel-

ings of President Heber J. Grant, who said, "I can never think of [the pioneers] but I am full of admiration and gratitude, and utter a prayer to the Lord to help me, as one of the descendants of that noble band, to be loyal, to be true, to be faithful as they were!"¹⁸

Brothers and sisters, join with us and begin now to prepare for a spiritual journey next year by walking in the footsteps of our beloved pioneers in every land. We must be sure that the legacy of faith received from them is never lost. Let their heroic lives touch our hearts, and especially the hearts of our youth, so the fire of true testimony and unwavering love for the Lord and His Church will blaze brightly within each one of us as it did in our faithful pioneers. Their accomplishments were possible because they knew, as I know, that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, restored the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith and that this Church will continue to roll forth until it fills the whole earth. To this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1904, 1.
2. See Stanley B. Kimball, *Historic Resource Study: Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail* (1991), 40, 49, 62–63.
3. Holograph quoted in Susan Arrington Madsen, *I Walked to Zion* (1994), 37.
4. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 255.
5. See George A. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:85.
6. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (1983–85), 3:55; spelling and punctuation modernized.
7. Reed C. Durham Jr., "The Iowa Experience: A Blessing in Disguise," *Brigham Young University Studies*, fall 1981, 463; see also 474.
8. See Kimball, *Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail*, 35, 49.
9. See Kimball, *Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail*, 66.
10. See Kate B. Carter, comp., *Heart Throbs of the West*, 6 vols. (1939–51), 6:360–61.
11. Peter Howard McBride, quoted in Madsen, *I Walked to Zion*, 45–46; see also 41, 43.
12. See Jens Neilson journal, quoted in *Wyoming Trails Resource Handbook* (Church Educational System, 1996), 29.
13. Address delivered near Riverton, Wyoming, 15 Aug. 1992, quoted in *Wyoming Trails Resource Handbook* (Church Educational System, 1995), 27.
14. See Jens Neilson journal, quoted in *Wyoming Trails Resource Handbook* (Church Educational System, 1996), 29.
15. Margaret McNeil Ballard autobiography, quoted in Madsen, *I Walked to Zion*, 126.
16. "This Is the Place," in Preston Nibley, comp., *Faith Promoting Stories* (1943), 81; see also *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 1917, 157.
17. Joseph F. Smith, in Nibley, *Faith Promoting Stories*, 83; see also *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 1917, 159.
18. In Conference Report, Oct. 1919, 7.

Elder Bruce C. Hafen

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract

Three summers ago I watched a new bride and groom, Tracy and Tom, emerge from a sacred temple. They laughed and held hands as family and friends gathered

to take pictures. I saw happiness and promise in their faces as they greeted their reception guests, who celebrated publicly the creation of a new family. I wondered that night how long it would be until these two faced the opposition

that tests every marriage. Only then would they discover whether their marriage was based on a *contract* or a *covenant*.

Another bride sighed blissfully on her wedding day, "Mom, I'm at the end of all my troubles!" "Yes," replied her mother, "but at which end?" When troubles come, the parties to a *contractual* marriage seek happiness by walking away. They marry to obtain benefits and will stay only as long as they're receiving what they bargained for. But when troubles come to a *covenant* marriage, the husband and wife work them through. They marry to give and to grow, bound by covenants to each other, to the community, and to God. *Contract* companions each give 50 percent; *covenant* companions each give 100 percent.

Marriage is by nature a covenant, not just a private contract one may cancel at will. Jesus taught about contractual attitudes when he described the "hireling," who performs his conditional promise of care only when he receives something in return. When the hireling "seeth the wolf coming," he "leaveth the sheep, and fleeth . . . because he . . . careth not for the sheep." By contrast, the Savior said, "I am the good shepherd, . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep."¹ Many people today marry as hirelings. And when the wolf comes, they flee. This idea is wrong. It curses the earth, turning parents' hearts away from their children and from each other.²

An eternal perspective of marriage

Before their marriage, Tom and Tracy received an eternal perspective on covenants and wolves. They learned through the story of Adam and Eve about life's purpose and how to return to God's presence through obedience and the Atonement. Christ's life is the story of giving the Atonement. The life of Adam and Eve is the story of receiving the Atonement, which empowered

them to overcome their separation from God and all opposition until they were eternally "at one" with the Lord and with each other.

Without the Fall, Lehi taught, Adam and Eve would never have known opposition. And "they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery."³ Astute parents will see a little connection here—no children, no misery! But left in the garden, Adam and Eve could never know joy. So the Lord taught them they would live and bear children in sorrow, sweat, and thorns.

Still, the ground was cursed *for their sake*:⁴ their path of affliction also led to the joy of both redemption and comprehension.⁵ That is why the husband and wife in a covenant marriage sustain and lift each other when the wolf comes. If Tom and Tracy had understood all this, perhaps they would have walked more slowly from the gardenlike temple grounds, like Adam and Eve, arm in arm, into a harsh and lonely world.

And yet—marrying and raising children *can* yield the most valuable religious experiences of a couple's lives. Covenant marriage requires a total leap of faith: they must keep their covenants without knowing what risks that may require of them. They must surrender unconditionally, obeying God and sacrificing for each other. Then they will discover what Alma called "incomprehensible joy."⁶

Of course, some have no opportunity to marry. And some divorces are unavoidable. But the Lord will ultimately compensate those faithful ones who are denied mortal fulfillment.

The "wolf" of natural adversity

Every marriage is tested repeatedly by three kinds of wolves. The first wolf is natural adversity. After asking God for years to give them a first child, David and Fran had a baby with a serious

heart defect. Following a three-week struggle, they buried their newborn son. Like Adam and Eve before them, they mourned together, brokenhearted, in faith before the Lord.⁷

The "wolf" of personal imperfections

Second, the wolf of their own imperfections will test them. One woman told me through her tears how her husband's constant criticism finally destroyed not only their marriage but her entire sense of self-worth. He first complained about her cooking and housecleaning, and then about how she used her time, how she talked, looked, and reasoned. Eventually she felt utterly inept and dysfunctional. My heart ached for her, and for him.

Contrast her with a young woman who had little self-confidence when she first married. Then her husband found so much to praise in her that she gradually began to believe she was a good person and that her opinions mattered. His belief in her rekindled her innate self-worth.

The "wolf" of excessive individualism

The third wolf is the excessive individualism that has spawned today's contractual attitudes. A seven-year-old girl came home from school crying, "Mom, don't I belong to you? Our teacher said today that nobody *belongs* to anybody—children don't belong to parents, husbands don't belong to wives. I am *yours*, aren't I, Mom?" Her mother held her close and whispered, "Of course you're mine—and I'm yours too." Surely marriage partners must respect one another's individual identity, and family members are neither slaves nor inanimate objects. But this teacher's fear, shared today by many, is that the bonds of kinship and marriage are not valuable ties that bind, but are, instead, sheer bondage. Ours is the age of the waning of belonging.

The adversary has long cultivated this overemphasis on personal autonomy, and now he feverishly exploits it. Our deepest God-given instinct is to run to the arms of those who need us and sustain us. But he drives us away from each other today with wedges of distrust and suspicion. He exaggerates the need for having space, getting out, and being left alone. Some people believe him—and then they wonder why they feel left alone. And despite admirable exceptions, children in America's growing number of single-parent families are far more at risk than children in two-parent families.⁸ The primary cause of today's general decline in child well-being is a remarkable "collapse of marriage."⁹

Modern questions about marriage

Many people even wonder these days what marriage is. Should we prohibit same-sex marriage? Should we make divorce more difficult to obtain? Some say these questions are not society's business because marriage is a private contract.¹⁰ But as the modern prophets recently proclaimed, "marriage . . . is ordained of God."¹¹ Even secular marriage was historically a three-party covenant among a man, a woman, and the state. Society has a huge interest in the outcome and the offspring of every marriage. So the public nature of marriage distinguishes it from all other relationships. Guests come to weddings, wrote Wendell Berry, because sweethearts "say their vows to the community as much as to one another," giving themselves not only to each other, but also to the common good "as no *contract* could ever join them."¹²

Observing covenants brings strength

When we observe the covenants we make at the altar of sacrifice, we discover hidden reservoirs of strength. I once said in exasperation to my wife, Marie, "The

Lord placed Adam and Eve on the earth as full-grown people. Why couldn't he have done that with this boy of ours, the one with the freckles and the unruly hair?" She replied, "The Lord gave us that child to make Christians out of us."

One night Marie exhausted herself for hours encouraging that child to finish a school assignment to build his own diorama of a Native American village on a cookie sheet. It was a test no hireling would have endured. At first he fought her efforts, but by bedtime, I saw him lay "his" diorama proudly on a counter. He started for his bed, then turned around, raced back across the room, and hugged his mother, grinning with his fourth-grade teeth. Later I asked Marie in complete awe, "How did you do it?" She said, "I just made up my mind that I couldn't leave him, no matter what." Then she added, "*I didn't know I had it in me.*" She discovered deep, internal wellsprings of compassion because the bonds of her covenants gave her strength to lay down her life for her sheep, even an hour at a time.

Be as shepherds, not hirelings

Now I return to Tom and Tracy, who this year discovered wellsprings of their own. Their second baby threatened to come too early to live. They might have made a hireling's convenient choice and gone on with their lives, letting a miscarriage occur. But because they tried to observe their covenants by sacrifice,¹³ active, energetic Tracy lay almost motionless at home for five weeks, then in a hospital bed for another five. Tom was with her virtually every hour when he was not working or sleeping. They prayed their child to earth. Then the baby required 11 more weeks in the hospital. But she is here, and she is theirs.

One night as Tracy waited patiently upon the Lord in the hospital, she sensed that perhaps her willingness to sacrifice

herself for her baby was in some small way like the Good Shepherd's sacrifice for her. She said, "I had expected that trying to give so much would be really difficult, but somehow this felt more like a privilege." As many other parents in Zion have done, she and Tom gave their hearts to God by giving them to their child. In the process they learned that theirs is a covenant marriage, one that binds them to each other and to the Lord.

May we restore the concept of marriage as a covenant, even the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.¹⁴ And when the wolf comes, may we be as shepherds, not hirelings, willing to lay down our lives, a day at a time, for the sheep of our covenant. Then, like Adam and Eve, we will have joy.¹⁵ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 10:12-15.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 2.
3. 2 Nephi 2:23.
4. See Moses 4:23.
5. See Moses 5:11.
6. Alma 28:8.
7. See Moses 5:27.
8. See Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *Atlantic Monthly*, Apr. 1993, 47.
9. Maggie Gallagher, *The Abolition of Marriage* (1996), 4.
10. See Bruce Dunford, "Governor: Take State Out of Marriage Role," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 9 Jan. 1996, p. A5; "Family Cannot Be Forced," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 17 Jan. 1996, p. A10.
11. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
12. Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community* (1993), 125, 137-39; italics added.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 97:8.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:2.
15. See 2 Nephi 2:25.

President Faust

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God,

for a Prophet." Elder Quentin L. Cook, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Quentin L. Cook

My beloved brothers and sisters, this is my first opportunity to address you since the call to this new assignment. There is no way to express either the sense of responsibility or the feelings of inadequacy that I have experienced, but I want you to know how grateful I am for the privilege of serving the Lord.

Rejoice in the plan of salvation

The chorus of one of my favorite hymns entreats: "Lift up your heart! Lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!" ("Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" *Hymns*, no. 66). The text of the hymn is taken from Paul's writings to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). The dictionary defines *rejoice* as "to feel joy or great delight" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., "rejoice," 986).

The source of the kind of joy which causes us to rejoice is an understanding of the plan of salvation. The Savior, in the Gospel of John, was approaching the closing hours of His mortal life when He would take upon Himself the sins of the world. As He prepared His disciples for what He knew was to come, He told them, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me" (John 16:16). They were not yet ready to comprehend the Resurrection. Instead the Savior explained in gentle terms that He would leave and re-

turn and told them what they would feel: sorrow at His leaving, "but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

Just as the Savior's death brought sorrow, the vicissitudes of life—like death, disease, poverty, and injury—can and often will bring unhappiness. Separation from those we love invariably brings sorrow and mourning. Life is not easy, and it would be improper to diminish in any way the trials and tribulations that most experience.

That having been said, the Resurrection and Atonement wrought by the Savior and the promise of eternal life with our loved ones are of such overwhelming significance that to not rejoice would demonstrate a lack of understanding of the Savior's gift.

How to obtain joy

Joy comes when we have the Spirit in our lives (see Alma 22:15). When we have the Spirit, we rejoice in what the Savior has done for us.

What do we need to do to have this kind of joy? In addition to attaining saving ordinances and following the living prophet, we need to live in accordance with certain fundamental spiritual principles, such as prayer, scripture study, righteous living, and service to others. It is well understood that if we engage in sinful conduct, we must repent. Let

me suggest three other areas or distractions we need to avoid in order to maintain joy and rejoice more fully in the Savior's gift: (1) avoid distractions which keep us from doing what we ought to do, (2) avoid the magnification of small imperfections, and (3) avoid unfavorable comparisons with others.

Avoid "Saturday morning cartoons"

We are often unaware of the distractions which push us in a material direction and keep us from a Christ-centered focus. In essence we let celestial goals get sidetracked by telestial distractions. In our family we call these telestial distractions "Saturday morning cartoons." Let me explain.

When our children were small, my wife, Mary, and I decided to follow a tradition which my father taught when I was a child. He would meet with us individually to help us set goals in various aspects of our lives and then teach us how Church, school, and extracurricular activities would help us achieve those goals. He had three rules:

1. We needed to have worthwhile goals.
2. We could change our goals at any time.
3. Whatever goal we chose, we had to diligently work toward it.

Having been the beneficiary of this tradition, I had the desire to engage in this practice with my children. When our son, Larry, was five years old, I asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. He said he wanted to be a doctor like his Uncle Joe. Larry had experienced a serious operation and had acquired great respect for doctors, especially his Uncle Joe. I proceeded to tell Larry how all the worthwhile things he was doing would help prepare him to be a doctor.

Several months later I asked him again what he would like to be. This time he said he wanted to be an airline pilot. Changing the goal was fine, so I pro-

ceeded to explain how his various activities would help him achieve this goal. Almost as an afterthought I said, "Larry, last time we talked you wanted to be a doctor. What has changed your mind?" He answered, "I still like the idea of being a doctor, but I have noticed that Uncle Joe works on Saturday mornings, and I wouldn't want to miss Saturday morning cartoons."

Since that time our family has labeled a distraction from a worthwhile goal as a Saturday morning cartoon.

What are some of the Saturday morning cartoons that distract us from attaining the joy that we desire? Some want to be married in the temple but date only those who do not qualify for a recommend. Others want to be a good home teacher or visiting teacher but are distracted by the constant parade of TV programs, catalogs, and other material maintenance and don't find time to minister to those they are assigned to teach. Still others want to have family prayer but allow little matters to build into discord that make it harder for the family to kneel together. If we examine the reasons we don't do what we ought to do, we find that the list of Saturday morning cartoons is almost endless.

Speaking of those who will not inherit a kingdom of glory, the Lord said, "For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift" (D&C 88:33). The greatest gift to all mankind is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. If we are to rejoice in this gift, we need to avoid the Saturday morning cartoons of life which distract our focus from the Savior and the celestial goal for which we strive.

Avoid magnifying small imperfections

A second group who do not find joy are distracted by magnifying small areas

of imperfection so as to drive out happiness. Some have allowed their own perceptions of imperfection to cloud the reality of their lives. An objective outsider observing them would conclude that they should be joyful. But they do not feel to rejoice. They are like the couple who have been invited to visit a beautiful garden. Instead of celebrating the visual feast, they see only the few wilted flowers and weeds and the relatively small areas which are not beautiful to behold. They do not feel the garden meets their expectations. In like manner they are unduly critical of themselves and of others. They have become accustomed to exaggerating small imperfections and underestimating great blessings and have lost the capacity to rejoice.

The Savior in Luke mildly cautioned Martha about this approach when she complained that her sister Mary was spending too much time listening to the Savior instead of serving temporal needs. He said, "Martha, Martha, thou art . . . troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41). The Savior then indicated that Mary was focused on what really mattered.

Avoid comparing talents and blessings

A third area of distraction that can destroy joy is comparing our talents and blessings with others. The growth in our own talents is the best measure of personal progress. In recent years the concept of "personal best" has become widely accepted. This has great merit. Remember we usually judge others at their best and ourselves at our worst. In the parable of the talents, the servants who received five talents and two talents were praised by their lord for increasing their talents and told to "enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The servant who was rebuked was the servant who buried the talent given him. (See Matthew 25:14-30.) Comparing blessings is almost

certain to drive out joy. We cannot be grateful and envious at the same time. If we truly want to have the Spirit of the Lord and experience joy and happiness, we should rejoice in our blessings and be grateful. We should especially rejoice in the blessings that are available through the temple.

Rejoice in the promise of the Atonement

On April 3, 1836, the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were engaged in sacred spiritual worship in the Kirtland Temple. After a solemn and silent prayer, the Lord appeared to them and accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house.

The marvelous description of the Savior and the appearance of ancient prophets who restored essential keys make the 110th section of the Doctrine and Covenants one of the most sacred and profound of all the communications the Lord has given us.

Some of the most beautiful words in this section, or that any of us could ever hope to hear, are contained in verses 5 and 6:

"Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice.

"Let the hearts of your brethren rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name."

Brothers and sisters, let us avoid the Saturday morning cartoons of life, particularly those that would keep us from the temple. Let us rejoice in the promise that is ours through the Atonement of the Savior and through Christlike living adhere to the counsel of the Psalmist: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). That each of us may do this is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Henry B. Eyring**Faithful home teachers and visiting teachers**

The Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. From the day of baptism through the spiritual milestones of our lives, we make promises with God and He makes promises with us. He always keeps His promises offered through His authorized servants, but it is the crucial test of our lives to see if we will make and keep our covenants with Him.

I saw again the power of keeping covenants through a chance conversation with a man I sat down next to on a trip. I had never met him before, but apparently he had seen me in the crowd because his first words after I introduced myself were, "I've been watching you." He told me about his work. I told him about mine. He asked about my family, and then he told me something about his. He said that his wife was a member of the Church and that he was not.

After he came to trust me, he said something like this: "You know, there is something in your church you should fix. You need to tell your people when to quit." He explained that he and his wife had been married for 25 years. She had been a member of the Church since childhood. In their years of marriage she had only once stepped into a building of the Church, and that was to tour a temple before its dedication, and then only because her parents had arranged it.

Then he told me why he thought we ought to make a change. He said that in those 25 years of married life, in which his wife showed no interest in the Church,

visiting teachers and home teachers had never stopped coming to their home. He told of one evening when he went out to walk his dog alone only to find the home teacher happening by with his dog, eager to visit with him.

He told, with a touch of exasperation, of another night when he came home from a long business trip, put his car in the garage, and then came out to find his home teachers standing there, smiling. He said to me something like, "And there they were, right in my face with another plate of cookies."

I think I understood his feelings. And then I tried, as best I could, to tell him how hard it would be to teach such teachers to quit. I told him that the love that he had felt from those many visitors and their constancy over the years in the face of little response came from a covenant they had made with God. I told him about the baptismal covenant as Alma described it in the Book of Mormon. I didn't quote these words, but you will remember them as Alma asked those he had taught whether they wished to be baptized:

"And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

"Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye

may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life" (Mosiah 18:8-9).

Our covenant to witness and to love

Those home teachers and visiting teachers understood and believed that the covenant to be a witness and to love were intertwined and that they reinforced each other. There is no other way to explain what had happened. My new friend recognized that the visitors had genuine concern for him and for his wife. And he knew their caring sprang from a belief that impelled them to come back. He seemed, at least to me, to understand that those visitors were driven from within by a covenant they would not break.

As we parted, I think he knew why he could expect that there would be more visits, more evidence of caring, and more patient waiting for the opportunity to bear testimony of the restored gospel. As we parted, I realized that I had learned something too. I will never again see home teaching or visiting teaching as only programs of the Church. Those faithful teachers saw what they were doing for what it really was. Such work is an opportunity, not a burden. Every member has made the covenant in the waters of baptism to be a witness for God. Every member has made a covenant to do works of kindness as the Savior would do. So any call to bear witness and to care for others is not a request for extra service; it is a blessing designed by a loving Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ. They have provided such calls as well as other settings, sometimes without a formal call, all for the same purpose. Each is a chance to prove what blessings flow from being a covenant people, and each is an opportunity for which you agreed to be accountable. Each is a sacred responsibility for others accepted in the waters of baptism but

too often not met because it may not be recognized for what it is.

Keep covenants in families

The power of that covenant to love and to witness should transform what members do in other settings across the world. One of the most important is in the family. Prophets in our time have consolidated our meetings on Sunday to allow time for families to be together. The prophets have also been inspired to help us reserve Monday night for family home evenings. Those opportunities require choices. In thousands of homes the choices made are guided by the covenant to comfort those that stand in need of comfort and to stand as witnesses of God.

Both the consolidation of the Sunday meetings and the creation of a family home evening are to provide opportunity for families to have time together to give Christlike service and to study the scriptures and gospel principles. The power of that possibility was taught by President Spencer W. Kimball this way:

"I wonder what this world would be like if every father and mother gathered their children around them at least once a week, explained the gospel, and bore fervent testimonies to them. How could immorality continue and infidelity break families and delinquency spawn?" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 345).

There are in those hours on Sunday and in a family home evening on Monday the opportunity to combine genuine caring, teaching the gospel, and the bearing of testimony. Across the earth there are families who love and understand their covenants who do that. From my front window I have seen parents, their children at their sides, move down the street to the home of a neighbor to offer comfort, to give Christlike service. I wasn't there to see it, but surely the warmth of those moments lingered later at home

when a song of Zion was sung, a prayer given that likely included a plea for the person visited, a scripture read, a short lesson taught, and testimonies of the restored gospel borne.

There is a caution I would give and a promise I would offer about such choices of how to use family time. For a person not yet a member of the Church, to fail to provide such moments of love and faith is simply a lost opportunity. But for those under covenant, it is much more. There are few places where the covenant to love and to bear witness is more easily kept than in the home. And there are few places where it can matter more for those for whom we are accountable. For members of the Church, my caution is that to neglect those opportunities is a choice not to keep sacred covenants.

Because God always honors covenants, I can make a promise to those who in faith keep the covenant to create experiences of giving love and bearing testimony with their families. They will reap a harvest of hearts touched, faith in Jesus Christ exercised unto repentance, and the desire and the power to keep covenants strengthened.

Keep covenants by sharing the gospel

There is another circumstance in which the covenant to combine kindness with bearing witness has great power to change lives. Thousands of times every day, members of the Church are watched, as I was by the man I met on a trip, by people curious to know something about our lives. Because we are under covenant to be witnesses, we will try to tell them how the gospel has brought us happiness. What they think of what we say may depend largely on how much they sense we care for them.

That was true when King Lamoni met Ammon, as we have it described in the Book of Mormon. Ammon had been captured by guards and brought to the king, who could take his life. But appar-

ently within minutes King Lamoni recognized that Ammon cared enough for him to want to serve him. Ammon said, when offered high station, "Nay, but I will be thy servant" (Alma 17:25; see also verses 20-24). Within days the king knew that Ammon was willing to risk his life for him. And then came the opportunity for Ammon to be a witness of God to the king.

Those we meet will feel the love that springs from our long practice in keeping a covenant to "mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9). It may not be in hours or days as it was for King Lamoni, but they will feel our love after testing our hearts. And when they find our concern sincere, the Holy Spirit can more easily touch them to allow us to teach and to testify, as it did for Ammon.

Again I have a caution and a promise. The caution is that sorrow will come from failure either to love or to bear witness. If we fail to feel and show honest concern for those we approach with the gospel, they will reasonably distrust our message. But if out of fear of rejection we fail to tell them what the gospel has meant in our lives and could mean in theirs, we will someday share their sorrow. Either in this life or in the life to come, they will know that we failed to share with them the priceless gift of the gospel. They will know that accepting the gospel was the only way for them to inherit eternal life. And they will know that we received the gospel with a promise that we would share it.

I can make two promises to those who offer the gospel to others. The first is that even those who reject it will someday thank us. More than once I have asked missionaries to visit friends far from where I lived, learned that the missionaries had been rejected, and then received a letter from my friend with words like this: "I was honored that you would

offer to me something that I knew meant so much to you." If not in this life, such messages will be sent to us in the world to come when those we approached will know the truth and how much we cared for them. My second promise is that as you offer the gospel to others, it will go down more deeply into your own heart. It becomes the well of water springing up into eternal life for us as we offer it to others.

Keep covenants by living law of the fast

There is one other setting which provides a near-perfect opportunity to combine love and testimony. In every ward and branch in the Church, once a month we hold a fast and testimony meeting. We fast for two meals. With the money saved, and adding more to it whenever we can, we pay a generous fast offering. The bishop and the branch president use those offerings, under inspiration, to care for the poor and the needy. Thus, by paying a fast offering we give comfort to those in need of comfort as we promised that we would.

The fast also helps us to feel humble and meek so that the Holy Ghost may more easily be our companion. By our fast, we both keep our covenant to care for others and we prepare to keep our covenant to bear testimony.

Those who have prepared carefully for the fast and testimony meeting won't need to be reminded how to bear testimony should they feel impressed to do it in the meeting. They won't give sermons or exhortations or travel reports or try to entertain as they bear witness. Because they will have already expressed appreciation to people privately, they will have less need to do it publicly. Neither will they feel a need to use eloquent language nor to go on at length.

A testimony is a simple expression of what we feel. The member who has fasted both for the blessing of the poor and for the companionship of the Spirit

will be feeling gratitude for the love of God and the certainty of eternal truth. Even a child can feel such things, which may be why sometimes the testimony of a child so moves us and why our preparation of fasting and prayer produces in us childlike feelings.

That preparation for the fast and testimony meeting is a covenant obligation for members of the Church. The offering of the gospel to those we meet and to our families are covenant obligations. We can take heart that our honest effort to keep our covenants allows God to increase our power to do it. We all need that assurance at times when our promise to love and to witness seems hard for us.

Blessings of keeping covenants

The fruit of keeping covenants is the companionship of the Holy Ghost and an increase in the power to love. That happens because of the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ to change our very natures. We are eyewitnesses of that miracle of greater spiritual power coming to those who accept covenants and keep commandments. For instance, there are families across the Church who read and reread letters from their missionary children with wonder, and a few tears, at the miracle that in so short a time they have become new, better people.

Yet I have also seen that same miracle in a mature man and woman, called to serve as proselyting missionary companions in the most difficult of circumstances which would have taxed the bravest youth. As the husband made his report, I thought back to the man I had known. I realized that the promised miracle of spiritual growth is not a product of youth but of the faith simply to try to keep covenants. That couple went out to love the people and to bear witness, and they returned transformed as much as any 21-year-old.

God will help us keep covenants

Each of us who has made covenants with God faces challenges unique to us. But each of us shares some common assurances. Our Heavenly Father knows us and our circumstances and even what faces us in the future. His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, has suffered and paid for our sins and those of all the people we will ever meet. He has perfect understanding of the feelings, the suffering, the trials, and the needs of every individual. Because of that, a way will be prepared for us to keep our covenants, however difficult that may now appear, if we go forward in faith.

I share with you the obligation to be a witness for God at all times and in all places that I will be in as long as I live. And I share with you the confidence that God can grant us the power to keep all our covenants.

I am grateful that I know as surely as did the Apostles Peter, James, and John that Jesus is the Christ, our risen Lord, and that he is our advocate with the Father. I know that the Father bore di-

rect witness of His Beloved Son by introducing the resurrected Lord to the boy Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove. I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, translated by the Prophet Joseph through the power of God. I know that the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood were restored by those who received them from the Savior and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is now the only person on earth authorized to direct the use of all those keys. I bear solemn testimony that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ, in which the ordinances and the covenants are offered, which if accepted and honored produce peace in this life and assure us eternal life in the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just heard from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Russell M. Nelson, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Humbly I join the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob, who asked, "Why not speak of the atonement of Christ?"¹ This topic comprises our third article of faith: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."

Before we can comprehend the Atonement of Christ, however, we must first understand the Fall of Adam. And before we can understand the Fall of Adam, we must first understand the Creation. These three crucial components of the plan of salvation relate to each other.²

The Creation

The Creation culminated with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They were created in the image of God, with bodies of flesh and bone.³ Created in the image of God and not yet mortal, they could not grow old and die.⁴ "And they would have had no children"⁵ nor experienced the trials of life. (Please forgive me for mentioning children and the trials of life in the same breath.) The creation of Adam and Eve was a *paradisiacal creation*, one that required a significant change before they could fulfill the commandment to have children⁶ and thus

provide earthly bodies for premortal spirit sons and daughters of God.

The Fall

That brings us to the Fall. Scripture teaches that “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”⁷ The Fall of Adam (and Eve) constituted the *mortal creation* and brought about the required changes in their bodies, including the circulation of blood and other modifications as well.⁸ They were now able to have children. They and their posterity also became subject to injury, disease, and death. And a loving Creator blessed them with healing power by which the life and function of precious physical bodies could be preserved. For example, bones, if broken, could become solid again. Lacerations of the flesh could heal themselves. And miraculously, leaks in the circulation could be sealed off by components activated from the very blood being lost.⁹

Think of the wonder of that power to heal! If you could create anything that could repair itself, you would have created life in perpetuity. For example, if you could create a chair that could fix its own broken leg, there would be no limit to the life of that chair. Many of you walk on legs that were once broken and do so because of your remarkable gift of healing.

Even though our Creator endowed us with this incredible power, He con-signed a counterbalancing gift to our bodies. It is the blessing of *aging*, with visible reminders that we are mortal beings destined one day to leave this “frail existence.”¹⁰ Our bodies change every day. As we grow older, our broad chests and narrow waists have a tendency to trade places. We get wrinkles, lose color in our hair—even the hair itself—to remind us that we are mortal children of God, with a “manufacturer’s guarantee” that we shall not be stranded upon the

earth forever. Were it not for the Fall, our physicians, beauticians, and morticians would all be unemployed.

Adam and Eve, as mortal beings, were instructed to “worship the Lord their God, and . . . offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord.”¹¹ They were further instructed that “the life of the flesh is in the blood: . . . for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”¹² Probation, procreation, and aging were all components of—and physical death was essential to—God’s “great plan of happiness.”¹³

But mortal life, glorious as it is, was never the *ultimate* objective of God’s plan. Life and death here on planet Earth were merely *means* to an end—not the *end* for which we were sent.

The Atonement

That brings us to the Atonement. Paul said, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”¹⁴ The Atonement of Jesus Christ became the *immortal creation*. He volunteered to answer the ends of a law previously transgressed.¹⁵ And by the shedding of His blood, His¹⁶ and our physical bodies could become perfected. They could again function without blood, just as Adam’s and Eve’s did in their *paradisiacal* form. Paul taught that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; . . . this mortal must put on immortality.”¹⁷

Meaning of atonement

With this background in mind, let us now ponder the deep meaning of the word *atonement*. In the English language, the components are *at-one-ment*, suggesting that a person is at one with another. Other languages¹⁸ employ words that connote either *expiation* or *reconciliation*. *Expiation* means “to atone for.” *Reconciliation* comes from Latin roots *re*, meaning “again”; *con*, meaning “with”;

and *sella*, meaning "seat." *Reconciliation*, therefore, literally means "to sit again with."

Rich meaning is found in study of the word *atonement* in the Semitic languages of Old Testament times. In Hebrew, the basic word for atonement is *kaphar*, a verb that means "to cover" or "to forgive."¹⁹ Closely related is the Aramaic and Arabic word *kafat*, meaning "a close embrace," no doubt related to the Egyptian ritual embrace. References to that embrace are evident in the Book of Mormon. One states that "the Lord hath redeemed my soul . . . ; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love."²⁰ Another proffers the glorious hope of our being "clasped in the arms of Jesus."²¹

I weep for joy when I contemplate the significance of it all. To be redeemed is to be atoned—received in the close embrace of God with an expression not only of His forgiveness but of our oneness of heart and mind. What a privilege! And what a comfort to those of us with loved ones who have already passed from our family circle through the gateway we call death!

Scriptures teach us more about the word *atonement*. The Old Testament has many references to *atonement*, which called for animal sacrifice. Not any animal would do. Special considerations included:

- The selection of a firstling of the flock, without blemish.²²
- The sacrifice of the animal's life by the shedding of its blood.²³
- Death of the animal without breaking a bone.²⁴
- One animal could be sacrificed as a vicarious act for another.²⁵

The Atonement of Christ fulfilled these prototypes of the Old Testament. He was the firstborn Lamb of God, without blemish. His sacrifice occurred by the shedding of blood. No bones of His body were broken—noteworthy in that

both malefactors crucified with the Lord had their legs broken.²⁶ And His was a vicarious sacrifice for others.

While the words *atone* or *atonement*, in any of their forms, appear only once in the King James translation of the New Testament,²⁷ they appear 35 times in the Book of Mormon.²⁸ As another testament of Jesus Christ, it sheds precious light on His Atonement, as do the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. Latter-day revelation has added much to our biblical base of understanding.

Infinite atonement

In preparatory times of the Old Testament, the practice of atonement was finite, meaning it had an end. It was a symbolic forecast of the definitive Atonement of Jesus the Christ. His Atonement is infinite—without an end.²⁹ It was also infinite in that all humankind would be saved from never-ending death. It was infinite in terms of His immense suffering. It was infinite in time, putting an end to the preceding prototype of animal sacrifice. It was infinite in scope—it was to be done once for all.³⁰ And the mercy of the Atonement extends not only to an infinite number of people, but also to an infinite number of worlds created by Him.³¹ It was infinite beyond any human scale of measurement or mortal comprehension.

Jesus was the only one who could offer such an infinite atonement, since He was born of a mortal mother and an immortal Father. Because of that unique birthright, Jesus was an infinite Being.

The ordeal of the Atonement

The ordeal of the Atonement centered about the city of Jerusalem. There the greatest single act of love of all recorded history took place.³² Leaving the upper room, Jesus and His friends crossed

the deep ravine east of the city and came to a garden of olive trees on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. There in the garden bearing the Hebrew name of *Gethsemane*—meaning “oil press”—olives had been beaten and pressed to provide oil and food. There at Gethsemane, the Lord “suffered the pain of all men, that all . . . might repent and come unto him.”³³ He took upon Himself the weight of the sins of all mankind, bearing its massive load that caused Him to bleed from every pore.³⁴

Later He was beaten and scourged. A crown of sharp thorns was thrust upon His head as an additional form of torture.³⁵ He was mocked and jeered. He suffered every indignity at the hands of His own people. “I came unto my own,” He said, “and my own received me not.”³⁶ Instead of their warm embrace, He received their cruel rejection. Then He was required to carry His own cross to the hill of Calvary, where He was nailed to that cross and made to suffer excruciating pain.

Later He said, “I thirst.”³⁷ To a doctor of medicine, this is a very meaningful expression. Doctors know that when a patient goes into shock because of blood loss, invariably that patient—if still conscious—with parched and shriveled lips cries for water.

Even though the Father and the Son knew well in advance what was to be experienced, the actuality of it brought indescribable agony. “And [Jesus] said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”³⁸ Jesus then complied with the will of His Father.³⁹ Three days later, precisely as prophesied, He rose from the grave. He became the firstfruits of the Resurrection. He had accomplished the Atonement, which could give immortality and eternal life to all obedient human beings. All that the Fall allowed to go awry, the Atonement allowed to go aright.

The Savior’s gift of *immortality* comes to all who have ever lived. But His gift of *eternal life* requires repentance and obedience to specific ordinances and covenants. Essential ordinances of the gospel symbolize the Atonement. Baptism by immersion is symbolic of the death, burial, and Resurrection of the Redeemer. Partaking of the sacrament renews baptismal covenants and also renews our memory of the Savior’s broken flesh and of the blood He shed for us. Ordinances of the temple symbolize our reconciliation with the Lord and seal families together forever. Obedience to the sacred covenants made in temples qualifies us for eternal life—the greatest gift of God to man⁴⁰—the “object and end of our existence.”⁴¹

The Atonement enabled the purpose of the Creation to be accomplished

The Creation required the Fall. The Fall required the Atonement. The Atonement enabled the purpose of the Creation to be accomplished. Eternal life, made possible by the Atonement, is the supreme purpose of the Creation. To phrase that statement in its negative form, if families were not sealed in holy temples, the whole earth would be utterly wasted.⁴²

The purposes of the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement all converge on the sacred work done in temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The earth was created and the Church was restored to make possible the sealing of wife to husband, children to parents, families to progenitors, worlds without end.

This is the great latter-day work of which we are a part. That is why we have missionaries; that is why we have temples—to bring the fullest blessings of the Atonement to faithful children of God. That is why we respond to our own calls from the Lord. When we comprehend His voluntary Atonement, any sense of

sacrifice on our part becomes completely overshadowed by a profound sense of gratitude for the privilege of serving Him.

As one of the "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world,"⁴³ I testify that He is the Son of the living God. Jesus is the Christ—our atoning Savior and Redeemer. This is His Church, restored to bless God's children and to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jacob 4:12.
2. The relationships of these components are found linked together in several scriptures, such as Alma 18:34–39; Mormon 9:12; Doctrine and Covenants 20:17–25.
3. They were created as *amortal* beings—"without mortality"—not at that time subject to death.
4. See Alma 12:21–23.
5. 2 Nephi 2:23.
6. See Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28.
7. 2 Nephi 2:25.
8. We should remember that God forgave Adam and Eve their transgression (see Moses 6:53).
9. Such as platelets and thrombin.
10. "O My Father," *Hymns*, no. 292.
11. Moses 5:5.
12. Leviticus 17:11.
13. Alma 42:8.
14. 1 Corinthians 15:22; see also Mosiah 16:7–8.
15. See 2 Nephi 2:7; see also "Behold the Great Redeemer Die," *Hymns*, no. 191.
16. See Luke 13:32.
17. 1 Corinthians 15:50–53.
18. Such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and German.
19. We might even surmise that if an individual qualifies for the blessings of the Atonement (through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel), Jesus will "cover" our past transgressions from the Father.
20. 2 Nephi 1:15.
21. Mormon 5:11; additional examples are in Alma 5:33; 34:16.
22. See Leviticus 5:18; 27:26.
23. See Leviticus 9:18.
24. See Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12.
25. See Leviticus 16:10.
26. See John 19:31–33.
27. See Romans 5:11.
28. *Atonement* = 24; plus *atone*, *atoning*, or *atoned* = 8; plus *atoneth* = 3; total 35 times.
29. See 2 Nephi 9:7; 25:16; Alma 34:10, 12, 14.
30. See Hebrews 10:10.
31. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:24; Moses 1:33.
32. See John 3:16.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 18:11.
34. See Luke 22:44; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
35. See Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5.
36. 3 Nephi 9:16; see also Doctrine and Covenants 6:21; 10:57; 11:29; 39:3; 45:8; 133:66.
37. John 19:28.
38. Mark 14:36. The word *Abba* is significant. *Ab* means "father"; *Abba* is an endearing and tender form of that term. The nearest English equivalent might be *Daddy*.
39. Centuries later, the Lord shared innermost recollections of this experience with the Prophet Joseph Smith, the record of which we read in Doctrine and Covenants 19.
40. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
41. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (1978), 568.
42. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:3; 138:48.
43. Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.

President Faust

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will con-

vene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

We express gratitude to the Primary children's choir from the stakes in Sandy

and Draper, Utah, for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon.

The choir will sing in closing "Beautiful Savior." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder L. Edward Brown of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder L. Edward Brown offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 5, 1996. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a men's choir from the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. Brother Douglas Brenchley conducted the choir, and Brother John Longhurst was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood meeting. These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

Elders Henry B. Eyring, Monte J. Brough, and L. Lionel Kendrick are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall. F. Burton Howard, Merrill J. Bateman, John K. Carmack, and Claudio R. M. Costa are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. Marlin K. Jensen and Ben B. Banks are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

We announce, for the information of those who were not here today in the earlier sessions, that Elder Carlos E. Asay was given emeritus status and released as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Elders W. Mack Lawrence, Rulon G. Craven, Joseph C. Muren, Graham W. Doxey, Jorge A. Rojas, Julio E. Dávila, Han In Sang, Stephen D. Nadauld, and Sam K. Shimabukuro were honorably released from their service as Seventies after having done a great work. Elder Earl C. Tingey was sustained as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Elder Stephen D. Nadauld was released as first counselor in the Young Men general presidency. Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone was released as second counselor; he was then sustained as first counselor in the Young Men presidency. And Elder F. David Stanley was sustained as second counselor in the Young Men presidency.

We are favored tonight with the presence of this great missionary chorus. Look at them—all of their badges on and their faces washed, shining there like angels in black armor. They will provide the music for this evening's meeting, under the direction of Brother Douglas Brenchley, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ. I should say they've come up from the Missionary Training Center.

We shall now begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Called to Serve," following which Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Seventy will offer the benediction. I've got the meeting dismissed already! It's the invocation. Somebody may say, "Well, I wish!"

The choir sang "Called to Serve."
Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Uchtdorf.

The choir will now favor us with "Lord, I Would Follow Thee," and Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder L. Tom Perry

The revelation of the Word of Wisdom

The early history of the Church records that during the winter of 1832-33, the Lord directed that a school of the prophets was to be organized "for their instruction in all things that are expedient for them" (D&C 88:127). It was to be held on the second floor of the Newel K. Whitney store. The brethren would come to the school to be instructed by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Some had acquired the habit of chewing and smoking tobacco. It became difficult for the Prophet to teach spiritual things in a temporal environment filled with smoke. Joseph Smith was troubled with the physical surroundings and inquired of the Lord if such conditions were proper for the brethren. In answer to his petition, he received a revelation known to us as the Word of Wisdom.

The Word of Wisdom contains some very positive aspects. It encourages us to use grains, particularly wheat, and to use fruits and vegetables and the sparing use of meat. It is also noted for its prohibition—absolute prohibition—against the use of alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee. Added to this has been the counsel of the Church leaders to abstain from the use of such drugs as marijuana, cocaine,

et cetera, and the abusive use of prescription drugs.

In a special promise that was given in this revelation as contained in the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, we receive these words:

"And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

"And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:18-21).

Creed Haymond obeys the Word of Wisdom

I will ever be grateful for the teachings of righteous parents who instilled in us the lessons taught to us in the Word of Wisdom. In addition to their teachings, we were taught carefully by Primary, Sunday School, and priesthood teachers.

I particularly remember a Primary teacher reading a story to us from the

Improvement Era. I had the Historical Department find it for me, and I found it was worth repeating. The story was taken from the October 1928 *Improvement Era* and is about Creed Haymond, a young Mormon who applied and was accepted at the University of Pennsylvania. He was an athlete known for his speed, and because of the way he acted and participated, he was chosen to be the captain of the track team.

The annual meet of the Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America was held at Harvard Stadium at the end of May of 1919. To Cambridge came the greatest college athletes—1,700 in all. In the tryouts, Penn had qualified 17 men. Cornell, their most feared rival that year, had qualified only 10. The Penn team was in position to be crowned the champions. The scores were made on the first five places—five for first, four for second, three for third, two for fourth, and one for fifth. Naturally, the team that qualified the most men had the greatest opportunity to win the meet.

The Penn coach was in high spirits the night before the meet. He made the rounds of his team members before he retired. He came into Creed's room and said, "Creed, if we do our best tomorrow, we will run away with it."

The coach hesitated. "Creed, I'm having the boys take a little sherry wine tonight. I want you to have some, just a little of course."

"I won't do it, Coach."

"But, Creed, I'm not going to get you drunk. I know what you 'Mormons' believe. I'm giving you this as a tonic, just to put you all on your metal."

"It won't do me any good, Coach; I can't take it."

The coach replied, "Remember, Creed, you're the captain of the team and our best point winner. Fourteen thousand students are looking to you personally to win this meet. If you fail

us, we'll lose. I ought to know what is good for you."

Creed knew that other coaches felt that a little wine was useful when men have trained muscles and nerves almost to the snapping point. He knew also that what the coach was asking him to do was against all that he had been taught from his early childhood. He looked his coach in the eye and said, "I won't take it."

The coach replied, "You're a funny fellow, Creed. You won't take tea at the training table. You have ideas of your own. Well, I'm going to let you do as you please."

The coach then left the captain of the team in a state of extreme anxiety. Suppose he made a poor showing tomorrow. What could he say to his coach? He was going up against the fastest men in the world. Nothing less than his best would do. His stubbornness might lose the meet for Penn. His teammates were told what to do, and they had responded. They believed in their coach. What right did he have to disobey? There was only one reason. He had been taught all his life to obey the Word of Wisdom.

It was a critical hour in this young man's life. With all the spiritual forces of his nature pressing in on him, he knelt down and earnestly asked the Lord to give him a testimony as to the source of this revelation that he had believed in and obeyed. Then he went to his bed and slept in sound slumber.

Creed Haymond wins his races

The next morning the coach came into his room and asked, "How are you feeling, Creed?"

"Fine," the captain answered cheerfully.

"All of the other fellows are ill. I don't know what's the matter with them," the coach said seriously.

"Maybe it's the tonic you gave them, Coach."

"Maybe so," answered the coach.

Two o'clock found 20,000 spectators in their seats waiting for the meet to begin. As the events got under way, it was plain that something was wrong with the wonderful Penn team. Event after event, the Penn team performed well below what was expected of them. Some members were even too ill to participate.

The 100- and 220-yard dash were Creed's races. The Penn team desperately needed him to win for them. He was up against the five fastest men in American colleges. As the men took their marks for the 100-yard dash and the pistol was shot, every man sprang forward into the air and touched the earth at a run—that is, all except one—Creed Haymond. The runner using the second lane in the trials—the lane that Creed was running in at this particular event—had kicked a hole for his toe an inch or two behind the spot where Haymond had just chosen for his. They didn't use starting blocks in those days. With the tremendous thrust that Creed gave, the narrow wedge of earth broke through, and he came down on his knee behind the line.

He got up and tried to make up for the poor start. At 60 yards, he was last in the race. Then he seemed to fly past the fifth man, then the fourth, then the third, then the second. Close to the tape, heart bursting with strain, he swept into that climax with whirlwind swiftness and ran past the final man to victory.

Through some mistake in arrangements, the semifinals for the 220 were not completed until almost the close of the meet. With the same bad breaks that had followed the Penn team all day, Creed Haymond had been placed in the last qualifying heat for the 220-yard dash. Then, five minutes after winning it, he was called upon to start the final 220, the last event of the day. One of the other men who had run in an earlier heat rushed up to him. "Tell the starter

you demand a rest before running again. You're entitled to it under the rules. I've hardly caught my breath yet and I ran in the heat before yours."

Creed went panting to the starter and begged for more time. The official said he would give him 10 minutes. But the crowd was clamoring for the final race to begin. Regretfully he called the men to their marks. Under ordinary conditions Creed would not have feared this race. He was probably the fastest man in the world at that distance, but yet he had already run three races that afternoon—one the heart-stopping 100-yard dash.

The starter ordered the men to their marks, raised his pistol, and with a puff of smoke the race began. This time the Penn captain literally shot from his marks. Soon Creed emerged from the crowd and took the lead. He sprinted all the way up the field, and with a burst of speed and eight yards ahead of the nearest man, he broke the tape, winning the second race—the 220-yard dash.

Penn had lost the meet, but their captain had astounded the fans with his excellent runs.

At the end of that strange day, as Creed Haymond was going to bed, there suddenly came to his memory his question of the night before regarding the divinity of the Word of Wisdom. The procession of that peculiar series of events then passed before his mind—his teammates had taken wine and had failed; his abstinence had brought victories that even amazed himself. The sweet, simple assurance of the Spirit came to him: the Word of Wisdom is of God. (Adapted from Joseph J. Cannon, "Speed and the Spirit," *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1928, 1001-7.)

Be an example in living the law of health

I wonder in this age if it is enough to just have the courage to say no, or do we have a further responsibility to be of ser-

vice to others in helping them overcome the great curse that is now plaguing our society? There was one time in my life that I wished that I had exerted a little more influence in preventing a friend from partaking of a harmful substance. We were on a Scout outing in Yellowstone. Late one evening we went to see Old Faithful erupt. Walking back to our tents, my friend stopped me in a dark, secluded spot and took out a can of beer. I don't know where he managed to get it. He said, "I have a treat for us"; then he offered to share the can of beer with me. Of course, my home training and teachings of great leaders in the auxiliaries and priesthood had been such that this was no temptation for me and that I was not to accept his offer. He drank the whole can, and I made no effort to dissuade or stop him. It had a harmful effect on our friendship. I really don't know why. Maybe it was because I had a sense of guilt for not being more aggressive in preventing him from partaking of the beverage. And maybe on his part, he was afraid that I would reveal what occurred in a way that it would get back to his parents. Over the years I have been saddened by the loss of that friendship.

Today the curse of drink and drugs is becoming a national nightmare. It is the cause of most of our crime, accidents, loss of employment, and the breakup of our homes. You great young men of the

Aaronic Priesthood will be required to pay the social costs for this dreaded disease as you move forward into your adult lives. Surely something must be done to stop this destructive force. I challenge you to stand up to your peers as an example of righteous living. I know the Lord will fulfill his promise to you by blessing you with health, with knowledge, with wisdom that will set you apart from the rest of the world. Your righteous example will also bless the lives of many, many others.

God bless you that you will have the courage to live the way you should and be an example of one living the great gospel principles we hold so dear is my humble prayer in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Perry. I may say that I heard Creed Haymond tell that story personally when I was a boy. He lived in our stake. He was on the high council, and he came and told it to the Aaronic Priesthood boys of our ward. It was very impressive. He later presided over the Northern States Mission. He was a successful dentist in this community and a man of great faith.

Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy will now speak to us.

Elder Joe J. Christensen

The Savior is counting on you

A few years ago following general conference, our four-year-old grandson Andrew asked his mother, "Mommy, is Jesus counting on me?" His mother answered, "Oh yes, Andrew, Jesus *is* counting on you. He wants you to obey Mom and Dad, to do what is right, and *espe-*

cially to be kind to your little brother, Benny." This four-year-old thought about that for a few moments and said, "Mommy, tell Him *not* to count on me!"

Fortunately, by the time Andrew receives the Aaronic Priesthood, he will have come to know that Jesus *is* counting on him.

Tonight let's consider three important ways in which the Lord is counting on you who are privileged to bear the Aaronic Priesthood.

Be a champion of those who need you

First, the Savior is counting on you to be a champion of those who need you.

In a high school not far from here, a young mentally handicapped student we will call Frank wanted so much to be accepted by the popular crowd. He would follow them around, always on the outside looking in, hoping to be included but never achieving it.

One day in the cafeteria, some of the more popular boys and girls encouraged Frank to get up on the table and dance. Thinking he would please them, he did it. In his awkward way, he twisted and twirled. The group yelled, clapped their hands, and laughed. They were laughing *at* him, and Frank thought they were laughing *with* him.

A few tables away, Dave was eating lunch with a friend and watching it all. He courageously leaped up, faced that crowd of tormentors, and through clenched teeth said, "I've had as much of this as I can stand!" He helped Frank down and said, "Frank, you come and have lunch with us."

The Savior is counting on you to be a champion of those who need you, and they are all around you—in your school, in your neighborhood, in your family.

At a 20-year high school reunion, one of the graduates had a surprising conversation with one of her classmates that went something like this:

"I came to this reunion after all these years hoping you would be here so I could thank you. My high school experience was hard for me. You may not have known it, but you were the only friend I had in high school. I wondered if maybe the seminary teacher had assigned you to be nice to me. Did he?"

"No. He didn't assign me."

"Well, you didn't know it, but every day I looked for you because I knew that you would talk to me. You made me feel better about myself. Now I am married and have a large family. During these past years I have thought many times of what you meant to me, and I wanted to tell you that."

There are those who wake up every morning dreading to go to school, or even to a Church activity, because they worry about how they will be treated. You have the power to change their lives for the better. You are a bearer of the priesthood of God, and the Lord is counting on you to be a builder and give them a lift. Think less about yourself and more about the power you have to assist others, even those within your own family.

A 14-year-old sister was all dressed up to go to a Young Women activity at a time in her life when she felt very unsure about herself. She was quietly and self-consciously inching her way toward the front door, hoping not to be noticed by all the young men in the living room who were visiting with her older brother Russell. She was given a life-changing boost when her older brother interrupted his conversation and said to her in front of his friends, "My, Emily, you look pretty tonight!" A small thing? No. There are young women who claim that they would not have made it through those growing-up years without the encouragement and support of their older brothers.

Last month in the area of Salt Lake City, a fellow Aaronic Priesthood bearer, Zachary Snarr, was brutally and senselessly murdered. Among the many wonderful things said about him by family and friends was that he rarely let a day go by without telling his mother how much he loved her. His cheerful and loving nature around their home leaves them with priceless memories. Your mothers need you to be a champion of

them. Never should a bearer of the Aaronic Priesthood be guilty of saying anything discourteous or disrespectful to his mother.

The scriptures teach us that whenever we are abusive, thoughtless, or unkind to others, “the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice” (3 Nephi 9:2); also, that “the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen [or the end] to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (D&C 121:37).

Maybe you have thought that doing these little kindnesses doesn’t make much difference, but as Alma said, “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6). We also read: “Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. [You are a great work in progress.] And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

Avoid evil in the media

Next, the Savior is counting on you to avoid the immoral trash that surrounds you in the media.

Satan has made great inroads into the lives of some Latter-day Saints through the evil in the media. I am confident that the great majority of you have not been guilty of serious sexual sin, but many are placing themselves in a path that could lead to it. A bishop reported that he had observed that the spiritual level of the young priesthood bearers in his ward was declining. Through his personal interviews with them, he discovered that many of them were watching R-rated movies. When he asked them where they went to see such trash, they said, “We don’t go anywhere. We watch them at home. We have cable television, and when our parents are gone we watch anything we want to.”

Fathers, you may want to reconsider having unrestricted cable or unsuper-

vised television sets in your home and particularly in your children’s bedrooms.

It is very unreasonable to suppose that exposure to profanity, nudity, sex, and violence has no negative effects on us. We can’t roll around in the mud without getting dirty.

It is a concern that some of our young Latter-day Saints, as well as their parents, regularly watch R-rated and other inappropriate movies and videos—one more reason why the “devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice” (3 Nephi 9:2).

Just a few months ago the Lord’s prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, shared with the youth, and with all of us, this clear and unmistakable counsel:

“Be clean. I cannot emphasize that enough. Be clean. It is so very, very important, and you at your age are in such temptation all the time. It is thrown at you on television. It is thrown at you in books and magazines and videos. You do not have to rent them. Don’t do it. Just don’t do it. Don’t look at them. If somebody proposes that you sit around all night watching some of that sleazy stuff, you say, ‘It’s not for me.’ Stay away from it” (Denver, Colorado, youth meeting, 14 Apr. 1996).

The Lord and His living prophets are counting on you to avoid the trash that surrounds you in the media. When anyone chooses to ignore or defiantly go against the counsel of the living prophet, he is on very shaky ground.

Remember that when Joseph was tempted by Potiphar’s wife to be immoral with her, he “fled, and got him out” (Genesis 39:12).

Temptations are all around us, and today with the advent of the Internet, they are increasing. There is much that is positive in the world of the media, but there is so much that is negative. If we permit ourselves to become involved with the negative, there will be much more cause for the devil to laugh and his angels to rejoice.

Be worthy to enter the temple and serve missions

Finally, the Savior is counting on you to be worthy to enter the temple and to fill an honorable mission.

An acquaintance of mine grew up not far from here. By the time he was 14 years old, he was over six feet tall and very uncoordinated. He said, "One afternoon when I was in a 10th-grade seminary class, the Spirit really touched me. I came to know that the gospel literally was true. I made up my mind that day that I wanted to serve the Lord in any way I could."

By his senior year, he was well over six feet tall and much more coordinated. Many universities offered him scholarships to play basketball. After his first year playing at a university, he told his coach that he would like to be excused for two years to go on a mission. The coach said, "If you leave, you can be sure of one thing: you will never again wear one of our basketball uniforms!" Many thought that his "mission" ought to be playing basketball. Even some family members, including his parents, tried to convince him not to serve a mission. But he was totally committed. He was willing to give everything to the Lord—the scholarship, the applause of the fans, and the excitement of playing. He knew what the Lord was counting on him to do. He was called, and he served an honorable mission.

When he returned two years later, he was even taller and about 35 pounds heavier. His coach decided to repent. He was permitted to wear one of those basketball uniforms again, and in his senior year, his team not only won the conference championship but went on to the finals in national competition.

The Lord's commandment to His Apostles was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15).

Modern prophets have taught that every young man who is physically and mentally able should prepare himself to serve an honorable mission. The Lord did not say, "Go on a mission if it fits your schedule, or if you happen to feel like it, or if it doesn't interfere with your scholarship, your romance, or your educational plans." Preaching the gospel is a commandment and not merely a suggestion. It is a blessing and a privilege and not a sacrifice. Remember, even though for some of you there may be very tempting reasons for you not to serve a full-time mission, the Lord and His prophets are counting on you.

More than ever before in my life, I know that Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church, and it is led by living prophets. The Lord and His prophets are counting on you to:

1. Be a champion of those who need you.
2. Avoid the trash that surrounds you in the media.
3. Be worthy to enter the temple and fill an honorable mission.

I pray that the world will be a better place because you have lived in it. That is our task, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just heard Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President James E. Faust

My dear brethren, we are all privileged that so many of us in so many countries can be together in this great meeting of the priesthood of the Church. All of us are grateful that our beloved prophet and leader, President Gordon B. Hinckley, is present. We all rejoice that President Hinckley has been able to meet with so many Saints in so many lands since he was called as President of the Church, and he has blessed them greatly. We are grateful for his inspired leadership. I am humbled beyond the power of expression to serve with President Hinckley, President Monson, members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and the other General Authorities of the Church. I have a most profound respect and appreciation for each of them.

Honesty—a moral compass

Brethren, we all should be concerned about the society in which we live, a society which is like a moral Armageddon. I am concerned about its effect upon us as the holders of the priesthood of God. There are so many in the world who do not seem to know or care about right or wrong. The 13th article of faith is known to all of us. I repeat it for emphasis:

“We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”

We all need to know what it means to be honest. Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth telling, truth speaking, truth living, and truth loving. John, a nine-year-old Swiss pioneer child who was in one of the handcart companies, is

an example of honesty. His father put a chunk of buffalo meat in the handcart and said it was to be saved for Sunday dinner. John said, “I was so very hungry and the meat smelled so good to me while pushing at the handcart that I could not resist. I had a little pocket knife. . . . Although I expected a severe whipping when father found it out, I cut off little pieces each day. I would chew them so long that they got white and perfectly tasteless. When father came to get the meat he asked me if I had been cutting off some of it. I said ‘Yes. I was so hungry I could not let it alone.’ Instead of giving me a scolding or whipping, father turned away and wiped tears from his eyes.”¹

I wish to speak to you frankly about being honest. Honesty is a moral compass to guide us in our lives. You young men are under great pressure to learn the technology that is expanding and will continue to expand so rapidly. However, the tremendous push to excel in secular learning sometimes tempts people to compromise that which is more important—their honesty and integrity.

J Ballard Washburn challenges cheaters

Cheating in school is a form of self-deception. We go to school to learn. We cheat ourselves when we coast on the efforts and scholarship of someone else.

A friend related this experience her husband had while attending medical school. “Getting into medical school is pretty competitive, and the desire to do well and be successful puts a great deal of pressure on the new incoming freshmen. My husband had worked hard on his studies and went to attend his first examination. The honor system was expected behavior at the medical school. The professor passed out the examination and left the room. Within a short time, students started to pull little cheat

papers out from under their papers or from their pockets. My husband recalled his heart beginning to pound as he realized it is pretty hard to compete against cheaters. About that time a tall, lanky student stood up in the back of the room and stated, 'I left my hometown and put my wife and three little babies in an upstairs apartment and worked very hard to get into medical school. And I'll turn in the first one of you who cheats, and *you better believe it!*' They believed it. There were many sheepish expressions, and those cheat papers started to disappear as fast as they had appeared. He set a standard for the class which eventually graduated the largest group in the school's history."²

The young, lanky medical student who challenged the cheaters was J Ballard Washburn, who became a respected physician and in later years received special recognition from the Utah Medical Association for his outstanding service as a medical doctor. He also served as a General Authority and is now the president of the Las Vegas Nevada Temple.

In reality, we are in competition only with ourselves. Others can challenge and motivate us, but we must reach down deep into our souls and call forth our God-given intelligence and capabilities. We cannot do this when we depend on the efforts of someone else.

Honesty is a principle, and we have our moral agency to determine how we will apply this principle. We have the agency to make choices, but ultimately we will be accountable for each choice we make. We may deceive others, but there is One we will never deceive. From the Book of Mormon we learn, "The keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name."³

Interview with tough army officers

In the fateful war year of 1942, I was inducted into the United States Army Air Corps. One cold night at Chanute Field, Illinois, I was given all-night guard duty. As I walked around my post, I meditated and pondered the whole miserable, long night through. By morning I had come to some firm conclusions. I was engaged to be married and knew that I could not support my wife on a private's pay. In a day or two, I filed my application for Officer's Candidate School. Shortly thereafter, I was summoned before the board of inquiry. My qualifications were few, but I had had two years of college and had finished a mission for the Church in South America.

The questions asked of me at the officers' board of inquiry took a very surprising turn. Nearly all of them centered upon my beliefs: "Do you smoke?" "Do you drink?" "What do you think of others who smoke and drink?" I had no trouble answering these questions.

"Do you pray?" "Do you believe that an officer should pray?" The officer asking these questions was a hard-bitten career soldier. He did not look like he prayed very often. I pondered. Would I give him offense if I answered how I truly believed? I wanted to be an officer very much so that I would not have to do all-night guard duty and KP and clean latrines, but mostly so my sweetheart and I could afford to be married.

I decided not to equivocate. I admitted that I did pray and that I felt that officers might seek divine guidance as some truly great generals had done. I told them that I thought that officers should be prepared to lead their men in all appropriate activities, if the occasion requires, including prayer.

More interesting questions came. "In times of war, should not the moral code be relaxed? Does not the stress of battle justify men in doing things that

they would not do when at home under normal situations?"

I recognized that here was a chance perhaps to make some points and look broad-minded. I suspected that the men who were asking me this question did not live by the standards that I had been taught. The thought flashed through my mind that perhaps I could say that I had my own beliefs, but I did not wish to impose them on others. But there seemed to flash before my mind the faces of the many people to whom I had taught the law of chastity as a missionary. In the end I simply said, "I do not believe there is a double standard of morality."

I left the hearing resigned to the fact that these hard-bitten officers would not like the answers I had given to their questions and would surely score me very low. A few days later when the scores were posted, to my astonishment I had passed. I was in the first group taken for Officer's Candidate School! I graduated, became a second lieutenant, married my sweetheart, and we have "lived together happily ever after."

This was one of the critical crossroads of my life. Not all of the experiences in my life turned out that way or the way I wanted them to, but they have always been strengthening to my faith.

Stealing dishonors the priesthood

Stealing is all too common throughout the world. For many, their reasoning seems to be, "What can I get away with?" or "It's OK to do it as long as I don't get caught!" Stealing takes many forms, including shoplifting; taking cars, stereos, CD players, video games, and other items that belong to someone else; stealing time, money, and merchandise from employers; stealing from the government by the misuse of the taxpayers' money or making false claims on our income tax returns; or borrowing without any intention of repayment. No one has ever gained anything of value by theft. In the

play *Othello*, Shakespeare has Iago teach a great truth:

Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis
something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been
slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good
name
Robs me of that which not enriches
him
And makes me poor indeed.⁴

The stealing of anything is unworthy of a priesthood holder.

Any moral dishonesty is inconsistent with exercising the priesthood of God. In fact, the priesthood can be exercised only on the principle of righteousness.⁵ When exercised "in any degree of unrighteousness," it is withdrawn.⁶ You just can't have it both ways. By being dishonest, people cheat only themselves.

Tell the whole truth

There are different shades of truth telling. When we tell little white lies, we become progressively color-blind. It is better to remain silent than to mislead. The degree to which each of us tells the whole truth and nothing but the truth depends on our conscience.

"David Casstevens of the *Dallas Morning News* tells a story about Frank Szymanski, a Notre Dame center in the 1940s, who had been called as a witness in a civil suit at South Bend [Indiana].

"Are you on the Notre Dame football team this year?" the judge asked.

"Yes, Your Honor."

"What position?"

"Center, Your Honor."

"How good a center?"

"Szymanski squirmed in his seat, but said firmly, 'Sir, I'm the best center Notre Dame has ever had.'"

"Coach Frank Leahy, who was in the courtroom, was surprised. Szymanski always had been modest and unassuming. So when the proceedings were over, he

took Szymanski aside and asked why he had made such a statement. Szymanski blushed.

"I hated to do it, Coach," he said. "But, after all, I was under oath.""

Achieve honestly, not on false merit

This summer the Olympic Games were held in Atlanta, Georgia. Many of the athletes had trained most of their lives to compete. Mere hundredths of a second separated the gold, silver, or bronze medals as well as the possibility of fortunes in commercial endorsements.

Some athletes have been known to cheat by taking prohibited chemicals into their bodies in an effort to temporarily enhance their performance. Whether in sports or in the game of life, we need to achieve honestly, under our own steam, and not on false merit.

Bobby Polacio's honesty

I would like to tell you a story of an excellent athlete—a young man with superb character. He never went to the Olympics, but he stands as tall as any Olympian because he was honest with himself and with his God.

The account is told by a coach in a junior high school. He states:

"Today was test day in climbing the rope. We climb from a standing start to a point 15 feet high. [My job is] to train and teach the boys to negotiate this distance in as few seconds as possible.

"The school record for the event is 2.1 seconds. It has stood for three years. Today this record was broken. . . .

"For three years Bobby Polacio, a 14½-year-old ninth-grade . . . boy, [trained and worked, consumed by his dream] of breaking this record.

"In his first of three attempts, Bobby climbed the rope in 2.1 seconds, tying the record. On the second try the watch stopped at 2.0 seconds flat, a record! But as he descended the rope and the

entire class gathered around to check the watch, I knew I must ask Bobby a question. There was a slight doubt in my mind whether or not the board at the 15-foot height had been touched. If he missed, it was so very, very close—not more than a fraction of an inch—and only Bobby knew this answer.

"As he walked toward me, expressionless, I said, 'Bobby, did you touch?' If he had said, 'Yes,' the record he had dreamed of since he was a skinny seventh-grader and had worked for almost daily would be his, and he knew I would trust his word.

"With the class already cheering him for his performance, the slim, brown-skinned boy shook his head negatively. And in this simple gesture, I witnessed a moment of greatness. . . .

" . . . And it was with effort through a tight throat that I told the class: 'This boy has not set a record in the rope climb. No, he has set a much finer record for you and everyone to strive for. He has told the . . . truth.'

"I turned to Bobby and said, 'Bobby, I'm proud of you. You've just set a record many athletes never attain. Now, in your last try I want you to jump a few inches higher on the takeoff.' . . .

"After the other boys had finished their next turns, and Bobby came up . . . for his try, a strange stillness came over the gymnasium. Fifty boys and one coach [watched] breathlessly [as] Bobby Polacio . . . climbed the rope in 1.9 seconds! A school record, a city record, and perhaps close to a national record for a junior high school boy.

"When the bell rang and I walked away, . . . I was thinking: 'Bobby, . . . at 14 you are a better man than I. Thank you for climbing so very, very high today.'"

Honor every form of truth

All of us can climb high when we honor every form of truth. As President

Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "Let the truth be taught by example and precept—that to steal is evil, that to cheat is wrong, that to lie is a reproach to anyone who indulges in it."⁹

Holding and exercising the priesthood of God is a marvelous blessing. We are privileged to be part of the unprecedented unrolling of this holy work. We are seeing the remarkable progress of this Church in lands we never dreamed of. Brethren, I am confident the Lord will continue to bless us as we remain honest, faithful, and true to ourselves and to this great cause. The progress of this work is a testimony of its truthfulness, yet each of us can have our own witness through the gift of the Spirit. I have such a witness. That witness permeates the very depths of my soul. May the Lord bless us as we go forth in this holy cause, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (1960), 189–90.
2. As related by Janette Hales Beckham.

3. 2 Nephi 9:41.

4. *Othello*, act 3, scene 3, lines 157–61.

5. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.

6. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.

7. "Nothing but the Truth," in Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, comps., *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (1993), 91–92.

8. In Stanley E. Miller and others, comps., *Especially for Mormons*, 5 vols. (1972), 1:185–86.

9. "Four Simple Things to Help Our Families and Our Nations," *Ensign*, Sept. 1996, 7.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Faust, for that great message.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Let Us All Press On," and President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Let Us All Press On."

President Thomas S. Monson

President Faust, I wish you would tell the clocks in the Tabernacle to be honest. They've changed 2 hours and 40 minutes during the last song! I can't believe it. Take a look, brethren.

"Be thou an example"

As I contemplate the vast audience assembled for this general priesthood meeting of the Church, I seek the help of our Heavenly Father. I approach my responsibility to speak to you with the deepest humility.

Of late I have been studying the teachings of the early Apostles, including their calls, their ministries, and their

very lives. It is a fascinating experience and brings one closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tonight may I share with you a profound plea given by the Apostle Paul to his beloved Timothy. Paul's words are applicable to each of us: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. . . . Neglect not the gift that is in thee. . . . Meditate upon these things."¹

Brethren, ours is the opportunity to learn, the privilege to obey, and the duty to serve. In our time there are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save.

Paying tithing strengthens us

For example, consider the law of tithing. The honest payment of tithing provides a person the inner strength and commitment to comply with the other commandments.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has declared: "There has been laid upon the Church a tremendous responsibility. Tithing is the source of income for the Church to carry forward its mandated activities. The need is always greater than the availability. God help us to be faithful in observing this great principle which comes from him with his marvelous promise."²

From Malachi we read: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. . . . Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."³

All of us can afford to pay tithing. In reality, none of us can afford not to pay tithing. The Lord will strengthen our resolve. He will open a way to comply.

A family pays tithing and is blessed

May I share with you a letter I received some months ago which provides such an example? The letter begins:

"We live on the edge of a small town, and our neighbor uses our pasture for his cattle and as payment provides us with all the beef we want. Each time we get new meat, we have some of the present supply left over; and since we live in a student ward, we take meat to some students we feel might have use for some good beef.

"During the time my wife was serving in a Relief Society presidency, her secretary was a student's wife, the mother

of eight children. Her husband, Jack, had recently been called as ward clerk.

"My wife had always prayed to know which students might need our help with our excess meat. When she told me she felt we should give some meat to Jack and his family, I was very concerned that we might offend them. So was she. We both were worried because they were a very independent family.

"A few days later, my wife said she still felt we should take the meat to them, and I reluctantly agreed to go along. When we delivered the meat, my wife's hands were actually shaking, and I was very nervous. The children opened the door, and when they heard why we were there, they began dancing around. The parents were reserved but pleasant. When we drove away, my wife and I both were so relieved and happy that they had accepted our gift.

"A few months later our friend Jack got up in testimony meeting and related the following. He said that all his life he had had a hard time paying tithing. With such a large family, they used all the money he made just to get by. When he became ward clerk, he saw all the other people paying tithing and felt he needed to also. He did so for a couple of months, and all was well. Then one month he had a problem. In his job, he completed work and was paid a few months later. He could see that the family was going to be far short of money. He and his wife decided to share the problem with their children. If they paid their tithing, they would run out of food on about the 20th of the month. If they didn't pay their tithing, they could buy enough food to last until the next paycheck. Jack said he wanted to buy [the] food, but the children said they wanted to pay tithing—so Jack paid the tithing, and they all prayed.

"A few days after paying their tithing, we had shown up with our package of meat for them. With the meat, added to what they had, there was no problem

having enough food until the next paycheck.

"There are so many lessons here for me—for instance, always listen to my wife—but for me the most important is that the prayers of people are almost always answered by the actions of others."

Counsel to returning missionaries

I recognize that there are thousands of missionaries attending this priesthood meeting tonight. I wish to share a word or two especially with you. During the time I served as a mission president, and then in thousands of missionary interviews as a member of the Twelve, I said to the missionaries I interviewed, "When you return to your home, I ask that you make three commitments." Eagerly, without knowing what the commitments were, they would nod their approval. I then shared with them this counsel:

1. Prepare well for your vocation, profession, or trade, and be the very best you can be at what you choose to do.

2. Quoting Elder Bruce R. McConkie: "Marry the right person [at the right time], in the right place, [and] by the right authority."⁴ Thus far, their responses were spontaneous and enthusiastic. Then I would counsel:

3. Always be active in the Church. Some of the missionaries would look a little quizzical before responding, and I would say, "Let me put the matter another way. Three words provide the formula: *Pay your tithing.*" Each would affirm determination to do so. I truly believe that the payment of an honest tithing will go a long way to ensure continued activity in the Church.

Giving fast offerings blesses all

I could say much more concerning tithing, but tonight I would also wish to address the other part of Malachi's message—namely, offerings.

The concept of fast offerings appears as early as the time of Isaiah when,

speaking of the true fast, he encouraged people to fast and "to deal thy bread to the hungry, and . . . bring the poor that are cast out to thy house."⁵ The Prophet Joseph instituted the practice of collecting fast offerings for the poor in Kirtland, Ohio. And later at Nauvoo, Illinois, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles sent a general letter to the Church defining "the principle of fasts," stating: "Let this be an ensample to all saints, and there will never be any lack for bread: When the poor are starving, let those who have, fast one day and give what they otherwise would have eaten to the bishops for the poor, and every one will abound for a long time; and this is one great and important principle of fasts approved of the Lord. And so long as the saints will all live to this principle with glad hearts and cheerful countenances they will always have an abundance."⁶

The prophets of our day and time have been equally specific. Harold B. Lee counseled: "When you think about it, there is so much promised in the gospel for so little required on our part. For example, the ordinance of baptism is given us for the remission of sins, for entrance into the kingdom—a new birth; the gift of the Holy Ghost gives us the right to companionship with one of the Godhead; administration to the sick qualifies the individual with faith for a special blessing; by paying our tithing, the windows of heaven may be opened unto us; by fasting and by paying our fast offerings, we are told that then we might call on the Lord and He will hear our cry and our call."⁷

President Lee's successor in the Presidency of the Church, President Spencer W. Kimball, said: "We wish to remind all the Saints of the blessings that come from observing the regular fast and contributing as generous a fast offering as we can, and as we are in a position to give. Wherever we can, we should give many times the value of the meals from which we abstained."⁸

The honor of collecting fast offerings

President Kimball added: "Collecting fast offerings is an important [duty]. I thought it was a great honor to be a deacon. My father was always considerate . . . and . . . permitted me to take the buggy and horse to gather fast offerings. My responsibility included that part of the town in which I lived, but it was quite a long walk to the homes, and a sack of flour or a bottle of fruit or vegetables or bread became quite heavy as it accumulated. So the buggy was very comfortable and functional. We have changed to cash in later days, but it was commodities in my day. It was a very great honor to do this service for my Heavenly Father: and though times have changed, when money is given generally instead of commodities, it is still a great honor to perform this service."⁹

I imagine you young deacons today also wouldn't mind taking a horse and buggy to gather fast offerings!

I remember when, as a young deacon, I would cover a portion of the ward on fast Sunday morning, giving the small envelope to each family, waiting while a contribution was placed in it, and then returning it to the bishop. On one such occasion, an elderly member, Brother Wright, welcomed me at the door and, with aged hands, fumbled at the tie of the envelope and placed within it a quarter. His eyes fairly twinkled as he made his contribution. He told me of a time years before when the Relief Society president, Sister Balmforth, with food collected from those who had given, carried to his home in a small red wagon food for his cupboard and provided gratitude for his soul. He described her as "an angel sent from heaven." I have not forgotten Eddie Wright.

Taking deacons to Welfare Square

Deacons and others of the Aaronic Priesthood who perform today this sa-

cred service, please know this to be a sacred duty. I recall that as a bishop, one morning the boys in the ward over which I presided had assembled—sleepy-eyed, a bit disheveled, and mildly complaining about arising so early to fulfill their assignment. Not a word of reproof was spoken, but during the following week we escorted the boys to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City for a guided tour. They saw firsthand a lame sister operating the telephone switchboard, an older man stocking shelves, women arranging clothing to be distributed—even a blind person placing labels on cans of food. Here were individuals earning their sustenance through their contributed labors. A penetrating silence came over the boys as they witnessed how their effort each month helped to collect the sacred fast offering funds which aided the needy and provided employment for those who otherwise would be idle.

From that hallowed day forward, we no longer had to urge our deacons with regard to collecting fast offerings. On fast Sunday mornings, they were present at 7:00 A.M., dressed in their Sunday best, anxious to do their duty as holders of the Aaronic Priesthood. No longer were they simply distributing and collecting envelopes. They were helping to provide food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless—all after the way of the Lord. Their smiles were more frequent, their pace more eager, their very souls more subdued. Perhaps now they were marching to the beat of a different drummer; perhaps now they better understood the classic passage, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."¹⁰

Cleaning the poultry farm

In the vicinity where I lived and served, we operated a poultry project. Most of the time it was an efficiently operated welfare project, supplying to the

storehouse thousands of dozens of fresh eggs and hundreds of pounds of dressed poultry. On a few occasions, however, the experience of being volunteer city farmers provided not only blisters on the hands, but frustration of heart and mind. For instance, I shall ever remember the time we gathered together the teenage Aaronic Priesthood young men to really give the poultry project a spring cleaning. Our enthusiastic and energetic throng gathered at the project and in a speedy fashion uprooted, gathered, and burned large quantities of weeds and debris. By the light of the glowing bonfires, we ate hot dogs and congratulated ourselves on a job well done. The project was now neat and tidy. However, there was just one disastrous problem. The noise and the fires had so disturbed the fragile and temperamental population of several thousand laying hens that most of them went into a sudden molt and ceased laying. Thereafter we tolerated a few weeds, that we might produce more eggs.

Blessings of providing for those in need

No member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who has canned peas, topped beets, hauled hay, or shoveled coal in such a cause ever forgets or regrets the experience of helping provide for those in need. Devoted men and women help to operate this vast and inspired welfare program. In reality, the plan would never succeed on effort alone, for this program operates through faith after the way of the Lord.

Brethren, you and your families are to be commended for the manner in which you also contribute generously to the humanitarian efforts of the Church throughout the world. We provide essential help to the needy in times of natural disasters, starvation, sickness, and events that can strike anywhere. Emergency food supplies, clothing, shelter, and medical equipment bring succor to the suf-

fering and peace to the recipient and to the giver—even the peace promised of the Lord. Projects provided by your generosity bring health and happiness through the drilling of wells to provide uncontaminated water to those who have never had such. Children walk who once would have been crippled by polio, thanks to your contributions which provided the vaccine to prevent such tragedies.

Do more to bless those in need

Should you be in Salt Lake City, visit the Sort Center, where millions of pounds of contributed clothing are received, sorted, packed, and shipped to the needy throughout the world as well as to pockets of poverty situated closer to home. One is reminded of the statement made by the Prophet Joseph: "A man filled with the love of God is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race."¹¹

Most of you are home teachers. You are the eyes and ears of the bishops in seeking out the poor and the afflicted. While doing their duty, vigilant home teachers have observed unemployed fathers anxious to obtain work; distraught mothers seeing their tiny broods suffer; children crying from hunger, inadequately clothed to protect them from the cold of winter. In one instance, all of the family members were sleeping on the floor because they had no beds. Without delay, needed help was provided.

Remember the counsel from King Benjamin described in Mosiah: "Ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish."¹²

Fortunately and commendably, the Church is doing more than it has ever done to relieve suffering, to satisfy hun-

ger, to prevent and cure illness, and to bless those in need. There is more to do.

Brethren, my prayer is that we be "example[s] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."¹³ Then shall we be recipients of the Lord's promise:

"I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory."¹⁴

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Timothy 4:12, 14, 15.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 61; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 41.
3. Malachi 3:8, 10.
4. *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 118.
5. Isaiah 58:7.
6. *History of the Church*, 7:413.
7. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 366-67.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 121; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 80.

9. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 146.
10. Matthew 25:40.
11. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 174.
12. Mosiah 4:16.
13. 1 Timothy 4:12.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5-6.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. I hope they can get the clocks going by then. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

We express our very deep gratitude to the Provo MTC men's choir for the inspiring music this evening.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "Rise Up, O Men of God." The benediction will be offered by Elder Richard B. Wirthlin of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Travels to meet with the Saints

My dear brethren, we have received good counsel this evening.

Since we met last April, I have been much out among our people. I have determined that for so long as I have the strength to do so, I will get out and meet with the Saints I love, both the youth and the adults. I have in recent months participated in many meetings with more than 300,000 Latter-day Saints in 17 different nations. We have traveled from sea to sea across the United States, and extensively in Asia and in Europe. I do not enjoy travel. I weary of it. Jet lag, for me, is a very real thing. But I do enjoy looking into the faces and shaking the hands of faithful Latter-day Saints,

and I thank those who have made this possible.

As I have gone about the world, I have had opportunity for interviews with representatives of the media. This is always a worrisome undertaking because one never knows what will be asked. These reporters are men and women of great capacity, who know how to ask questions that come at you like a javelin. It is not exactly an enjoyable experience, but it represents an opportunity to tell the world something of our story. As Paul said to Festus and Agrippa, "This thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).

We have something that this world needs to hear about, and these interviews afford an opportunity to give voice to that.

Interview with Mike Wallace

One of the most extensive interviews was with Mr. Mike Wallace of the CBS *60 Minutes* program. I express appreciation to Senator Orrin Hatch, Willard Marriott Jr., and Steve Young (who ought to be here this evening—and probably *is* somewhere), who participated in this program.

Millions saw the outcome this last Easter Sunday, as Elder Haight said this morning. The editors of the program distilled about 15 minutes out of many hours of filming.

I developed a deep respect for Mr. Wallace. He is a very able professional. He was courteous, respectful, incisive in his questions—one who might be described as a tough, streetwise reporter with long experience, but a gentleman in the best sense of the word.

I first met him at a luncheon at the Harvard Club in New York about a year ago. He then came to Salt Lake City on two different occasions and interviewed me at great length in my office. I have thought this evening to read parts of those interviews as they were recorded—his questions and my extemporaneous answers just as they were given and without editing except to delete areas in the interest of time and add in brackets an occasional needed word. I do so in the spirit of reaffirming the position of this Church on a number of different and significant matters of general concern. For the most part, this is from the material not used in the broadcast.

Here are Mr. Wallace's questions and my extemporaneous, unrehearsed answers.

Correcting misconceptions

Mr. Wallace: "Are you concerned about misconceptions about the Mormon Church?"

My answer: "There are still many ideas that persist concerning us. We are not well known. We have grown up in

the West [for the most part]. The Church originated in Palmyra, New York. You have heard of the Mormon migration to the West, . . . where we established some three or four hundred different communities. . . . We would like to . . . let people come to know us for what we are and what we are trying to accomplish."

The great work of women in the Church

Question: "Are there any conflicts between your convictions about families and women's roles with the family and the aspirations of some women to occupy leadership positions in your Church?"

Reply: "We have a few women who feel that women should hold the priesthood. We have a great women's organization. I believe it is the largest women's organization in the world—our women's Relief Society. They have their own officers who preside over their own organization. They carry forward a tremendous program of education among women. I think they are happy. They are doing a great work."

Efforts to strengthen families

Mr. Wallace: "Since World War II, we seem to be splintering; we seem to be becoming more selfish, more self-absorbed, less community minded. Families don't seem to mean so much, and morality has gone to hell [his expression] in a handbasket. Why?"

Response: "The basic failure is in our homes. Parents haven't measured up to their responsibilities. It is evident. A nation will rise no higher than the strength of its homes. If you want to reform a nation, you begin with families, with parents who teach their children principles and values that are positive and affirmative and will lead them to worthwhile endeavors. That is the basic failure that has taken place in America. And we are making a tremendous effort to bring about greater solidarity in fami-

lies. Parents have no greater responsibility in this world than the bringing up of their children in the right way, and they will have no greater satisfaction as the years pass than to see those children grow in integrity and honesty and make something of their lives."

Codes of health and morality

His question: "Your Church has a very strict code of health. Why is that a part of religion?"

Reply: "The body is the temple of the spirit. The body is sacred. It was created in the image of God. It is something to be cared for and used for good purposes. It ought to be taken care of, and this thing which we call the Word of Wisdom, which is a code of health, is most helpful in doing that."

His question: "For some, particularly those who are not Mormons, your teachings demand conformity, rigidity. Those are the complaints one hears."

Response: "Oh, yes, you may hear those complaints. I don't think it is so. I don't think there is substance to it. Our people have tremendous liberty. They are free to live their lives as they please."

He asked: "Are they?"

Answer: "Oh, absolutely. Surely. They have to make choices. It is the old eternal battle that has been going on since the War in Heaven, spoken of in the book of Revelation—the forces of evil against the forces of good. We all exercise agency in the choices we make."

Mr. Wallace: "You also have a moral code."

Reply: "We believe in chastity before marriage and total fidelity after marriage. That sums it up. That is the way to happiness in living. That is the way to satisfaction. It brings peace to the heart and peace to the home."

Next question: "Some of the students we've talked to say that the health code is easy compared to no premarital sex. . . . They say that not smoking or not

drinking is a clear line but that the sexual line is somewhere—[well,] they are confused, some of them anyway, about where that line is."

Response: "Oh, I think they know. Any young man or woman who has grown up in this Church knows where that line is. When you see yourself slipping, begin to exercise some self-discipline. And if it is a serious problem, take it to the Lord. Talk with God about it. Share your burden with Him. He will give you strength. He will help you. They know that. I am confident they know that."

Roles of men and women

Mr. Wallace: "Why must only men run the Church?"

Reply: "'Only men' do not run the Church. Men have their place in the Church. Men hold the priesthood offices of the Church. But women have a tremendous place in this Church. They have their own organization. It was started in 1842 by the Prophet Joseph Smith and called the Relief Society because its initial purpose was to administer help to those in need. It has grown to be, I think, the largest women's organization in the world, with a membership of more than three million. They have their own offices, their own presidency, their own board. That reaches down to the smallest unit of the Church everywhere in the world."

His next question: "But they don't have the power."

Response: "They have office. They have responsibility. They have control of their organization."

Mr. Wallace: "But you run it. The men run it. Look, I'm not being—"

Answer: "The men hold the priesthood, yes. But my wife is my companion. In this Church the man neither walks ahead of his wife nor behind his wife but at her side. They are coequals in this life in a great enterprise."

Size of families

Mr. Wallace: "Why is it that Mormons apparently have so many children?"

Reply: "We don't dictate family size. That is left to the father and the mother, the husband and wife. And we expect them to make of this the most serious business of their lives, the rearing of the family."

Great growth of the Church

Next question: "There are those who say that Mormonism began as a cult. You don't like to hear that."

Response: "I don't know what that means, really. But if it has negative connotations, I don't accept it as applying to this Church. People may have applied it; they may have applied it in the early days. But look, here is this great Church now. There are only six churches in America with more members than this Church. We are the second church in membership in the state of California. We are reaching out across the world. We are in more than 150 nations. This is a great, strong, viable organization with a tremendous outreach. . . . You will find our people in business institutions, high in educational circles, in politics, in government, in whatever. We are [rather] ordinary people trying to do an extraordinary work."

Tithing and the use of Church funds

Mr. Wallace: "It's expensive to be a Mormon."

Answer: "Oh, it isn't expensive. We are living by the law of the Lord—tithing."

Question: "But 10 percent of your gross goes to the Church, and you have nothing to do with the way the money is spent—an average Mormon, that is."

Reply: "The average Mormon has a good deal to do with it. He is a member of the Church."

Mr. Wallace: "But he has nothing to do with how it is going to be spent."

Response: "If he is a bishop, he has the expenditures of his ward. A lot of that money comes back to the local units. What is that money used for? It is used for Church purposes."

His question: "What are Church purposes exactly?"

Answer: "Building chapels—about 375 a year. Think about that—new buildings each year to accommodate the needs of the growing membership. It is used for education. We maintain the largest private, church-sponsored university in the world, Brigham Young University, with its 27,000 students on that campus, as well as other campuses. We maintain a tremendous institute of religion program, where we have off-campus connections with [students in] the major universities of America. You will find institutes at UCLA, USC, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the University of New York, the University of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and so forth.

"When it comes to the financial circumstances of the Church, we have all funds carefully audited. We have a corps of auditors who are qualified CPAs who are independent from all other agencies of the Church and who report only to the First Presidency of the Church. We try to be very careful. I keep on the credenza behind my desk a widow's mite that was given me in Jerusalem many years ago as a reminder, a constant reminder, of the sanctity of the funds with which we have to deal. They come from the widow; they are her offering as well as the tithe of the rich man, and they are to be used with care and discretion for the purposes of the Lord. We treat them carefully and safeguard them and try in every way that we can to see that they are used as we feel the Lord would have them used for the upbuilding of His work and the betterment of people."

Service of full-time missionaries

Mr. Wallace: "Young men and women give two years of their lives to serve as missionaries?"

Response: "Young women serve 18 months. The work is strenuous; it is difficult. It isn't easy to go to New York or London or Tokyo and knock on doors and face people you have never met before. But it does something for you. It does two or three things. It creates in the first place a feeling of reliance upon the Lord. . . . It builds within [a young man] something of strength and capacity. If he goes to a foreign land, he develops expertise in the language; he learns to speak the language of the people. Wherever he goes, he comes to know the people among whom he serves and brings back with him something of their culture, their way of doing things, with appreciation and respect for them and their conditions and circumstances. There is nothing like it—when you think that we have more than 50,000 out right now, and that number is constantly rotating so that it touches the lives of hundreds of thousands of these people. . . . I can walk down the streets of Salt Lake City with you and meet people who speak fluently in Japanese and Chinese and Swedish and Norwegian and Finnish and Spanish and Portuguese and who have love in their hearts for the people among whom they served."

The principle of self-reliance

Question: "Why are members of the Church expected to keep a year's supply of food, clothing, and fuel?"

Reply: "We teach self-reliance as a principle of life, that we ought to provide for ourselves and take care of our own needs. And so we encourage our people to have something, to plan ahead, keep . . . food on hand, to establish a savings account, if possible, against a rainy day. Catastrophes come to people sometimes

when least expected—unemployment, sickness, things of that kind. The individual, as we teach, ought to do for himself all that he can. When he has exhausted his resources, he ought to turn to his family to assist him. When the family can't do it, the Church takes over. And when the Church takes over, our great desire is to first take care of his immediate needs and then to help him for so long as he needs to be helped, but in that process to assist him in training, in securing employment, in finding some way of getting on his feet again. That's the whole objective of this great welfare program."

Cleanliness of Salt Lake City

Mr. Wallace: "Why is Salt Lake City so clean?"

Answer: "Well, we hope it is a reflection of the people who live here."

Mr. Wallace: "It is astonishing to walk down the streets of Salt Lake City." [He'd just come from New York City.]

Response: "We hope it will stay that way. I hope that it reflects, in some measure at least, some of the teachings of this Church. Look at the beauties of Temple Square right here in the heart of the city, the very core of the city. Look at the magnificent temple and that great Tabernacle. They were built with vision by people with culture, with refinement, with artistry. These are not the work of charlatans. They are the work of people who had a great vision to do beautiful things."

How the prophet receives revelation

Mr. Wallace: "The Mormons, Mr. President, call you a 'living Moses,' a prophet who literally communicates with Jesus. How do you do that?"

Reply: "Let me say first that there is a tremendous history behind this Church, a history of prophecy, a history of revela-

tion, and . . . decisions which set the pattern of the Church so that there are not constant recurring problems that require any special dispensation. But there are occasionally things that arise where the will of the Lord [is needed and] is sought, and in those circumstances I think the best way I could describe the process is to liken it to the experience of Elijah as set forth in the book of First Kings. Elijah spoke to the Lord, and there was a wind, a great wind, and the Lord was not in the wind. And there was an earthquake, and the Lord was not in the earthquake. And there was a fire, and the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire a still, small voice, which I describe as the whisperings of the Spirit. (See 1 Kings 19:9-12.) Now, let me just say, categorically, that the things of God are understood by the Spirit of God, and one must have and seek and cultivate that Spirit, and there comes understanding and it is real. I can give testimony of that."

Why we preach the gospel

Question: "Why is your Church so aggressive about spreading the word, having missionaries knock on doors where they may not be welcome and where they're obviously not invited?"

Answer: "We believe that the Lord meant what He said when He said, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature' (Mark 16:15). We believe in that mandate. We think it rests upon us to try to fulfill it. We are doing that with all of the energy and resources that we have."

Mr. Wallace: "How do you view non-Mormons?"

Response: "With love and respect. I have many non-Mormon friends. I respect them. I have the greatest of admiration for them."

Question: "Despite the fact that they haven't really seen the light yet?"

Reply: "Yes. To anybody who is not of this Church, I say we recognize all of the virtues and the good that you have. Bring it with you and see if we might add to it."

Brigham Young's prophetic vision

Mr. Wallace: "Tell me about Brigham Young."

Reply: "Brigham Young had a prophetic vision. Can anyone doubt it who looks around here today? No. And that's the way it is with this Church. It has been led by revelation. 'We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and . . . that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God' for the blessing of His sons and daughters wherever they may be found" (Articles of Faith 1:9).

Changes come by revelation

Question: "As you know, some skeptics say that major changes in Church policy have come from political pressures, not necessarily as revelations from God. For example, the business of ending polygamy, say the skeptics, wasn't because it was revelation but because Utah wanted to become a state."

Response: "One of the purposes of a prophet is to seek the wisdom and the will of the Lord and to teach his people accordingly. It was the case with Moses when he led the children of Israel out of Egypt. It was the case for the Old Testament prophets when people were faced with oppression and trouble and difficulty. That is the purpose of a prophet, to give answers to people for the dilemmas in which they find themselves. That is what happens. That is what we see happen. Is it a matter of expediency, political expediency? No! Inspired guidance? Yes!"

The Church's efforts to fight abuse

Mr. Wallace: "How big a problem, Mr. President, is child abuse in the Mormon Church?"

Reply: "I hope it isn't a big problem. . . . This is a serious phenomenon that is finding expression all over the world. It is a terrible thing. It is a wicked thing. It is a reprehensible thing. It is a thing of which I have spoken time and again."

Question: "What are you doing to reduce it?"

Response: "We are doing everything we know how to reduce it. We are teaching our people. We are talking about it. We have set up a course of instruction for our bishops all across the nation. All last year we carried on an educational program. We have set up a help-line for them where they can get professional counseling and help with these problems. We have issued a journal dealing with child abuse, spouse abuse, abuse of the elderly, the whole problem of abuse. We are concerned about it. I am deeply concerned about the victims. My heart reaches out to them. I want to do everything we can to ease the pain, to preclude the happening of this evil and wicked thing. . . . I know of no other organization in this world that has taken more exhaustive measures, tried harder, done more to tackle this problem, to work with it, to do something to make a change. We recognize the terrible nature of it, and we want to help our people, reach out to them, assist them."

Mr. Wallace: "One sociologist tells us that the root of the problem is the fact that men, in effect, in your Church have authority over women so that your clergymen tend to sympathize with the men being abusers instead of with the abused."

Response: "That is one person's opinion. I don't think there is any substance to it. I think that the men of this Church, the bishops of this Church, the officers of this Church are as concerned

with the welfare of the women of the Church as they are with the men of the Church and with the children of the Church. I wouldn't hesitate to say that for one minute. I am confident of that. I have been around a long time. I have known this Church from the ground up, inside and out, over a very, very long period of time. I am 85 years of age now and I've lived with it all my life and I think I know how it functions. I think I know the attitude of our people. Now, there will be a blip here, a blip there, a mistake here, a mistake there. But by and large the work is wonderful, and vast good is being accomplished, and the welfare of women and children is as seriously considered as is the welfare of the men in this Church, if not more so."

Walk with faith and righteousness

Well, brethren, that's enough for this occasion. Needless to say, we were blessed of the Lord. Now in conclusion I wish to say that none of us ever need hesitate to speak up for this Church, for its doctrine, for its people, for its divine organization and divinely given responsibility. It is true. It is the work of God. The only things that can ever embarrass this work are acts of disobedience to its doctrine and standards by those of its membership. That places upon each of us a tremendous responsibility. This work will be judged by what the world sees of our behavior. God give us the will to walk with faith, the discipline to do what is right at all times and in all circumstances, the resolution to make of our lives a declaration of this cause before all who see us, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Rise Up, O Men of God."

Elder Richard B. Wirthlin offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 6, 1996. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful autumn Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City to the fourth general session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Jeffrey R. Holland, Spencer J. Condie, and W. Don Ladd are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Gene R. Cook, Alexander B. Morrison, Neil L. Andersen, and C. Max Caldwell are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of these various facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders; those of other faiths who honor us with their presence; and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ, opened these services by singing "Praise to the Lord."

The choir will now sing "Our Savior's Love," following which Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Our Savior's Love."

Elder Lance B. Wickman offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Wickman.

We shall now be pleased to listen to President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President James E. Faust

To those with heartrending challenges

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, the responsibility of speaking to you today prompts me to earnestly ask for your faith and prayers. Today I speak to those who have heartrending challenges. I speak to those who suffer, to those who mourn and have heartaches. I speak to those with physical, mental, or emotional pain. I speak to those born

crippled or who have become crippled. I speak to those who were born blind or who can no longer see the sunsets. I speak to those who have never been able or who are no longer able to hear a bird sing. I speak to those who have the privileged responsibility of helping others who have mental and physical disabilities. I also speak to those who may be in serious transgression.

I take as my text the words of the Savior to the sorrowing Mary Magdalene, who “stood without at the sepulchre weeping.”¹ As she turned around, she “saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?”²

The Savior was speaking not just to the sorrowing Mary. He was also speaking to us—men, women, and children and all of mankind ever born or yet to be born, for the tears of sorrow, pain, or remorse are the common lot of mankind.

The complexities of this life at times tend to be very dehumanizing and overwhelming. Some have so much, while others struggle with so very little.

It is a joy to meet with the faithful Saints of the Church all over the world. Even though some of them have difficulties and challenges and lack material wealth, they seem to find much happiness and are able to walk in faith over the rough cobblestones of life. Their deep faith strengthens ours as we meet with them.

Healing power of the Atonement

Many who think that life is unfair do not see things within the larger vision of what the Savior did for us through the Atonement and the Resurrection. Each of us has at times agony, heartbreak, and despair when we must, like Job, reach deep down inside to the bedrock of our own faith. The depth of our belief in the Resurrection and the Atonement of the Savior will, I believe, determine the measure of courage and purpose with which we meet life's challenges.

The first words of the risen Lord to His disciples were, “Peace be unto you.”³ He has also promised “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”⁴ The Atonement and the Resurrection have taken place. Our Lord and Savior suffered that appalling agony in

Gethsemane. He performed the ultimate sacrifice in dying on the cross and then breaking the bonds of death.

All of us benefit from the transcendent blessings of the Atonement and the Resurrection, through which the divine healing process can work in our lives. The hurt can be replaced by the joy the Savior promised. To the doubting Thomas, Jesus said, “Be not faithless, but believing.”⁵ Through faith and righteousness, all of the inequities, injuries, and pains of this life can be fully compensated for and made right. Blessings denied in this life will be fully recompensed in the eternities. Through complete repentance of our sins, we can be forgiven and we can enjoy eternal life. Thus our suffering in this life can be as the refining fire, purifying us for a higher purpose. Heartaches can be healed, and we can come to know a soul-satisfying joy and happiness beyond our dreams and expectations.

The resolution promised by the Atonement and the Resurrection continues in eternity. Physical limitations will be compensated. Alma's words are comforting: “The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.”⁶

The resolution is brought about by the Savior's intercession. As He said in the great intercessory prayer found in the 17th chapter of John, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”⁷ Then the Savior prayed for His Apostles and all of the Saints, saying:

“I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

“And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.”⁸

The healing process of repentance

All of us have made wrong turns along the way. I believe the kind and merciful God, whose children we are, will judge us as lightly as He can for the wrongs that we have done and give us the maximum blessing for the good that we do. Alma's sublime utterance seems to me an affirmation of this. Said Alma, "And not many days hence the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers."⁹

Of vital importance is resolving transgression, experiencing the healing process which comes of repentance. As President Kimball reminds us:

"The principle of repentance—of rising again whenever we fall, brushing ourselves off, and setting off again on that upward trail—is the basis for our hope. It is through repentance that the Lord Jesus Christ can work his healing miracle, infusing us with strength when we are weak, health when we are sick, hope when we are downhearted, love when we feel empty, and understanding when we search for truth."¹⁰

One of the tender stories of the Book of Mormon takes place when Alma speaks to his son Corianton, who has fallen into transgression while on a mission to the Zoramites. As Alma counsels him to forsake his sin and turn again to the Lord, he learns that Corianton is worried about what will happen to him in the Resurrection. There follows a detailed treatment of the probationary state of this life, of justice versus mercy, and God's plan for our happiness in the hereafter, culminating in this verse:

"And mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back

men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice."¹¹

Stay free from evil

The Savior gives us a profound key by which we can cope with and even surmount the debilitating forces of the world. Said the Savior, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."¹² This grand key, then, is that regardless of the saturation of wickedness around us, we must stay free from the evil of the world. The Savior's prayer both commands us to avoid evil and profers divine help to do so. Through this effort, we become one with our Lord. The prayer of the Savior in Gethsemane was "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."¹³

To remain true and faithful through this mortal vale of tears, we must love God with all our heart, might, mind, and strength and love our neighbor as ourselves. We must also stand together as families; as members of wards and branches, stakes and districts; and as a people. To our neighbors not of our faith, we should be as the good Samaritan who cared for the man who fell among thieves.¹⁴ We must gather strength from each other. We must also "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."¹⁵

Paul taught well on this subject. Said he to the Corinthians, speaking of the body, or the Church, of Christ:

"There should be no schism in the body; but . . . the members should have the same care one for another.

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."¹⁶

In this way, as individuals and as a people we may be kept from evil. As we go through travail and difficulty, we may feel sorry for ourselves and despair; but with the love of God and with the Saints unitedly bearing each other's burdens, we can be happy and overcome evil.

The Savior values womanhood

Some faithful women have been denied that which is at the very center of their souls. In the eternal plan, no blessing will be kept from the faithful. No woman should question how the Savior values womanhood. The grieving Mary Magdalene was the first to visit the sepulchre after the Crucifixion, and when she saw that the stone had been rolled away and that the tomb was empty, she ran to tell Peter and John. The two Apostles came to see and then went away sorrowing. But Mary stayed. She had stood near the cross.¹⁷ She had been at the burial.¹⁸ And now she stood weeping by the empty sepulchre.¹⁹ There she was honored to be the first mortal to see the risen Lord. After He said, "Woman, why weepest thou?" she was instructed by Him, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."²⁰

Jesus teaches the woman at the well

During His mortal ministry, Jesus left Judea to go to Galilee. He arrived at Jacob's well thirsty and weary from traveling. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jewish convention at the time forbade dealings with Samaritans. Yet "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. . . .

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? . . .

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

Jesus went on to teach her about the living water "springing up into everlasting life." The Samaritan woman responded, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Then she "saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." At this point Jesus revealed His true identity to her: "I that speak unto thee am he."²¹

Elizabeth Jackson's enduring faith

The Resurrection and the Atonement of the Savior can be a constant fortifying influence in our lives as illustrated by the account of Elizabeth Jackson, a pioneer in the Martin Handcart Company. She tells of the death of her husband, Aaron, on the Wyoming plains in 1856 in these moving words:

"About nine o'clock I retired. Bedding had become very scarce so I did not disrobe. I slept until, as it appeared to me, about midnight. I was extremely cold. The weather was bitter. I listened to hear if my husband breathed, he lay so still. I could not hear him. I became alarmed. I put my hand on his body, when to my horror I discovered that my worst fears were confirmed. My husband was dead. I called for help to the other inmates of the tent. They could render me no aid; and there was no alternative but to remain alone by the side of the corpse till morning. Oh, how the dreary hours drew their tedious length along. When daylight came, some of the male part of the company prepared the body for burial. And oh, such a burial and funeral service. They did not remove his clothing—he had but little. They wrapped him in a blanket and placed him in a pile with thirteen others who

had died, and then covered him up with snow. The ground was frozen so hard that they could not dig a grave. He was left there to sleep in peace until the trump of God shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall awake and come forth in the morning of the first resurrection. We shall then again unite our hearts and lives, and eternity will furnish us with life forever more."²²

Savior's sacrifice will wipe away tears

To the question "Woman, why weep-est thou?" we turn to the comforting words written to the faithful Saints by John in the book of Revelation:

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."²³

To the question "Woman, why weep-est thou?" I testify of the great atoning sacrifice and breaking of the bonds of death by the Lord Jesus Christ, which shall indeed wipe away our tears. I have a witness of this. It has been given by the Holy Spirit of God.

I also testify that the Lord Jesus Christ is the head of this Church today. We see His omnipotent hand guiding this holy work. I further testify to the prophetic calling and great leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley as His servant under whose inspired direction we are all privileged to serve. President

Monson and our beloved associates are witnesses of this.

"Be steadfast and immovable"

I pray, as did King Benjamin, that we shall "be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal [us] his, that [we] may be brought to heaven, that [we] may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all."²⁴ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 20:11.
2. John 20:14-15.
3. John 20:19.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
5. John 20:27.
6. Alma 40:23.
7. John 17:3.
8. John 17:9-10.
9. Alma 9:26.
10. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 106.
11. Alma 42:23.
12. John 17:15.
13. John 17:21.
14. See Luke 10:29-37.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
16. 1 Corinthians 12:25-27.
17. See Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25.
18. See Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47.
19. See John 20:11.
20. John 20:17.
21. See John 4:6-26.
22. Quoted in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (1976), 111.
23. Revelation 7:14-17.
24. Mosiah 5:15.

The choir sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, and the Tabernacle

Choir has sung "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

"Always have his Spirit"

I have chosen to speak about the relationship between our partaking of the sacrament and our enjoying the blessings available from the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In modern revelation the Lord commanded, "That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day" (D&C 59:9). As we partake of the sacrament each week, we ponder the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and we reaffirm and renew the covenants we made when we were baptized. These acts of worship and commitment are described in the revealed prayer the priest offers upon the bread. As stated in that prayer, we partake of the bread "in remembrance of the body" of our Savior, and by doing so we witness to God, the Eternal Father, "that [we] are willing to take upon [us] the name of [his] Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given [us]" (D&C 20:77).

After we were baptized, hands were laid upon our heads and we were given the gift of the Holy Ghost. When we consciously and sincerely renew our baptismal covenants as we partake of the sacrament, we renew our qualification for the promise "that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us]" (D&C 20:77).

We cannot overstate the importance of that promise. President Wilford Woodruff called the gift of the Holy Ghost the greatest gift we can receive in mortality

(see *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham [1990], 5). Unfortunately the great value of that gift and the important conditions for its fulfillment are not well understood. Nephi prophesied that in the last days churches would be built up that would "teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance" (2 Nephi 28:4). He also pronounced "wo" upon "him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost!" (v. 26).

Scriptural teachings about the Holy Ghost

The Bible tells us that when the Savior gave His final instructions to His disciples, He promised that He would send them "the Comforter" (John 16:7). Earlier He had taught them the mission of this Comforter, who is otherwise referred to as the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord, or simply the Spirit. That Comforter dwells in us (see John 14:17). He teaches us all things and brings all things to our remembrance (see John 14:26). He guides us into truth and shows us things to come (see John 16:13). He testifies of the Son (see John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 12:3). The Bible also teaches that the Savior and His servants will baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire (see Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 1:5). I will speak of the meaning of that teaching later.

The Bible's teachings about the Holy Ghost are reaffirmed and elaborated in the Book of Mormon and in modern rev-

elations. The Holy Ghost is the means by which God inspires and reveals His will to His children (see, for example, D&C 8:2–3). The Holy Ghost bears record of the Father and of the Son (see 3 Nephi 28:11; D&C 20:27; 42:17). He enlightens our minds and fills us with joy (see D&C 11:13). By the power of the Holy Ghost we may know the truth of all things (see Moroni 10:5). By His power we may have the mysteries of God unfolded to us (see 1 Nephi 10:19), all things which are expedient (see D&C 18:18; 39:6). The Holy Ghost shows us what we should do (see 2 Nephi 32:5). We teach the gospel as we are directed by the Holy Ghost, which carries our words into the hearts of those we teach (see 2 Nephi 33:1).

Latter-day scriptures also teach that the remission of sins, which is made possible by the Atonement, comes “by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost” (D&C 19:31; see also 2 Nephi 31:17). Thus, the Risen Lord pleaded with the Nephites to repent and come unto Him and be baptized “that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:20).

A distinguishing part of our faith

The gift of the Holy Ghost is so important to our faith that a prophet gave it unique emphasis in a conversation with the president of the United States. Joseph Smith had journeyed to Washington to seek help in recovering compensation for injuries and losses the Saints had suffered in the Missouri persecutions. In his meeting with the president, Joseph was asked how this Church differed from the other religions of the day. The Prophet replied that “we differed in mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands” (*History of the Church*, 4:42). He later explained that this answer was given because “all other considerations

were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost” (*History of the Church*, 4:42).

In highlighting the gift of the Holy Ghost as a distinguishing characteristic of our faith, we need to understand the important differences between (1) the Light of Christ, (2) a manifestation of the Holy Ghost, and (3) the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The Light of Christ

The Light of Christ, which is sometimes called the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of God, “giveth light to every man that cometh into the world” (D&C 84:46). This is the light “which is in all things, which giveth life to all things” (D&C 88:13). The prophet Mormon taught that “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil” (Moroni 7:16; see also v. 19; 2 Nephi 2:5; Helaman 14:31). Elder Lorenzo Snow spoke of this light when he said, “Everybody has the Spirit of God” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:304). The Light of Christ enlightens and gives understanding to all men (see D&C 88:11).

Manifestations of the Holy Ghost

In contrast, a manifestation of the Holy Ghost is more focused. This manifestation is given to acquaint sincere seekers with the truth about the Lord and His gospel. For example, the prophet Moroni promises that when we study the Book of Mormon and seek to know whether it is true, sincerely and with real intent, God will “manifest the truth of it unto [us], by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). Moroni also records this promise from the Risen Lord: “He that believeth these things which I have spoken, him will I visit with the manifestations of my Spirit, and he shall know and bear record. For because of my Spirit he shall know that these things are true” (Ether 4:11).

These manifestations are available to everyone. The Book of Mormon declares that the Savior “manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (2 Nephi 26:13).

To repeat, the Light of Christ is given to all men and women that they may know good from evil; manifestations of the Holy Ghost are given to lead sincere seekers to gospel truths that will persuade them to repentance and baptism.

The gift of the Holy Ghost

The gift of the Holy Ghost is more comprehensive. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the *gift* of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 199; italics added).

The gift of the Holy Ghost includes the right to constant companionship, that we may “always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77).

A newly baptized member told me what she felt when she received that gift. This was a faithful Christian woman who had spent her life in service to others. She knew and loved the Lord, and she had felt the manifestations of His Spirit. When she received the added light of the restored gospel, she was baptized and the elders placed their hands upon her head and gave her the gift of the Holy Ghost. She recalled, “I felt the influence of the Holy Ghost settle upon

me with greater intensity than I had ever felt before. He was like an old friend who had guided me in the past but now had come to stay.”

For faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ, the companionship of the Holy Spirit should be so familiar that we must use care not to take it for granted. For example, that good feeling you have felt during the messages and music of this conference is a confirming witness of the Spirit, available to faithful members on a continuing basis. A member once asked me why he felt so good about the talks and music in a sacrament meeting, while a guest he had invited that day apparently experienced no such feeling. This is but one illustration of the contrast between one who has the gift of the Holy Ghost and is in tune with His promptings and one who has not, or is not.

If we are practicing our faith and seeking the companionship of the Holy Spirit, His presence can be felt in our hearts and in our homes. A family having daily family prayers and seeking to keep the commandments of God and honor His name and speak lovingly to one another will have a spiritual feeling in their home that will be discernible to all who enter it. I know this because I have felt the presence or absence of that feeling in many LDS homes.

It is important to remember that the illumination and revelation that come to an individual as a result of the gift of the Holy Ghost do not come suddenly or without seeking. President Spencer W. Kimball taught that the Holy Ghost “comes a little at a time as you merit it. And as your life is in harmony, you gradually receive the Holy Ghost in a great measure” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 114).

The blessings available through the gift of the Holy Ghost are conditioned upon worthiness. “The Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples” (Hela-

man 4:24; see also Mosiah 2:36–37; 1 Corinthians 3:16–17). Even though we have a right to His constant companionship, the Spirit of the Lord will dwell with us only when we keep the commandments. He will withdraw when we offend Him by profanity, uncleanness, disobedience, rebellion, or other serious sins.

Worthy men and women who have the gift of the Holy Ghost can be edified and guided by inspiration and revelation. The Lord has declared that “the mysteries of his kingdom . . . are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him” (D&C 76:114, 116).

A few years ago I met with a prospective mission president and his wife to discuss their availability for service. I asked whether their responsibilities to aged parents would preclude their service at that time. This sister was the only daughter of a wonderful mother, then about 80, whom she visited and helped each week. Though somewhat dependent physically, this mother was strong spiritually. She had served four missions and 15 years as a temple worker. Because she was in tune with the Spirit, she had a remarkable experience. Several months before this interview, she told her daughter that the Spirit had whispered that her daughter’s husband would be called as a mission president. So advised, the mother had prepared herself for the needed separation and assured her daughter, long in advance of my assignment for the exploratory interview, that she would “not be a hindrance” to their service.

Renew covenants to have His Spirit

The need to keep our personal temple clean in order to have the companionship and guidance of the Holy Ghost explains the importance of the commandment to partake of the sacrament on the Sabbath.

In partaking of the sacrament, we can renew the effects of our baptism. When we desire a remission of our sins through the Atonement of our Savior, we are commanded to repent and come to Him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:20; 12:19; Moroni 6:2; D&C 20:37). In the waters of baptism we witness to the Lord that we have repented of our sins and are willing to take His name upon us and serve Him to the end (see D&C 20:37). The effects are described by Nephi: “For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17; see also Moroni 6:4). That last promise is fulfilled as a result of our receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The renewal of our covenants by partaking of the sacrament should also be preceded by repentance, so we come to that sacred ordinance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 2 Nephi 2:7; 3 Nephi 12:19; D&C 59:8). Then, as we renew our baptismal covenants and affirm that we will “always remember him” (D&C 20:77), the Lord will renew the promised remission of our sins, under the conditions and at the time He chooses. One of the primary purposes and effects of this renewal of covenants and cleansing from sin is “that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77).

Attitude when taking the sacrament

My brothers and sisters, I solemnly witness to you that these doctrines and principles are true. In view of these truths, I plead with all members of the Church, young and old, to attend sacrament meeting each Sabbath day and to partake of the sacrament with the repentant attitude described as “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20). I pray that we will do so with the reverence and worship of our Savior that will signify a serious covenant to “always remember

him" (D&C 20:77). The Savior himself has said that we should partake "with an eye single to my glory—remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins" (D&C 27:2).

I pray that we will also partake of the sacrament with the submissive manner that will help us accept and serve in Church callings in order to comply with our solemn covenant to take His name and His work upon us. I also plead for us to comply with our solemn covenant to keep His commandments.

Promises of the sacrament

To those brothers and sisters who may have allowed themselves to become lax in this vital renewal of the covenants of the sacrament, I plead in words of the First Presidency that you "come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints" ("An Invitation to Come Back," *Church News*, 22 Dec. 1985, 3). Let us qualify ourselves for our Savior's promise that by partaking of the sacrament we will "be filled" (3 Nephi 20:8; see also 3 Nephi 18:9), which means that we will be "filled with the Spirit" (3 Nephi 20:9). That Spirit—the Holy Ghost—is our comforter, our direction finder, our communicator, our interpreter, our witness, and our purifier—our infallible guide and sanctifier for our mortal journey toward eternal life.

Any who may have thought it a small thing to partake of the sacrament should remember the Lord's declaration that the foundation of a great work is laid by small things, for "out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33). Out of the seemingly small act of consciously and reverently renewing our baptismal covenants comes a renewal of the blessings of baptism by water and by the Spirit, that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. In this way all of us will be guided, and in this way all of us can be cleansed. That we may qualify for these precious blessings is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Consider the Lilies."

President Hinckley

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us. The choir then sang "Consider the Lilies."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." We shall then hear from Bishop Richard C. Edgley, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

"We care enough to send our very best"

Today I would like to address my remarks to those not of our faith who are joining us in these proceedings. I speak as one of approximately 100,000 mothers

and fathers of more than 50,000 missionaries from our Church who are serving the Lord in all parts of the world. Paraphrasing the slogan of a prominent greeting card company, "We care enough to send our very best."¹

The parents I speak for today come from all parts of the world. They come from the plains of Iowa and the streets of the Bronx. They come from the cities of Peru and Bolivia. They come from the rolling mountains of the Ozarks and the jungles of Colombia and Kenya. They come from every economic, social background there is. Yet they all have one common trait: "They cared enough to send their very best." Yes, we send to you for two years our choice young men and women at the dawn of their adulthood. We send to you our children, whom we have loved, taught, and nurtured.

We rejoice in their successes, we suffer their discouragements and setbacks, and we pray for them continually. In short, we have the same loving feelings, emotions, and dreams for them as you have for your children.

We send these young men, young women, and mature couples to all parts of the world, wherever hosting governments and countries will welcome them. They live under all sorts of conditions, almost always substantially below the comforts to which they are accustomed. They often live in unfamiliar environments, which are sometimes unfriendly to those who would teach the saving truths of Jesus Christ.

To the many thousands of you not of our faith who have befriended these young people, we give our most sincere thanks and we pray that God's choicest blessings will be with you.

Serving a mission takes commitment

The call to serve a mission seldom comes at a convenient time. Most missionaries are just a year out of high school. Many have just begun their university studies. Some have delayed or even forgone promising professions. Cars are sold, sweethearts are put on hold, college is delayed, scholarships are forfeited, careers are postponed. Behind each missionary is a private story of years

of personal commitment, preparation, personal sacrifice, and examples of love for the Savior. And there are those worthy young men and young women who have in their hearts the greatest desire to serve a mission, but because of physical, health, or other limiting circumstances are honorably excused.

A missionary's life is not an easy one. After preparing through childhood and teen years by studying the scriptures, preparing financially, and maintaining personal worthiness (including sexual purity and abstinence from tobacco, alcohol, and drugs), missionaries enter one of several missionary training centers scattered throughout the world. This is the only formal training they will receive—three weeks if they are called to serve in a country of their native language, or two months if they must learn a foreign language. Their day in the mission field is demanding. It begins every morning at 6:30 A.M. with two hours of study, a dozen hours of hard and often discouraging work, continuing until bedtime—about 10:00 P.M. Their work consists mostly of proselyting and teaching but also includes a generous amount of time for voluntary community service. They can be seen teaching English in foreign lands, donating time in hospitals and retirement homes, serving meals at homeless shelters, or doing other service for the benefit of the community. They have part of one day a week for personal preparedness, letter writing, and some relaxation and recreation. Excluded from their mission are dating, secular music, beaches, swimming, and many other activities considered normal for young men and women of this age.

An opportunity to show love

Some outside our Church may feel that a mission is a great and unreasonable sacrifice. Our missionaries do not view it as a sacrifice. They view it as an opportunity to manifest their love to the

Savior, who charged, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). They see it as an opportunity to express their love to all mankind. They see it as an opportunity to testify of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, the Redeemer of the world. They see it as an opportunity to build faith in Christ and to teach His saving and comforting doctrine. I see it as truly one of the distinguishing characteristics of true Christianity. I see these young missionaries as true Christian servants exemplifying the highest Christian principles by testifying of and serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

They just keep coming—today more than 50,000, tomorrow more than 60,000, and then 70,000 young men, young women, and couples serving all over the world. At a time when so many young men and women of this age are searching, wandering aimlessly, and struggling with the meaning and purpose of life, tens of thousands are fully devoted to this great cause of serving the Lord. They prepare, they sacrifice, and they come. They come because they believe in God, and they believe in the brotherhood of all mankind.

Why our missionaries serve

Some have questioned why our missionaries would be sent to all parts of the world, even among our fellow Christians. In the third chapter of John, verse 16, we read the familiar scripture, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Our missionaries go to all nations and all people because they have a firm, unshakable testimony that God still loves the world and that He has spoken again as an indication of that love. He has restored precious truths lost over the centuries of Christian persecution, dark ages, and years of confusion—truths that are essential to our peace and happiness.

These are truths so essential to our eternal salvation that our loving Father restored them in their completeness. After Christ's ministry and ascension to heaven, the Apostle Peter prophesied of a restitution of all things before Christ would return for His Second Coming. He said:

"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

"Whom the heaven must receive *until the times of restitution of all things*" (Acts 3:20–21; italics added).

These missionaries go into all the world full of love and faith because they know of the fulfillment of Peter's prophecy of a restitution of all things. They testify of a restoration that is so marvelous that only the hand of God could be its author—so miraculous that it can be believed only if one understands the powers of God and His love for all mankind—a story so divine that the truth of it can be truly accepted only through the personal manifestation of the Holy Ghost, which the Savior promised as His way of testifying of the truth to those who prayerfully seek it.

What our missionaries will bring you

Our missionaries do not attempt to take away any precious truths, values, or principles that have led so many of you to a life of righteous service and devotion to the Savior. Rather, they come to your homes to present further evidence, additional scripture, that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, who indeed hung upon the cross and atoned for our sins. They bring a message of confirmation of His life and magnification of His goodness and love.

They will testify to you of a marvelous vision, considered miraculous in today's world of doubt, yet which would easily be accepted if it had occurred 2,000 years ago. These missionaries will explain how God and Christ appeared to a young boy only 14 years of age to commence this Restoration. They will tell

you about other heavenly messengers who have come to restore Christ's authority, doctrine, and teachings in their completeness and simplicity. They will tell you of events and truths so beautiful and wonderful, so marvelous that you will thrill as they unfold before you.

The missionaries will explain to you the very purpose of this life that we call mortality. They will help you understand where we came from, why we are here, and why it is necessary and even desirable to experience the vicissitudes of mortality, including suffering, pain, temptation, and death, as well as joy and happiness. They will explain how through Christ's teachings, one finds peace and direction in a sometimes troubled and turbulent world. Perhaps most important of all, they will explain God's view of the importance and sanctity of the family. To husbands and wives who love each other and who love their children, there will be a message of how you can have your families forever—eternally—beyond the grave. And finally, they will explain how you can gain your personal witness as to the truthfulness of these things.

Listen to the message and pray

And so, we do "care enough to send our very best." To all of you who are not of our faith, when two young men dressed in white shirts and ties, two lovely young women, or a noble couple knock at your door and introduce themselves as representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, may I invite you to

let them in. Listen to their message and evaluate for yourself. May I suggest that you not just accept their message but that you inquire fervently of our Father in Heaven as to its truthfulness and its value to you and your family, for He is the author of all truth and has promised His witness to those who earnestly seek it.

I testify to you that the Spirit has borne witness to me that these things are true. The Spirit has borne witness to over 50,000 missionaries and 100,000 parents and thousands of family members who are sacrificing and giving their most precious gift of all to bring this message to you. We jointly testify that the Spirit will bear witness to you if you will receive the message and ask Heavenly Father for a personal confirmation of its truthfulness.

I add my solemn testimony to that of our missionaries, their parents, and millions of others who have received this same witness—that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ. He is our Savior, our Redeemer, and He loves us—every one of us—and He has restored His gospel in its fulness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. Hallmark Cards, Inc.

President Hinckley

Bishop Richard C. Edgley, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Robert D. Hales

The doctrine of eternal families

I wish to speak to all those who would like to know about eternal families and about families being forever. One year ago the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a proclamation to the world concerning the family. It summarizes eternal gospel principles that have been taught since the beginning of recorded history and even before the earth was created.

The doctrine of the family begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them. The Apostle Paul taught that God is the father of our spirits (see Hebrews 12:9). From the proclamation we read, "In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life." The proclamation also reiterates to the world that "marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

From the earliest beginnings, God established the family and made it eternal. Adam and Eve were sealed in marriage for time and all eternity:

"And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof; and thus it was" (Moses 5:59).

"And Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and

they began to multiply and to replenish the earth" (Moses 5:2).

The Savior Himself spoke of this sacred marriage covenant and promise when He gave the authority to His disciples to bind in heaven sacred covenants made on earth:

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

In this latter day the promise of eternal families was restored in 1829 when the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood were restored to the earth. Seven years later, in the Kirtland Temple, the keys to perform the sealing ordinances were restored, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

"Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi. . . .

" . . . The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands" (D&C 110:13-14, 16).

With the restoration of these keys and priesthood authority comes the opportunity for all who are worthy to receive the blessings of eternal families. "Yea the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house" (D&C 110:9).

Promises and requirements of sealings

What is the promise of these sealings which are performed in the temples? The Lord outlines the promise and requirements in this sacred verse:

"And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life . . . and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever" (D&C 132:19).

As taught in this scripture, an eternal bond doesn't just happen as a result of sealing covenants we make in the temple. How we conduct ourselves in this life will determine what we will be in all the eternities to come. To receive the blessings of the sealing that our Heavenly Father has given to us, we have to keep the commandments and conduct ourselves in such a way that our families will want to live with us in the eternities. The family relationships we have here on this earth are important, but they are much more important for their effect on our families for generations in mortality and throughout all eternity.

Love spouse above all others

By divine commandment, spouses are required to love each other above all others. The Lord clearly declares, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22). The proclamation states:

"By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide

the necessities of life and protection for their families [see D&C 83:2–4; 1 Timothy 5:8]. [By divine design,] mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children." By divine design, husband and wife are equal partners in their marriage and parental responsibilities. By direct commandment of God, "parents have a sacred duty . . . to teach [their children] *to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens* [in the countries where they reside]" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102; italics added; see Mosiah 4:14–15; D&C 68:25–28).

Satan's efforts to destroy the family

Because of the importance of the family to the eternal plan of happiness, Satan makes a major effort to destroy the sanctity of the family, demean the importance of the roles of men and women, encourage moral uncleanness and violations of the sacred law of chastity, and discourage parents from placing the bearing and rearing of children as one of their highest priorities.

So fundamental is the family unit to the plan of salvation that God has declared a warning that those "individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God [their maker]. The disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Save families, not just ourselves

While our individual salvation is based on our individual obedience, it is equally important that we understand that we are each an important and integral part of a family and that the highest blessings can be received only within an eternal family. When families are func-

tioning as designed by God, the relationships found therein are the most valued of mortality. The plan of the Father is that family love and companionship will continue into the eternities. Being one in a family carries a great responsibility of caring, loving, lifting, and strengthening each member of the family so that all can righteously endure to the end in mortality and dwell together throughout eternity. It is not enough just to save ourselves. It is equally important that parents, brothers, and sisters are saved in our families. If we return home alone to our Heavenly Father, we will be asked, "Where is the rest of the family?" This is why we teach that families are forever. The eternal nature of an individual becomes the eternal nature of the family.

Families prepare us for eternal life

The eternal nature of our body and our spirit is a question often pondered by those who live in mortality. All people who will ever live on earth are members of a human family and are eternal children of God, our loving Heavenly Father. After birth and tasting of death in mortality, all will be resurrected because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Father. Depending on our individual obedience to the laws, ordinances, and commandments of God, each mortal can have the blessing of attaining eternal life; that is, returning to live in the presence of Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, having eternal increase for all the eternities to come. Through making and keeping the sacred covenants found in the temple ordinances, individuals can return to the presence of God and will be reunited with their families eternally.

The home is where we are nurtured and where we prepare ourselves for living in mortality. It is also where we prepare ourselves for death and for immortality because of our belief and understanding

that there is life after death, not only for the individual but also for the family.

Faith of a friend with a terminal illness

Some of the greatest lessons of gospel principles about the eternal nature of the family are learned as we observe how members of the Church, when faced with adversity, apply gospel principles in their lives and in their homes. In the past year I have witnessed the blessings of joy which come to those who honor and revere the gospel teaching of the eternal family during times of adversity in their lives.

A few months ago I had the opportunity of visiting a man who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. As a devoted priesthood holder, he was confronted with the realities of mortality. He found strength, however, in the example of the Savior, who said, in the Lord's Prayer, "After this manner therefore pray ye: . . . Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10). My friend took courage in knowing that as Jesus was required to endure great pain and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane while completing the atoning sacrifice, He uttered the words, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42).

My friend came to accept the phrase "Thy will be done" as he faced his own poignant trials and tribulations. As a faithful member of the Church, he was now confronted with some sobering concerns. Particularly touching were his questions, "Have I done all that I need to do to faithfully endure to the end?" "What will death be like?" "Will my family be prepared to stand in faith and be self-reliant when I am gone?"

We had the opportunity to discuss all three questions. They are clearly answered in the doctrine taught to us by our Savior. We discussed how he had

spent his life striving to be faithful, to do what God asked of him, to be honest in his dealings with his fellowmen and all others, to care for and love his family. Isn't that what is meant by enduring to the end? We talked about what happens immediately after death, about what God has taught us about the world of spirits. It is a place of paradise and happiness for those who have lived righteous lives. It is not something to fear.

After our conversation, he called together his wife and the extended family—children and grandchildren—to teach them again the doctrine of the Atonement that all will be resurrected. Everyone came to understand that just as the Lord has said, while there will be mourning at the temporary separation, there is no sorrow for those who die in the Lord (see Revelation 14:13; D&C 42:46). His blessing promised him comfort and reassurance that all would be well, that he would not have pain, that he would have additional time to prepare his family for his departure, and even that he would know the time of his departure. The family related to me that on the night before he passed away, he said he would go on the morrow. He passed away the next afternoon at peace, with all his family at his side. This is the solace and comfort that comes to us when we understand the gospel plan and know that families are forever.

Gospel doctrines comfort a young widow

Contrast these events with an incident which happened to me when I was a young man in my early twenties. While serving in the Air Force, one of the pilots in my squadron crashed on a training mission and was killed. I was assigned to accompany my fallen comrade on his final journey home to be buried in Brooklyn. I had the honor of standing by his family during the viewing and funeral services and of representing our govern-

ment in presenting the flag to his grieving widow at the graveside. The funeral service was dark and dismal. No mention was made of his goodness or his accomplishments. His name was never mentioned. At the conclusion of the services, his widow turned to me and asked, "Bob, what is really going to happen to Don?" I was then able to give her the sweet doctrine of the Resurrection and the reality that, if baptized and sealed in the temple for time and all eternity, they could be together eternally. The clergyman standing next to her said, "That is the most beautiful doctrine I have ever heard."

The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ brings great comfort in stressful times of mortality. It brings light where there is darkness and a calming influence where there is turmoil. It gives eternal hope where there is mortal despair. It is more than just beautiful doctrine. It is a reality in our lives that if we can be obedient and obtain the eternal rewards that God grants us, if we will draw nigh unto Him and embrace the eternal doctrine, we will be blessed.

A dying man has faith in eternal families

Another incident that has touched my life recently happened when a young man with a terminal illness passed away. He knew that his illness would first take away his manual dexterity and his ability to walk, then its progression would take his ability to speak, and finally his respiratory system would cease to function. But he also had faith that families are forever. With this knowledge, he spoke to each of his children through video recordings for use when he was gone. He produced recordings to be given to his sons and daughters at important, sacred occasions in their lives, such as baptisms, priesthood ordinations, and weddings. He spoke to them with the tender love of a father who knew that while his family was forever, for a time he would not

physically be able to be with them, but spiritually he would never leave their side.

The examples of faith shown by steadfast widows and widowers, along with that of their children, after the passing of a spouse or parent are an inspiration to all of us. Great lessons can be learned as we observe their faith and obedience as they strive to remain faithful so that they can once again be together as families through eternity.

The gospel brings light and hope

The knowledge and understanding of the doctrine that God lives and Jesus is the Christ and that we have an opportunity to be resurrected and live in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, make it possible to endure otherwise tragic events. This doctrine brings a brightness of hope into an otherwise dark and dreary world. It answers the simple questions of where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. These are truths that must be taught and practiced in our homes.

God lives. Jesus is the Christ. Through His Atonement we will all have the opportunity of being resurrected.

This is not just an individual blessing; it is much more than that. It is a blessing to each one of us and to our families. That we may be eternally grateful, that we can live in the presence of God the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ, that we may be together in the eternities to come, that we might understand the joy, and that we not only teach this doctrine but live true to it in our lives and in our families, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

President Hinckley

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Following my remarks, the choir will sing "Lead, Kindly Light," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at two o'clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Women are essential to God's plan

Half, possibly more than half, of the adult members of the Church are women. It is to them that I wish particularly to speak this morning. I do so with the hope that the men will also hear.

First let me say to you sisters that you do not hold a second place in our Father's plan for the eternal happiness and well-being of His children. You are an absolutely essential part of that plan.

Without you the plan could not function. Without you the entire program

would be frustrated. As I have said before from this pulpit, when the process of creation occurred, Jehovah, the Creator, under instruction from His Father, first divided the light from the darkness and then separated the land from the waters. There followed the creation of plant life, followed by the creation of animal life. Then came the creation of man, and culminating that act of divinity came the crowning act, the creation of woman.

Each of you is a daughter of God, endowed with a divine birthright. You need no defense of that position.

Great strength in women of the Church

As I go about from place to place, I am interviewed by representatives of the media. Invariably they ask about the place of women in the Church. They do so in an almost accusatory tone, as if we denigrate and demean women. I invariably reply that I know of no other organization in all the world which affords women so many opportunities for development, for sociality, for the accomplishment of great good, for holding positions of leadership and responsibility.

I wish all of these reporters could have been in the Tabernacle a week ago Saturday when the general Relief Society meeting was held. It was an inspiration to look into the faces of that vast gathering of the daughters of God, women of faith and ability, women who know what life is about and have something of a sense of the divinity of their creation. I wish they could have heard that great chorus of young women from Brigham Young University, who touched our hearts with the beauty of their singing. I wish they could have heard the stirring messages of the Relief Society general presidency, each of whom spoke on a phase of the subject faith, hope, and charity.

What able people these women are. They express themselves with power and conviction and great persuasiveness. President Faust concluded that service with a wonderful talk.

If those reporters who are prone to raise this question could have sat in that vast congregation, they would have known, even without further inquiry, that there is strength and great capacity in the women of this Church. There is leadership and direction, a certain spirit of independence, and yet great satisfaction in being a part of this, the Lord's kingdom, and of working hand in hand with the priesthood to move it forward.

The real builders of the nation

Many of you are here today who were in that meeting. Today you are seated with your husbands, men whom you love and honor and respect, and who in turn love and honor and respect you. You know how fortunate you are to be married to a good man who is your companion in life and who will be your companion throughout eternity. Together, as you have served in many capacities and reared your families and provided for them, you have faced a variety of storms and come through them all with your heads held high. Most of you are mothers, and very many of you are grandmothers and even great-grandmothers. You have walked the sometimes painful, sometimes joyous path of parenthood. You have walked hand in hand with God in the great process of bringing children into the world that they might experience this estate along the road of immortality and eternal life. It has not been easy rearing a family. Most of you have had to sacrifice and skimp and labor night and day. As I think of you and your circumstances, I think of the words of Anne Campbell, who wrote as she looked upon her children:

You are the trip I did not take;
You are the pearls I cannot buy;
You are my blue Italian lake;
You are my piece of foreign sky.
["To My Child," quoted in Charles L. Wallis, ed., *The Treasure Chest* (1965), 54]

You sisters are the real builders of the nation wherever you live, for you have created homes of strength and peace and security. These become the very sinew of any nation.

Rebuke to abusers

Unfortunately a few of you may be married to men who are abusive. Some

of them put on a fine face before the world during the day and come home in the evening, set aside their self-discipline, and on the slightest provocation fly into outbursts of anger.

No man who engages in such evil and unbecoming behavior is worthy of the priesthood of God. No man who so conducts himself is worthy of the privileges of the house of the Lord. I regret that there are some men undeserving of the love of their wives and children. There are children who fear their fathers, and wives who fear their husbands. If there be any such men within the hearing of my voice, as a servant of the Lord I rebuke you and call you to repentance. Discipline yourselves. Master your temper. Most of the things that make you angry are of very small consequence. And what a terrible price you are paying for your anger. Ask the Lord to forgive you. Ask your wife to forgive you. Apologize to your children.

Advice to single women

There are many women among us who are single. Generally this is not of their own choice. Some have never had the opportunity to marry one with whom they would wish to spend eternity.

To you single women who wish to be married, I repeat what I recently said in a meeting for singles in this Tabernacle:

"Do not give up hope. And do not give up trying. But do give up being obsessed with it. The chances are that if you forget about it and become anxiously engaged in other activities, the prospects will brighten immeasurably. . . .

"I believe that for most of us the best medicine for loneliness is work, service in behalf of others. I do not minimize your problems, but I do not hesitate to say that there are many others whose problems are more serious than are yours. Reach out to serve them, to help them, to encourage them. There are so many boys and girls who fail in school for want of a

little personal attention and encouragement. There are so many elderly people who live in misery and loneliness and fear for whom a simple conversation would bring a measure of hope and happiness" (Salt Lake Valley single adult fireside, 22 Sept. 1996).

Assist women who have lost husbands

Included among the women of the Church are those who have lost their husbands through abandonment, divorce, and death. Great is our obligation to you. As the scriptures declare, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

I received a letter from one who counts herself fortunate, and indeed fortunate she is. She writes:

"Although I have been raising our four boys as a single parent, . . . I am not alone. I have a wonderful 'ward family' that has rallied around us. . . .

"My Relief Society president has been there for me through my greatest hardships, encouraging my spiritual growth, personal prayer, and temple attendance.

"Our bishop has been generous in providing needed food and clothing and has helped send two of the boys to camp. He has had interviews with all of us and given each of us blessings and needed encouragement. He has helped me to budget and do what I can to help my family.

"Our home teachers have come regularly and even gave the boys blessings as they started the new school year.

"Our stake president and his counselors have checked in on us on a regular basis by taking time to visit with us at church, on the phone, or in our home.

"This Church is true, and my boys and I are living proof that God loves us

and that a 'ward family' can make all the difference.

"Our priesthood leaders have been instrumental in keeping the boys active in church and in the Scouting program. [One] is an Eagle Scout and is receiving his fourth palm this week. [Another] is an Eagle with three palms. And [a third] has just turned in his Eagle papers this week. The youngest is a Webelos and loves Cub Scouts.

"We are always met with loving hearts and warm handshakes. The Christ-like attitude of the stake and our ward has helped us through trials we never imagined possible.

"Life has been hard, . . . but we put on the whole armor of God as we kneel in family prayer . . . , asking for help and guidance and sharing thanks for the blessings we have received. I pray daily for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost to guide me as I raise these boys to be missionaries and encourage them to be true to the gospel and the priesthood they hold.

"I am proud to say I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I know this Church is true. I sustain my Church leaders. We are doing well, and I thank everyone for their love and prayers and acceptance."

What a great letter that is! How much it says about the way this Church functions and should function throughout the world. I hope that every woman who finds herself in the kind of circumstances in which this woman lives is similarly blessed with an understanding and helpful bishop, with a Relief Society president who knows how to assist her, with home teachers who know where their duty lies and how to fulfill it, and with a host of ward members who are helpful without being intrusive.

I have never met the woman whose letter I have read. Notwithstanding the cheerful attitude she conveys, I am sure there has been much of struggle and

loneliness and, at times, fear. I notice that she works to provide for her needs and the needs of her boys, who are in their teens. I assume her income is inadequate, because she indicates that the bishop has helped them with food and clothing.

Advice on employment outside the home

Some years ago President Benson delivered a message to the women of the Church. He encouraged them to leave their employment and give their individual time to their children. I sustain the position which he took.

Nevertheless, I recognize, as he recognized, that there are some women (it has become very many, in fact) who have to work to provide for the needs of their families. To you I say, do the very best you can. I hope that if you are employed full-time you are doing it to ensure that basic needs are met and not simply to indulge a taste for an elaborate home, fancy cars, and other luxuries. The greatest job that any mother will ever do will be in nurturing, teaching, lifting, encouraging, and rearing her children in righteousness and truth. None other can adequately take her place.

It is well-nigh impossible to be a full-time homemaker and a full-time employee. I know how some of you struggle with decisions concerning this matter. I repeat, do the very best you can. You know your circumstances, and I know that you are deeply concerned for the welfare of your children. Each of you has a bishop who will counsel with you and assist you. If you feel you need to speak with an understanding woman, do not hesitate to get in touch with your Relief Society president.

To the mothers of this Church, every mother who is here today, I want to say that as the years pass, you will become increasingly grateful for that which you did in molding the lives of your children

in the direction of righteousness and goodness, integrity and faith. That is most likely to happen if you can spend adequate time with them.

Advice to single parents

For you who are single parents, I say that many hands stand ready to help you. The Lord is not unmindful of you. Neither is His Church.

May He bless you, my beloved sisters who find yourselves in the situation of single parenthood. May you have health, strength, vitality to carry the heavy burden that is yours. May you have loving friends and associates to bear you up in your times of trial. You know the power of prayer as perhaps few others do. Many of you spend much time on your knees speaking with your Father in Heaven, with tears running down your cheeks. Please know that we also pray for you.

With all that you have to do, you are also asked to serve in the Church. Your bishop will not ask you to do anything that is beyond your capacity. And as you so serve, a new dimension will be added to your life. You will find new and stimulating associations. You will find friendship and sociality. You will grow in knowledge and understanding and wisdom and in your capacity to do. You will become a better mother because of the service you give in the work of the Lord.

To older women

Now in conclusion I wish to say a word to you older women, many of whom are widows. You are a great treasure. You have passed through the storms of life. You have weathered the challenges now facing your younger sisters. You are mature in wisdom, in understanding, in compassion, in love and service.

There is a certain beauty that shines through your countenances. It is the beauty that comes of peace. There may

still be struggle, but there is mature wisdom to meet it. There are health problems, but there is a certain composure concerning them. The bad memories of the past have largely been forgotten, while the good memories return and bring sweet and satisfying enrichment to life.

You have learned to love the scriptures, and you read them. Your prayers for the most part are prayers of thanksgiving. Your greetings are words of kindness. Your friendship is a sturdy staff on which others may lean.

What a resource are the women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You love this Church; you accept its doctrine; you honor your place in its organization; you bring luster and strength and beauty to its congregations. How thankful we are to you. How much you are loved, respected, and honored.

I salute my own beloved companion. It will soon be 60 years ago that we walked from the Salt Lake Temple as husband and wife, with love for one another. That love has strengthened through all of these years. We have faced many problems during our years of marriage. Somehow, with the blessing of the Lord, we have survived them all.

It is becoming physically harder to stand tall and straight as we did in our younger years. No matter—we still have one another and we still stand together, even though we lean a little. And when the time for separation comes, there will be much of sorrow, but there will also be the comfort that will come from the assurance that she is mine and I am hers for the eternity that lies ahead.

Appreciation for sisters

And so, my beloved sisters, please know how much we appreciate you. You bring a measure of wholeness to us. You have great strength. With dignity and tremendous ability, you carry forward the

remarkable programs of the Relief Society, the Young Women, and the Primary. You teach Sunday School. We walk at your side as your companions and your brethren with respect and love, with honor and great admiration. It was the Lord who designated that men in His Church should hold the priesthood. It was He who has given you your capabilities to round out this great and marvelous organization, which is the Church and kingdom of God. I bear testimony

before the entire world of your worth, of your grace and goodness, of your remarkable abilities and tremendous contributions, and I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light."
Elder Dennis E. Simmons offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 6, 1996. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

Good afternoon. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We note that Elders Robert D. Hales, J. Richard Clarke, and F. Melvin Hammond are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; and Elders Dean L. Larsen, James M. Paramore, Gary J. Coleman, and D. Todd Christofferson are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and accompanied by Clay Christiansen, will provide the music for this session.

The choir will begin this service by singing "How Wondrous and Great." The invocation will be offered by Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy.

The choir sang "How Wondrous and Great."

Elder Sheldon F. Child offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Sabbath Day." Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker at this session.

The choir sang "Sabbath Day."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Christians in belief and action

My beloved brethren and sisters, it is a privilege for me to speak to you this afternoon, and I pray for that same Spirit that we've enjoyed so much during this conference.

Some people erroneously believe that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members are not Christian. We have difficulty understanding why anyone could accept and promote an idea that is so far from the truth. President Gordon B. Hinckley has described Church members as a people "bound [together] by a common love for our Master, who is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. We are a covenant people who have taken upon ourselves His holy name."¹

Our beliefs and actions may differ from those of others, but we, as good Christians, do not criticize other religions or their adherents. "We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, *let them worship how, where, or what they may.*"²

A dictionary defines a Christian as "one who professes *belief* in Jesus as the Christ or follows the religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus" and "one who *lives* according to the teachings of Jesus."³ Thus two characteristics identify Christians: (1) they profess *belief* in the Savior, and (2) they *act* in harmony with the Savior's teachings. Faithful members of the Church, called Saints or Latter-day Saints, qualify clearly in both characteristics. In our belief and our action, we demonstrate that "Jesus Christ himself [is] the chief corner stone" of our faith.⁴

Christians in belief

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bears His name. He stands at

its head and directs it through His chosen prophets.

We believe the *first principle of the gospel* is "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."⁵ "No [one] cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]."⁶ As His disciples, we echo boldly the words of Peter's resounding testimony to our Master: "Thou art the Christ."⁷ The burning witness of the Holy Spirit that we feel deep within our hearts prompts us to make this declaration humbly and gratefully. When we explain our regard for Jesus, we lovingly and plainly testify that He is "that Christ, the Son of the living God."⁸

We rejoice in our sure knowledge that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."⁹ With obedient hearts and eyes of faith, "we see that the gate of heaven is open unto all, even to those who will believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God."¹⁰

We declare that Jesus is the First-born Son of our Heavenly Father in the spirit and the Only Begotten Son of God in mortality. He is a God, one of the three in the Godhead. He is the Savior and Redeemer of the human race. In a premortal council at which we were all present, He accepted our Father's great plan of happiness for His children and was chosen by the Father to give effect to that plan. He led the forces of good against those of Satan and his followers in a battle for the souls of men that began before this world was formed. That conflict continues today. We were all on the side of Jesus then. We are on the side of Jesus today.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ, an act of pure love, overcame the effects of the Fall and provided the way for all mankind to return to the presence of God. As part of the Atonement, the Savior overcame physical death and provided immortality for every one of God's

children through the Resurrection. He also overcame spiritual death and provided the possibility of eternal life, the life that God lives and the greatest of all the gifts of God. This He did by taking upon Himself the suffering for the sins of all humankind.

Under the direction of His Father, He created this world and many others. He came to this earth as the Son of God, the Eternal Father, and the mortal virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life. He had a greater effect upon the people of this world than any other who has ever lived or will live upon it. He "stands first, foremost, and alone, as a directing personality in the world's progression."¹¹ He was crucified and resurrected and ascended to His Father in Heaven. After His Resurrection, He ministered to people who lived in the Western Hemisphere.

After the great Apostasy, He initiated the Restoration of the gospel on a spring day in 1820 when He and His Father visited young Joseph Smith. The Lord directed the organization of His restored Church on 6 April 1830.

He will return in glory to reign in righteousness for 1,000 years, after which He will deliver the kingdom to His Father.¹²

Belief based on scriptures and revelation

We base our belief and conviction of the divine nature and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ on the holy scriptures and on continuing revelation to latter-day prophets.

"We believe the Bible to be the word of God."¹³ We delight in the knowledge of the Lord that we find recorded in the Old and New Testaments. We know that Jehovah of the Old Testament and Jesus of the New Testament are one and the same. We are grateful that this sacred record of God's dealings with the people of ancient Israel and of His mortal ministry has been preserved and passed to us

to enlighten our minds and strengthen our spirits. The fragmentary nature of the biblical record and the errors in it, resulting from multiple transcriptions, translations, and interpretations, do not diminish our belief in it as the word of God "as far as it is translated correctly."¹⁴

We read and study the Bible, we teach and preach from it, and we strive to live according to the eternal truths it contains. We love this collection of holy writ.

"We also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God."¹⁵ It is another testament of Jesus Christ, written "by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation . . . to the convincing of [all people] that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations."¹⁶ God brought forth the Book of Mormon as a second witness that corroborates and strengthens the Bible's testimony of the Savior. The Book of Mormon does not supplant the Bible. It expands, extends, clarifies, and amplifies our knowledge of the Savior. Surely this second witness should be cause for great rejoicing by all Christians.

We invite our friends who are not of our faith to read the Book of Mormon and ponder its content prayerfully. To them we offer this scriptural promise: "And now, my beloved brethren, . . . and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good."¹⁷

Latter-day Saints "believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."¹⁸ We feel blessed to know that God speaks to His children, as He has throughout the ages, through living prophets.¹⁹

God called, prepared, and sustained Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Restoration. Prophets have no other purpose, no other mission except to serve God. Of his own sacred responsibility and holy calling, our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said: "I have no desire other than to do that which the Lord would have done. I am His servant, called to serve His people. This is His Church. We are only custodians of that which belongs to Him."²⁰

The Doctrine and Covenants also contains revelations in which "one hears the tender but firm voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking anew in the dispensation of the fulness of times . . . in fulfillment of and in concert with the words of all the holy prophets since the world began."²¹

This book of revelations is "of great value to the human family and of more worth than the riches of the whole earth" because of "the testimony that is given of Jesus Christ—his divinity, his majesty, his perfection, his love, and his redeeming power."²²

The Pearl of Great Price provides the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the central figure in every dispensation from Adam to Joseph Smith and including President Gordon B. Hinckley.

Christians in action

To repeat, by definition a Christian not only professes *belief* in the Savior, but a Christian *lives and acts* according to the teachings and commandments of Jesus Christ. He taught, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father."²³ Jesus also said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."²⁴ He commanded us to pattern our lives after His.²⁵ True disciples of the Lord must be "doers of the word, and not hearers only."²⁶

Our faith in the Lord moves us to the *second principle of the gospel*: repen-

tance.²⁷ We develop a desire to purify and sanctify ourselves so that we might be worthy to return to God's presence. We learn of the great plan of happiness that our Father has designed for His children, and we seek the blessings of peace and joy that are linked irrevocably to obedience to the laws of God.²⁸ Through the marvelous power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, a power activated by our obedience to His commandments, we can be washed clean of our sins. His infinite "mercy can satisfy the demands of justice"²⁹ for everyone who will repent. One of the great truths restored to the earth through modern revelation is that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is universal! The saving power of the gospel spans all generations of time and extends to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples. Through humble repentance, we offer the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit that the Lord requires of us before we can enter the waters of baptism.³⁰

Our faith in the Lord moves us to the *third principle of the gospel*, which is "baptism by immersion for the remission of sins" by one who has priesthood authority.³¹ The Savior commanded that we all must be born again: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."³² Latter-day Saints accept baptism as an essential saving ordinance that is required of all people. Through baptism we covenant to take upon us the Lord's name and honor it by keeping His commandments. He, in turn, promises us the guiding and enlightening presence of His Spirit. The *fourth principle of the gospel* is the "laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."³³

Covenant to obey the commandments

As we take His name upon us, we most certainly are Christians, for we bear the name of Christ. Each week as we partake of the emblems of bread and water,

we do it in remembrance of Him. We renew our covenant that we "are willing to take upon [us] the name of [the] Son [of God], and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given [us]." ³⁴

Through faith in the Lord, repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are born anew. We experience "a mighty change . . . in our hearts" ³⁵ and become "quicken[ed] in the inner man." ³⁶ If we are faithful and obedient, this mighty change will cause that "we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually." ³⁷

By obeying God's commands, we deny ourselves of all ungodliness. Through obedience motivated by a wholehearted love of God, we come fully unto Christ and allow His grace, through the Atonement, to lead us into perfection. ³⁸

Latter-day Saints covenant to keep the Lord's commandments. Though we may fall short, our hearts are committed to striving earnestly to be obedient. We follow the teachings of the Savior. We try always to go the extra mile, to fast, to pray for our enemies, to care for the poor, and to do our acts of charity in private. We try to follow the example He gave in the parable of the good Samaritan. We avoid profanity. We avoid finding fault. We keep the Sabbath day holy and strive to be reconciled to our brother. With patience and forgiveness we try to turn the other cheek, knowing that we will be judged as we judge others. We are aware of the dangers of materialism and debt. We seek to put the kingdom of God and His righteousness first in our lives because we know that our hearts will follow what we treasure. We know that the gate is strait and the way is narrow, so we labor to develop self-discipline to follow in His footsteps.

We love our neighbors. We strive to treat others with courtesy and respect, to treat them as we would want to be treated, both in public settings and in our

homes. We strive to show concern for others and courtesy in all that we do—even as we drive in a traffic jam. We know that "out of small things proceedeth that which is great." ³⁹ Because we find joy in what we know and in how we live, we like to share the gospel with others.

"The author and finisher of our faith"

Can anyone doubt that Latter-day Saints profess a profound belief in Jesus Christ or doubt that we follow a religion based on the life and teachings of the Savior? He is, without question, "the author and finisher of our faith." ⁴⁰ President Hinckley gave this powerful testimony of our Redeemer:

"Towering above all mankind stands Jesus the Christ, the King of glory, the unblemished Messiah, the Lord Emmanuel. . . .

"He is our King, our Lord, our Master, the living Christ, who stands on the right hand of His Father. He lives! He lives, resplendent and wonderful, the living Son of the living God." ⁴¹

I add my personal testimony to others you have heard. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind, our Mediator with the Father, and our perfect example. I love Him and serve Him and seek only to do His will. God lives, and He loves His children. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's chosen prophet today. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 89; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 65.
2. Articles of Faith 1:11; italics added.
3. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1992), "Christian," 340; italics added.
4. Ephesians 2:20.
5. Articles of Faith 1:4.
6. John 14:6.

7. Mark 8:29.
8. John 6:69.
9. Acts 4:12.
10. Helaman 3:28.
11. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 2.
12. See Revelation 20:6; Doctrine and Covenants 76:107–9.
13. Articles of Faith 1:8.
14. Articles of Faith 1:8.
15. Articles of Faith 1:8.
16. Title page, Book of Mormon.
17. 2 Nephi 33:10; see also Moroni 7:16.
18. Articles of Faith 1:9.
19. See Amos 3:7; Ephesians 4:11–14.
20. In Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 89; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 65.
21. Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
22. Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
23. Matthew 7:21; italics added.
24. John 14:15; Doctrine and Covenants 124:87.
25. See 3 Nephi 12:48; Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 27:27.
26. James 1:22.
27. See Articles of Faith 1:4.
28. See Alma 12:32–34; Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
29. Alma 34:16; see also Mosiah 15:9; Alma 42.
30. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
31. Articles of Faith 1:4.
32. John 3:5.
33. Articles of Faith 1:4; see also 1:5.
34. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
35. Mosiah 5:2; see also Alma 5:12–14.
36. Moses 6:65.
37. Mosiah 5:2.
38. See Moroni 10:32.
39. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.
40. Hebrews 12:2.
41. In Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 92; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 67.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack, general president of the Relief Society.

Elder Richard G. Scott

God's great plan of happiness

The scriptures record, "And I, God, created man . . . ; male and female created I them."¹ This was done spiritually in your premortal existence when you lived in the presence of your Father in Heaven. Your gender existed before you came to earth. You elected to have this earth experience as part of His plan for you. The prophets call it "the plan of mercy,"² the "eternal plan of deliverance,"³ "the plan of salvation,"⁴ and, yes, "the great plan of happiness."⁵ You were taught this plan before you came to earth and there rejoiced in the privilege of participating in it.

Obedience to the plan is a requisite for full happiness in this life and a continuation of eternal joy beyond the veil. Essential to His plan of happiness is agency—the right of personal choice. Also fundamental is the holy privilege of procreation to be exercised within the commitment of legal marriage. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. The family is ordained of God.⁶ As husband and wife, you have the responsibility to bear children and to nurture and train them spiritually, emotionally, and physically.⁷

Satan also has a plan. It is a cunning, evil, subtle plan of destruction.⁸ It is his

objective to take captive the children of Father in Heaven and with every possible means frustrate the great plan of happiness.

Importance of marriage in God's plan

Our Heavenly Father endowed His sons and daughters with unique traits especially fitted for their individual responsibilities as they fulfill His plan. To follow His plan requires that you do those things He expects of you as a son or daughter, husband or wife. Those roles are different but entirely compatible. In the Lord's plan, it takes two—a man and a woman—to form a whole. Indeed, a husband and wife are not two identical halves, but a wondrous, divinely determined combination of complementary capacities and characteristics.

Marriage allows these different characteristics to come together in oneness—in unity—to bless a husband and wife, their children and grandchildren. For the greatest happiness and productivity in life, both husband and wife are needed. Their efforts interlock and are complementary. Each has individual traits that best fit the role the Lord has defined for happiness as a man or woman. When used as the Lord intends, those capacities allow a married couple to think, act, and rejoice as one—to face challenges together and overcome them as one, to grow in love and understanding, and through temple ordinances to be bound together as one whole, eternally. That is the plan.

Learn from the lives of Adam and Eve

You can learn how to be more effective parents by studying the lives of Adam and Eve. Adam was Michael who helped create the earth—a glorious, superb individual. Eve was his equal—a full, powerfully contributing partner. After they had partaken of the fruit, the Lord spoke with them. Their comments reveal some

different characteristics of a man and woman. To Adam He said, "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?"⁹ Now, Adam's response was characteristic of a man who wants to be perceived as being as close to right as possible. Adam responded, "The woman thou gavest me, and commandest that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat."¹⁰ And the Lord said unto Eve, "What is this thing which thou hast done?"¹¹ Eve's response was characteristic of a woman. Her answer was very simple and straightforward: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."¹²

Later, "Adam blessed God . . . and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of *my* transgression *my* eyes are opened, and in this life *I* shall have joy, and again in the flesh *I* shall see God."¹³ Adam was thinking about his responsibilities. He was trying to align his performance with the desires of the Lord. Eve said, "Were it not for *our* transgression *we* never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of *our* redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto *all* the obedient."¹⁴ Eve's response was characteristic of a woman. She embraced all, wanted to make sure that everyone was considered. One response was not more correct than the other. The two perspectives resulted from the traits inherent in men and women. The Lord intends that we use those differences to fulfill His plan for happiness, personal growth, and development. By counseling together they arrived at a broader, more correct understanding of truth.

They worked together.¹⁵ They obeyed the commandment to have children.¹⁶ They knew the plan of happiness and followed it, even though at times it resulted in hardship and difficulty for them.

They were commanded, "Thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore."¹⁷ And they did. Further, they taught their children the plan of happiness.¹⁸ They worked together to overcome challenges,¹⁹ and they "ceased not to call upon God."²⁰

Because Adam and Eve were obedient, the Holy Ghost led them. As husband and wife, you can receive direction in your lives by qualifying for the gift of the Holy Ghost through obedience to the teachings of the Savior.

Roles of wife and mother

Beware of the subtle ways Satan employs to take you from the plan of God²¹ and true happiness. One of Satan's most effective approaches is to demean the role of wife and mother in the home. This is an attack at the very heart of God's plan to foster love between husband and wife and to nurture children in an atmosphere of understanding, peace, appreciation, and support. Much of the violence that is rampant in the world today is the harvest of weakened homes. Government and social plans will not effectively correct that, nor can the best efforts of schools and churches fully compensate for the absence of the tender care of a compassionate mother and wife in the home.

This morning President Hinckley spoke of the importance of a mother in the home. Study his message. As a mother guided by the Lord, you weave a fabric of character in your children from threads of truth through careful instruction and worthy example. You imbue the traits of honesty, faith in God, duty, respect for others, kindness, self-confidence, and the desire to contribute, to learn, and to give in your trusting children's minds and hearts. No day-care center can do that. It is your sacred right and privilege.

Of course, as a woman you can do exceptionally well in the workplace, but is that the best use of your divinely ap-

pointed talents and feminine traits? As a husband, don't encourage your wife to go to work to help in your divinely appointed responsibility of providing resources for the family, if you can possibly avoid it. As the prophets have counseled, to the extent possible with the help of the Lord, as parents, work together to keep Mother in the home.²² Your presence there will strengthen the self-confidence of your children and decrease the chance of emotional challenges. Moreover, as you teach truth by word and example, those children will come to understand who they are and what they can obtain as divine children of Father in Heaven.

Blessings to be given in the Lord's time

I know I have been speaking of the ideal, and you may be disturbed because your life may not now fit that mold. I promise you that through your obedience and continuing faith in Jesus Christ and your understanding of the whole plan of happiness, even if important parts of it aren't fulfilled in your life now, they will be yours in the Lord's due time. I also promise you that you can have significant growth and happiness now in your present circumstances. As a daughter or son of God, live whatever portion of the plan you can to the best of your ability.

Your desire to be a wife and mother may not have its total fulfillment here, but it will in His time as you live in faith and obedience to merit it.²³ Don't be lured away from the plan of our God²⁴ to the ways of the world, where motherhood is belittled, femininity is decried, and the divinely established role of wife and mother is mocked. Let the world go its way. You follow the plan of the Lord for the greatest measure of true, eternal achievement and the fullest happiness. The lack of promised blessings for which you qualify will be fully rectified in this life or in the next.²⁵

Gratitude for what women are and do

I often interview strong priesthood leaders. When these men speak of their wives, it is with deep tenderness and obvious appreciation. Often, tears flow. Their comments include, "She is more spiritual, purer, and more committed than I," "She motivates me to be a better person," "She is the strength of my life," and "I couldn't do it without her." As a woman, please don't judge how worthwhile, needed, and loved you are by our inept ability to express our true feelings. Your divinely conferred trait of giving of self without counting the cost leads you to underestimate your own worth.

I humbly thank our Father in Heaven for His daughters, you who were willing to come to earth to live under such uncertain circumstances. Most men could not handle the uncertainties you are asked to live with. Social customs require that you wait to be asked for marriage. You are expected to go with your husband wherever his employment or call takes him. Your environment and neighborhood are determined by his ability to provide, meager or not. You place your life in the Lord's hands each time you bear a child. Men make no such sacrifice. The blessing of nurturing children and caring for a husband often is intermingled with many routine tasks. But you do all of these things willingly because you are a woman. Generally you have no idea of how truly wonderful and capable you are, how very much appreciated and loved, or how desperately needed, for most men don't tell you as completely and as often as needed.

How to attain happiness

How can you receive the greatest happiness and blessings from this earth experience?

- Learn the doctrinal foundation of the great plan of happiness by studying

the scriptures, pondering their content, and praying to understand them. Carefully study and use the proclamation of the First Presidency and the Twelve on the family.²⁶ It was inspired of the Lord.

- Listen to the voice of current and past prophets. Their declarations are inspired. You may verify that counsel in your own mind and heart by praying about it as it applies to your special circumstances. Ask the Lord to confirm your choices, and accept accountability for them.

- Obey the inner feelings that come as promptings from the Holy Ghost. Those feelings are engendered by your righteous thoughts and acts and your determination to seek the will of the Lord and to live it.

- When needed, seek counsel and guidance from parents and your priesthood leaders.

A choice mother wrote: "How did the pioneer women . . . respond to the challenges of their day? They *listened* to their prophet's voice and *followed* him because they *knew* he spoke the will of the Lord. They met the challenges and reaped great blessings because of their faith and obedience. Their first priorities were not security, nice homes, or an easy life. . . . No sacrifice was too great for them to make for their precious husbands and children."²⁷

I obviously don't know what it feels like to be a woman, but I do know what it is to love one with all of my heart and soul. I constantly express to the Lord overflowing gratitude for the unending blessings that flow to our children and so abundantly to me from the life of one of His precious daughters. I want the happiness we have found together to be yours. The more closely you personally adhere to His plan for you on earth, the greater will be your happiness, fulfillment, and progress; the more qualified you will be to receive the rewards He has

promised for obedience. I so testify, for the Savior lives and He loves you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 2:27. See also Moses 2:28; 3:5; James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 4:303; James E. Talmage, *Millennial Star*, 24 Aug. 1922, 539.
2. Alma 42:15.
3. 2 Nephi 11:5.
4. Moses 6:62.
5. Alma 42:8.
6. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. See “Proclamation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. See 2 Nephi 9:8–9; Alma 12:4–5; Helaman 2:8; 3 Nephi 1:16; Doctrine and Covenants 10:12, 23.
9. Moses 4:17.
10. Moses 4:18.
11. Moses 4:19.
12. Moses 4:19.
13. Moses 5:10; italics added.
14. Moses 5:11; italics added.
15. See Moses 5:1.
16. See Moses 5:2.
17. Moses 5:8.
18. See Moses 5:12.
19. See Moses 5:13.
20. Moses 5:16.
21. 2 Nephi 9:13.
22. See Spencer W. Kimball, San Antonio fireside, 3 Dec. 1977, 32.
23. See Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 71.
24. See 2 Nephi 9:13.
25. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76.
26. See “Proclamation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
27. Jeanene W. Scott, BYU Women’s Conference, 6 Apr. 1989, 1.

Sister Elaine L. Jack

The Saints in flooded Mistolar

On the plains of Paraguay sits the tiny village of Mistolar. It is located on a large stretch of land in a desolate area near the Pilcomayo River. There in this small farming community is a branch of the Church. In June of 1987, with the melting snows of the Andes, the river which was their lifeline for crops was also the source of their destruction. It overflowed its banks not once but twice, forcing the Saints to relocate and then relocate again. They lost everything: their chapel, their homes, their gardens and fences. For a month they waded in knee-deep water simply trying to stay alive.

The Area Presidency, hearing of their plight, dispatched supplies, and Elder Ted E. Brewerton of the Quorum of

Seventy led the rescue party in a grueling two-day journey.

When the group arrived, they were warmly welcomed by the women and children because the men, for the most part, were away hunting and fishing. The people had little food and clothing to sustain them in that freezing winter weather, and their surviving livestock included three sheep, a few chickens, a goat, and a scrawny dog. At night their makeshift reed-and-stick homes offered very little protection.

Clearly their situation was bleak, yet the villagers were smiling. Their peace was a stark contrast to their destitute circumstances.

How were they sustaining their spirits under such difficulties? The answer came when Elder Brewerton asked the

young branch president, "Do you have any sick among your members?"

The young priesthood leader paused and said, "I don't think so; let me ask the other brethren." A few minutes later he answered, "There are 39 of us who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. We watch over and bless our people."

That evening at the branch meeting a sister offered a prayer, one Elder Brewerton will always remember. She said, "Father, we have lost our beautiful chapel, we have lost our clothing, we no longer have homes, . . . we don't have any materials to build anything, we have to walk ten kilometers to get a drink of dirty river water and don't have a bucket. But we desire to express to thee our gratitude for our good health, for our happiness, and for our Church membership. Father, we want thee to know that under any conditions, we will be true, strong, and faithful to the covenants we made to thee when we were baptized" (in Heidi S. Swinton, *Pioneer Spirit* [1996], 10; see 8–11).

When all around them had washed away, the Saints in Mistolar held firmly to the power of the priesthood and its spiritual blessings (see D&C 107:18). I can picture that Relief Society sister standing up to thank the Lord in prayer for all they had. They had practically nothing—not even a bucket. But they had their covenants; they had their Church membership, their commitment to Christ. They were blessed to become "partakers of the glories." In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, "Blessed are you for receiving mine everlasting covenant, even the fulness of my gospel, sent forth unto the children of men, that they might . . . be made partakers of the glories which are to be revealed in the last days" (D&C 66:2).

The priesthood is God's power

I have a firm testimony of the power of the priesthood in the lives of all Church members. In the Doctrine and

Covenants we are also told that the Melchizedek Priesthood holds "the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church" (D&C 107:18). I know it is God's power and authority on earth to bless our lives and help us bridge our earthly experiences to the eternities. When we receive the blessings of the priesthood, we are drawing on the power and grace of God.

President Joseph Fielding Smith said, "Priesthood is given us for two purposes, first, that we may ourselves receive exaltation, and, second, that we may be the means of helping others to obtain like blessings" (*The Way to Perfection* [1935], 221).

Sisters share in priesthood blessings

There is order to the work of God. In one of the first meetings of the Relief Society 154 years ago, the Prophet Joseph Smith charged the sisters with helping to save souls (see Relief Society minutes, 9 June 1842, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). Our purpose has not changed. It is significant to me that the women were organized under the authority of the priesthood. We sustain the priesthood and are sustained by its power. The sisters of the Church, like the one from Mistolar, treasure our opportunity to be full partakers of the spiritual blessings of the priesthood.

Each of us can be directed and blessed in our eternal progression by receiving these blessings. The ordinances, covenants, sealings, and the gift of the Holy Ghost are essential for exaltation. There are a host of individual priesthood blessings as well. Priesthood blessings give us direction; they lift our sights; they encourage and inspire us; they prompt our commitment. We can all be partakers of these spiritual blessings.

Baptism is the critical priesthood ordinance which opens the door to eternal life for each one of us. It is the benchmark from which we count our many blessings

because this is when our accountability to follow Jesus Christ and live His gospel begins. And then each week as we partake of the sacrament, we are reminded to "always remember him" (D&C 20:79). What a blessing this visual reminder is.

When we are confirmed, the heavens open and we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. By and through the Spirit, blessings of the priesthood flow into our lives—the Holy Ghost to lead and guide us, to be with us, to bring us peace, to testify of truth, to bear testimony of Jesus Christ. These spiritual blessings direct the course of our lives. And the lives of those around us are richer in things of the Spirit, for blessings are magnified as they are shared.

When hands are laid on my head in a personal priesthood blessing, I feel enveloped in the love of the Savior. I know that the brother who is administering that blessing is acting in the name of the Lord. In Mistolar, 39 of the men held the Melchizedek Priesthood—and used it to bless their people.

Priesthood brings peace and healing

When I was a child I received a blessing of healing, which I attribute to the power of the priesthood and the faith of my believing parents. Several years later I distinctly remember the pressure of my grandfather's hands on my head when, as a patriarch, he blessed me with a guide for my life, an account of promises for me, conditional on my faithfulness.

I have found a distinct difference in my approach to a calling after I have been set apart. Some calls bring a feeling of total wonder—"I wonder why they called me; I wonder what I should do; I wonder who should help me." I remember the peace that came when my counselors and I were set apart as general officers of the Relief Society by the First Presidency. The setting was formal yet warm. I was addressed by my full name,

and then came quiet concentration, personal direction, and wise counsel.

I felt the same sweet spirit when my husband, Joe, was ordained a bishop and again when he gave our oldest son a father's blessing before Dave left for the Persian Gulf. Then our son, in turn, blessed his wife and baby daughter. This brought such solace during a frightening time.

This morning I asked my husband for a special blessing to complete my preparation to speak to you. It is difficult to put into words what we feel in response to the Lord's words, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John 14:27).

Blessings include spiritual gifts

Spiritual gifts are powerful priesthood blessings. They increase our capacity as we develop them by drawing on the storehouse in heaven. One gift I value is discernment. When the Lord spoke to the woman at the well, He offered her living "water springing up into everlasting life." He discerned her needs. His words startled her: "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." She answered, "I have no husband," and Jesus said, "Thou hast well said." And "the woman saith unto him, . . . I perceive that thou art a prophet." (See John 4:14–19.)

Many women have the gift of discernment. Often blessed with the power to know and understand beyond their experience, women draw on this strength as they visit monthly to teach in the homes or to assess needs as directed by the bishop. We use it as we nurture our children and teach them the gospel. We discern, by the power of God given to us through His Spirit, that "one thing is needful" (Luke 10:42). Nothing we do is more important than the work of righteousness in our homes.

Discernment is critical for our times. President Boyd K. Packer has said, "We need women with the gift of discernment

who can view the trends in the world and detect those that, however popular, are shallow" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 9; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 8). That is exactly what we need.

Priesthood blessings and the temple

The temple is the matchless setting for receiving priesthood blessings. In this holy house we are endowed individually and then sealed together as families for eternity. Priesthood authority ensures that the covenants we make in the temple are everlasting. The gifts of exaltation deepen the partnership of men and women as they commit to covenants and share the blessings of the temple. And when we attend the temple, we are blessed with knowledge of "things as they really are, and of things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13).

A Relief Society president in Ghana understood the "glories" related to the temple. Talking to some visitors to her ward, she took a small folded piece of paper from her purse and said reverently, "I am a temple recommend holder." It may be years before she can afford to go to the temple in London or Johannesburg, but she has a reminder that she is worthy and willing. The Lord asks no more. (See Don L. Searle, "Ghana: A Household of Faith," *Ensign*, Mar. 1996, 37-38.)

Follow priesthood leaders

We have been taught in this conference by prophets, seers, revelators, and other General Authorities who bear the priesthood of God. Their messages are for every member of the Church. When we have "ears to hear" (Matthew 11:15), we can recognize that the Lord is saying, "Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

I want to bear my testimony that I know this Church is led by a prophet of

God, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Church administration on the general and local levels is evidence of the blessing of the priesthood, for this is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and He is directing the work. The Lord has said, "Let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God" (D&C 101:16).

The Saints in Mistolar knew God. They had a testimony of His gospel. They were partakers of the many spiritual blessings brought by the power of the priesthood, blessings described in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And . . . all they who receive this priesthood, receive me, saith the Lord;

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom" (D&C 84:35-38).

That we may all be "partakers of the glories" in our Father's kingdom is my prayer. And I say it in the name of Jesus Christ, my Savior, amen.

President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack, general president of the Relief Society.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel." Elder Francisco J. Viñas, who was sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Francisco J. Viñas

Listening to the voice of the Lord

I have been reflecting lately on the importance that listening to the voice of the Lord has had in my life and in the lives of other people, especially when this voice comes through His servants and under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

The fact that I am able to be here this afternoon is a blessing for which I must express appreciation to my parents, who, many years ago when the missionaries came to them, heard for the first time the voice of the Lord through His servants and hearkened to it. That changed the course of their lives and was a great influence in the lives of their children and grandchildren.

Growing up in the Church in Uruguay and being a witness of this wonderful work in other countries of South America, I have carefully observed the effect that diligently and humbly listening to the voice of the Lord has had in the lives of people. I observed the same effect when I went back to live in Spain and saw the change produced in the lives of people when they diligently listened to the servants of the Lord and developed sufficient faith to obey the commandments. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

The same promise that the people of ancient Israel received is valid today:

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

"And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 28:1-2).

Admonition repeated in all dispensations

The admonition to listen attentively to the word of the Lord has been repeated in all dispensations. In His earthly ministry, the Savior frequently declared these words: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15; see also 13:9, 43; Mark 4:23; Luke 8:8; 14:35). He also taught that "he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life" (John 5:24).

The preface the Lord gave to the Doctrine and Covenants, which we know as section 1, begins by saying, "Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together" (D&C 1:1).

King Benjamin began his powerful sermon with these words: "You that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you this day; for I have not commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that you should hearken unto me, and open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view" (Mosiah 2:9).

This admonition to open our ears to listen does not always receive the same response. While some people indicate a willingness to listen attentively and to be obedient to the words of the Lord, others seem to close their ears, not wanting to hear or to obey. There are others who are slow to hear but who eventually do listen and become obedient. For all of these people, the result of their attitudes concerning the voice of the Lord will bring into their lives consequences which, in many instances, may be of an eternal nature.

Saul's pride is an obstacle to listening

An example of those who close their ears can be found in chapter 15 of 1 Samuel when Saul, who had been anointed king over Israel, set aside the counsel and warnings of the prophet of the Lord and tried to justify the error of his ways. Samuel the prophet reproved Saul and taught him that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." He then indicated to Saul the consequences of his attitude: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:22-23). From the example of Saul we learn that pride is a great obstacle in listening to the voice of the Lord.

Naaman is persuaded to listen

In chapter 5 of 2 Kings we read the story of Naaman, a general in the Syrian army who sought help from the prophet Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. The prophet sent one of his servants to say to Naaman, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (2 Kings 5:10). This response was not pleasing to Naaman, who went away in anger. Thanks to the intervention of his servants, who persuaded Naaman to follow the instructions of the prophet, finally "went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (v. 14).

From his experience we learn that frequently the words of the prophets do not agree with our expectations or with our way of seeing things. Sometimes it seems that we need someone else, in addition to the prophets, to persuade us to listen to the voice of the Lord.

A widow in Zarephath listens

In chapter 17 of 1 Kings we read about a humble widow who lived in Zarephath during a time of great scarcity of food because of the drought. This humble woman possessed no more than a handful of meal and a little oil for herself and for her son. With these she planned to prepare a final meal and then die. The prophet Elijah asked her to first give him something to eat, with the promise that if she did so the meal and the oil would not decrease until it rained again:

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah" (1 Kings 17:15-16).

Thus we see how, when people listen to and accept with humility and simple faith the words of the prophets, they receive the Lord's blessings.

Develop the ability to hear

In summary, the voice of the Lord may be received by listening to the Lord's servants, studying the scriptures, and being prompted through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And for those who not only hear but also hearken to the Lord's voice, the Lord calls them "mine elect," "for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts" (D&C 29:7).

I believe that our ability and our willingness to hear can be increased and that our ears can be opened to hear clearly the voice of the Lord. In section 136, verse 32, we find a guideline which will help us do this: "Let him that is ignorant learn wisdom by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord his God, that his eyes may be opened that he may see, and his ears opened that he may hear" (D&C

136:32). Through humility and prayer we can develop and improve our capacity to be attentive to the words of life which will bless our lives and the lives of our families.

This conference is a great opportunity to listen to the voice of the Lord, to follow the counsel given, and to give heed to the teachings we are receiving. I know that God the Eternal Father lives, that Jesus Christ also lives and is our Savior, our Redeemer. I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet of the

Lord and that this is the true Church. I testify of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and of the divinely ordained role of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I testify of this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you. We have just listened to Elder Francisco J. Viñas of the Seventy.

Elder W. Rolfe Kerr, who was also sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will now speak to us.

Elder Wm. Rolfe Kerr

I acknowledge this call to serve with gratitude for the many teachers, leaders, and friends who have touched my life. This call brings with it an increased sense of love and gratitude for goodly parents, my wonderful wife and family, and a marvelous corps of faithful missionaries with whom we served in the Texas Dallas Mission. This call also brings an increased sense of love and appreciation for the life and teachings of the Savior, from which we learn principles that should govern our lives.

"Behold your little ones"

Following His Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus Christ visited, taught, and blessed the righteous inhabitants of ancient America. The Book of Mormon records those glorious events and stands as another testament of the divinity of Jesus Christ and of the reality of His Resurrection. As the Savior taught and blessed those faithful people, He invited them to bring their little children to Him and to set them round about Him. He then knelt and prayed with words so marvelous and great they could not be written—words which filled the souls of the people with inconceivable joy. The

sacred record tells us that Jesus said unto the multitude:

"Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.

"And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, *one by one*, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

"And when he had done this he wept again;

"And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: *Behold your little ones*" (3 Nephi 17:20–23; italics added).

When the Savior invited the multitude to behold their little ones, was He speaking in the collective sense of a group of little children? Or was He drawing their attention, and ours, to the individual nature and importance of each of those little *ones*—each of those little individuals? I believe that by His example the Savior was teaching us of the individual and tender care we should give to each one of our little children—indeed to each of our Heavenly Father's children. It may be the lovable toddler or the wayward teen, the grieving widow or the grateful woman for whom all is well. It may even be your own son or daughter or your own husband or wife. Each is

an individual. Each has divine potential. And each must be spiritually nourished and temporally cared for with love, tenderness, and individual attention.

Remember and nourish each person

The prophet Lehi exhorted his wayward sons, Laman and Lemuel, with "all the feeling of a tender parent" (1 Nephi 8:37). This is the Savior's way. This is as it should be in our families and in the Church. Moroni was telling us this when he said of those received into the Church by baptism, "They were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God" (Moroni 6:4). Remembered and nourished, one by one, name by name!

The Savior taught us this principle in the parable of the lost sheep. As the shepherd left the ninety and nine and searched until the lost sheep was found, so also are we to go after him who is lost and continue the search until he is found. (See Matthew 18:12-14.) And once he is found, our work is not done until we bring him safely home, rejoicing. This is the objective of the gospel of Jesus Christ and must be the objective of all the programs and activities of the Church—to bring the children of our Father in Heaven home, and home to stay.

The power of one person

While the Savior taught us the importance of the one, He also taught us of the power of one. He showed us the power and influence He alone possessed as our Savior, Redeemer, and Judge. He was alone in Gethsemane when He offered Himself as the sacred offering in that great atoning sacrifice—a sacrifice which He sealed at Golgotha with His freely given life. Feeling alone there, His painful utterance "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew

27:46) teaches us that while the Father was never far from His Beloved Son, the infinite Atonement was, of necessity, wrought by the power of one—one person standing alone, even the Only Begotten Son of God.

The power of one person is apparent throughout the scriptures as we see the influence of an Abraham, of a Joseph, a Moses, of Peter and Paul, of a Nephi, of Abinadi, Alma, and Ammon, and of Mormon and Moroni. There were Sarah and Rebekah and Esther and Hannah, and Sariah and Mary and so many more—even Joseph and Emma. Yes, these were mighty men and women of God; but they were often alone, standing as one, even as each of us on occasion must stand alone in a sometimes hostile world. Yet as these valiant servants of the Lord were not entirely alone, neither will we be if we are worthy of His companionship and the companionship of the Holy Spirit. The Lord gave this promise to His faithful servants: "For I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88). We may be one, but we need not be entirely alone.

Sarah Ann Meeks made a difference

The power and influence one person can have is enormous. It was one Sarah Ann Meeks who paid what seemed to be her ultimate sacrifice as she stood alone on the doorstep of her home in far-off England nearly a century and a half ago. Her father met her there with a small bundle containing a few of her belongings and with these words, "You join that church and you must never set foot in my home again." Unfortunately that was the last she saw of her family. Alone? Very much alone! She could have bowed to that impossible, heart-wrenching rejection. But no—she loved the Lord. She had been touched by the Spirit and knew

that the gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored to the earth in its fulness. She knew that she must stand as a witness to the truthfulness of this message. She knew that she could make a difference.

From that one stalwart woman has sprung a progeny of faithful Latter-day Saints difficult to number. Literally hundreds of her descendants have stood as witnesses all around the world testifying to the reality of the Restoration of the gospel—the same message she embraced as she stood alone. One of those descendants now stands here as an especial witness of the Savior Jesus Christ, bearing solemn testimony to all the world that God the Eternal Father lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, and that leading The Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints today is a living and loving prophet of God, serving with all the meaning that sacred title implies.

It is this testimony I leave with you, praying that we will treat each one of our Heavenly Father's children lovingly, tenderly, and individually, as He would have us treat them, and praying also that we will always be mindful of the power each one of us has to make a difference and to influence the world in which we live. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder W. Rolfe Kerr of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will next speak to us.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

God's will revealed during conference

We are drawing to the close of another magnificent general conference of the Church. We have been blessed with earnest prayers, magnificent music, and truly inspired teachings. In just a few minutes we will hear concluding counsel from our prophet and president of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley. A general conference of this Church is a remarkable occasion indeed—it is an institutional declaration that the heavens are open, that divine guidance is as real today as it was for the ancient house of Israel, that God our Heavenly Father loves us and speaks His will through a living prophet.

The great Isaiah foresaw such moments and foretold this very setting in which we find ourselves:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above

the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."¹

Of such comforting latter-day direction, including its divine source, Isaiah would go on to say: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."²

Jesus gives peace, strength, and hope

Peace and good tidings; good tidings and peace. These are among the ultimate blessings that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings a troubled world and the troubled people who live in it—solutions to personal struggles and human sinfulness, a source of strength for days of weariness

and hours of genuine despair. This entire general conference and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints which convenes it declare that it is the Only Begotten Son of God Himself who gives us this help and this hope. Such assurance is as "firm as the mountains around us."³ As the Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi made clear in a slight variation of Isaiah's exclamation:

"O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is *the founder of peace*, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people."⁴

Ultimately it is Christ who is beautiful upon the mountain. And it is His merciful promise of "peace in this world," His good tidings of "eternal life in the world to come"⁵ that make us fall at His feet and call His name blessed and give thanks for the restoration of His true and living Church.

Seeking peace that only God can bring

The search for peace is one of the ultimate quests of the human soul. We all have highs and lows, but such times come and they usually always go. Kind neighbors assist. Beautiful sunshine brings encouragement. A good night's sleep usually works wonders. But there are times in all of our lives when deep sorrow or suffering or fear or loneliness makes us cry out for the peace which only God Himself can bring. These are times of piercing spiritual hunger when even the dearest friends cannot fully come to our aid.

Perhaps you know people in the broad congregation of this conference, or in your local ward or stake, or in your own home—courageous people who are carrying heavy burdens and feeling private pain, who are walking through the dark valleys of this world's tribulation. Some may be desperately worried about a husband or a wife or a child, worried

about their health or their happiness or their faithfulness in keeping the commandments. Some are living with physical pain, or emotional pain, or disabilities that come with age. Some are troubled as to how to make ends meet financially, and some ache with the private loneliness of an empty house or an empty room or simply empty arms.

These beloved people seek the Lord and His word with particular urgency, often revealing their true emotions only when the scriptures are opened or when the hymns are sung or when the prayers are offered. Sometimes only then do the rest of us realize they feel near the end of their strength—they are tired in brain and body and heart, they wonder if they can get through another week or another day or sometimes just another hour. They are desperate for the Lord's help, and they know that in such times of extremity nothing else will do.

Christ, angels, and prophets seek to help

Well, at least one of the purposes of general conference and the teachings of the prophets down through the ages is to declare to these very people that the Lord is equally fervent in trying to reach them, that when there is trouble, His hopes and His striving and His efforts greatly exceed our own, and it never ceases.

We have been promised, "He that keepeth [us] will not slumber, . . . nor [will he] sleep."⁶

Christ and His angels and His prophets forever labor to buoy up our spirits, steady our nerves, calm our hearts, send us forth with renewed strength and resolute hope. They wish all to know that "if God be for us, who can be against us?"⁷ In the world we shall have tribulation, but we are to be of good cheer. Christ has overcome the world.⁸ Through His suffering and His obedience He has earned and rightly bears the crown of "Prince of Peace."

Obedience and repentance bring peace

In that spirit we declare to all the world that for real and abiding peace to come, we must strive to be more like that exemplary Son of God. Many among us are trying to do that. We salute you for your obedience, your forbearance, your waiting faithfully upon the Lord for the strength you seek, which will surely come. Some of us, on the other hand, need to make some changes, need to make greater effort in gospel living. And change we can. The very beauty of the word *repentance* is the promise of escaping old problems and old habits and old sorrows and old sins. It is among the most hopeful and encouraging—and yes, most peaceful—words in the gospel vocabulary. In seeking true peace, some of us need to improve what has to be improved, confess what needs to be confessed, forgive what has to be forgiven, and forget what should be forgotten in order that serenity can come to us. If there is a commandment we are breaking, and as a result it is breaking us and hurting those who love us, let us call down the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to help us, to free us, to lead us through repentance to that peace “which passeth all understanding.”⁹

And when God has forgiven us, which He is so eternally anxious to do, may we have the good sense to walk away from those problems, to leave them alone, to let the past bury the past. If one of you has made a mistake, even a serious mistake, but you have done all you can according to the teachings of the Lord and the governance of the Church to confess it and feel sorrow for it and set it as right as can be, then trust in God, walk into His light, and leave those ashes behind you. Someone once said that repentance is the first pressure we feel when drawn to the bosom of God. For real peace may I recommend an immediate rush to the bosom of God, leaving behind you all that would bring sorrow

to your soul or heartache to those who love you. “Depart from evil,” the scripture says, “and do good.”¹⁰

Forgive others to find peace

Closely related to our own obligation to repent is the generosity of letting others do the same—we are to forgive even as we are forgiven. In this we participate in the very essence of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Surely the most majestic moment of that fateful Friday, when nature convulsed and the veil of the temple was rent, was that unspeakably merciful moment when Christ said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”¹¹ As our advocate with the Father, He is still making that same plea today—in your behalf and in mine.

Here, as in all things, Jesus set the standard for us to follow. Life is too short to be spent nursing animosities or keeping a box score of offenses against us—you know, no runs, no hits, all errors. We don’t want God to remember our sins, so there is something fundamentally wrong in our relentlessly trying to remember those of others.

When we have been hurt, undoubtedly God takes into account what wrongs were done to us and what provocations there are for our resentments, but clearly the more provocation there is and the more excuse we can find for our hurt, all the more reason for us to forgive and be delivered from the destructive hell of such poisonous venom and anger.¹² It is one of those ironies of godhood that in order to find peace, the offended as well as the offender must engage the principle of forgiveness.

Our trials have a purpose

Yes, peace is a very precious commodity, a truly heartfelt need, and there are many things we can do to achieve it. But—for whatever reason—life has its moments when uninterrupted peace may

seem to elude us for a season. We may wonder why there are such times in life, particularly when we may be trying harder than we have ever tried to live worthy of God's blessings and obtain His help. When problems or sorrows or sadness come and they *don't* seem to be our fault, what are we to make of their unwelcome appearance?

With time and perspective we recognize that such problems in life do come for a purpose, if only to allow the one who faces such despair to be convinced that he really does need divine strength beyond himself, that she really does need the offer of heaven's hand. Those who feel no need for mercy usually never seek it and almost never bestow it. Those who have never had a heartache or a weakness or felt lonely or forsaken never have had to cry unto heaven for relief of such personal pain. Surely it is better to find the goodness of God and the grace of Christ, even at the price of despair, than to risk living our lives in a moral or material complacency that has never felt any need for faith or forgiveness, any need for redemption or relief.

A life without problems or limitations or challenges—life without “opposition in all things,”¹³ as Lehi phrased it—would paradoxically but in very fact be less rewarding and less ennobling than one which confronts—even frequently confronts—difficulty and disappointment and sorrow. As beloved Eve said, were it not for the difficulties faced in a fallen world, neither she nor Adam nor any of the rest of us ever would have known “the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.”¹⁴

“The better angels of our nature”

So life has its oppositions and its conflicts, and the gospel of Jesus Christ has answers and assurances. In a time of terrible civil warfare, one of the most gifted leaders ever to strive to hold a na-

tion together said what could be said of marriages and families and friendships. Praying for peace, pleading for peace, seeking peace in any way that would not compromise union, Abraham Lincoln said in those dark, dark days of his First Inaugural: “Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory,” he said, “will yet swell . . . when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”¹⁵

The better angels of our nature. That is much of what the Church and general conference and the gospel of Jesus Christ are about—the appeal today and tomorrow and forever to be better, to be cleaner, to be kinder, to be holier; to seek peace and always be believing.

God's gift of sanctifying renewal

I have personally known in my own life the realization of the promise “that the everlasting God, . . . the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is [he] weary.” I am a witness that “he giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.”¹⁶

I know that in times of fear or fatigue, “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”¹⁷

We receive the gift of such majestic might and sanctifying renewal through the redeeming grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has overcome the world, and if we will take upon us His name and “walk in His paths” and keep our covenants with Him, we shall, ere long, have peace. Such a reward is not only possible; it is certain.

“For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”¹⁸

Of Him and His good tidings, of the publication of His peace in this conference and in this His true Church, and of His living prophet who is about to speak to us, I bear grateful and joyful witness in the merciful name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Isaiah 2:2-3.
2. Isaiah 52:7.
3. "Carry On," *Hymns*, no. 255.
4. Mosiah 15:18; italics added.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
6. Psalm 121:3-4.
7. Romans 8:31.
8. See John 16:33.
9. Philippians 4:7.
10. Psalm 34:14.
11. Luke 23:34.
12. Adapted from George MacDonald.
13. 2 Nephi 2:11.
14. Moses 5:11.
15. Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address, 4 Mar. 1861.
16. Isaiah 40:28-29.
17. Isaiah 40:31.
18. 3 Nephi 22:10.

President Monson

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Mormon

Youth Chorus; the Primary children's choir from stakes in Sandy and Draper, Utah; the Provo MTC men's choir; and the Tabernacle Choir; and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference. The music has been outstanding.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters—a great army of interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference.

And we are grateful to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of the conference in many countries.

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who will be our concluding speaker.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "I Believe in Christ." The benediction will be offered by Elder W. Craig Zwick of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A remarkable outpouring of the Spirit

Just a few words as we bring to a close this great general conference of the Church. It's been a wonderful occasion. The weather has favored us here in Salt Lake City. This is a beautiful season of the year, with the fall flowers in bloom.

The harvest is largely in, and by and large it has been good. We are grateful for the mercies of the Lord upon us.

We have been able to meet together in peace and comfort and security here in the sacred precincts of Temple Square, where our forebears built so well that we might be so comfortable.

We have had unprecedented coverage of the conference, reaching across the continents and the oceans to people far and wide.

Though we are far removed from some of you, we feel of your brotherhood and express our great appreciation for you.

Most importantly, we have enjoyed a remarkable and wonderful outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord. The Brethren and the sisters have spoken to us, and we have been blessed by their messages.

I hope that we will long remember what we have heard. I hope that we will take the time to read the talks which will be reprinted in the *Ensign*. I hope that each of us may have been touched in a personal way by something that was said, and that as a result of that, there will be a turnabout in any unseemly attitude or action.

Anniversary days

As Brother Ballard has reminded us, this is an anniversary year, and next year will be another anniversary year when we commemorate the arrival of the Mormon pioneers in this valley in 1847. There will be much of remembering. It will all be to the good. All of us need to be reminded of the past. It is from history that we gain knowledge which can save us from repeating mistakes and on which we can build for the future.

These are days for remembering and celebrating the past. These are anniversary days.

The rescue of destitute pioneers

I think of what occurred in this Tabernacle 140 years ago this Sunday. I spoke of it from this pulpit some years back, but I wish to mention it again as we bring to a close this conference.

I take you back to the general conference of October 1856. On Saturday of that conference, Franklin D. Richards

and a handful of associates arrived in the valley. They had traveled from Winter Quarters with strong teams and light wagons and had been able to make good time. Brother Richards immediately sought out President Young. He reported that there were hundreds of men, women, and children scattered over the long trail from Scottsbluff to this valley. Most of them were pulling handcarts. They were accompanied by two wagon trains which had been assigned to assist them. They had reached the area of the last crossing of the North Platte River. Ahead of them lay a trail that was uphill all the way to the Continental Divide with many, many miles beyond that. They were in desperate trouble. Winter had come early. Snow-laden winds were howling across the highlands of what is now western Nebraska and Wyoming. Our people were hungry; their carts and their wagons were breaking down; their oxen dying. The people themselves were dying. All of them would perish unless they were rescued.

I think President Young did not sleep that night. I think visions of those destitute, freezing, dying people paraded through his mind.

The next morning he came to the old Tabernacle which stood on this square. He said to the people:

"I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak. . . . It is this. . . . Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, 'to get them here.' . . .

"That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people. . . .

"I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want

to send oxen. I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them. Also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, besides those that drive the teams. . . .

"I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. *Go and bring in those people now on the plains*" (in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* [1960], 120-21).

That afternoon, food, bedding, and clothing in great quantities were assembled by the women.

The next morning, horses were shod and wagons were repaired and loaded.

The following morning, Tuesday, 16 mule teams pulled out and headed eastward. By the end of October there were 250 teams on the road to give relief.

Wonderful sermons have been preached from this pulpit, my brethren and sisters. But none has been more eloquent than that spoken by President Young in those circumstances.

Reach out to help, lift, feed, and nurture

Stories of the beleaguered Saints and of their suffering and death will be repeated again and again next year. Stories of their rescue need to be repeated again and again. They speak of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am grateful that those days of pioneering are behind us. I am thankful that we do not have brethren and sisters stranded in the snow, freezing and dying, while trying to get to this, their Zion in the mountains. But there are people, not a few, whose circumstances are desperate and who cry out for help and relief.

There are so many who are hungry and destitute across this world who need help. I am grateful to be able to say that

we are assisting many who are not of our faith but whose needs are serious and whom we have the resources to help. But we need not go so far afield. We have some of our own who cry out in pain and suffering and loneliness and fear. Ours is a great and solemn duty to reach out and help them, to lift them, to feed them if they are hungry, to nurture their spirits if they thirst for truth and righteousness.

There are so many young people who wander aimlessly and walk the tragic trail of drugs, gangs, immorality, and the whole brood of ills that accompany these things. There are widows who long for friendly voices and that spirit of anxious concern which speaks of love. There are those who were once warm in the faith, but whose faith has grown cold. Many of them wish to come back but do not know quite how to do it. They need friendly hands reaching out to them. With a little effort, many of them can be brought back to feast again at the table of the Lord.

My brethren and sisters, I would hope, I would pray that each of us, having participated in this great conference, would resolve to seek those who need help, who are in desperate and difficult circumstances, and lift them in the spirit of love into the embrace of the Church, where strong hands and loving hearts will warm them, comfort them, sustain them, and put them on the way of happy and productive lives.

I leave with you my beloved friends, my co-workers in this wonderful cause, my testimony of the truth of this work, the work of the Almighty, the work of the Redeemer of mankind. I leave with you my love and my blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Believe in Christ."

Elder W. Craig Zwick offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Primary children's choir from stakes in Sandy and Draper, Utah. Sister Kay Asay conducted the choir, and Sister Linda Margetts was at the organ.

At the general priesthood session a men's choir from the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, provided the music. Brother Douglas Brenchley con-

ducted the choir, and Brother John Longhurst was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Richard Elliott and Clay Christiansen were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

INDEX

B

- Ballard, Elder M. Russell** 29
 Faith in every footstep; Sacrifices of pioneers; Plan sesquicentennial celebrations; Magnitude of the pioneer trek; Visions of the Saints' destination; Difficulty and length of the trek; Peter and Jenetta McBride; Jens Neilson; Margaret McNeil; The Lord's protective hand; Walk in the footsteps of the pioneers

C

- Christensen, Elder Joe J.** 53
 The Savior is counting on you; Be a champion of those who need you; Avoid evil in the media; Be worthy to enter the temple and serve missions
- Cook, Elder Quentin L.** 37
 Rejoice in the plan of salvation; How to obtain joy; Avoid "Saturday morning cartoons"; Avoid magnifying small imperfections; Avoid comparing talents and blessings; Rejoice in the promise of the Atonement

E

- Edgley, Bishop Richard C.** 82
 "We care enough to send our very best"; Serving a mission takes commitment; An opportunity to show love; Why our missionaries serve; What our missionaries will bring you; Listen to the message and pray
- Eyring, Elder Henry B.** 40
 Faithful home teachers and visiting teachers; Our covenant to witness and to love; Keep covenants in families; Keep covenants by sharing the gospel; Keep covenants by living law of the fast; Blessings of keeping covenants; God will help us keep covenants

F

- Faust, President James E. (priesthood session)** 57
 Honesty—a moral compass; J Ballard Washburn challenges cheaters; Interview with tough army officers; Stealing dishonors the priesthood; Tell the whole truth; Achieve honestly, not on false merit; Bobby Polacio's honesty; Honor every form of truth
- Faust, President James E. (Sunday morning session)** 73
 To those with heartrending challenges; Healing power of the Atonement; The healing process of repentance; Stay free from evil; The Savior values womanhood; Jesus teaches the woman at the well; Elizabeth Jackson's enduring faith; Savior's sacrifice will wipe away tears; "Be steadfast and immovable"

G

General Authorities Present	1
General Priesthood Session	49

H

Hafen, Elder Bruce C.	33
Marriage is a covenant, not a contract; An eternal perspective of marriage; The "wolf" of natural adversity; The "wolf" of personal imperfections; The "wolf" of excessive individualism; Modern questions about marriage; Observing covenants brings strength; Be as shepherds, not hirelings	
Haight, Elder David B.	16
"Now let us rejoice"; The Lord's influence on His Apostles; Prophets are called of God; The influence of President McKay; The influence of President Kimball; President Hinckley on <i>60 Minutes</i>	
Hales, Elder Robert D.	86
The doctrine of eternal families; Promises and requirements of sealings; Love spouse above all others; Satan's efforts to destroy the family; Save families, not just ourselves; Families prepare us for eternal life; Faith of a friend with a terminal illness; Gospel doctrines comfort a young widow; A dying man has faith in eternal families; The gospel brings light and hope	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session)	3
A letter reports blessings of conference; Prayer that messages will meet needs; Sacrifice and legacy of the pioneers; Promises to those who listen	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session)	66
Travels to meet with the Saints; Interview with Mike Wallace; Correcting misconceptions; The great work of women in the Church; Efforts to strengthen families; Codes of health and morality; Roles of men and women; Size of families; Great growth of the Church; Tithing and the use of Church funds; Service of full-time missionaries; The principle of self-reliance; Cleanliness of Salt Lake City; How the prophet receives revelation; Why we preach the gospel; Brigham Young's prophetic vision; Changes come by revelation; The Church's efforts to fight abuse; Walk with faith and righteousness	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session)	90
Women are essential to God's plan; Great strength in women of the Church; The real builders of the nation; Rebuke to abusers; Advice to single women; Assist women who have lost husbands; Advice on employment outside the home; Advice to single parents; To older women; Appreciation for sisters	

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session)	116
A remarkable outpouring of the Spirit; Anniversary days; The rescue of destitute pioneers; Reach out to help, lift, feed, and nurture	

Holland, Elder Jeffrey R.	112
God's will revealed during conference; Jesus gives peace, strength, and hope; Seeking peace that only God can bring; Christ, angels, and prophets seek to help; Obedience and repentance bring peace; Forgive others to find peace; Our trials have a purpose; "The better angels of our nature"; God's gift of sanctifying renewal	

J

Jack, Sister Elaine L.	104
The Saints in flooded Mistolar; The priesthood is God's power; Sisters share in priesthood blessings; Priesthood brings peace and healing; Blessings include spiritual gifts; Priesthood blessings and the temple; Follow priesthood leaders	

K

Kerr, Elder Wm. Rolfe	110
"Behold your little ones"; Remember and nourish each person; The power of one person; Sarah Ann Meeks made a difference	

M

Maxwell, Elder Neal A.	26
Doctrinal teachings concerning <i>desire</i> ; Acknowledge responsibility for desires; Righteous desires; Absence of desire; Educating our desires; Dissolve wrong desires, strengthen good ones; Parents assist in educating desires; Begin now to train desires	

Monson, President Thomas S. (Saturday morning session)	19
Christ heals at the pool of Bethesda; Follow the Savior; Listen to the Savior; Peter heals a lame man; The rich young man; Randy Spaulding's faithful parents; The Lord will bless the humble; "Living what we pray for"; Mary Watson and Kathleen McKee; Caring and seeing with the heart	

Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session)	61
"Be thou an example"; Paying tithing strengthens us; A family pays tithing and is blessed; Counsel to returning missionaries; Giving fast offerings blesses all; The honor of collecting fast offerings; Taking deacons to Welfare Square; Cleaning the poultry farm; Blessings of providing for those in need; Do more to bless those in need	

Music, Summary of Conference	119
-------------------------------------------	-----

N

Nelson, Elder Russell M. 44
The Creation; The Fall; The Atonement; Meaning of *atonement*; Infinite atonement; The ordeal of the Atonement; The Atonement enabled the purpose of the Creation to be accomplished

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H. 78
“Always have his Spirit”; Scriptural teachings about the Holy Ghost; A distinguishing part of our faith; The Light of Christ; Manifestations of the Holy Ghost; The gift of the Holy Ghost; Renew covenants to have His Spirit; Attitude when taking the sacrament; Promises of the sacrament

P

Packer, President Boyd K. 4
Jesus calls the Twelve Apostles; The Apostasy and the Restoration; Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators; The ministry of the Twelve; Apostles have the gift of discernment; Warning to wrongful critics; Unity of First Presidency and Twelve; Heed the counsel of the Lord’s servants; A special witness that Jesus is the Christ

Pearce, Sister Virginia H. 12
Hoping we will be active and faithful; Church classes foster growth; Teach, understand, and apply doctrine; Learn and enhance teaching skills; Church classes affect Church activity; How to help class members learn; Create trust and safety in class; The beginning, middle, and end of class; A successful Young Women class; Strengthen each other through classes

Perry, Elder L. Tom 50
The revelation of the Word of Wisdom; Creed Haymond obeys the Word of Wisdom; Creed Haymond wins his races; Be an example in living the law of health

Porter, Elder L. Aldin 9
The First Vision changed the world; Testimony comes by revelation; The Spirit empowers missionaries; Too many deny the spirit of prophecy; Revelation continues today; Spirit reveals most important knowledge

Priesthood Session, General 49

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	24
Saturday Morning Session	2
Scott, Elder Richard G.	100
God's great plan of happiness; Importance of marriage in God's plan; Learn from the lives of Adam and Eve; Roles of wife and mother; Bless- ings to be given in the Lord's time; Gratitude for what women are and do; How to attain happiness	
Summary of Conference Music	119
Sunday Afternoon Session	95
Sunday Morning Session	73
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers, The	25

V

Viñas, Elder Francisco J.	108
Listening to the voice of the Lord; Admonition repeated in all dispensa- tions; Saul's pride is an obstacle to listening; Naaman is persuaded to listen; A widow in Zarephath listens; Develop the ability to hear	

W

Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	96
Christians in belief and action; Christians in belief; Belief based on scriptures and revelation; Christians in action; Covenant to obey the commandments; "The author and finisher of our faith"	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



4 02960 49000

96049 001

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-seventh
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 5 and 6, 1997

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-seventh
Annual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
April 5 and 6, 1997

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Report of the 167th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 167th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 5, 1997, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 5 and 6, 1997. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 5, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goasland, Harold G. Hillam, and Earl C. Tingey

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*¹ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Dallas N. Archibald, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Carl B. Pratt, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Richard D. Allred, Lino Alvarez, L. Edward Brown, C. Max Caldwell, Eran A. Call, Sheldon F. Child, Quentin L. Cook, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, John E. Fowler, Duane B. Gerrard, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, Augusto A. Lim, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, V. Dallas Merrell, Dale E. Miller, Bruce D. Porter, Lynn G. Robbins, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, F. David

¹Elder James M. Paramore was excused due to illness.

Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Jerald L. Taylor, Richard E. Turley Sr., Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and Richard B. Wirthlin

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 167th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 5, 1997, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "They, the Builders of the Nation." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 167th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We greet all of you who are participating in the Tabernacle; and in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders M. Russell Ballard, Vaughn J. Featherstone, and Francisco J. Viñas are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Dean

L. Larsen, John H. Groberg, Marlin K. Jensen, and Ben B. Banks are in attendance.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder James M. Paramore, who is ill.

We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present this morning.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

The chorus opened by singing "They, the Builders of the Nation" and will now favor us with "Faith of Our Fathers." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Faith of Our Fathers."

Elder Cree-L Kofford offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, if I may make a few preliminary remarks. We welcome you wherever you may be throughout the world. With much of love we greet you. This is both a general conference and a world conference. One hundred sixty-seven years have passed since the Church was organized. From that day until this it has steadily and consistently grown until at the end of 1996, the membership reached nearly 9,700,000. We have become a great concourse of people. We should reach the 10 million mark by the end of this year.

In these opening remarks, I intend to briefly mention three or four matters that I hope will be of interest to each of you.

New assembly building

For those far afield, I may say that we are speaking from the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. We hope to break ground on July 24 for a new place of assembly which we have not yet named, where, at least for many years to come, all who desire to attend the general conference may do so. It will be constructed on the block directly north of Temple Square. It will seat up to four times as many as the Tabernacle.

It will be used for general conference and for other purposes that are in harmony with the reasons for which it is being built. The stage will be such that it can accommodate a large pageant. We may not fill it initially, but we are building for the long term.

This remarkable Tabernacle has served us well and will continue to do so. The Tabernacle Choir broadcasts will continue from here, and many meetings will be held here. This building has remarkable properties, different from other structures. It is unique and wonderful. However, there are today re-

gional conferences involving only six or seven stakes where we have many more people than the Tabernacle will accommodate.

New temples

Now as we speak of construction projects, we remind you that we are moving forward with the building of new temples. On June 1-5 the St. Louis Missouri Temple will be dedicated. This fall the temple in Vernal, Utah, will be dedicated.

Work is on schedule in Preston, England; Bogotá, Colombia; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Cochabamba, Bolivia; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Recife, Brazil; and Madrid, Spain. The approval process is moving forward in Boston, Massachusetts. While delayed, planning for a temple in Nashville, Tennessee, continues. Preliminary work is under way in Billings, Montana, and White Plains, New York, as well as Monterrey, Mexico. The search for a suitable property continues in Venezuela. We are pleased to announce today that ground has been acquired in Albuquerque, New Mexico, for the construction of a temple and also in Campinas, Brazil, where the need is great. Other sites are under consideration. I hope to see temples so located that members of the Church can travel to one of these sacred houses within a reasonable distance of their homes.

Though I live with it, this matter of temple construction is a thing of awesome wonder to me. We are trying to build in such a way and in such places across the world that these houses of the Lord may stand and serve through the Millennium.

General Relief Society presidency

The next item: the general Relief Society presidency will be released at

Saturday, April 5, 1997

Morning Session

this conference. These women have done a great and significant work. They have served for more than eight years, giving unselfishly of their time and their rich talents. They have given remarkable leadership to the women of the Church and also have participated on other boards and committees of which they have been members. We are deeply grateful to them. Formal action on this matter will be taken when President Monson presents the General Authorities and general officers of the Church immediately after my remarks.

New Quorums of Seventy

I come now to the Brethren of the Seventy. As you know, we have two Quorums of Seventy who serve as General Authorities with jurisdiction across the Church. The First is comprised of those who serve to age 70. We will sustain four Brethren in this quorum this morning. Additionally, we are calling a group of wise and mature men with long experience in the Church and with freedom to go wherever circumstances dictate as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. These Brethren will serve for periods of from three to five years. In every sense they will be General Authorities.

We also have a faithful cadre of Brethren serving as Area Authorities. These have been called wherever the Church is organized. They are faithful and devoted men. They are men who love the Church and who have served in many capacities. As we have traveled at home and abroad, we have worked with many of them and have been deeply impressed with their remarkable capacity.

The Lord made provision at a general level for a First Presidency, a Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. At a local level the revelations speak of stake presidents and bishops. We have had in between the general

and local authorities for a period of time the Regional Representatives—now more recently these Area Authorities. We have determined to present to the conference the names of these Area Authorities to be ordained Seventies. They will then have a quorum relationship presided over by the Presidents of the Seventy. They will be known as Area Authority Seventies, to serve for a period of years in a voluntary capacity in the area in which they reside. They are called by the First Presidency and will work under the general direction of the Quorum of the Twelve, the Presidents of the Seventy, and the Area Presidencies in that part of the world in which they live.

They will continue with their present employment, reside in their own homes, and serve on a Church-service basis. Those residing in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Pacific will become members of the Third Quorum of Seventy. Those in Mexico, Central America, and South America will become members of the Fourth Quorum. Those residing in the United States and Canada will become members of the Fifth Quorum.

They may be assigned to (a) preside at stake conferences and train stake presidencies, (b) create or reorganize stakes and set apart stake presidencies, (c) serve as counselors in Area Presidencies, (d) chair regional conference planning committees, (e) serve on area councils presided over by the Area Presidency, (f) tour missions and train mission presidents, and (g) complete other duties as assigned.

Consistent with their ordination as Seventies, they become officers of the Church with a specific and definite tie to a quorum. While there will be only limited opportunities for them to come together in quorum meetings, the Presidents of the Seventy will communicate with them, will instruct them, receive reports, and do other things of that kind. They will now have a sense of belonging

that they have not experienced up to this time. As Seventies they are called to preach the gospel and to be especial witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the revelations. Though all Seventies have equal scriptural authority, members of the First and Second Quorums are designated General Authorities, while members of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth are designated Area Authorities.

Although the ordination to the office of Seventy is without term, a Seventy is called to serve in a quorum for a designated period of years. At the conclusion of this service, he will return to activity in his respective ward and stake and will meet with his high priests group.

We welcome most warmly these Brethren into quorum membership and activity. They have our confidence, our love, and our esteem.

With these respective quorums in place, we have established a pattern under which the Church may grow to any size with an organization of Area Presidencies and Area Authority Seventies, chosen and working across the world according to need.

Now, the Lord is watching over His kingdom. He is inspiring its leadership to care for its ever growing membership. Immediately following my remarks, President Monson will present the Gen-

eral Authorities, the Area Authorities, and the general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote. I need not remind you that this is a very sacred and important matter.

A wonderful season of the Lord's work

We are living in a wonderful season of the work of the Lord. The work is growing ever stronger. It is expanding across the world. Each of us has an important part to play in this great undertaking. People in more than 160 nations, speaking a score of languages and more, worship our Father in Heaven and our Redeemer, His Beloved Son. This is their great work. It is their cause and their kingdom.

May I, in closing, repeat the words of Jacob: "But behold, I, Jacob, would speak unto you that are pure in heart. Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause, and send down justice upon those who seek your destruction" (Jacob 3:1).

May we be faithful and true, doing our duty to move forward the eternal work of the Lord, blessing our Father's children wherever we can touch their lives, is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authorities, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of

Saturday, April 5, 1997

Morning Session

the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Gary J. Coleman, John M. Madsen, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, and Carl B. Pratt as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Richard D. Allred, Eran A. Call, Richard E. Cook, Duane B. Gerrard, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Lynn G. Robbins, Donald L. Staheli, and Richard E. Turley Sr. as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the 134 Area Authorities, who are present with us today, as Seventies of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to act in the office of Area Authority Seventies. These brethren are:

Oscar H. Aguayo
Carlos E. Agüero
Julio E. Alvarado
Paulo C. F. Amorím
Adolfo Ávalos
Carl W. Bacon
Lowell C. Barber
David A. Bednar
Blair S. Bennett
Robert K. Bills
Bruce B. Bingham

O. Brent Black
Norman C. Boehm
Harold C. Brown
Donald J. Butler
René J. Cabrera
Douglas L. Callister
Antonio Cappel
Raimondo Castellani
Hugo A. Catrón
Victor D. Cave
Chu-Jen Chia
V. Francisco Chinchay
Jess L. Christensen
Kay H. Christensen
Christopher N. Chukwurah
L. Whitney Clayton
Ambrosio C. Collado
Gordon G. Conger
Max W. Craner
Cláudio Cuellar
César A. Dávila
Jorge L. del Castillo
Cleto P. De Oliveira
Adelson de Paula Parrella
Paul L. Diehl
Lindsay T. Dil
Donald B. Doty
Dale L. Dransfield
Alvie R. Evans Sr.
Enrique R. Falabella
David W. Ferrel
Lawrence R. Fuller
Armando Gaona
Ruben G. Gapiz
Harvey L. Gardner
Daryl H. Garn
Eduardo Gavarret
Silvio Geschwandtner
Larry W. Gibbons
Francisco G. Giménez
Christoffel Golden Jr.
Walter F. González
Paulo R. Grahl
James E. Griffin
C. Scott Grow
Esteban Guevara
Mario E. Guzmán
Donald L. Hallstrom
Ronald T. Halverson

Ronald J. Hammond
 John A. Harris
 Keith K. Hilbig
 Thomas A. Holt
 Pita F. Hopoate
 Clayton S. Huber
 Jon M. Huntsman Sr.
 Ernst Husz
 Salomón Jaar
 Julio H. Jaramillo
 Lloyd W. Jones
 Hitoshi Kashikura
 Seiji Katanuma
 Chong-Youl Kim
 Richard K. Klein
 Won Yong Ko
 Brent H. Koyle
 Eduardo A. Lamartine
 James G. Larkin
 Shih-An Liang
 David López
 J. Willard Marriott Jr.
 João R. C. Martins Silva
 Gary Matsuda
 John Maxwell
 W. E. Barry Mayo
 Hyde M. Merrill
 César A. S. Milder
 P. Bruce Mitchell
 J. Michael Moeller
 J. Kirk Moyes
 Mitchell V. Myers
 Karl E. Nelson
 Rodrigo Obeso
 James S. Olson
 Julio E. Otay
 Glen A. Overton
 William W. Parmley
 Wolfgang H. Paul
 Stein Pedersen
 Jorge A. Pedrero
 E. Israel Pérez
 Wayne S. Peterson
 Alain A. Petion
 Steven H. Pond
 R. Gordon Porter
 Holger D. Rakow
 Gustavo Ramos
 Eugene F. E. W. Reid

Michael T. Robinson
 Alejandro M. Robles
 Servando Rojas
 Lynn A. Rosenvall
 Claudio D. Signorelli
 Keith L. Smith
 R. Lloyd Smith
 L. Douglas Smoot
 Irajá B. Soares
 Su Kiong Tan
 Ernani Teixeira
 José A. Teixeira da Silva
 Octaviano Tenorio
 D. Lee Tobler
 Juan Uceda
 Tomás Valdés
 Carlos D. Vargas
 Jorge W. Ventura
 Hector M. Verdugo
 Remus G. Villarete
 Craig T. Vincent
 Brian A. Watling
 Robert S. Wood
 Jorge F. Zeballos
 Claudio D. Zivic

Those in favor may manifest it.

Those opposed may also manifest it.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks and sincere appreciation Sisters Elaine L. Jack, Chieko N. Okazaki, and Aileen H. Clyde as the Relief Society general presidency. We also release all members of the Relief Society General Board.

It is also proposed that we release as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency Sister Bonnie D. Parkin. Sister Parkin has accepted a call to serve with her husband as he presides over the England London South Mission.

All who wish to join in an expression of profound appreciation for the excellent service of these sisters may do so.

It is proposed that we sustain Sister Mary Ellen Wood Smoot as the new general president of the Relief Society, with Sister Virginia Urry Jensen as first counselor and Sister Sheri L. Dew as

second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain Sister Carol Ann Burdett Thomas as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. All in favor, please signify. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson. I think he made a pretty good effort at pronouncing those names. I'm not sure he got them all right, but he tried! I want to say further that Sister Sheri Dew's call to the Relief Society presidency isn't a thank-you for writing my biography. She was nominated by Sister Smoot and not by me, although I greatly appreciate what she's done. She's left me without privacy or anything else.

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve, will now speak to us.

President Boyd K. Packer

Study of doctrines improves behavior

My message is to our young people. We have great concern for young people who grow up without values on which to base their conduct. I have long believed that the study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than talking about behavior will improve behavior.

The study of behavior is greatly improved when linked to standards and to values. Practical values, useful in everyday life, are found in the scriptures and the doctrines they reveal. I will give you one example: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."¹

You should learn while you are young that while the Atonement of Christ applies to humanity in general, the influence of it is individual, very personal, and very useful. Even to you beginners, an understanding of the Atonement is of immediate and very practical value in everyday life.

Untidy soldiers in World War II

More than 50 years ago during World War II, I had an experience. Our

bomber crew had been trained at Langley Field, Virginia, to use the latest invention—radar. We were ordered to the West Coast and then on to the Pacific.

We were transported on a freight train with boxcars fitted with narrow bedsprings that could be pulled down from the wall at night. There were no dining cars. Instead, camp kitchens were set up in boxcars with dirt floors.

We were dressed in light-colored summer uniforms. The baggage car got sidetracked, so we had no change of clothing during the six-day trip. It was very hot crossing Texas and Arizona. Smoke and cinders from the engine made it very uncomfortable. There was no way to bathe or wash our uniforms. We rolled into Los Angeles one morning—a grubby-looking outfit—and were told to return to the train that evening.

We thought first of food. The 10 of us in our crew pooled our money and headed for the best restaurant we could find.

It was crowded, and so we joined a long line waiting to be seated. I was first, just behind some well-dressed women. Even without turning around, the stately woman in front of me soon became aware that we were there.

She turned and looked at us. Then she turned and looked me over from head to toe. There I stood in that sweaty, dirty, sooty, wrinkled uniform. She said in a tone of disgust, "My, what untidy men!" All eyes turned to us.

No doubt she wished we were not there; I shared her wish. I felt as dirty as I was, uncomfortable, and ashamed.

The shame of being spiritually unclean

Later, when I began a serious study of the scriptures, I noticed references to being spiritually clean. One verse says, "Ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell."²

I could understand that. I remembered how I felt that day in Los Angeles. I reasoned that to be spiritually unclean would bring shame and humiliation immeasurably more intense than I felt then. I found references—there are at least eight of them—which say that no unclean thing can enter the presence of God.³ While I realized those references had little to do with dirty clothes or soiled hands, I decided I wanted to stay spiritually clean.

Incidentally, that day we went canoeing in Griffith Park. We were horsing around and, of course, tipped over. We got to shore all right, and in due time the sun dried us out. By the time we returned to the train, we were really quite presentable.

I learned that when I didn't live as I ought to, getting myself spiritually clean was not as easy as taking a shower or putting on clean clothing or falling out of a canoe.

Repentance can cleanse us

I learned about the great plan of happiness, that we are on earth to be

tested. We will all make mistakes. The Apostle John taught, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Fortunately he added, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."⁴ I paid particular attention to that word *cleanse*.

I thought that repentance, like soap, should be used frequently. I found that when I apologized for mistakes, things were better. But for serious mistakes, an apology was not enough—sometimes not even possible. While these mistakes were, for the most part, not major ones, the spiritual pain called *guilt* invariably set in. Sooner or later they must be resolved, but I didn't know what to do. That happens when you break something that you alone can't fix.

Wickedness never was happiness

Among you young people are those who are "vexed," as Peter said, "with the filthy conversation of the wicked."⁵ Some of you joke about standards and see no need to change behavior. You tell yourselves it doesn't matter because everybody's doing it.

But that doesn't work because you, by nature, are good. How many times have you heard someone say, after doing some generous or heroic deed or simply helping others, how *good* it made them feel? Like any natural feeling or emotion, that reaction is inborn in you. Surely you have experienced that yourself! Happiness is inseparably connected with decent, clean behavior.

The prophet Alma bluntly told his wayward son that because he transgressed he was "in a state contrary to the nature of happiness"⁶ and that "wickedness never was happiness."⁷ Those who don't know how to erase mistakes often feel cornered and rebellious and lose themselves in unworthy living. If you

travel with transgressors, you will suffer much more than I did in that restaurant.

Through the Atonement we can repent

Most mistakes you can repair yourself, alone, through prayerful repentance. The more serious ones require help. Without help, you are like one who can't or doesn't wash or bathe or put on clean clothes. The path you need to follow is in the scriptures. Read them and your faith in Christ will grow. Listen to those who know the gospel.

You will learn about the Fall of man, about the purpose of life, about good and evil, about temptations and repentance, about how the Spirit works. Read what Alma said of his repentance: "I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more."⁸

Hear the Lord say, "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."⁹ Doctrine *can* change behavior quicker than talking about behavior will.

It was through reading the scriptures, and listening, that I could understand, at least in part, the power of the Atonement. Can you imagine how I felt when finally I could see that if I followed whatever conditions the Redeemer had set, I need never endure the agony of being spiritually unclean? Imagine the consoling, liberating, exalting feeling that will come to you when you see the reality of the Atonement and the practical everyday value of it to you individually.

You need not know everything before the power of the Atonement will work for you. Have faith in Christ; it begins to work the day you ask! The scripture speaks of "obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."¹⁰ We all pretty well know what it means to obey laws. But how are we to obey ordinances?

Generally we understand that, conditioned upon repentance, the ordinance of

baptism washes our sins away. Some wonder if they were baptized too soon. If only they could be baptized now and have a clean start. But that is not necessary! Through the ordinance of the sacrament, you renew the covenants made at baptism. When you meet all of the conditions of repentance, however difficult, you may be forgiven and your transgressions will trouble your mind no more.

Like Joseph F. Smith, we can be clean

President Joseph F. Smith was six years old when his father, Hyrum, was killed in Carthage Jail. Joseph crossed the plains with his widowed mother. At age 15 he was called on a mission to Hawaii. He felt lost and alone and said: "I was very much oppressed. . . . I was almost naked and entirely friendless, except the friendship of a poor, benighted . . . people. I felt as if I was so debased in my condition of poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge, just a boy, that I hardly dared look [anyone] in the face."

While pondering his plight, the young elder had a dream, "a literal thing; . . . a reality." He dreamed he was on a journey rushing as fast as he possibly could.

He carried a small bundle. Finally he came to a wonderful mansion, his destination. As he approached, he saw a notice, "Bath." He turned aside quickly, went in, and washed himself clean. He opened his little bundle and found clean, white clothing—"a thing," he said, "I had not seen for a long time." He put them on and rushed to the door of the mansion.

"I knocked," he said, "and the door opened, and the man who stood there was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He looked at me a little reprovingly, and the first words he said [were]: 'Joseph, you are late.' . . . I took confidence and said: 'Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!'"¹¹

And so it can be with you.

Poetic expression of testimony

I say to you again that a knowledge of the principles and doctrines of the gospel will affect your behavior more than talking about behavior.

I have used the Atonement as one of many examples. In the gospel of Jesus Christ are values on which to build a happy life.

I give you my testimony that our Father in Heaven lives. The Atonement of Christ can bless your life. If only I could tell you what the Atonement means to me. I once tried to express it in writing and close with these lines:

In ancient times the cry "Unclean!"
Would warn of lepers near.
"Unclean! Unclean!" the words rang
out;
Then all drew back in fear,
Lest by the touch of lepers' hands
They, too, would lepers be.
There was no cure in ancient times,
Just hopeless agony.

No soap, no balm, no medicine
Could stay disease or pain.
There was no salve, no cleansing bath,
To make them well again.

But there was One, the record shows,
Whose touch could make them pure;
Could ease their awful suffering,
Their rotting flesh restore.

His coming long had been foretold.
Signs would precede His birth.
A Son of God to woman born,
With power to cleanse the earth.

The day He made ten lepers whole,
The day He made them clean,
Well symbolized His ministry
And what His life would mean.

However great that miracle,
This was not why He came.
He came to rescue every soul
From death, from sin, from shame.

For greater miracles, He said,
His servants yet would do,

To rescue every living soul,
Not just heal up the few.

Though we're redeemed from mortal
death,
We still can't enter in
Unless we're clean, cleansed every
whit,
From every mortal sin.

What must be done to make us clean
We cannot do alone.
The law, to be a law, requires
A pure one must atone.

He taught that justice will be stayed
Till mercy's claim be heard
If we repent and are baptized
And live by every word. . . .

If we could only understand
All we have heard and seen,
We'd know there is no greater gift
Than those two words—"Washed
clean!"¹²

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:3.
2. Mormon 9:4.
3. See 1 Nephi 10:21; 15:34; Alma 7:21; 11:37; 40:26; 3 Nephi 27:19; Doctrine and Covenants 94:9; Moses 6:57.
4. 1 John 1:8-9.
5. 2 Peter 2:7.
6. Alma 41:11.
7. Alma 41:10.
8. Alma 36:19.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42; see also Hebrews 8:12; 10:17.
10. Articles of Faith 1:3.
11. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 541-42.
12. Boyd K. Packer, "Washed Clean."

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer has just spoken to us.

We're pleased and delighted to have Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve with us this morning. The Lord has blessed him, immensely and

wonderfully. He will now address us, following which the choir and congregation will join in singing "Praise to the Man."

Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, Primary general president, will then speak to us.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Appreciation for faith and prayers

My thanks to the First Presidency for this opportunity during which, as you can see, the lights combine with my cranium to bring some different "illumination" to this pulpit. As to my illness, treatments to date have proved encouraging, so I gladly express my deep gratitude for having come "thus far" (2 Nephi 31:19).

Brothers and sisters, if I have any entitlement to the blessings of God, it has long since been settled in the court of small claims by His generous bestowals over a lifetime.

I express special appreciation for the faith and prayers of a loving and nursing wife and family, the Brethren and their wives, my secretary, hundreds and hundreds of members and friends; and for caring and very competent doctors and nurses. Heavenly Father has surely responded to their meritorious prayers and efforts. These, your gifts, are already a spiritual spur to me. I truly feel unworthy, but I am not unappreciative. My love and thanks to all of you!

Something I have heard President Hinckley do many times publicly is to give all the glory, the praise, and the honor to God. This is something I am going to do more often, including today, incorporating my appreciation for God's tutoring and blessings.

No immunity from trials

Uncertainty as to our longevity is one of life's basic realities for all of us. Hence, you and I should importune in faith for the blessings we deeply desire,

but then be "content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto [us]" (Alma 29:3). Clearly our individual exit routes from this life vary; so does the timing.

There are many who suffer so much more than the rest of us: some go agonizingly; some go quickly; some are healed; some are given more time; some seem to linger. There are variations in our trials but no immunities. Thus, the scriptures cite the fiery furnace and fiery trials (see Daniel 3:6–26; 1 Peter 4:12). Those who emerge successfully from their varied and fiery furnaces have experienced the grace of the Lord, which He says is sufficient (see Ether 12:27). Even so, brothers and sisters, such emerging individuals do not rush to line up in front of another fiery furnace in order to get an extra turn! However, since the mortal school is of such short duration, our tutoring Lord can be the Schoolmaster of the compressed curriculum.

The greatest truth

The redeeming presence of our loving Father-God in the universe is the grand fact pertaining to the human condition. It is the supernal truth which, along with His plan of happiness, reigns preeminent and imperial over all other realities. Other truths, by comparison, are merely fleeting factoids about which we may be "ever learning" without coming to a knowledge of the grand truths (2 Timothy 3:7).

Mortal experience points evermore to the Atonement of Jesus Christ as the central act of all human history. The more I learn and experience, the more

unselfish, stunning, and encompassing His Atonement becomes!

The fellowship of Christ's sufferings

When we take Jesus' yoke upon us, this admits us eventually to what Paul called the "fellowship of [Christ's] sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). Whether illness or aloneness, injustice or rejection, etc., our comparatively small-scale sufferings, if we are meek, will sink into the very marrow of the soul. We then better appreciate not only Jesus' sufferings for us, but also His matchless character, moving us to greater adoration and even emulation.

Alma revealed that Jesus knows how to succor us in the midst of our griefs and sicknesses precisely because Jesus has already borne our griefs and sicknesses (see Alma 7:11-12). He knows them firsthand; thus His empathy is earned. Of course, we do not comprehend it fully any more than we understand how He bore all mortal sins, but His Atonement remains the rescuing and reassuring reality.

We will praise Jesus' loving-kindness

No wonder, of all the things for which we might praise Jesus when He comes again in majesty and power, we will praise Him for His "loving kindness" and His "goodness"; moreover, we will go on praising Him forever and ever! (D&C 133:52; see also Mosiah 4:6, 11;

Alma 7:23). We will never need to be coaxed.

Thus, ever acknowledging God's redeeming hand is very important, but, alas, so doing is diminished by the unwise mortal reliance on "the arm of flesh" (2 Nephi 4:34; D&C 1:19). Ah, the arrogant arm of flesh, like the quarterback whose arm was so strong it was boasted that he could throw a football through a car wash and it would come out dry on the other side! Such naïveté, such triviality symbolize not only the arm, but also the mind of flesh, which misses "things as they really are, and . . . things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13).

Gratitude for the precious Comforter

Finally, my humble praise today flows not only to God the Father for His loving plan of salvation and to Jesus, the Lord of the universe, for His marvelous and remarkable Atonement, but also to the Holy Ghost, about whom we speak less. Among His many roles I express my particular and personal gratitude today for the recent ways in which He has been the precious Comforter, including in the midnight moments!

In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

Sister Patricia P. Pinegar

Unite in caring for the souls of children

The longer I serve in my calling as Primary president, the greater is my concern for children. Children are a sacred gift from a loving Heavenly Father. "Children are an heritage of the Lord"

(Psalm 127:3). The more I think about children, the more I worry about parents.

President Spencer W. Kimball said: "Our Heavenly Father placed the responsibility upon parents to see that their children are well fed, well groomed

and clothed, well trained, and well taught. Most parents protect their children with shelter—they tend and care for their diseases, provide clothes for their safety and their comfort, and supply food for their health and growth. But what do they do for their souls?" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 332).

I am afraid that some children may someday have the feelings expressed by the Psalmist: "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4).

Today I speak to all parents and every adult member of the Church and invite all to unite in caring for the souls of children.

Many dangers threaten our families

Several years ago I was working in my garden and was delighted to see a family of quail. I watched the father sitting on top of the wall standing guard. The mother was busy keeping her 10 precious babies together and seemed to be demonstrating how to peck in the earth for food. I was fascinated. I carefully and quietly walked closer. All too soon I was detected by the watchful father, and he let out a warning call. The mother tried to guide the children around the wall to safety, but I—the danger—was too near, and she became frustrated and confused and flew up on the wall by the father. I didn't want to harm this family, so I quickly retreated out of sight.

Unlike my experience with the quail family, the dangers threatening the lives of our families do not retreat. Satan rejoices in our confusion and frustration, and his influences surround us. We turn on the television—is this a family show? We hear something coming out of our child's room—is this music? We try to pick a movie—did this one really have an acceptable rating?

Sometimes Satan's influences are more subtle. I have asked myself these questions: Do I leave my children exposed to danger when I don't teach them the truths of the gospel? Do I neglect their souls when I don't help them recognize the promptings of the Spirit and the guidance they can receive? Do I leave my children exposed to danger when my example is not the same as my words or when I don't share my love in such a way that each child feels it deeply?

Parenting is a godly responsibility

Statistics and news reports tell us that there are children who have been tragically deserted. Happily, that is not the plight of all children. I have visited homes where love abounds, the gospel is taught, and children's souls are well cared for. I have witnessed single parents who are magnificent in their faith and dedication. I know single adults who are involving themselves in the lives of families and strengthening both the parents and the children. I know teachers and leaders and other caring adults who touch the lives of children and youth, who care for their souls.

The blessings of parenting and helping to care for children are many. President Hinckley said: "Of all the joys of life, none other equals that of happy parenthood. Of all the responsibilities with which we struggle, none other is so serious. To rear children in an atmosphere of love, security, and faith is the most rewarding of all challenges. The good result from such efforts becomes life's most satisfying compensation" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 74; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54).

Parenting is a godly responsibility necessary for the salvation of Father's children and important for our preparation for eternal blessings. Rejoice in your opportunities to love and care for the souls of children. Our Father has

blessings and eternal rewards available for each of His children, whether they are married or single, parents or childless. Our circumstances may be different, our opportunities may be varied, but the end result of our righteousness can be the same—eternal parenthood, eternal lives. Helping to care for the souls of children will help each of us prepare for this eternal blessing.

Follow the example of the Father and the Son

What are some things that we can do to improve? I believe that seriously studying how our Father cares for His children can help us. Everything we know about our Heavenly Father is connected with His parenthood and His loving care for our souls. He loves each of His children unconditionally. We can do the same in our families. His plan of happiness is a plan to help His children progress and be prepared to receive His greatest blessings. We can make plans to help our families progress. He included His children in the great Heavenly Council and allowed us to participate and use our agency to choose. We can have family councils and include our children as active participants. Under His guidance, this earth was prepared as a place where we could learn and grow. Our homes can be happy places where our children can learn and grow. He has given His children rules of conduct and commandments that keep us moving forward, focused on the path that leads to our heavenly home. The rules of conduct in our family can help us move forward on the path back to our Heavenly Father.

The Only Begotten Son of our Father, our Savior Jesus Christ, spent His earthly ministry showing us how to love, bless, and teach all of the family of God. He taught us that not one soul should be lost. We should follow His example in loving and blessing our families and do-

ing all we can to see that not one soul is lost.

Receive blessings from temple attendance

In preparation for this talk and in search of answers to how we can better care for each child, my husband, Ed, and I attended the temple. I was so grateful for that sacred opportunity, for in the temple we were reminded of promised blessings. I realized that the blessings offered in this sacred place provide help needed by every parent in raising children today.

Work toward being temple worthy, and obtain a temple recommend even if the temple is too far away to attend very often. Great blessings will come to you and your children because of your personal righteousness. If you now have a temple recommend, study and pray and attend the temple often to increase your understanding of the covenants you have made.

Receive inspiration from the Lord

Each parent also needs to follow this counsel from President Hinckley: "You need more than your own wisdom in rearing [your children]. You need the help of the Lord. Pray for that help and follow the inspiration which you receive" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 120; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 89).

As we become more righteous by keeping our covenants and by more closely following the counsel in the scriptures and from our living prophets, we will truly be blessed with the daily guidance that we need from our Father and Savior to raise our children in righteousness.

To all fathers and mothers of the Church, tell your children that you love them and that you are so happy to have them in your family. Prepare yourselves spiritually to receive guidance through

the Holy Ghost. As you prayerfully study the scriptures and "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102), listen and respond to the promptings of the Spirit. Be aware of Satan's influences. Where do the feelings come from that make you feel that your efforts in the home are not fulfilling or important? Where do the feelings come from that make you feel unappreciated? Rejoice in this preparation for godhood. Rejoice in the opportunity to teach your children the truths of the kingdom, and help them experience the peace and joy that come from following these truths.

Young people should prepare

May I say something to the young men and women of the Church. Look to parenthood; prepare and plan for it. Prepare to be worthy fathers and mothers. The thoughts of your future children can keep you in the right way. If this blessing isn't yours in this earth life, your preparation and desire will prepare you to love and nurture all of God's children as the Savior did. Your eternal reward can be an eternal family.

The prophet's counsel

In a recent stake conference, our prophet counseled parents:

"Never forget that these little ones are the sons and daughters of God and that yours is a custodial relationship to them, that He was a parent before you were parents and that He has not relinquished His parental rights or interest in these . . . little ones. Now, love them, take care of them. Fathers, control your tempers, now and in all the years to come. Mothers, control your voices, keep them down. Rear your children in love, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Take care of your little ones, welcome them into your homes and nurture and love them with all of your hearts" (Gordon B. Hinckley, Salt Lake University Third Stake conference, 3 Nov. 1996; in *Church News*, 1 Mar. 1997, 2).

My prayer, my brothers and sisters, is that all of us will rejoice in the opportunities we have in caring for the souls of children, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Sister Pinegar. Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, Primary general president, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

We are all impressed with Elder Neal A. Maxwell's beautiful talk. I might add, he now joins the ranks of those, especially Brother Oaks and me, with illuminated heads. But most of all, we remember him for his wisdom, inspiration, and great leadership in the kingdom. What a miracle it is to have him here today. The Lord has blessed him and heard our prayers.

Great things are happening

General conference is an inspiring time of the year for the entire membership of the Church. Our purpose is to "instruct and edify each other, that [we] may know how to . . . act upon the points of [God's] law and commandments."¹ I humbly pray that we may continue to have that same spirit with us that we have enjoyed so much during this morning's session.

In our day, great things are happening in the kingdom! The Church is moving forward throughout the world as never before. It is a privilege for us to witness in our lifetimes such exciting progress toward fulfillment of the great prophecy that "the kingdom . . . may become a great mountain and fill the whole earth!"¹²

Great things are happening because so many of you are faithfully "act[ing] upon the points of [God's] law and commandments." As leaders of the Lord's Church, we are thrilled to see so much good being done by many righteous and faithful Latter-day Saints. Please know that we pray often that our Heavenly Father will help you to be true to the covenants that you have made with Him.

"Walk the path of faith"

In a recent message, President Gordon B. Hinckley issued both an invitation and a challenge: "I invite you," he said, "to walk the path of faith with me. I challenge you to stand for that which is right and true and good."³ Our prophet exemplifies an unwavering commitment to and example of walking in this path of faith and diligence. In our everyday lives, are we following his inspired example? As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are we rising to his challenge "to stand for that which is right and true and good"? Echoing a favorite hymn, President Hinckley admonished, "Let us be [true,] 'true to the faith that our parents have cherished, *true to the truth* for which martyrs have perished.'"⁴

Brothers and sisters, are we "true to the truth"?

The thirteenth article of faith states that "we believe in being . . . true." The truth of the restored gospel, as this hymn highlights, is "the fairest gem, . . . the brightest prize / To which mortals or Gods can aspire. . . . Truth, the sum of existence, will weather the worst, / Eternal, unchanged, evermore."⁵

Yes, the fulness of the gospel is a pearl of great price worth any effort.

While we are taught to develop our talents and provide for our families, nevertheless we must be careful not to let the pursuit of our career path divert us from the gospel path.

We must be "true to the truth" and stay on the "strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life."⁶ Remember Alma's counsel to his son Corianton: "Suffer not yourself to be led away by any vain or foolish thing."⁷

"Keep the commandments. In this there is safety and peace."⁸ Nothing this world has to offer can surpass the joy of living the gospel! No worldly wealth or possession, no degree of fame or recognition can supplant the satisfaction of feeling the warmth and peace of the Spirit of the Lord in our hearts and in our homes. "Sweet is the peace the gospel brings."⁹ As we strive for success, we cannot allow "any vain or foolish thing" to divert us from the path of faith and lead us away from being *true* to our covenants.

"True to the faith"

I like the word *true*. It powerfully explains basic gospel principles with insightful clarity.

True means "steadfast, loyal, . . . honest, just"¹⁰—all virtues that we should cultivate in our lives.

"No hypocrisy and no deception"

Truth can also describe "that which is [actually] the case rather than what is manifest or assumed," as in the true dimensions of a problem or the true nature of an individual.

Do we, indeed, actually live the gospel, or do we just *manifest* the appearance of righteousness so that those around us *assume* we are faithful when, in reality, our hearts and unseen actions are *not* true to the Lord's teachings?

Do we take on only the “form of godliness” while denying the “power thereof”?¹¹

Are we righteous in fact, or do we feign obedience only when we think others are watching?

The Lord has made it clear that He will not be fooled by appearances, and He has warned us not to be false to Him or to others. He has cautioned us to be wary of those who project a false front, who put on a bright pretense that hides a darker reality. We know that the Lord “looketh on the heart” and *not* on the “outward appearance.”¹²

The Savior taught us to “judge not according to the appearance”¹³ and warned us against wolves who “come to [us] in sheep’s clothing” and whose deception can only be discovered “by [examining] their fruits.”¹⁴

Nephi taught that we must walk the path of faith “with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God.”¹⁵

We know that “a double minded man is unstable in all his ways”¹⁶ and that we cannot “serve two masters.”¹⁷ President Marion G. Romney wisely observed that there are too many of us “who try to serve the Lord without offending the devil.”¹⁸

“The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind.”¹⁹ Hence, the first of the Ten Commandments is, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,”²⁰ and the Savior declared that the first and great commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind.”²¹ Only when we give our all and overcome our pride and walk the path of faith without deviation can we honestly sing, “Lord, accept our *true* devotion.”²²

Faith in every footstep

The valiant pioneer Saints who sacrificed so much “to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion”²³ walked a

path of faith through great physical hardship that forged and tempered their souls. With genuine commitment to the cause of truth, they held fast to the iron rod in spite of opposition or challenge. They were “true to the truth” and gave their all in strengthening and living the restored gospel.

Be true to your covenants

One of the great blessings of the restored gospel is the privilege of entering into sacred covenants with our Father in Heaven—covenants made binding by virtue of the holy priesthood. When we are baptized and confirmed, when brethren are ordained to the priesthood, when we go to the temple and receive our endowment, when we enter into the new and everlasting covenant of eternal marriage—in all these sacred ordinances, we make solemn commitments to keep God’s commandments.

We covenant that we will show our love for our Heavenly Father through humble service and diligent obedience and prove ourselves to be “good and faithful servant[s].”²⁴

If we are true to our covenants, our Father in Heaven will grant us the blessing of “eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”²⁵ “All that [the] Father hath”²⁶ is promised to those who walk the path of faith and remain true to their covenants. Those “who [do] the works of righteousness shall receive [their] reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”²⁷

An eternal calling

Each of you has an eternal calling from which no Church officer has authority to release you. This is a calling given you by our Heavenly Father Himself. In this eternal calling, as with all other callings, you have a stewardship, and “it is required of the Lord, at the

hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity."²⁸ This most important stewardship is the glorious responsibility your Father in Heaven has given you to watch over and care for your own soul.

At some future day, you and I will each hear the voice of the Lord calling us forward to render an account of our mortal stewardship. This accounting will occur when we are called up to "stand before [the Lord] at the great and judgment day."²⁹

Each day on this earth is but a small part of eternity. The day of resurrection and final judgment will surely come for each one of us.

Then our Father in Heaven's great and noble heart will be saddened for those of His children who, because they chose evil, will be cast out, unworthy to return to His presence. But He will welcome with loving arms and with indescribable joy those who have chosen to be "true to the truth." Righteous living, combined with the grace of the Atonement, will qualify us to stand before Him with clean hearts and clear consciences.

As leaders of the Church, as servants of a compassionate Father in Heaven, we likewise want each of you to return to His presence. We love you and desire with all our hearts to see you rejoice with your Father in Heaven and with your parents, your children, and other loved ones in that great day of judgment. So we ask you, "Are you true?" And, therefore, we admonish you, as did Jacob, to "prepare your souls for that glorious day when justice shall be administered unto the righteous, even the day of judgment, that ye may not shrink with awful fear; that ye may not remember your awful guilt in perfectness."³⁰

Five suggestions

What can help us to strengthen our resolve to keep on the narrow path of

righteousness and truth so our souls will welcome our day of judgment as a glorious day? May I offer five suggestions.

First, the fundamental reason why the Lord has instructed us to conduct worthiness interviews in His Church is to teach us to keep the commitments we make. In short, we are to be trained during this season of mortal probation to master ourselves,³¹ to live with integrity and be true to our covenants. Worthiness interviews are conducted in a spirit of loving concern for each son and daughter of a loving God. These interviews represent the rehearsal stage for final judgment. Such interviews are a blessing, a choice opportunity to account to the Lord through His authorized servants for the sacred stewardship we all have to "watch [ourselves], and [our] thoughts, and [our] words, and [our] deeds."³²

Second, in the Lord's Church, we are reminded of our sacred covenants every time we partake of the sacrament.

Third, each time we return to the temple, we are reminded of the covenants we make when we receive our endowment.

Fourth, in our home teaching and visiting teaching, do we remember our promise to serve others?³³

Fifth, the Savior Himself knew, as we should also know, that He was accountable to His Father. He taught that His sacred stewardship was "to do the will of him [who] sent me."³⁴ In His great intercessory prayer, the Lord reported to the Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."³⁵

When we are living righteously, we rejoice that we can report positively our worthiness and our preparation for continued blessings, whether they be the honor of receiving the priesthood, the blessings of temple attendance, the satisfaction of the Young Women Personal Progress achievements, or the blessings of service in whatever our calling might be.

Such mortal experiences give us the opportunity to assess what we are doing with our lives. All help us school our souls and strengthen our characters in preparation for that final interview.

And "if [we] are prepared [we] shall not fear."³⁶

When we have need to repent, interviews are not always easy. Thank goodness the Lord has called wonderful bishops, stake presidents, and other priesthood leaders who can provide loving guidance to help us repent and cleanse ourselves "that [we] may stand blameless before God at the last day."³⁷

Value of regular spiritual checkups

Worthiness interviews, sacrament meetings, temple attendance, and other Church meetings are all part of the plan that the Lord provides to educate our souls, to help us develop the healthy habit of constantly checking our bearings to stay on the path of faith. Regular spiritual checkups help us navigate life's highways and byways.

In quiet moments of personal reflecting and pondering, I have benefited from humbly asking myself the simple question, "Am I true?"

May I suggest that we can all similarly benefit by looking deep inside our hearts during reverent moments of worship and prayer and asking ourselves this simple question, "Am I true?"

The question becomes more powerfully useful if we are completely honest with our answers and if it motivates us to make repentant course corrections that keep us on the path of faith.

I testify that our Father in Heaven loves each one of us.

If we will be true to the truth, accept the invitation to walk with President Gordon B. Hinckley in the path of faith, and keep our covenants, we will find "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come."³⁸ I testify that our Heavenly Father lives and that His

Beloved Son is our Redeemer and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is indeed our prophet, seer, and revelator during this inspiring time of our mortal lives. May we be blessed in our efforts to prepare for that great day when, with our loved ones, we can return rejoicing into the presence of our Father in Heaven, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 43:8.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 109:72; see also Daniel 2:31-45.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "'True to the Faith,'" *Ensign*, June 1996, 4.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, "'True to the Faith,'" 8; italics added.
5. "Oh Say, What Is Truth?" *Hymns*, no. 272.
6. 2 Nephi 31:18.
7. Alma 39:11.
8. "Keep the Commandments," *Hymns*, no. 303.
9. "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings," *Hymns*, no. 14.
10. Definitions in this and the following paragraph are from *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. [1993], "true," 1268.
11. Joseph Smith—History 1:19.
12. 1 Samuel 16:7.
13. John 7:24.
14. Matthew 7:15-16.
15. 2 Nephi 31:13; see also Jacob 6:5; Mosiah 7:33; 3 Nephi 10:6; Doctrine and Covenants 18:27-28.
16. James 1:8.
17. Matthew 6:24; see also Luke 16:13; 3 Nephi 13:24.
18. Marion G. Romney, "The Price of Peace," *Ensign*, Oct. 1983, 6.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
20. Exodus 20:3.
21. Matthew 22:37-38; italics added; see also verses 36-40.
22. "Lord, Accept Our True Devotion," *Hymns*, no. 107; italics added.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 6:6.
24. Matthew 25:21, 23.

25. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 72:3.
29. 2 Nephi 9:22.
30. 2 Nephi 9:46.
31. See Alma 34:33–37.
32. Mosiah 4:30.
33. See Mosiah 18:8–10.
34. John 4:34.
35. John 17:4.
36. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
37. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
38. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.

The chorus sang "Sweet Is the Work."

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Sweet Is the Work."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker.

President James E. Faust

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, I am humbled by the responsibility of addressing you. I would be grateful for your spiritual understanding as I speak of the greatest blessings that can be received in mortality.

Temple blessings in Nauvoo

On February 3, 1846, it was a bitter cold day in Nauvoo, Illinois. That day, President Brigham Young recorded in his diary:

"Notwithstanding that I had announced that we would not attend to the administration of the ordinances, the House of the Lord was thronged all day. . . . I also informed the brethren that I was going to get my wagons started and be off. I walked some distance from the Temple supposing the crowd would disperse, but on returning I found the house filled to overflowing.

"Looking upon the multitude and knowing their anxiety, as they were thirsting and hungering for the word, we continued at work diligently in the House of the Lord."¹

And so the temple work continued until 1:30 A.M.

The first two names that appear on the fourth company of the Nauvoo Tem-

ple register for that very day, February 3, 1846, are John and Jane Akerley, who received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple that evening. They were humble, new converts to the Church, without wealth or position. Their temple work was their final concern as they were leaving their home in Nauvoo to come west. It was fortunate that President Young granted the wish of the Saints to receive their temple blessings because John Akerley died at Winter Quarters, Nebraska. He, along with over 4,000 others, never made it to the valleys of the Rocky Mountains. William Clayton's classic Mormon hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," captures well their faith: "And should we die before our journey's through, Happy day! / All is well!"²

Temple building in the Salt Lake Valley

A temple was announced on July 26, 1847, the second day after the arrival of President Brigham Young in the Great Salt Lake Valley. President Young made this great proclamation before the Saints even had a roof over their heads and while they were still living in wagons or sleeping on the ground. He drove his cane into the ground and said, "Here we

will build the Temple of our God."³ This magnificent edifice would require 40 years to build.

Within 10 years of their arrival in the valley, the Saints built the Endowment House, where they could receive some of their temple blessings. As Brigham Young explained, "In consequence of our having been driven from our homes, and because of our destitute circumstances, the Lord has permitted us to do what we have done, namely, to use this Endowment House for temple purposes."⁴ It was dedicated May 5, 1855. Here Elsie Ann, the daughter of John and Jane Akerley, was sealed for time and all eternity to her husband, Henry Jacob Faust, on April 2, 1857.

There were, however, ordinances that could not be administered in the Endowment House, and the work was under way to build the Salt Lake Temple. Referring to this great building that was to stand through the Millennium, Brigham Young announced: "This is not the only temple we shall build; there will be hundreds of them built and dedicated to the Lord."⁵

The driving force of the pioneers in coming to the West was larger than escaping persecution. They were seeking a place "where none shall come to hurt or make afraid," where "the Saints [would] be blessed."⁶ Part of the spiritual pull that brought them to the Salt Lake Valley was their vision of a place where they could worship unmolested in a temple of God.

No doubt many of the pioneers had been at the funeral of Joseph Smith Sr. and heard the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. speak of the strength and comfort his father, the Patriarch of the Church, had received while being in the temple:

"To dwell in the house of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple, was his daily delight; and in it he enjoyed many blessings, and spent many hours in sweet communion with his heavenly Father.

He has trod its sacred aisles, solitary and alone from mankind. . . . In its holy enclosures have the visions of heaven been opened to his mind, and his soul has feasted on the riches of eternity; and there under his teachings have the meek and humble been instructed, while the widow and the orphan have received his patriarchal blessings."⁷

Temples from ancient times until now

Ancient prophets had the vision of the eternity that lies before us. Indeed, the practice of building special houses of worship and sacred ceremony has been part of the history of the human race for centuries. John the Revelator had a prophetic manifestation regarding temple work. Said he:

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

"And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."⁸

Many of the Saints, including President Wilford Woodruff, had heard the Prophet Joseph say:

"Brethren I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies here tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it. . . . It is only a little handfull of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world. . . . It will fill the Rocky Mountains. There will be tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints who will be gathered in the Rocky Moun-

tains. . . . This people will go into the Rocky Mountains; they will there build temples to the Most High.”⁹

This prophetic statement has been abundantly fulfilled in every respect.

Twenty-four years after Brigham Young’s cane marked the spot for the Salt Lake Temple, they broke ground for the unique temple in St. George, Utah. In another six years they began building the exquisitely beautiful temples in Manti and Logan, Utah. The work of temple building has continued from that time to the present. Forty-nine operating temples grace much of the earth, with more to be dedicated this year and others announced and planned, as President Hinckley has indicated.

Temples answer our deepest questions

What is the significance of the words of the Prophet Joseph that we will “build temples to the Most High”? Why were all of these temples built at such cost and sacrifice? Why are they still being built at an ever increasing pace? It is because the deepest questions of our existence are answered in the temple. These answers tell us where we came from, why we are here, where we may go, and how we may cope with the matter of death. This life makes no logical sense unless we think in terms of the eternities. The transcendent blessings of life and eternity are received within the sacred walls of the temple. The Savior’s supernal gift to mankind gave us the opportunity for eternal life, but eternal life without our loved ones would be bleak.

A basic eternal truth of this Church is that families may, if they are worthy, have an eternal relationship; for us it would not be heaven without our parents, our grandparents, our eternal companions, our children, and our posterity. This union of families comes through the sealing power exercised within the hallowed walls of the temples under authorized priesthood authority.

An eternal family begins when a young couple kneel at an altar in the holy temple of God and make covenants with each other and with God and receive His greatest promises. This sealing is preceded by each making and receiving covenants which, if they continue worthy, will bless them in this life as well as in the life to come.

The father and mother are equal partners with different roles in nurturing and teaching their family members on the journey to immortality and eternal life. To have full meaning, how can life be other than an eternal process?

Part of the process of reaching into the eternities comes when we must deal with the experience called death. This life is hollow without a belief in and an understanding of immortality. Said Paul, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”¹⁰ The Atonement and the Resurrection of the Savior are the grand keys that open the locks of immortality. The greatest fulfillment of these blessings, if we are worthy, comes to us in the holy temples of God. Within their sacred walls, those who hold the power and authority bind in heaven that which is bound in earth. This authority has been delegated by the President of the Church, who holds and exercises all of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth.

All may receive temple blessings

Fundamental to temple worship is the principle that “God is no respecter of persons.”¹¹ Within the hallowed walls of the temples, there is no preference of position, wealth, status, race, or education. All dress in white. All receive the same instruction. All make the same covenants and promises. All receive the same transcendent, eternal blessings if they live worthy to claim them. All are equal before their Creator. Those who are single through no fault of their own,

if worthy, will be given the blessings, if they wish, of an eternal family relationship.

We are a covenant-making people. These eternal blessings are for all who wish to worthily receive of them, both the living and the dead. In the mercy of God we are privileged to receive these blessings by proxy for our deceased ancestors who did not have this privilege in life. They, of course, may choose whether to accept these blessings. Our duty is to search out our forebears and give them the opportunity to accept and receive these blessings. As the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead."¹²

Temple blessings help us endure

The opportunity to receive these supernal blessings was given by God in His infinite goodness to the people of this earth through the great prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith. He was commissioned to restore the fulness of all things in our time. This is why temple blessings were one of the last yearnings of President Brigham Young and the pioneers as they left Nauvoo. For the same reason, President Young's thoughts on arriving in the valley of the Great Salt Lake were to again secure these eternal blessings for God's children by building and operating temples.

Temple building and temple worship were paramount reasons for the pioneers' willingness to suffer so greatly and endure so much in their remarkable exodus to the barren, isolated desert of the West. We rejoice that God has, in His divine providence, made possible the building of so many temples in so many countries in our time. No one has dedicated more temples in this dispensation than President Gordon B. Hinckley. Of the 49 operating temples, he has dedicated 24. We hope and pray that temple blessings in time will be available to

more of God's children around the world.

There were over 5,600 members who received their blessings in the Nauvoo Temple. The spiritual leaven given in the Nauvoo Temple blesses us today in an ever increasing measure. It spreads to every house of the Lord in the world so that all who hunger and thirst for the fulness of God's word may be filled.

John and Jane Akerley and the others of the multitude who waited in the bitter cold to enter the majestic Nauvoo Temple received within its walls the greatest blessings offered by the Lord in this life. They endured much, but their suffering was just beginning. Their temple blessings helped strengthen them for what lay ahead. Separated by death in Winter Quarters, they were able to endure all things because of their faith and the blessings received that cold February night in 1846.

As the pioneers had the larger vision in their daily challenge for survival, so also we need to have a greater vision and understanding of our eternal destiny. Our challenges are more subtle but equally hard. Maintaining our spiritual strength is also a daily challenge. The greatest source of that spiritual strength comes, as it did in their time, from our temples.

I urge all who have not yet received these greatest of all blessings within the walls of the temple to do whatever may be necessary to qualify to receive them. To those who have received these blessings, I invite you to prepare yourselves to savor again the experience of being within the sacred premises of the holy temples of God and have the visions of life eternal open again to your hearts, minds, and souls.

This I humbly pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 7:579.
2. *Hymns*, no. 30.

3. As quoted by Heber J. Grant, in Conference Report, Apr. 1921, 211; see also Wilford Woodruff, in *The Utah Pioneers* (1880), 23.
4. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1941), 394.
5. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 395.
6. *Hymns*, no. 30.
7. *History of the Church*, 4:194.
8. Revelation 7:13–15.
9. As quoted by Wilford Woodruff, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 57.
10. 1 Corinthians 15:19.
11. Acts 10:34.
12. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 356.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Faust. President Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has been our concluding speaker for this session of the conference.

We're grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings

of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

We're grateful for those who have spoken this morning. We feel a particular sense of gratitude concerning Brother Maxwell, who has been blessed of the Lord in a remarkable way. And that blessing has been manifest as he has addressed us this morning. We wish for him continued health and assure him of our continuing prayers in his behalf.

We should say that Brother Paramount has undergone serious surgery and that we shall offer prayers in behalf of him.

We express our appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. Thank you, Brother Bowden and all of your associates, for the great service which you give.

The chorus will now sing "Beautiful Savior." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy. And we shall be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The chorus sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder Jay E. Jensen offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 167th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 5, 1997, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Logan-Ogden combined Institute choirs, under the direction of Brother Don Castleton, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session. We welcome you to the second general session of the 167th Annual General Conference of the Church.

We extend greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the

world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, William R. Bradford, and Kwok Yuen Tai are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall. Elders Robert E. Wells, J. Richard Clarke, James O. Mason, and Dallas N. Archibald are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by the Logan-Ogden combined Institute choirs, under the direction of Brother Don Castleton, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "True to the Faith." The invocation will be offered by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "True to the Faith."

Elder Harold G. Hillam offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "Joseph Smith's First Prayer." Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will then read the report of the Church Audit Committee. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1996.

The choir sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1996

Ted E. Davis

The Church Audit Committee consists of three members who are independent of all Church officers, employees, departments, and Church-owned businesses and affiliates. We report directly to the First Presidency and have access to all records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibilities.

The Church also has an auditing department that is independent of all other Church operations and departments. The Church Auditing Department is separate and independent from the Church Audit Committee. The Church Auditing Department's staff consists of certified public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors. It has established procedures for audits of Church operations in accordance with recognized professional auditing standards. This includes monitoring of con-

tributions and expenditures of local ecclesiastical units.

The Church Audit Committee has reviewed the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over contributions and expenditures of Church funds and that safeguard assets of the Church. We have also reviewed budgeting, accounting and reporting, and auditing systems and reports of the Church for the year ended 31 December 1996.

Expenditures of Church funds for 1996 were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under the direction of the Appropriations and Budget Committees.

Church-owned businesses are managed by professionals who report to in-

dependent boards of directors that do not include General Authorities as members. These companies maintain their own accounting and reporting systems in compliance with accepted business practices and are audited by the Church Auditing Department and/or independent public accounting firms. The board of directors of Deseret Management Corporation consists of General Authorities, who monitor most Church-owned businesses. Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education are audited by independent public accounting firms.

Based on our review of financial, budgeting, and other control policies and procedures, and our review of all audit reports issued in 1996 and responses thereto, the Church Audit Committee is of the opinion that, in all material respects, Church contributions received and expended during the year ended 31 December 1996 have been managed in accordance with established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee
Ted E. Davis, Chairman
Donald D. Salmon
Frank M. McCord

The Church Statistical Report for 1996

F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, for the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of 31 December 1996. These statistics are based on 1996 reports available prior to this conference.

Church units

Stakes.....	2,296
Districts.....	671
Missions.....	309
Wards and branches.....	23,528

These wards and branches are in 140 nations and in 21 territories and possessions.

Church membership

Total membership.....	9,694,549
Eight-year-old children of record baptized during 199681,017
Converts baptized during 1996 . .	.321,385

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries.....	52,938
-----------------------------	--------

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Lowell D. Wood, a member of the Seventy; *Elder Lloyd P. George*, an emeritus General Authority; *Sister Florence Smith Prows Cullimore*, widow of Elder James A. Cullimore of the Seventy; *Brother David M. Kennedy*, former special representative of the First Presidency and United States secretary of the treasury; *Brother Terrel H. Bell*, former United States secretary of education; and *Sister Florence Holbrook Richards*, former counselor in the Primary general presidency.

President Faust

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

"Bishop, help!"

My brothers and sisters, I begin by sharing an event from a large ward in Provo about 20 years ago. During a sacrament meeting, a little boy made a big disturbance. After several minutes of trying to quiet this noisy three-year-old, the mother desperately handed him to the father, who was seated on the aisle close to the front of the chapel. By this time the noise distracted the speaker and audience, and everyone was very conscious of the parents' plight. The father's patience was much shorter than the mother's. In a few moments he put the little boy over his shoulder, stood up, and started for the back door. Looking back over his father's shoulder and sensing his determined steps, the little boy became quiet and apprehensive. Just as the father approached the rear door of the chapel, the little fellow reached his arms out toward the stand and shouted, "Bishop, help!"

There are times in the lives of all of us when we must reach out to our bishop or his counselors for help. Perhaps we need inspired counsel and direction to help with our families or our occupations. Perhaps we seek increased understanding of the gospel or the duties of our callings. We may need temporal assistance in a time of stress. We may even reach out for discipline to assist us in getting back on the path of growth. Always we benefit from their stalwart examples. Thank heaven for faithful and inspired bishops and branch presidents and their counselors!

Duties of the bishopric

A bishop (or branch president) has many duties. As the president of the Aaronic Priesthood, he personally oversees the programs and activities of the young men and young women in the

ward. He and his counselors interview each one each year. They give special attention to teaching correct principles. Always they encourage our youth to prepare for the covenants they will make in the temple.

As the presiding high priest, the bishop gives direction to all quorums, auxiliaries, activities, and programs in the ward. Calls to ward positions are under his direction. So are home teaching and visiting teaching, and the performing of ordinances like baptism. Assisted in all of this by his counselors, he is responsible for sacrament meeting and for the teaching of the gospel in all classes in the ward. The bishopric also directs all of the other meetings of the ward, including the priesthood executive committee and the ward council.

The bishopric is also responsible for monitoring the Church-service time of all ward members serving under their direction. Knowing the circumstances of the ward, they determine the appropriate balance of ward meetings and activities and the time remaining for families. They are also conscious of the purpose of our Sunday consolidated meeting schedule, which was not established to give time for more Sabbath meetings but to allow increased time for families to be together and for individual gospel study and service.

The bishopric (or branch presidency) is also in charge of unit finances. They receive tithes and offerings, oversee the unit budget and expenditures, remit funds, and see that records are properly kept. The bishop is the judge who determines how Church commodities and funds are used to provide for the temporal needs of the members. He is also responsible for seeking out the poor and the needy.

The bishop is the judge and the shepherd who has the power of discern-

ment and the right to revelation and inspiration for the guidance of the flock. He is responsible for holding worthiness interviews in order to authorize attendance at the temple, callings to ward positions, ordinations to priesthood offices, and the callings of missionaries. He administers formal and informal discipline for violation of the laws of the Church, and he counsels and helps members avoid the necessity for discipline.

Although some of their duties cannot be delegated, in most of these tasks the bishop and his counselors need the assistance of many others working under their direction: executive secretary, clerks, presidencies and group leadership of quorums, presidencies of auxiliaries, and officers and teachers. A bishop needs to be a skillful delegator, or he will be crushed under the burden of his responsibilities or frustrated at seeing so many of them unfilled.

I marvel at the work of our bishops and branch presidents. In my lifetime, our family has had many bishops. We have loved each of them and their counselors, and we have felt their love and assistance in our lives. Each of them was different in his personality, but each was a devoted servant of the Lord. I have seen the mantle of responsibility increase their stature, and I have rejoiced in their magnificent service to the people. God bless the bishops and bishoprics of this Church!

Bishops seek to unify the flock

There is something else we should mention about bishops. They are not specialists. We do not have bishops whose sole attentions are directed toward the youth, the aged, the married, the abused, or any particular occupational or ethnic group. Under the revelations of the Lord and the directions of His prophets, a bishop is ordained and set apart to preside over a ward whose

boundaries are geographic and whose membership includes all who reside there. For this reason, a bishop looks after the old and the young, the married and the single, the rich and the poor, the active and the less active. In this he seeks to unify the flock so that we may be taught and serve in groups of Saints that transcend considerations of age, marital status, ancestry, and economic condition. Our bishops lead us all in our efforts to follow the Savior's commandment to "be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27).

The Lord speaks through His servants

The Lord told the early members of His Church that the voice of His servants is the voice of the Lord, and that the hand of His servants is the hand of the Lord (see D&C 1:38; 36:2). I testify to the truthfulness of that principle, which imposes a solemn duty upon the members of this Church to be loyal to their leaders and faithful in following their direction. I affirm that the Lord will bless us for doing so. That principle also imposes a great responsibility on the holders of office in this Church. Leaders must assure that they exercise their sacred authority "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (D&C 121:41).

We now have over 15,000 bishops and over 8,000 branch presidents in this Church. When we count their counselors, the total serving in bishoprics and branch presidencies is over 65,000. We praise and honor these worthy shepherds of the flock, judges in Israel, leaders and teachers of the people, men who love and are loved by those whom they serve as undershepherds of the Lord Jesus Christ. God bless these good men! And God bless their faithful wives, whose loyalty and support make their service possible.

"Help the bishop!"

As I began this talk, I quoted the words of a three-year-old who called, "Bishop, help!" I will now reverse those words and make them a challenge for each of us: "Help the bishop!"

Our current circumstances are different from those experienced by bishops and their counselors and members in earlier times. Today we have local leaders in most parts of the world. Many geographic wards and branches are in large cities and include hundreds of thousands or even millions of people. Some bishops travel during the week or commute long hours and great distances to work, effectively isolated from their families and their members for most of the hours of the week. Nevertheless, we also have communication and transportation resources undreamed of in earlier times. Whatever the physical changes over time, the nature of our local leaders' callings has not changed, nor has their compensation. They are totally uncompensated by the coin of mortality. For the reward of their labors, all rely on the Lord's deferred compensation plan.

Unchanged also is the fact that as they struggle with the heavy duties of their callings, bishops and their counselors must also earn a living and fulfill other family responsibilities. They do this not only because of their love for their wife and children, but also because they are responsible for being role models for the members of their flock. The burden is a heavy one that cannot be fulfilled without the supportive efforts of ward officers and members.

Fulfill callings diligently

How do we help? To lighten the load of the bishopric, auxiliary presidencies and Melchizedek Priesthood quorum presidencies and group leaders need to exercise initiative and fully function in the great responsibilities of their

callings. Bishops are responsible to call; they should not be required to beg or push. All of us should accept the callings we are given and serve in all diligence. The most common calling received for men is home teacher and for women is Relief Society visiting teacher. When properly performed, these vital callings can substantially lighten the load of the bishopric. Home teachers and visiting teachers are the eyes and ears and hands of the bishop. Brothers and sisters, help the bishop and his counselors by reliable, faithful performance of your visits and oversight as home teachers and visiting teachers.

Provide for ourselves and our families

Each of us should do all that we can, in the spirit of gospel self-reliance, to provide for ourselves and our families in a temporal and a spiritual way. Then, if it is necessary to reach out for help, we know we have first done all that we can. This includes helping the members of our immediate and extended families to the maximum extent possible so that the bishop is not faced with burdens that should be handled in the first instance by the individual or by the extended family.

Be considerate of leaders' time

Another way to help our busy bishops and their counselors is to be careful not to occupy their time with matters that others can handle. If we need an address or a phone number or help with some other routine task, we should not call a member of the bishopric. Let us reserve their time for the heavy responsibilities that are uniquely theirs. Let us call on others for the things others can handle.

When contacting our local leaders is necessary, we should remember that they have employment responsibilities too. Don't contact them at their place of work unless there is a true emergency.

Let us be careful not to put our leaders' employment in jeopardy. Members should also be careful not to expect their local leaders to give them the products of those leaders' occupations. Our leaders are called to give us Church service, not professional services or merchandise inventories.

We should remember that our leaders are also husbands and fathers. They are bishops or counselors for a season, but they will never be released from their family responsibilities, which are for eternity. Our leaders need time to perform their family responsibilities also, and our thoughtful consideration will help.

My heart ached for a young mother who wondered what would necessitate her bishop-husband's spending six hours counseling a needy member on a Sunday following sacrament meeting. He did not arrive home until 6:00 P.M., which is bad enough, but this particular Sunday happened to be Christmas Day. I am sure the bishop felt he needed to give the help that was requested, but I also wonder whether a member in distress could not have held some of that need in abeyance long enough for a bishop to enjoy this Christmas afternoon with his family. That is admittedly an extreme example, but the problem is not an exceptional one, as many bishops and their wives would affirm.

A more familiar example was mentioned in a ward I recently attended in Salt Lake City. A wife of a member of

the bishopric was speaking in sacrament meeting. She thanked the members of the ward for not phoning their home on Monday evening. She said that was the only time in the week when she and her children could plan to have their husband and father all to themselves. That forbearance would be good for all wards and branches.

The offices of the bishopric are sacred

Brothers and sisters, the offices of bishop and branch president and counselors are sacred in this Church. The men who hold those offices are respected by the Lord, inspired by His Spirit, and given the powers of discernment necessary to their office. We honor and love them, and we show this by our consideration for them.

I testify of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Church this is and whose servants they are. I ask the blessings of the Lord on the members and leaders of this Church, general and local, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Henry B. Eyring, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Monte J. Brough, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

The Savior wants to lead us to safety

The Savior has always been the protector of those who would accept His protection. He has said more than once, "How oft would I have gathered you as

a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not" (3 Nephi 10:5).

The Lord expressed the same lament in our own dispensation after describing the many ways in which He calls us to safety:

"How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, and by the great sound of a trumpet, and by the voice of judgment, and by the voice of mercy all the day long, and by the voice of glory and honor and the riches of eternal life, and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!" (D&C 43:25).

He counsels us through prophets

There seems to be no end to the Savior's desire to lead us to safety. And there is constancy in the way He shows us the path. He calls by more than one means so that His message will reach those willing to accept it. And those means always include sending the message by the mouths of His prophets whenever people have qualified to have the prophets of God among them. Those authorized servants are always charged with warning the people, telling them the way to safety.

When tensions ran high in northern Missouri in the fall of 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith called for all the Saints to gather to Far West for protection. Many were on isolated farms or in scattered settlements. He specifically counseled Jacob Haun, founder of a small settlement called Haun's Mill. A record of that time includes this: "Brother Joseph had sent word by Haun, who owned the mill, to inform the brethren who were living there to leave and come to Far West, but Mr. Haun did not deliver the message" (Philo Dibble, in "Early Scenes in Church History," in *Four Faith Promoting Classics* [1968], 90). Later, the Prophet Joseph recorded in his history: "Up to this day God had given me wisdom to save the people who took coun-

sel. None had ever been killed who [had abided] by my counsel" (*History of the Church*, 5:137). Then the Prophet recorded the sad truth that innocent lives could have been saved at Haun's Mill had his counsel been received and followed.

In our own time, we have been warned with counsel on where to find safety from sin and from sorrow. One of the keys to recognizing those warnings is that they are repeated. For instance, more than once in these general conferences, you have heard our prophet say that he would quote a preceding prophet and would therefore be a second witness and sometimes even a third. Each of us who has listened has heard President Kimball give counsel on the importance of a mother in the home and then heard President Benson quote him, and we have heard President Hinckley quote them both. The Apostle Paul wrote that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). One of the ways we may know that the warning is from the Lord is that the law of witnesses, authorized witnesses, has been invoked. When the words of prophets seem repetitive, that should rivet our attention and fill our hearts with gratitude to live in such a blessed time.

Follow the prophet or choose another influence

Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith. When a prophet speaks, those with little faith may think that they hear only a wise man giving good advice. Then if his counsel seems comfortable and reasonable, squaring with what they want to do, they take it. If it does not, they consider it either faulty advice or they see their circumstances as justifying their being an exception to the counsel. Those without faith may think that they hear only men seeking to exert

influence for some selfish motive. They may mock and deride, as did a man named Korihor, with these words recorded in the Book of Mormon:

"And thus ye lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness, and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges" (Alma 30:27).

Korihor was arguing, as men and women have falsely argued from the beginning of time, that to take counsel from the servants of God is to surrender God-given rights of independence. But the argument is false because it misrepresents reality. When we reject the counsel which comes from God, we do not choose to be independent of outside influence. We choose another influence. We reject the protection of a perfectly loving, all-powerful, all-knowing Father in Heaven, whose whole purpose, as that of His Beloved Son, is to give us eternal life, to give us all that He has, and to bring us home again in families to the arms of His love. In rejecting His counsel, we choose the influence of another power, whose purpose is to make us miserable and whose motive is hatred. We have moral agency as a gift of God. Rather than the right to choose to be free of influence, it is the inalienable right to submit ourselves to whichever of those powers we choose.

Another fallacy is to believe that the choice to accept or not accept the counsel of prophets is no more than deciding whether to accept good advice and gain its benefits or to stay where we are. But the choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous. The failure to take prophetic counsel lessens our power to take inspired counsel in the future. The best time to have decided to

help Noah build the ark was the first time he asked. Each time he asked after that, each failure to respond would have lessened sensitivity to the Spirit. And so each time his request would have seemed more foolish, until the rain came. And then it was too late.

Every time in my life when I have chosen to delay following inspired counsel or decided that I was an exception, I came to know that I had put myself in harm's way. Every time that I have listened to the counsel of prophets, felt it confirmed in prayer, and then followed it, I have found that I moved toward safety. Along the path, I have found that the way had been prepared for me and the rough places made smooth. God led me to safety along a path which was prepared with loving care, sometimes prepared long before.

Those with priesthood keys lead us to safety

The account at the beginning of the Book of Mormon is of a prophet of God, Lehi. He was also the leader of a family. He was warned by God to take those he loved to safety. Lehi's experience is a type of what happens as God gives counsel through His servants. Of Lehi's family, only those who had faith and who themselves received confirming revelation saw both the danger and the way to safety. For those without faith, the move into the wilderness seemed not only foolish but dangerous. Like all prophets, Lehi, to his dying day, tried to show his family where safety would lie for them.

He knew that the Savior holds responsible those to whom He delegates priesthood keys. With those keys comes the power to give counsel that will show us the way to safety. Those with keys are responsible to warn even when their counsel might not be followed. Keys are delegated down a line which passes from the prophet through those responsible for ever smaller groups of members,

closer and closer to families and to individuals. That is one of the ways by which the Lord makes a stake a place of safety. For instance, I have sat with my wife in a meeting of parents called by our bishop, our neighbor, so that he could warn us of spiritual dangers faced by our children. I heard more than the voice of my wise friend. I heard a servant of Jesus Christ, with keys, meeting his responsibility to warn and passing to us, the parents, the responsibility to act. When we honor the keys of that priesthood channel by listening and giving heed, we tie ourselves to a lifeline which will not fail us in any storm.

Our Heavenly Father loves us. He sent His Only Begotten Son to be our Savior. He knew that in mortality we would be in grave danger, the worst of it from the temptations of a terrible adversary. That is one of the reasons why the Savior has provided priesthood keys so that those with ears to hear and faith to obey could go to places of safety.

Accept counsel humbly

Having listening ears requires humility. You remember the Lord's warning to Thomas B. Marsh. He was then the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Lord knew that President Marsh and his brethren of the Twelve would be tested. He gave counsel about taking counsel. The Lord said, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers" (D&C 112:10).

The Lord added a warning that is applicable to any who follow a living prophet: "Exalt not yourselves; rebel not against my servant Joseph; for verily I say unto you, I am with him, and my hand shall be over him; and the keys which I have given unto him, and also to youward, shall not be taken from him till I come" (D&C 112:15).

Follow counsel for the safety of others

God offers us counsel not just for our own safety, but for the safety of His other children, whom we should love. There are few comforts so sweet as to know that we have been an instrument in the hands of God in leading someone else to safety. That blessing generally requires the faith to follow counsel when it is hard to do. An example from Church history is that of Reddick Newton Allred. He was one of the rescue party sent out by Brigham Young to bring in the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies. When a terrible storm hit, Captain Grant, captain of the rescue party, decided to leave some of the wagons by the Sweetwater River as he pressed ahead to find the handcart companies. With the blizzards howling and the weather becoming life-threatening, two of the men left behind at the Sweetwater decided that it was foolish to stay. They thought that either the handcart companies had wintered over somewhere or had perished. They decided to return to the Salt Lake Valley and tried to persuade everyone else to do the same.

Reddick Allred refused to budge. Brigham had sent them out, and his priesthood leader had told him to wait there. The others took several wagons, all filled with needed supplies, and started back. Even more tragic, each wagon they met coming out from Salt Lake they turned back as well. They turned back 77 wagons, returning all the way to Little Mountain, where President Young learned what was happening and turned them around again. When the Willie Company was finally found, and had made that heartrending pull up and over Rocky Ridge, it was Reddick Allred and his wagons that waited for them. (See Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington, *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies* [1992], 29, 33–34.)

In this conference you will hear inspired counsel, for instance, to reach out to the new members of the Church. Those with the faith of Reddick Newton Allred will keep offering friendship even when it seems not to be needed or to have no effect. They will persist. When some new member reaches the point of spiritual exhaustion, they will be there offering kind words and fellowship. They will then feel the same divine approval Brother Allred felt when he saw those handcart pioneers struggling toward him, knowing he could offer them safety because he had followed counsel when it was hard to do.

While the record does not prove it, I am confident that Brother Allred prayed while he waited. I am confident that his prayers were answered. He then knew that the counsel to stand fast was from God. We must pray to know that. I promise you answers to such prayers of faith.

Be patient when counsel seems not to apply

Sometimes we will receive counsel that we cannot understand or that seems

not to apply to us, even after careful prayer and thought. Don't discard the counsel, but hold it close. If someone you trusted handed you what appeared to be nothing more than sand with the promise that it contained gold, you might wisely hold it in your hand awhile, shaking it gently. Every time I have done that with counsel from a prophet, after a time the gold flakes have begun to appear and I have been grateful.

We are blessed to live in a time when the priesthood keys are on the earth. We are blessed to know where to look and how to listen for the voice that will fulfill the promise of the Lord that He will gather us to safety. I pray for you and for me that we will have humble hearts, that we will listen, that we will pray, that we will wait for the deliverance of the Lord, which is sure to come as we are faithful. I testify that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and loves us. This is the Church of Jesus Christ. He lives and loves us. He is the head of the Church, and He is our Savior. I testify that Gordon B. Hinckley holds all the keys of the priesthood of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Monte J. Brough

"How come we 'got choosed'?"

A few years ago, I was privileged to be assigned to the Asia Area Presidency, with the area office being in Hong Kong. Our four youngest children accompanied Sister Brough and me to that fascinating city, where we lived for three very interesting years. Our children were accustomed to the wide-open spaces of western America, and Hong Kong required each child to make some very large personal and emotional adjustments. Many nights we sat around our dining room table in our modest 13th-

floor apartment, trying to help them with school and cultural challenges.

One night, after anxiously working for several hours to complete school assignments, our youngest child, Kami (then eight years old), asked, "Daddy, how come we 'got choosed' to come to Hong Kong?" My first reaction was to be somewhat flippant and say, "Just lucky, I guess." However, I could tell from the very sincere look on this little girl's face that she wanted a grown-up answer to her question. At that moment, as I surveyed the challenges placed on our little family because of my priesthood calling,

I needed to review the answer again for myself.

The divine nature of our callings

I recalled the day some years earlier when I picked up the telephone to hear the familiar voice of President Spencer W. Kimball, who carefully extended a call to me to serve as a mission president.

After the telephone call, I was troubled with great feelings of inadequacy. My wife and I were yet in our thirties, with a young family of six children. I remembered the deep love and respect that I felt and still feel for my mission president. Could President Kimball have made a mistake? Did they really understand who I was?

A few days later, we were granted an appointment with Elder Rex D. Pinegar. We explained to him our feelings. I will always remember Elder Pinegar's answer: "Brother Brough, have you a testimony as to the divine calling of our prophets and other Church leaders?"

"Yes, I do," I answered. "From my earliest childhood, I have believed in the sacred callings of our Church leaders. From the deepest part of my soul, I believe President Spencer W. Kimball to be a prophet."

Elder Pinegar then said, "Now you must gain a testimony as to the divine nature of your own calling. You must come to know that *you* also have been called of God."

Paul the Apostle had gained a personal testimony of his own "holy calling" and also that of Timothy. He declared that God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9).

This powerful personal witness would require Timothy to "be [a] partaker of the afflictions of the gospel

according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

As Kami and I read this scripture together, I could see that she very much wanted to understand. I wanted her to know that there can be some "afflictions" associated with our callings in the Church. We talked about being away from our home and family members. I understood it was difficult for her to adjust to these new surroundings.

It was obvious, however, that I was *still* short of my objective when she asked, "But, Daddy, why did we 'get choosed' and not someone else?" Now that is a much more difficult question. Why do these callings and responsibilities come to some and not to others? I was reminded of the charge President Hinckley gave me upon my ordination as a Seventy. He said: "Brother Brough, now a lot of people are going to say a lot of nice things about you. Don't believe them!"

It is very dangerous for any of us to think we have earned the right to a Church calling. However, every member must come to know the sacred nature of his or her own service in the Church. I remember my Primary teacher, Sister Mildred Jacobson, who I believe was divinely called to her position of responsibility. Two bishops, Bishop Lynn McKinnon and Bishop Ross Jackson, who served during my youth, played significant roles in the lives of many. I believe they were called of God in the same process of revelation as were Paul and Timothy.

"I have chosen you"

We must each prepare ourselves for every good work that might come to us and then accept the principle that revelation, not aspiration, is the basis for our respective callings. We can learn much from the following New Testament story:

"Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

"... She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" (Matthew 20:20-21).

I explained to Kami that Zebedee's children were the Apostles James and John, who would later sit with Peter, one on his right hand and the other on his left. Then we read together how Jesus answered the devoted mother: "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father" (Matthew 20:23).

The Apostles also were taught concerning their important calling when Jesus reminded them, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16).

A taxi ride in New Delhi

I explained to Kami that we definitely had been chosen because we would not seek such a challenging assignment. This was reinforced just a few days later when Sister Brough and I were assigned to travel to India for a missionary conference. The flight from Hong Kong to New Delhi, India, was a late-night flight that arrived in New Delhi at about two o'clock in the morning. Even at that late hour, there were hundreds of taxi drivers who wanted to provide our transportation. After selecting a driver, we began our journey of about 40 kilometers to the hotel. Even though it was late, the roads were crowded with animals, people, and other vehicles. As we were going through an intersection, the taxi's motor quit. I watched with increasing anxiety as the driver fruitlessly attempted to start the motor. Finally, in obvious frustration, the driver turned to me and in his very best English said, "Push taxi!" It was three o'clock in the

morning, and my wife and I were very tired. I got out of the taxi and tried to push it across the intersection but was not able to do so. The driver then said to my wife, "Push taxi." Lanette got out of the car and began to help me push the taxi through the intersection. As we were struggling to get the taxi through the traffic, I said to my wife, "There were a few things we didn't understand when we were given this assignment."

Divine calling of missionaries

I shall never forget the experience we had in June of 1993 at a special meeting in Beijing, China, with couples who were then teaching English in North Vietnam and Mongolia. After two days of training and inspiration, we closed with this familiar song:

It may not be on the mountain height
Or over the stormy sea,
It may not be at the battle's front
My Lord will have need of me.
("I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270)

As we were singing, my wife leaned over and whispered in my ear: "But it might be 'on the mountain height,' or it might be 'over the stormy sea,' or it might be 'at the battle's front.'" The Lord surely had need for these beautiful people serving in this interesting area of the world. These wonderful missionary couples did not choose to come to these countries. Yet as we now look at the results of their service, I know that they were chosen by the Lord for their special calling.

On four different occasions, Sister Brough and I and our family have excitedly opened the envelope containing the mission call and assignment for one of our children. Each time, we have contemplated with excitement the various possibilities for their service. While pref-

erences were expressed, the moment their eyes saw the words "You are hereby assigned to serve in the (blank) mission," without exception a wonderful feeling of good and right came over each family member. We each knew that a prophet had guided a divine selection process to which four of our children have gladly responded. Tens of thousands of returned missionaries can also testify of this process and the divine inspiration of their own missionary calling.

Church service is based on revelation

I never completely satisfied little Kami's question that night. Over the years, we have recalled that challenging evening when a small child was a bit overwhelmed with life. We have explored other scriptures and many other stories since that time. We have received the wonderful promise to those the Savior had chosen "that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it [to] you" (John 15:16).

That promise—of answer to our prayers—is directed even to a small

child. This was reaffirmed recently when I heard Kami, now 15 years old, respond to a question directed to her by an adult friend: "How come you were so lucky to live in Hong Kong when you were a child?" She looked directly at me as she gave her answer to our friend: "It wasn't luck; we 'were chosen.'"

That personal and prophetic revelation is the foundation upon which our Church service is firmly based is my witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, followed by Elder Monte J. Brough of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Sheldon F. Child

His word was as good as his bond

I was raised on a small farm in northern Utah. We were blessed to have enough land—not enough to make a living, but enough to make work for a young boy. My parents were good, hard-working, industrious people. In order to make ends meet, my father took outside employment. Each morning before he left for work, he would make a list of chores he wanted me to accomplish before he came home that evening.

I remember on one occasion one of the items on the list was to take a small broken part from our hay rake to the blacksmith shop to have it repaired. I

was uncomfortable about going. My father hadn't left any money, and I wondered what I should do. I put off going as long as I could. When all my other chores were finished, I knew I couldn't avoid it any longer. Father expected the broken part to be repaired when he came home, and it was my responsibility to see that it was done.

I can still remember walking the mile or so to the blacksmith shop. I even remember how uncomfortable I was as I watched him weld the part. As he finished, I nervously told him that I had no money, but that my father would pay him later. I'm sure he sensed my anxiety. He patted me on the shoulder and said,

"Son, don't worry, *your father's word is as good as his bond.*" I remember running all the way home, relieved that the part had been repaired and grateful that my father was known as a man whose word was as good as his bond.

As a boy I didn't fully understand what that meant, but I knew it was good and something to be desired. It was years later that I recognized that a person whose word is as good as his bond is a person of honesty and integrity, a person to be trusted. In today's world, there are some who think nothing of breaking their word, their promises, their covenants with man and with God. What a blessing it is to deal with those whom we can trust.

Nephi and Zoram could be trusted

A powerful example of this can be found in the Book of Mormon. You will remember the assignment given to Nephi and his brothers by their father, Lehi, to go to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass from Laban. After an unsuccessful attempt, the brothers desired to return to their father in the wilderness. Nephi recognized that they had a task to perform, an assignment to fulfill. He stated, "We will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us."¹ They tried again, and again they failed. Nephi then "crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban."² It was there that he found Laban drunken with wine and obeyed the voice of the Spirit, which said to him: "Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. . . . It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief."³ Then, putting on the clothes of Laban, he went to the treasury and obtained the plates. Nephi had accomplished that which he had been sent to do.

But we must not overlook the powerful example of Laban's servant, Zoram.

Nephi commanded Zoram to follow him as he left the treasury, and it was only when he called to his brothers that Zoram realized that it was Nephi and not Laban whom he had followed. The scriptures tell us that Zoram "began to tremble, and was about to flee,"⁴ when Nephi seized him and told him he need not fear, that he should be a free man if he would go down into the wilderness with them. Zoram promised that he would; he gave his word. And Nephi said that "when Zoram had made an oath unto us, our fears did cease concerning him."⁵ He was a man to be trusted; his oath was binding; his word was as good as his bond.

Honesty is essential today

Honesty and integrity are not old-fashioned principles. They are just as viable in today's world. We have been taught in the Church that:

When we say we will do something, we do it.

When we make a commitment, we honor it.

When we are given a calling, we fulfill it.

When we borrow something, we return it.

When we have a financial obligation, we pay it.

When we enter into an agreement, we keep it.

President N. Eldon Tanner related the following experience:

"A young man came to me not long ago and said, 'I made an agreement with a man that requires me to make certain payments each year. I am in arrears, and I can't make those payments, for if I do, it is going to cause me to lose my home. What shall I do?'

"I looked at him and said, 'Keep your agreement.'

"'Even if it costs me my home?'

"I said, 'I am not talking about your home. I am talking about your agreement; and I think your wife would rather

have a husband who would keep his word, meet his obligations, keep his pledges or his covenants, and have to rent a home than to have a home with a husband who will not keep his covenants and his pledges.”⁶

We are all familiar with the statement “Honesty is the best policy.” For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, honesty is the *only* policy. We must be honest with our fellowmen. We must be honest with our God. We are honest with God when we honor the covenants we make with Him.

Be honest with God by keeping covenants

We are a covenant-making people. We make covenants at the waters of baptism.⁷ We renew those covenants each week as we worthily partake of the sacrament. We take upon ourselves the name of Christ; we promise to always remember Him and to keep His commandments. And in return He promises us that His Spirit will always be with us. We make covenants as we enter into the temple, and in return we receive the promised blessings of eternal life—if we keep those sacred covenants.

Covenants with God are not to be taken lightly. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord tells us, “I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy.”⁸

The account of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies in the Book of Mormon is a touching example of this. Ammon and his brethren spent 14 years preaching to the Lamanite people. Thousands were brought to the knowledge of the truth, and those who were converted unto the Lord “never did fall away.”⁹ “For they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end.”¹⁰ They were so grateful for the mercy of God that

they covenanted with Him “that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives.”¹¹ You will remember that they buried their weapons of war in the ground. They were so true to that covenant that even when the armies of the Lamanites came upon them, “they went out to meet them, and prostrated themselves before them to the earth, and began to call on the name of the Lord.”¹² They offered no resistance. Many were slain. These people were willing to die rather than break the covenant that they had made with the Lord.

Rewards of honesty

In our dealings with both God and our fellowmen, let us be examples of honesty and integrity. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin tells us:

“The rewards of integrity are immeasurable. One is the indescribable inner peace that comes from knowing we are doing what is right; another is an absence of the guilt and anxiety that accompany sin. Another reward of integrity is the confidence it can give us in approaching God. . . . The consummate reward of integrity is the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. . . . Let us live true to the trust the Lord has placed in us.”¹³

It is my prayer that we may honor the commitments and covenants that we make with God and with our fellowmen, that it can be said of each of us, “Our word is as good as our bond.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 3:15.
2. 1 Nephi 4:5.
3. 1 Nephi 4:12–13.
4. 1 Nephi 4:30.
5. 1 Nephi 4:37.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1966, 99; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1966, 1137.
7. See Mosiah 18:8–10.

8. Doctrine and Covenants 98:14.
9. Alma 23:6.
10. Alma 27:27.
11. Alma 24:18.
12. Alma 24:21.
13. *Finding Peace in Our Lives* (1995), 193–94.

President Faust

Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Jerald L. Taylor of the Seventy.

Elder Dennis E. Simmons

“My peace I give unto you”

During the last few days of the Savior’s mortal ministry, He finalized His instruction to His Apostles. They had been with Him during His three-year ministry, but now He completed His teaching that had come line upon line and precept upon precept as rapidly as they had been able to receive it.

Knowing the end of His ministry was near, He told them of His impending departure: “Yet a little while I am with you. . . . Whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 13:33).

Fear, frustration, and concern must have gripped these humble disciples. Jesus had been their security, their help, their light. What could they do without His direction, His instruction, His example, His comfort?

In love and compassion, the Master assured them:

“I will not leave you comfortless” (John 14:18).

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

“ . . . He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:16–17, 26).

To His apostolic friends and for the benefit of all believers, Jesus added a significant benediction: “Peace I leave with you, *my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth*, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27; italics added).

The scriptures testify that the promise was fulfilled in the lives of His servants in the meridian of time. We testify that the fulfillment continues in this dispensation of the fulness of times.

Peace in the midst of tribulation

It should be noted that Jesus promised *His* peace—not the peace that the world gives. The world cries out for freedom from war, from violence, from oppression, from injustice, from contention, from disease and distress. That the Savior did not expect such worldly peace is clear from His concluding remark as He finished His special teaching to His Apostles: “These things I have spoken unto you, that *in me ye might have peace*. In the world ye *shall* have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33; italics added).

In mortality tribulation would continue. But in the midst of that tribulation His followers would have peace in Him. In other words, even if all the world is crumbling around us, the promised Comforter will provide His peace as a result of true discipleship. Ultimate total

peace will come, of course, because He overcame the world. But we can have His peace with us irrespective of the troubles of the world. His peace is that peace, that serenity, that comfort spoken to our hearts and minds by the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, as we strive to follow Him and keep His commandments.

"Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23).

"He who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

Peace through the still, small voice

Just as Helaman discovered in the midst of battle that "he did speak peace to our souls" (Alma 58:11) and Oliver Cowdery had peace spoken to his mind when he cried unto the Lord in his heart that he might know concerning the truth of the Book of Mormon (see D&C 6:22-23), all sincere seekers can have that same peace spoken to them. That peace comes from the assurances spoken by a still, small voice. The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit who generally communicates not through physical senses but by touching the heart and mind; in other words, He speaks through thoughts, impressions, and feelings and does so softly.

As Elder Packer has stated: "The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all" ("The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53).

Surrender to the power of the Spirit

Accordingly, many do not hear the voice. In fact, many do not *want* to hear the voice. Many men desire to be, and

are determined to be self-sufficient, rejecting and scoffing at anything which would potentially call into question their own power or ability. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

But although the Spirit is gentle, it speaks with great power. To receive the Spirit, a type of surrender is necessary. A few years before the first advent of Jesus Christ, the Nephite prophets "Nephi and Lehi were encircled about as if by fire" while confined in prison (Helaman 5:23). Their would-be slayers heard "a voice as if it were above the cloud of darkness" which had gripped the crowd of unbelievers, calling them to repentance as the earth shook (Helaman 5:29).

"When they heard this voice, and beheld that it was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did *pierce even to the very soul*—And notwithstanding the mildness of the voice, behold the earth shook exceedingly," they were motivated to repent and have faith in Christ (Helaman 5:30-31; italics added).

"And behold, the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words. And it came to pass that there came a voice unto them, yea, a pleasant voice, as if it were a whisper, saying: Peace, peace be unto you" (Helaman 5:45-47).

They surrendered—surrendered to a power unseen, but capable of penetrating any willing heart.

Fruits of the Spirit

Paul described the fruit of the Spirit—that is, what the Spirit produces: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

longsuffering, gentleness"; and he observed, "Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). In other words, the Spirit can penetrate anything. No law can be passed which will preclude the Spirit from doing His work with an obedient follower of Christ. The scriptures teach us that the Spirit:

- Enlightens the mind (see D&C 6:15).
- "Leadeth to do good— . . . to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously" (D&C 11:12).
- Fills the soul with joy (see D&C 11:13; Mosiah 4:20).
- Reveals the "truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5).
- Bears record of Father and Son (see D&C 20:27).
- Knows all things (see D&C 42:17).
- Convinces (see D&C 100:8).
- Gives knowledge (see D&C 121:26).
- Speaks in a "still small voice" (1 Nephi 17:45).
- Teaches a man to pray (see 2 Nephi 32:8).
- Brings about mighty change (see Mosiah 5:2).
- Gives assurances (see Alma 58:11).

- Fills with "hope and perfect love" (Moroni 8:26).
- Gives liberty (see 2 Corinthians 3:17).
- Comforts (see John 14:16).
- Speaks peace (Alma 58:11).
- Is available (see D&C 6:14).

Comfort is available to all

Just as Jesus' anxious Apostles were given peace by "another Comforter," so today can all men and women receive the same marvelous blessing each day of their lives: the teenager challenged by peer pressure, the person torn by seemingly overwhelming passions or emotions, the person encircled about by loneliness and despair, the hungry, the oppressed, the forgotten, the frightened, the abused, the abuser, the liar, the thief—all who will surrender, follow the Master, and do His works are entitled to the same peace.

Jesus' invitation is extended to all: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jerald L. Taylor

My dear brothers and sisters, this afternoon I would like to speak about gratitude: first, for a loving family; second, for a living prophet; and third, for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gratitude for a loving family

Nephi stated that he had "been born of goodly parents" (1 Nephi 1:1). I echo his same words, for I too was born of goodly parents—a father who was a faithful Latter-day Saint who honored his priesthood and a loving mother who

died when I was a young child, leaving my father with six children. My father remarried a widow with nine children, thus giving me in all five brothers and nine sisters. I am grateful for my second mother, who loved me as one of her own and who was an example to me. I thank my Father in Heaven for all of my brothers and sisters, who have loved and supported me and who also love the gospel and the Lord. It has now been 54 years since the Lunt-Taylor family was joined together, and even though our parents are gone, we feel unity and love for each

other. I also have felt the love and support of grandparents, uncles and aunts, and other relatives.

I am grateful for my loving and devoted wife, Sharon, and our six children, two sons-in-law, and five grandchildren. The Psalmist said: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord. . . . Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3, 5). I am grateful for this heritage of the Lord and for their love and support.

Gratitude for a living prophet

I express gratitude for a living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Last November he visited many South American countries, including Chile. That same week Chile hosted an important summit meeting for all nations of Latin America. There were presidents and dignitaries from 16 different countries. Streets in the areas where they stayed and met were barricaded. Day and night, sirens wailed and red lights flashed to make way for those men as they traveled back and forth from their meetings. In the midst of all the commotion, President Hinckley arrived. There was no fanfare and no special welcome, recognition, or privilege extended to him. Two vans left the airport and maneuvered through the streets of Santiago, one carrying the Lord's living prophet. At the hotel there were police and guards to protect the summit visitors, while President Hinckley, with his family and others, entered unnoticed.

My mind went back to a stable many years ago, where the birth of the Son of God went unnoticed except for a few shepherds in the fields watching over their flocks. God's kingdom on earth moves quietly along behind the scenes of more-publicized events.

The next day, as President Hinckley spoke to over 50,000 Saints and testified

of Christ and of His Church, one could feel his conviction. He told all present that he wanted them to remember that they had heard Gordon B. Hinckley say that God lives and Jesus is the Christ. He counseled the Saints to put their lives in order, to teach their children the ways of the Lord, and to form eternal families by being sealed in the temple. At the conclusion of the conference, with tears in their eyes and a testimony in their hearts that here, truly, was a prophet of God on earth, the vast congregation stood and waved white handkerchiefs in farewell. President Hinckley took his handkerchief from his pocket and with love returned their farewell. I know, as those many Saints in Chile and throughout the world know, that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the living prophet of God on earth. I am grateful for him and for his example.

Gratitude for the Lord Jesus Christ

I express gratitude and love for Jesus Christ and His Atonement, for His willingness to leave the realms of the heavens as a God and come to earth as a lowly babe, born in a stable to Mary and Joseph because there was no room for them in the inn. He lived a life of service, forgetting Himself in the cause of His Father's other children. His desire was to fulfill the Father's will, which is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

In the final hours of His mortal life, He went into the Garden of Gethsemane and took upon Himself the sins of *all* mankind, from Adam until the last person born on earth. There He "suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent" (D&C 19:16). His own words describe that experience: "Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at

every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:18). A few hours later, He was tried and judged of men and then crucified on a cross. The great Jehovah, the Creator of this world and worlds without number, submitted Himself humbly to the desires of evil men and thus accomplished the will of the Father.

Learn to use the key called repentance

The resurrected Savior taught the people in the Americas “that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world” (3 Nephi 27:16). In writing of repentance, President Boyd K. Packer said: “In the universal battle for human souls, the adversary takes enormous numbers of prisoners. Many, knowing of no way to escape, are pressed into his service. Every soul confined in a concentration camp of sin and guilt has a key to the gate. The key is labeled Repentance. The adversary cannot hold them, if they know how to use it. The twin principles of repentance and forgiveness exceed in strength the awesome power of the tempter” (*The Things of the Soul* [1996], 114).

The Lord said in Isaiah, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). The Lord has said in our day: “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more. By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:42–43).

Jesus Christ is the judge of all: “The keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate” (2 Nephi 9:41). I feel He will be disappointed if we are not worthy to live with Him and His Father. Brothers and sisters, may we know how to use the key labeled repentance so that we may, as we stand before the Savior, “listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading [our] cause before him—

“Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

“Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life” (D&C 45:3–5).

Testimony of the Savior

My desire is to be worthy to have this everlasting life with Jesus Christ and our Father, and I pray we will all have this same desire and strive to achieve it.

I bear witness that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God, our Lord and Savior. At this special time, as we remember His Resurrection, I express my deep gratitude for Him and for His Atonement, and I do so in His name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elders Dennis E. Simmons and Jerald L. Taylor of the Seventy.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Tribute to mothers

There are some lines attributed to Victor Hugo which read:

"She broke the bread into two fragments and gave them to her children, who ate with eagerness. 'She hath kept none for herself,' grumbled the sergeant.

"'Because she is not hungry,' said a soldier.

"'No,' said the sergeant, 'because she is a mother.'"

In a year when we are celebrating the faith and valor of those who made that exacting trek across Iowa, Nebraska, and Wyoming, I wish to pay tribute to the modern counterparts of those pioneer mothers who watched after, prayed for, and far too often buried their babies on that long trail. To the women within the sound of my voice who dearly want to be mothers and are not, I say through your tears and ours on that subject, God will yet, in days that lie somewhere ahead, bring "hope to [the] desolate heart."¹ As prophets have repeatedly taught from this pulpit, ultimately "no blessing shall be withheld" from the faithful, even if those blessings do not come immediately.² In the meantime we rejoice that the call to nurture is not limited to our own flesh and blood.

In speaking of mothers I do not neglect the crucial, urgent role of fathers, particularly as fatherlessness in contemporary homes is considered by some to be "the central social problem of our time."³ Indeed, fatherlessness can be a problem even in a home where the father is present—eating and sleeping, so to speak, "by remote." But that is a priesthood message for another day. Today I wish to praise those motherly hands that have rocked the infant's cradle and, through the righteousness taught to their children there, are at the very center of the Lord's purposes for us in mortality.

In so speaking I echo Paul, who wrote in praise of Timothy's "unfeigned faith . . . , which dwelt first," he said, "in thy grandmother Lois, and [in] thy mother Eunice."⁴ "From [the days when thou wert] a child," Paul said, "thou hast known the holy scriptures."⁵ We give thanks for all the mothers and grandmothers from whom such truths have been learned at such early ages.

Sacrifices made by young mothers

In speaking of mothers generally, I especially wish to praise and encourage *young* mothers. The work of a mother is hard, too often unheralded work. The young years are often those when either husband or wife—or both—may still be in school or in those earliest and leanest stages of developing the husband's breadwinning capacities. Finances fluctuate daily between low and nonexistent. The apartment is usually decorated in one of two smart designs—Deseret Industries provincial or early Mother Hubbard. The car, if there is one, runs on smooth tires and an empty tank. But with night feedings and night teething, often the greatest challenge of all for a young mother is simply fatigue. Through these years, mothers go longer on less sleep and give more to others with less personal renewal for themselves than any other group I know at any other time in life. It is not surprising when the shadows under their eyes sometimes vaguely resemble the state of Rhode Island.

Of course the irony is that this is often the sister we want to call—or need to call—to service in the ward and stake auxiliaries. That's understandable. Who wouldn't want the exemplary influence of these young Loises- and Eunices-in-the-making? Everyone, be wise. Remember that families are the highest priority of all, especially in those formative years. Even so, young mothers will

still find magnificent ways to serve faithfully in the Church, even as others serve and strengthen them and their families in like manner.

Do the best you can through these years, but whatever else you do, cherish that role that is so uniquely yours and for which heaven itself sends angels to watch over you and your little ones. Husbands—especially husbands—as well as Church leaders and friends in every direction, be helpful and sensitive and wise. Remember, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”⁶

Mothers, we acknowledge and esteem your faith in every footstep. Please know that it is worth it then, now, and forever. And if, for whatever reason, you are making this courageous effort alone, without your husband at your side, then our prayers will be all the greater for you, and our determination to lend a helping hand even more resolute.

Mothers do God's work

One young mother wrote to me recently that her anxiety tended to come on three fronts. One was that whenever she heard talks on LDS motherhood, she worried because she felt she didn't measure up or somehow wasn't going to be equal to the task. Second, she felt like the world expected her to teach her children reading, writing, interior design, Latin, calculus, and the Internet—all before the baby said something terribly ordinary, like “goo goo.” Third, she often felt people were sometimes patronizing, almost always without meaning to be, because the advice she got or even the compliments she received seemed to reflect nothing of the mental investment, the spiritual and emotional exertion, the long-night, long-day, stretched-to-the-limit demands that sometimes are required in trying to be and wanting to be the mother God hopes she will be.

But one thing, she said, keeps her going: “Through the thick and the thin of this, and through the occasional tears of it all, *I know deep down inside I am doing God's work.* I know that in my motherhood I am in an eternal partnership with Him. I am deeply moved that God finds His ultimate purpose and meaning in being a parent, even if some of His children make Him weep.

“It is this realization,” she says, “that I try to recall on those inevitably difficult days when all of this can be a bit overwhelming. Maybe it is precisely our inability and anxiousness that urge us to reach out to Him and enhance His ability to reach back to us. Maybe He secretly hopes we *will* be anxious,” she said, “and *will* plead for His help. Then, I believe, He can teach these children directly, through us, but with no resistance offered. I like that idea,” she concludes. “It gives me hope. If I can be right before my Father in Heaven, perhaps His guidance to our children can be unimpeded. Maybe then it can be *His* work and *His* glory in a very literal sense.”⁷

Your children will call you blessed

In light of that kind of expression, it is clear that some of those Rhode Island-sized shadows come not just from diapers and carpooling but from at least a few sleepless nights spent searching the soul, seeking earnestly for the capacity to raise these children to be what God wants them to be. Moved by that kind of devotion and determination, may I say to mothers collectively, in the name of the Lord, you are magnificent. You are doing terrifically well. The very fact that you have been given such a responsibility is everlasting evidence of the trust your Father in Heaven has in you. He knows that your giving birth to a child does not immediately propel you into the circle of the omniscient. If you and your husband will strive to love God and live the gospel yourselves; if you will

plead for that guidance and comfort of the Holy Spirit promised to the faithful; if you will go to the temple to both make and claim the promises of the most sacred covenants a woman or man can make in this world; if you will show others, including your children, the same caring, compassionate, forgiving heart you want heaven to show you; if you try your best to be the best parent you can be, you will have done all that a human being can do and all that God expects you to do.

Sometimes the decision of a child or a grandchild will break your heart. Sometimes expectations won't immediately be met. Every mother and father worries about that. Even that beloved and wonderfully successful parent President Joseph F. Smith pled, "Oh! God, let me not lose my own."⁸ That is every parent's cry, and in it is something of every parent's fear. But no one has failed who keeps trying and keeps praying. You have every right to receive encouragement and to know in the end your children will call your name blessed, just like those generations of foremothers before you who hoped your same hopes and felt your same fears.

Yours is the grand tradition of Eve, the mother of all the human family, the one who understood that she and Adam *had* to fall in order that "men [and women] might be"⁹ and that there would be joy. Yours is the grand tradition of Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel, without whom there could not have been those magnificent patriarchal promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which bless us all. Yours is the grand tradition of Lois and Eunice and the mothers of the 2,000 stripling warriors. Yours is the grand tradition of Mary, chosen and foreordained from before this world was, to conceive, carry, and bear the Son of God Himself. We thank all of you, including our own mothers, and tell you there is nothing more important in this world than participating so directly in

the work and glory of God, in bringing to pass the mortality and earthly life of His daughters and sons, so that immortality and eternal life can come in those celestial realms on high.

Rely on the Savior forever

When you have come to the Lord in meekness and lowliness of heart and, as one mother said, "pounded on the doors of heaven to ask for, to plead for, to demand guidance and wisdom and help for this wondrous task," that door is thrown open to provide you the influence and the help of all eternity. Claim the promises of the Savior of the world. Ask for the healing balm of the Atonement for whatever may be troubling you or your children. Know that in faith things will be made right in spite of you or, more correctly, because of you.

You can't possibly do this alone, but you *do* have help. The Master of Heaven and Earth is there to bless you—He who resolutely goes after the lost sheep, sweeps thoroughly to find the lost coin, waits everlastingly for the return of the prodigal son. Yours is the work of salvation, and therefore you will be magnified, compensated, made more than you are and better than you have ever been as you try to make honest effort, however feeble you may sometimes feel that to be.

Remember, remember all the days of your motherhood: "Ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save."¹⁰

Rely on Him. Rely on Him heavily. Rely on Him forever. And "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope."¹¹ You are doing God's work. You are doing it wonderfully well. He is blessing you and He will bless you, even—no, *especially*—when your days and your nights may be the most challenging. Like the woman

who anonymously, meekly, perhaps even with hesitation and some embarrassment, fought her way through the crowd just to touch the hem of the Master's garment, so Christ will say to the women who worry and wonder and sometimes weep over their responsibility as mothers, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole."¹² And it will make your children whole as well.

In the sacred and holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Redeemer of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 6; see also 3 Nephi 22:1.
2. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954-56), 2:76; Harold B. Lee, *Ye Are the Light of the World: Selected Sermons and Writings of President Harold B. Lee* (1974), 292; and Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 94.
3. Tom Lowe, "Fatherlessness: The Central Social Problem of Our Time," Claremont Institute Home Page Editorial, Jan. 1996.
4. 2 Timothy 1:5.
5. 2 Timothy 3:15.
6. Ecclesiastes 3:1.
7. Personal correspondence.
8. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 462.
9. 2 Nephi 2:25.
10. 2 Nephi 31:19.

11. 2 Nephi 31:20.

12. Matthew 9:22.

President Faust

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow the broadcast.

We express gratitude to the Logan-Ogden combined Institute choir for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon.

The choir will now sing in closing "I Feel My Savior's Love." Following the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I Feel My Savior's Love."

The benediction was offered by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 167th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 5, 1997. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Ricks College combined men's choir. Kevin Brower

and Steve Greason directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, what a wonderful sight you are, you who are gathered in the Taber-

nacle. We extend a welcome to each of you and to all of the many thousands of men scattered in halls across the land, and over into Europe and elsewhere, in this great priesthood gathering. These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and to various locations across the world.

We note that Elders Russell M. Nelson, Rex D. Pinegar, and Kenneth Johnson are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Earl C. Tingey, Angel Abrea, John M. Madsen, and John B. Dickson in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and L. Aldin Porter and F. David Stanley on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those who were not present this morning, we announce that during this morning's session, Elders Gary J. Coleman, John M. Madsen, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, and Carl B. Pratt were called as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy; Elders Richard D. Allred, Eran A. Call, Richard E. Cook, Duane B. Gerrard, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Lynn G. Robins, Donald L. Staheli, and Richard E. Turley Sr. were called as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. And all of the Area Authorities were sustained as Area Authority Seventies to serve as members of the newly constituted Third, Fourth, and Fifth Quorums of the Seventy.

Sisters Mary Ellen Wood Smoot, Virginia Urry Jensen, and Sheri L. Dew

were called to succeed Elaine L. Jack, Chieko N. Okasaki, and Aileen H. Clyde as the Relief Society general presidency. Sister Carol Ann Burdett Thomas was sustained to succeed Sister Bonnie D. Parkin as counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

We announce that on May 18, 1997, an Aaronic Priesthood Sesquicentennial Fireside will be broadcast over the Church satellite network at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the Ricks College combined men's choir, under the direction of Brothers Kevin Brower and Steve Greaason with Brother Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will now sing "Let the Mountains Shout for Joy," following which Elder Alexander B. Morrison of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Let the Mountains Shout for Joy."

Elder Alexander B. Morrison offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Morrison. The choir will now favor us with "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

Following the choir number, Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

Elder David B. Haight

"Let the mountains shout for joy"

What a tremendous sight, my brethren. It's thrilling to stand here and look out on this vast audience in the Tabernacle and then think of what is happening throughout the world. The songs that we have just heard, I think, are quite appropriate. "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" (*Hymns*, no. 129)—we could talk about that topic all evening. Before that, we heard the stirring song "Let the Mountains Shout for Joy," written by Evan Stephens. As we reflect upon the sesquicentennial year of our pioneers' arrival, you can imagine the thrill that the Saints must have felt when they sang that song or heard it for the first time. After they had made the trek across the plains and accomplished all that they had done—the suffering and the living in the wagon beds and sleeping out on the ground and walking barefooted and burying the dead out on the prairie—finally to arrive in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, there to establish Zion, you can imagine how they would later sing, "Let the mountains shout for joy! Let the valleys sing."

We can do that now as we reflect upon our ancestors who were part of that trek and all that they have done in making the way for us, and then envision the Church today. As we heard the statistics read today and as we reflect upon what is happening throughout the world regarding the image of the Church, the growth, and the continued expansion of stakes and wards and membership worldwide into new countries, new areas, again we could sing with great enthusiasm, "Let the mountains shout for joy!" Here we are, and the word is spreading the way it has been predicted and the way it should be done.

The basics haven't changed

I'm honored to be able to be on the program here tonight. I'm getting old

enough now that I just about span the 20th century. I'm missing six years of the beginning of the century—I was born in 1906—and I have three years on the other end, which would cover the 100 years. The other day when President Hinckley was talking about a dedication coming up in the year 2000, he said to me, "And I'm planning on your being there." I said, "I'll plan on being there." So if I can make that date, that would close the three on the upper end and I'm only short the six at the beginning. That would give me 94 percent of the 100 years of this century.

Now as I reflect upon the 20th century and what I have learned, I would like to say something to the Aaronic Priesthood, particularly about what I have witnessed and what I have felt during that time.

I would remind all of you that in the year 1906 the population of the Church was about 360,000 people. There were 55 stakes. There were 22 missions. There were some 1,500 missionaries as far as I've been able to calculate, which would mean about 70 missionaries per mission in 22 missions. The work was moving forward that year that I came into existence.

The story was told by my mother that on the morning I was born, on a Sunday, my father was quite proud. He was the bishop of the Oakley First Ward in Oakley, Idaho, and he went outside to announce the birth to one of our Scandinavian friends, Brother Petersen, who was walking by. My father asked him to come in and see the new son. My mother said I was the homeliest little child she had ever seen. I was undernourished, wrinkled, and bald headed. And so Brother Petersen, after looking at me, said, "Sister Haight, do you tink he's worth boddering with?" Well, that was my entrance into the world.

And now from that time I've seen automobiles come into being, and the

first airplanes. I've seen radio develop from a little crystal with a "cat whisker" to tune it, to the beginning of the modern electronics world. I remember that we would sit in the Idaho Power Company at night with a little radio and scratch with that little whisker, and we would get some terrible static. We thought we were tuned in to China because we couldn't understand what was going on.

As I think of the world that I knew when I was young, the basics that we talk about were in place then. With all of the things that I've seen happen since I've lived upon the earth, nothing has come along to change the basics. We now have the great ability to communicate as rapidly as we do and in the various ways that we do. We can travel faster—through the air, in automobiles, and so on—but the basics, the eternal principles, haven't changed a bit.

Aaronic Priesthood boys should remember the basics

Those of you who are young today—and I'm thinking of the deacons who are assembled in meetings throughout the world—I remember when I was ordained a deacon by Bishop Adams. He took the place of my father when he died. My father baptized me, but he wasn't there when I received the Aaronic Priesthood. I remember the thrill that I had when I became a deacon and now held the priesthood, as they explained to me in a simple way and simple language that I had received the power to help in the organization and the moving forward of the Lord's program upon the earth. We receive that as 12-year-old boys. We go through those early ranks of the lesser priesthood—a deacon, a teacher, and then a priest—learning little by little, here a little and there a little, growing in knowledge and wisdom. That little testimony that you start out with begins to grow, and you see it magnifying and you see it building in a way that is under-

standable to you. You can feel the magnitude of it as you start to grow up and prepare for manhood.

Speaking of preparing for manhood, I remember when I was 12 years old. I was the head man around the house. I was a man by the time I was 12 because my mother expected that of me. She was not looked upon as a widow; she was my mother, to raise, to teach, and to train us and to help us prepare for life. And so I would say to the boys in the Aaronic Priesthood, remember the simple, simple basics that we learn from the beginning, that we're taught in the scriptures. Starting with Adam, the basics were upon the earth, and with the development of mankind, and the speed of automobiles or airplanes or communication, none of those gospel basics have changed. They're still in place. We have to be prepared as we move on through life, learning to do the things that are essential for us to advance in the priesthood or advance in positions in society or in whatever it might be, but we have to learn to obey the simple, basic rules of the gospel.

The Oakley, Idaho, football team

As the First Presidency came in tonight, one of them said, "Knock a home run," and someone else said, "Kick a field goal." That reminded me that a few years ago I told a meeting such as this of a football story that I was involved in when the school board in Oakley, Idaho, was able to raise enough money to buy 12 football outfits (see Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 57–58; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 42). We hadn't played football; we'd played basketball because that was easy to do and was cheap and wouldn't require much equipment. But they finally were able to buy 12 uniforms so we'd have a full team and one substitute. Our coach was the chemistry teacher. He had seen a game one time, and so he taught us how to tackle and run up and down

the field and run a few simple plays, but we had never seen an actual team play.

Our first game was to play Twin Falls, Idaho, who the year before had been the state high school champs. We got in the little Ford cars and traveled to Twin Falls. We put on our suits and basketball shoes and went out on the field, all 12 of us, and after we had run around a little loosening up, the band started to play and in came their football team. They had more in their band than we had in our whole high school. But as their team came in in their big Green Bay Packer outfits, we were amazed. There were 39 of them in full uniform.

Well, as you could imagine, the game was interesting. They kicked off to us, and we tried a couple of plays and didn't go anywhere, so we kicked it to get rid of the ball. Each time we would get the ball, we would kick, and each time they would get hold of the ball, they would score. It was an interesting afternoon. Near the end of the game, when we were battered and bloody and beaten, they started to get a little reckless, and Clifford Lee, who was playing halfback with me, had one of their wild passes land right in his arms. He wondered what to do with it. But he saw them coming after him and he started to run. He was not running for points; he was running for his life. He scored a touchdown.

The final score was 106 to 6. The Twin Falls paper just two or three years ago had an article about their great football teams. They listed that game against Oakley, and the score they published in the paper was 106 to 7. I wrote the editor of the paper, and I said, "Dear Editor, I thought you would like to hear from someone who played on the other side." So I described the game to him, and I said, "We didn't try an extra point because we didn't have anyone who could have kicked the extra point. And you should correct the score in your records, because it was 106 to 6."

Be clean, obedient, and prepared

Well, that is part of life and the opportunity we have to be prepared; and when there is something to be done and things to be learned in order to accomplish it, then we have to learn the basics and how to carry them out.

The gospel is true. As I think of the missionary force we have out in the world, my, what a great opportunity to carry out the Lord's work in the way that it must be done. We love you for what you're doing. You boys in the Aaronic Priesthood, be as good as you ought to be and learn to be clean and honest and pure and forthright and obedient—obedient above all things—that you might be able to carry out the Lord's work in the majestic way in which it must be done.

I leave you my love, my witness, my testimony that this work is true; that President Hinckley, who leads the Church today, is our prophet, seer, and revelator; that he is called by the Lord to preside over the Church. I have watched him closely now for more than 20 years, seeing his ability, his talent, his dedication, and the spiritual impact that he brings to the world as he leads this work. This work is true. It will move forward to fill every corner of the earth. People will have an opportunity to hear with their own ears—to hear someone declare that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, which I declare to you. I leave you my love, my witness that this work is true, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Haight; you just keep that up. We appreciate what you have said. We will now hear from Elder Jack H Goasland of the Presidency of the Seventy and the Young Men General President.

Elder Jack H Goaslind

Ordinary men can do extraordinary tasks

This evening, brethren, I have a strong desire to relate to you an aspect of a well-documented story that is little known in the Church. It involves the courage, the strength of a few young men from the pioneer era; some were priest- or teacher-age like many of you assembled here tonight. These young men willingly made significant sacrifices when they received a call.

As I tell their story, please keep in mind what power it is that unifies us and also connects us to them. The royal priesthood we bear is more than coincidental to this account. Theirs was the same priesthood which today empowers you to perform great and small acts of service to your fellowmen.

Ordinary men—including, and perhaps *especially*, young men—blessed with the privilege of holding the priesthood of God may be called upon to do extraordinary tasks. Holders of the holy priesthood can accomplish mighty feats of heroism, bravery, and service through faith in that sacred power.

The pioneers did not doubt it. They bore frequent witness that the Spirit of the Lord guided and directed them. In confirmation of their testimony, I declare unto you His Spirit is with each of us. He desires to bless and strengthen us. He will make us equal to every righteous task we undertake in His name. He will magnify many times over our own natural ability. You can succeed beyond your own strength *if you learn to rely on the Spirit of the Lord.*

Rescuing the handcart companies

Now, the story I promised to tell you began before the October 1856 general conference, but that is where we will begin. President Brigham Young stood at

the Old Tabernacle pulpit on this square and issued a call to go rescue the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies. Two days later, about 30 faithful brethren with good mule teams were dispatched to go bring in the handcarts stranded several hundred miles east. Dan W. Jones, a convert of about five years, volunteered.

After arduous effort, the Willie Company finally was found. Caught in the storms of early winter, the Saints were freezing and starving to death. The relief party did all they could to improve conditions, but for some it was simply too late. The morning after the rescuers' arrival, nine of the company were buried in a common grave.

Some of the rescuers were assigned to escort the handcarts to the Salt Lake Valley, but others pushed further eastward in an effort to find the Martin Company. Finally they were found, along with the Hodgett and Hunt Wagon Companies, bogged down and helpless in the snow east of Devil's Gate, Wyoming.

Members of the Martin Company were in dire straits. Their food rations had been cut to a few ounces of flour per day. Only a third of them could walk, and deaths were recorded daily.

The leaders of the rescue party wisely decided to spare no effort in getting the suffering survivors to safety in the Salt Lake Valley. Because of the shortage of space in the wagons, it was necessary to leave most of the handcarts' possessions in storage at Devil's Gate till spring.

The sacrifice of pioneer young men

Brother Dan W. Jones and two others from the relief party, along with 17 young men from the wagon companies, were called to stay behind to guard the property. They were left to face five winter months in Wyoming, hundreds of

miles from help, with scarcely anything to eat, and under conditions of extreme privation. Imagine the sacrifice! Offers were made to each man to join the wagons bound for the valley, but every one of them chose to stay behind, obedient to the call to serve.

That winter was recorded as one of the most severe ever. The intrepid watchmen struggled to repair the cabins at Devil's Gate; killed the remaining cattle; stored the tough, stringy beef for food; and reconditioned and stacked the goods they were left to protect.

They killed a few buffalo, but the hunting became bad. Soon they were reduced to living on animal hides, from which they scraped off the hair, then boiled the leather. They ate the leather wrappings off the wagon tongues, old moccasin soles, and a well-worn buffalo hide that had been used as a foot mat for two months. At one point Dan Jones was literally preparing to eat his own saddle!

In February of that extreme winter, a member of the Snake Indian tribe visited and helped them. That first night he and two scouts came to camp loaded with good buffalo meat.

Inspiration received by Dan Jones

The winter passed, and finally, early in May, the relief wagons began to roll in. Of the various communications Brother Jones had received, one critical letter from Brigham Young had not arrived. Loading and shipping of the stored goods could not commence without it.

For days they waited, becoming increasingly anxious. Finally Brother Jones sought the Lord in prayer to know how to proceed. He recorded the following testimony: "Next morning without saying anything about the lack of instructions we commenced business. Soon some one asked whose teams were to be loaded first, [and] I dictated to my clerk. Thus we continued. As fast as the

clerk put them down, orders would be given, and we passed on to the next. We continued this [way] for four days. . . . All the teams were loaded up, companies organized and started back [to the valley]" (Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians* [1960], 107).

The 17 young men were loaded on the last wagons departing to the Salt Lake Valley, where they would be reunited with their families and loved ones.

Brother Jones arrived later to report to President Young, feeling not a little uncertain how he would be received. Should he have waited for the President's written orders? As everything unfolded, it was learned that President Young had indeed dictated a letter of instructions, which was never received. Dan carefully presented his detailed report. It was a testimony to him to find that the inspiration he'd received in Wyoming was *exactly* the same as in the prophet's letter.

More than they could have imagined

Dan Jones's young men had done more than they ever would have imagined they could:

- They had crossed the plains in wagons and by handcart, mostly on foot.
- They had seen many of their friends and relatives die along the way.
- They had volunteered to spend the winter 300 miles from their destination.
- They had survived a harsh winter with little food and few, if any, comforts.
- They had heeded the call of the prophet to serve their fellow Saints.
- They had endured to the end nobly and were blessed for their efforts.

I repeat, brethren: Ordinary men, blessed with the privilege of holding the priesthood of God, may be called upon to do extraordinary tasks and accomplish mighty feats through faith in that sacred power!

We can perform mighty miracles

One of my Book of Mormon heroes, Ammon, the great son of Mosiah, explains how much two people can accomplish when one of them is the Lord: "Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever" (Alma 26:12).

To you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and to you brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, I witness that we *can* perform "many mighty miracles," as testified by Ammon and by Dan Jones! They took the Lord as their guide, listened to and obeyed the Holy Spirit, and learned that they could indeed perform mighty miracles, which thing they never had supposed.

Our own challenges in this day will be great. Our needs will be significant.

Our loyalty to great gospel truths must be no less valiant than that of those young men over 140 years ago.

It is my prayer, brethren, that each of us will make the Lord—and His revealed word through His servants, the prophets—the guiding influence in our lives. Each of us has a miracle to perform, a journey to complete, and a marvelous mission to fulfill.

May Heavenly Father bless you to know that you are one of His chosen sons in a blessed and royal generation, and that He has mighty miracles for *you* to perform. With His strength and the guidance of the Spirit, you too can do all things! To which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elder Jack H. Goaslind of the Seventy. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President James E. Faust

Priesthood is the greatest power

My dear brethren, I prayerfully seek your faith as I undertake the overwhelming responsibility of addressing this great body of priesthood holders. May I express my profound appreciation for your loyalty, faithfulness, and devotion. The work of God our Father goes forward as never before because of your commitment and devotion to this holy work.

Brethren, we must never let the great powers of the holy priesthood of God lie dormant in us. We are bound together in the greatest cause and the most sacred work in all the world. To exercise these great powers, we must be clean in thought and action. We must do nothing

which would impair the full exercise of this transcendent power.

Priesthood is the greatest power on earth. Worlds were created by and through the priesthood. To safeguard this sacred power, all priesthood holders act under the direction of those who hold the keys of the priesthood. These keys bring order into our lives and into the organization of the Church. For us, priesthood power is the power and authority delegated by God to act in His name for the salvation of His children. Caring for others is the very essence of priesthood responsibility. It is the power to bless, to heal, and to administer the saving ordinances of the gospel. Righteous priesthood authority is most

needed within the walls of our own homes. It must be exercised in great love. This is true of all priesthood holders—deacon, teacher, priest, elder, high priest, patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle.

Serving as a junior home teaching companion

I first learned the principle of priesthood caring from my own father and grandfather, but I have also seen it manifested by thousands of worthy men. I learned great lessons of priesthood caring as a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. I was assigned to serve as a junior home teaching companion to a great Scandinavian immigrant named Algot Johnson from Malmo, Sweden. I learned to admire everything about him, including his endearing Swedish accent. He taught me the true meaning of the Lord's instruction to the teachers:

"The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."¹

Brother Johnson had paid a great price to leave his beloved Sweden and come to the United States. He was very dedicated. Despite the difference in our ages, we became lifelong friends. When he became our ward Sunday School superintendent, he asked for me to be his counselor. I was only 17 years of age. He was a successful contractor, and when I returned home from World War II, he built my first home. When I graduated from law school, I did legal work for him, and when I billed him for my legal services, he paid me more than I asked. That did not happen very often. I cite this experience to emphasize the importance of giving every Aaronic Priesthood

holder the opportunity to serve as a junior companion to faithful Melchizedek Priesthood holders.

Lessons learned from visiting a shut-in

The duty of home teachers cannot always be satisfied with a once-a-month visit. They need to be caring and willing to serve as the need arises. I know of members of one high priests group who take tools when they go home teaching. We do not expect home teachers to be able to fix everything, such as computers and other highly technical equipment. They can, however, offer their wisdom and experience in assisting their assigned families to find the needed help. Caring home teachers should make appointments in advance, if possible. Aaronic Priesthood home teaching companions can learn lifelong lessons and be greatly blessed by serving with faithful Melchizedek Priesthood senior companions. Brother Robert F. Jex shares his faith-strengthening experience as a junior home teaching companion many years ago:

"My legs felt like gelatin and there was a knot in my stomach as we approached the door. I was sure that I was going to faint as my [home teaching] companion told me that this was my door.

" . . . I was a 15-year-old home teacher climbing the stairs to the apartment of Sister Rice, a widow living in the Bountiful (Utah) First Ward. Don Gabbott, my companion, was to teach me a great lesson that night about the nurturing role of priesthood bearers to shut-ins who are cut off from the mainstream of Church activity.

"Brother Gabbott had given me a topic to present to the five families assigned us, and I was frightened. . . . I [had] prepared . . . some notes on a paper, but I was unsure of how to take the lead in the presence of a high priest.

"The response to our knocking was slow. . . . I was about to suggest that no one was home. Then the shrunken figure of a frail, aged sister, came around a corner in the hallway. She seemed uncertain of what waited her answer at the door. Her face brightened as she recognized Brother Gabbott. We were invited into her living room and asked to take a seat.

"After a short greeting, Brother Gabbott looked at me as if to say, 'Okay, Bob, it's time to give our message.' The knot in my stomach tightened as I began to speak. I cannot recall what I said—it doesn't really matter—for I was the pupil in the classroom of priesthood duty and responsibility. As I glanced up from my notes at the conclusion of my remarks, my eyes fell upon the tear-stained cheeks of that sweet, sensitive sister. She expressed her gratitude for the presence of priesthood bearers in her humble home.

"I was speechless. . . . What had I said that had been so profound? What could I do? Fortunately, Brother Gabbott came to my rescue by bearing his testimony and asking if there were any needs in the home. There were.

"Sister Rice said that she had not been feeling well and asked that she be remembered as we offered our prayer before leaving. She then turned to me and asked if I would offer that prayer. By that time, I was so overcome by the spirit of the occasion . . . [and] surprised that I was asked to pray when someone older and more experienced and trusted was present. Automatically, I consented and offered a benediction upon that home teaching visit, asking that a special blessing of health and strength be given to that faithful sister whom I barely knew but quickly came to love and respect.

"Twenty-five years have passed since my introduction to home teaching in the home of Sister Rice, and she has long since passed away. But I cannot

pass that orange-brick fourplex on Bountiful's Main Street without thinking about the experience provided by Brother Gabbott and a faithful sister who knew the appropriateness of calling upon the powers of heaven embodied in an obedient high priest and an insecure, frightened teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood."²

Counsel to bishops

I wish to say a word to our faithful and devoted bishops. I recently reread in the *Melchizedek Priesthood Leadership Handbook* the responsibilities of the bishop. These responsibilities are heavy and often quite demanding. Some duties the bishop cannot delegate, but others can and should be handled by his counselors, fathers, home teachers, and quorum leaders. Many years ago we were taught by President Harold B. Lee a fuller meaning of the direction from the Lord: "Let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling."³ He said: "It becomes the responsibility of those of us who lead to *let*, to *permit*, to *give opportunity* for every man to learn his duty. . . . Help is not helpful if we assume the prerogatives that belong to that individual."⁴ This fuller understanding also means that presiding officers of the Church should be careful not to usurp the responsibilities and duties of those they are called to direct.

Bishops, as you serve in this great calling, you may be able to influence more lives for good than at any other time in your life. While you are enjoying the mantle of a bishop and presiding high priest, you will have special spiritual endowments of wisdom, insight, and inspiration concerning the welfare of your people. As president of the Aaronic Priesthood and of the priests quorum, you have particular interest and concern for the youth, both boys and girls.

Safety in sustaining our leaders

I have discussed the duty of priesthood leaders and members to care for their families, quorums, wards, and stakes. I should like now to discuss another aspect of priesthood responsibility, which is our privilege to sustain those in authority over us. Wilford Woodruff recorded a remarkable account which illustrates the importance of this responsibility.

In the early days of the Church, President Brigham Young asked Wilford Woodruff to take his family to Boston and gather the Saints from New England and Canada and send them to Zion. With a company of 100, they arrived at Pittsburgh at sundown. Brother Woodruff recorded:

"We did not want to stay there, so I went to the first steamboat that was going to leave. I saw the captain and engaged passage for us on that steamer. I had only just done so when the spirit said to me, . . . 'Don't go aboard that steamer, nor your company.' Of course, I went and spoke to the captain, and told him [that] I had made up my mind to wait.

"Well, that ship started, and had only got five miles down the river when it took fire, and three hundred persons were burned to death or drowned."⁵

What if the Saints had not followed the counsel of Wilford Woodruff? All wisely chose to be obedient. Had they not done so, they would have perished.

In my lifetime, there have been very few occasions when I questioned the wisdom and inspiration given by key priesthood leaders. I have always tried to follow their counsel, whether I agreed with it or not. I have come to know that most of the time they were in tune with the Spirit and I was not. The safe course is to sustain our priesthood leaders and let God judge their actions.

In the early days of the Church, many fell away because they would not sustain Joseph Smith as the Lord's

anointed. In fact, the Prophet Joseph said of some of the leaders in Kirtland that "there have been but two but what have lifted their heel against me—namely Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball."⁶ Because of their faithful loyalty, the Lord called Brigham Young to lead the Church west, and when the First Presidency was reorganized, Heber C. Kimball was called as First Counselor to Brigham Young.

I do not speak of blind obedience, but rather the obedience of faith, which supports and sustains decisions with confidence that they are inspired. I advocate being more in tune with the Spirit so we may feel a confirming witness of the truthfulness of the direction we receive from our priesthood leaders. There is great safety and peace in supporting our priesthood leaders in their decisions.

Prepare for priesthood service

The priesthood of this Church carries the responsibility to help move the work of righteousness in all the world. Priesthood service requires us to set aside our selfish interests and desires. Brethren, we need to prepare so that we are able to accept priesthood callings should they come. We should try to live providently with respect to our personal lifestyles. Living providently means living well within our means and providing for future needs and events. We should avoid the bondage of crushing, unnecessary indebtedness. We should also try to have some savings to tide us over for a rainy day. In short, we should seek to manage our affairs so that we are better able to accept the calls which might come to us now, as well as in the future.

Righteousness necessary for priesthood power

You young men need to understand that this greatest of all powers, the priesthood power, is not accessed the

way power is used in the world. It cannot be bought or sold. In the book of Acts, we learn that a man called Simon wanted to buy the priesthood power of the Apostles to lay on hands and bestow the Holy Ghost. "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."⁷ Many of you watch and admire linebackers, power forwards, and centers, as well as those who wield wealth, fame, and political and military power. Worldly power often is employed ruthlessly. However, priesthood power is invoked only through those principles of righteousness by which the priesthood is governed. The Lord has said:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. . . .

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven."⁸

We are told that "many are called, but few are chosen."⁹ One who is chosen is one who is the object of divine favor.¹⁰ Brethren, how may we be chosen? We may be chosen only when we are chosen by God. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it [to] you."¹¹ This happens only when the heart and soul are transformed, when we have striven with all our heart, might, mind, and soul to keep all of the commandments of God. It happens when we have kept "the

oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood."¹² Thus, we may "become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God."¹³

Priesthood is a marvelous blessing

President Stephen L. Richards, a former Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "I have reached the conclusion in my own mind that no man, however great his intellectual attainments, however vast and far-reaching his service may be, arrives at the full measure of his sonship and the manhood the Lord intended him to have, without the investiture of the Holy Priesthood, and with that appreciation, my brethren, I have given thanks to the Lord all my life for this marvelous blessing which has come to me—a blessing that some of my progenitors had, and a blessing which more than any other heritage I want my sons and my grandsons and my great-grandsons to enjoy."¹⁴

Brethren, may we strive to keep the oath and covenant of the priesthood and qualify for and receive all of the supernatural blessings God has for His faithful sons, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–55.
2. "My First Door," *New Era*, May 1989, 27.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:109.
4. In Regional Representatives' Seminar Addresses, 4–5 Apr. 1973, 4, 14; Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
5. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham (1990), 294–95.
6. *History of the Church*, 5:412.
7. Acts 8:20.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42, 45.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 121:40.
10. See Merriam-Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. [1993], "chosen," 203.

11. John 15:16.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 84:39.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 84:34.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1955, 88.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Faust. The choir and congregation will now join in

singing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." Following that, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

President Thomas S. Monson

"If you build it, [they] will come"

Several years ago an unusual motion picture swept the theaters in this and in other lands. It was entitled *Field of Dreams* and was the story of a young man who revered the baseball players of his youth and, from this foundation, carved out a large section from his cornfield and located there a full-blown baseball diamond. People mocked his foolishness and ridiculed his lack of common sense. The film goes on to show the many challenges he faced in completing the project and readying the baseball diamond for view. His was not an easy task. During the period of doubt as to the future success of his dream, he was driven by the reassuring words, "If you build it, [they] will come." And come they did. Travelers by the thousands visited this unique place, which was filled with baseball's many memories.

Missionaries build bridges

Lately, I have reflected on the importance of building a bridge to the heart of a person. I think of the nearly 55,000 full-time missionaries from our faith who are assigned over much of the world with the divine commission to teach, to testify, and to baptize. Theirs is a bridge-building task, awesome to behold and somewhat overwhelming to contemplate. With

God's mandate ringing in their ears, with the Lord's instruction penetrating their hearts, they move forward in their lofty callings. They ponder the Lord's words:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."¹

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."²

Last year was the centennial of Utah statehood, and many ambassadors from other countries made a visit to our state capitol and also to the Church Administration Building. Many also toured the Missionary Training Center at Provo, Utah. They visited the classes of learning; they heard the testimonies of those going to their respective fields of labor. They marveled at the language proficiency, faith, and love exhibited by the missionaries. One ambassador stated, "I observed a sense of purpose, a commitment to prepare and to serve, and a joyful heart in each missionary."

These missionaries go forward with faith. They know their duty. They understand that they are a vital link for the persons they will meet as missionaries and in the teaching and testifying they

will experience as they bring others to the truth of the gospel.

They yearn for more persons to teach. They pray for the essential help each member can give to the conversion process.

The covenant of baptism

The decision to change one's life and come unto Christ is, perhaps, the most important decision of mortality. Such a dramatic change is taking place daily throughout the world.

Alma chapter 5, verse 13, describes this personal miracle: "And behold, . . . a mighty change was . . . wrought in their hearts, and they humbled themselves and put their trust in the true and living God."

The covenant of baptism spoken of by Alma causes all of us to probe the depths of our souls:

"Now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

"Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places . . .

"Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?"

Share the truth

Our studies reveal that most of those who embrace the message of the missionaries have had other exposures to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—perhaps hearing the magnificent Tabernacle Choir perform, maybe reading and viewing press reports of our

well-traveled President Gordon B. Hinckley and his skillful participation in broad-ranging interviews, or just knowing another person who is a member and for whom respect exists. We, as members, should be at our best. Our lives should reflect the teachings of the gospel and our hearts and voices ever be ready to share the truth.

Fellowship investigators

Fellowshipping of the investigator should begin well before baptism. The teachings of the missionaries often need the second witness of a new convert to the Church. It has been my experience that such a witness, borne from the heart of one who has undergone this mighty change himself, brings resolve and commitment. When I served as mission president in eastern Canada, we found that in Toronto, as well as in most of the cities of Ontario and Quebec, there was no dearth of willing helpers to accompany the missionaries and to fellowship the investigators, welcome them to meetings, and introduce them to the ward or branch officers and members. Fellowship, friendship, and reactivating are ongoing in the daily life of a Latter-day Saint.

Give callings to new converts

Each new convert should be provided a calling in the Church. Such brings interest, stability, and growth. The task may be somewhat simple, such as that given to Jacob de Jager when he and his family became members in Toronto. He held lofty posts in business, but his first calling in the Church was to put the hymnbooks in place along the pews. He took his assignment seriously. In recollecting this first calling, he said, "I had to be present each week, or the hymnbooks would remain undistributed." As you know, Elder de Jager later served many years as a member of the

First Quorum of the Seventy. Though he had many demanding responsibilities as a General Authority, he never forgot his first calling in the Church.

Miraculous conversions

The unseen hand of the Lord guides the efforts of those who strive to learn and live the truth of the gospel. As a mission president, I received a weekly letter from each missionary. One that pleased me greatly came from a young elder serving in Hamilton. He and his companion were working with a lovely family, a young couple with two children. The couple felt that the message was true, and they could not deny their desire to be baptized. The wife, however, worried about her mother and father in faraway western Canada, fearing she and her husband would be disowned by her parents for joining the Church. She took pen in hand and jotted a note to her parents in Vancouver. The note read something like this:

"Dear Mother and Father,

"I want to thank you with all of my heart for your kindness and for your understanding and for the teachings which you gave me in my youth. John and I have come across a great truth, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have studied the discussions, and our baptism will take place next Saturday night. We hope you will understand. In fact, we hope that you will welcome the missionaries in your home as we welcomed them in ours."

The letter was sealed with a tear, a stamp was affixed, and it was mailed to Vancouver. On the very day it was received in Vancouver, the couple in Hamilton received a letter from the wife's mother and father. They wrote:

"We are far away from you, or we would surely talk to you in person. We want you to know that missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have called at our home, and

we cannot deny the validity of their message. We have set a date for our baptism to take place next week. We hope you will understand and not be unduly critical of our decision. This gospel means so much to us and has brought such happiness into our lives that we pray someday you might also agree to learn more about it."

Can you imagine what happened when the couple in Hamilton received that letter from the wife's parents? They phoned Mother and Dad, and there were many tears of joy shed. I am sure there was a long-distance embrace, for both families became members of the Church.

You see, our Heavenly Father knows who we are, His sons and His daughters. He wants to bring into our lives the blessings for which we qualify, and He can do it. He can accomplish anything.

White carnations for new members

A visible and tender act of fellowship was witnessed in the ancient city of Rome. Some years ago, Sister Monson and I met with over 500 members there in a district conference. The presiding officer at that time was Leopoldo Larcher, a wonderful Italian. His brother had been working as a guest employee in the auto plants in Germany when two missionaries taught him the gospel. He went back to Italy and taught the gospel to his brother. Leopoldo accepted and sometime later became the president of the Italy Rome Mission and then the Italy Catania Mission.

During that meeting, I noticed that in the throng were many who were wearing a white carnation. I said to Leopoldo, "What is the significance of the white carnation?"

He said, "Those are new members. We provide a white carnation to every member who has been baptized since our last district conference. Then all the members and the missionaries know that

these people are especially to be fellowshipped."

I watched those new members being embraced, being greeted, being spoken to. They were no more strangers nor foreigners; they were "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."⁴

Spare no effort in reactivation

Beyond the new convert to the Church are some who have drifted from that pathway which upward leads and, for one reason or another, have become less active for months, even years. Perhaps they were not fellowshipped; maybe friends departed from their lives. Whatever the reason, the fact remains: We need them, and they need us. Missionaries can effectively visit the homes where these individuals reside. When they approach, those within the shelter of home may come to remember the glorious feelings which came over them when they first heard the principles of the gospel taught to them. The missionaries can teach such individuals and witness the changes which come into their lives as they return to activity.

They need friends with testimonies. They need to know that we truly care for the one.

Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and Young Women teachers are on the line of battle, and miracles are within their grasp. Who is the teacher you best remember from your youth? I would guess that in all probability it was the one who knew your name, who welcomed you to class, who was interested in you as a person, and who truly cared. When a leader walks the pathway of mortality with a precious youth alongside, there develops a bond of commitment between the two that shields the youth from the temptations of sin and keeps him or her walking steadfastly on the path that leads onward, upward, and unswervingly to eternal life. Build a bridge to each youth.

All of us here and abroad this evening must answer the call of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, to spare no effort in fellowshipping and reactivating those who need our help, our labors, and our testimonies.

Reactivation efforts in two stakes

Let me share with you visits to two stake conferences where I evidenced the miracle which can take place when we take to heart the words of the pioneer hymn "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel."⁵

One visit was to the Millcreek stake in Salt Lake City some years ago. Just over 100 brethren who were prospective elders had been ordained elders during the preceding year. I asked President James Clegg the secret of his success. He was too modest to take the credit. His counselor revealed that President Clegg, recognizing the challenge, had undertaken to personally call and arrange a private appointment between him and each prospective elder. During the appointment, President Clegg would mention the temple of the Lord, the saving ordinances and covenants emphasized there, and would conclude with this question: "Wouldn't you desire to take your sweet wife and your children to the house of the Lord, that you might be a forever family throughout all eternity?" An acknowledgment followed, the reactivation process was pursued, and the goal was obtained.

The other visit was to the North Carbon stake in Price, Utah, also many years ago. I noted during my visit that they had rescued 86 men from the prospective elders in one year and had taken them and their wives to the Manti Temple. I said to Cecil Broadbent, the president, "How did you do it, President?"

He said, "I didn't. My counselor, President Judd, did."

President Judd was a large, ruddy-faced Welsh coal miner. I said to him,

"President Judd, will you tell me how you were able to rescue 86 brethren in one year?"

I sat anticipating his answer, and he said, "No!"

I was stunned. I'd never had anyone say *no* so directly in my life. I asked, "Why not?"

He said, "Then you'll tell the other stake presidents you visit, and we won't lead the Church in reactivation." He was smiling, though, so I knew it was half in jest. He said, "I'll make a deal with you, Brother Monson. I'll tell you how we rescued 86 men in one year if you'll get me two tickets to general conference."

I said, "You're on!" And so he told me. What he didn't tell me is that he intended to collect interest every conference for the next 10 years. He came faithfully every six months for his two tickets.

In both the Millcreek and the North Carbon stakes, as well as in others which have been successful in this phase of the work, four principles have prevailed:

1. The reactivation opportunity was handled at the ward level.
2. The bishop of the ward was involved.
3. Qualified and inspired teachers were provided.
4. Attention was given to each individual.

In building a bridge to the investigator, the new convert, or the less-active member, when we do our part the Lord does His. I testify concerning this truth.

Turning point in a priest's life

When I served as a bishop, I noted one Sunday morning that one of our priests was missing from priesthood meeting. I left the quorum in the care of the adviser and visited Richard's home. His mother said he was working at the West Temple Garage.

I drove to the garage in search of Richard and looked everywhere, but I

could not find him. Suddenly I had the inspiration to gaze down into the old-fashioned grease pit situated at the side of the station. From the darkness I could see two shining eyes. Then I heard Richard say, "You found me, Bishop! I'll come up." After that he rarely missed a priesthood meeting.

The family moved to a nearby stake. Time passed, and I received a phone call informing me that Richard had been called to serve a mission in Mexico, and I was invited by the family to speak at his farewell testimonial. At the meeting, when Richard responded, he mentioned that the turning point in his determination to fill a mission came one Sunday morning—not in the chapel, but as he gazed up from the depths of a dark grease pit and found his quorum president's outstretched hand.

Through the years, Richard has stayed in touch with me, telling of his testimony, his family, and his faithful service in the Church, including his calling as a bishop.

My beloved brethren, let us, with faith unwavering and with love unstinting, be bridge builders to the hearts of those with whom we labor. As in the movie *Field of Dreams*, if we build it, they will come. Of this truth I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
2. Matthew 28:19–20.
3. Mosiah 18:8–10.
4. Ephesians 2:19.
5. "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel," *Hymns*, no. 252.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

We remind each of you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The

Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you go to bed this evening.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express our deep appreciation to the Ricks College men's choir for the inspiring music this evening. Following my remarks, they will conclude by singing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

The benediction will be offered by Elder Augusto A. Lim of the Seventy, who is president of the Manila Philippines Temple.

Now if I may, I will speak to you for a few minutes.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Urgent need to fellowship converts

I endorse that which has been said this evening. I hope that you have listened well and taken note.

President Monson has spoken on retaining the convert. I endorse what he has said and wish to speak somewhat further on this same subject. I feel very strongly about it.

Each year a substantial number of people become members of the Church, largely through missionary efforts. Last year there were 321,385 converts comprised of men, women, and children. This is a large enough number—and then some—in one single year to constitute 100 new stakes of Zion. One hundred new stakes per year. Think of it! This places upon each of us an urgent and pressing need to fellowship those who join our ranks.

It is not an easy thing to become a member of this Church. In most cases it involves setting aside old habits, leaving old friends and associations, and stepping into a new society which is different and somewhat demanding.

With the ever increasing number of converts, we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way. Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with "the good word of

God" (Moroni 6:4). It is our duty and opportunity to provide these things.

Striving to rekindle a convert's faith

To illustrate, I think I would like to share with you one of my failures. I suppose some people think I have never experienced failure. I have. Let me tell you of one such instance.

Sixty-three years ago, while serving as a missionary in the British Isles, my companion and I taught, and it was my pleasure to baptize, a young man. He was well educated. He was refined. He was studious. I was so proud of this gifted young man who had come into the Church. I felt he had all of the qualifications someday to become a leader among our people.

He was in the course of making the big adjustment from convert to member. For a short period before I was released, mine was the opportunity to be his friend. Then I was released to return home. He was given a small responsibility in the branch in London. He knew nothing of what was expected of him. He made a mistake. The head of the organization where he served was a man I can best describe as being short on love and strong on criticism. In a rather unmerciful way, he went after my friend who had made the simple mistake.

The young man left our rented hall that night smarting and hurt by his superior officer. He said to himself, "If that is the kind of people they are, then I am not going back."

He drifted into inactivity. The years passed. The war came on, and he served in the British forces. His first wife died. After the war he married a woman whose father was a Protestant minister. That did not help his belief.

When I was in England, I tried desperately to find him. His file contained no record of a current address. I came home and finally, after a long search, was able to track him down.

I wrote to him. He responded but with no mention of the gospel.

When next I was in London, I again searched for him. The day I was to leave, I found him. I called him, and we met in the underground station. He threw his arms around me as I did around him. I had very little time before I had to catch my plane, but we talked briefly and with what I think was a true regard for one another. He gave me another embrace before I left. I determined that I would never lose track of him again. Through the years I wrote to him, letters that I hoped would give encouragement and incentive to return to the Church. He wrote in reply without mentioning the Church.

The years passed. I grew older as did he. He retired from his work and moved to Switzerland. On one occasion when I was in Switzerland, I went out of my way to find the village where he lived. We spent the better part of a day together—he, his wife, my wife, and myself. We had a wonderful time, but it was evident that the fire of faith had long since died. I tried every way I knew, but I could not find a way to rekindle it. I continued my correspondence. I sent him books, magazines, recordings of the Tabernacle Choir, and other things, for which he expressed appreciation.

He died a few months ago. His wife wrote me to inform me of this. She said, "You were the best friend he ever had."

Tears coursed my cheeks when I read that letter. I knew I had failed. Perhaps if I had been there to pick him up when he was first knocked down, he might have made a different thing of his life. I think I could have helped him then. I think I could have dressed the wound from which he suffered. I have only one comfort: I tried. I have only one sorrow: I failed.

The challenge now is greater than it has ever been because the number of converts is greater than we have ever before known. A program for retaining and strengthening the convert will soon go out to all the Church. I plead with you, brethren; I ask of you, each of you, to become a part of this great effort. Every convert is precious. Every convert is a son or daughter of God. Every convert is a great and serious responsibility.

Converts should be remembered and nourished

Moroni, long ago, spoke of these people with whom we deal in this day and time. Said he:

"Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins.

"And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end" (Moroni 6:2-3).

I believe, my brethren, that these converts have a testimony of the gospel. I believe they have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and know of His divine reality. I believe they have truly repented of their sins and have a determination to serve the Lord.

Moroni continues concerning them after they are baptized: "And after they had been received unto baptism, and

were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith" (Moroni 6:4).

In these days as in those days, converts are "numbered among the people of the church . . . [to] be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer." Brethren, let us help them as they take their first steps as members.

Everyone can help in this work

This is a work for everyone. It is a work for home teachers and visiting teachers. It is a work for the bishopric, for the priesthood quorums, for the Relief Society, the young men and young women, even the Primary.

I was in a fast and testimony meeting only last Sunday. A 15- or 16-year-old boy stood before the congregation and said that he had decided to be baptized.

Then one by one, boys of the teachers quorum stepped to the microphone to express their love for him, to tell him that he was doing the right thing, and to assure him that they would stand with him and help him. It was a wonderful experience to hear those young men speak words of appreciation and encouragement to their friend. I am satisfied that all of those boys, including the one who was baptized last week, will go on missions.

Nothing of greater importance

In a recent press interview I was asked, "What brings you the greatest sat-

isfaction as you see the work of the Church today?"

My response: "The most satisfying experience I have is to see what this gospel does for people. It gives them a new outlook on life. It gives them a perspective that they have never felt before. It raises their sights to things noble and divine. Something happens to them that is miraculous to behold. They look to Christ and come alive."

Now, brethren, I ask each of you to please help in this undertaking. Your friendly ways are needed. Your sense of responsibility is needed. The Savior of all mankind left the ninety and nine to find the one lost. That one who was lost need not have become lost. But if he is out there somewhere in the shadows, and if it means leaving the ninety and nine, we must do so to find him. (See Luke 15:3-7.)

Now, I think that is all I will say this evening about this, except to say that in my view nothing is of greater importance.

Paul's counsel to young men

I now wish to move to another subject.

I wish to speak to the young men. I have as my text Paul's letters to his young friend and associate Timothy. I have quoted from these letters extensively to missionaries, and now I speak to you as missionaries yet to be.

I picture Paul as the old, battered teacher of truth. He writes to his young friend, in whom he has confidence and for whom he has a great love.

He says, among other things, "We both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Timothy 4:10).

Paul was persecuted and driven; he was hated and despised. Eventually his life was taken because he fearlessly bore witness of the Redeemer of all men.

We must be prepared to do likewise.

As Nephi proclaimed, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

Be an example and speak truth

Writes Paul further to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Those whom we teach will overlook our youth if in our conversations in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in the purity of our lives, we reflect the Spirit of Christ. We cannot indulge in swearing. We cannot be guilty of profanity; we cannot indulge in impure thoughts, words, and acts and have the Spirit of the Lord with us.

Paul goes on to say, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Timothy 4:14).

Who are the presbytery? They are the elders of the Church. Each of you deacons, teachers, and priests has been ordained by one having the proper authority, in most cases by your fathers or bishops. You have been given a great and precious gift. You can speak truth. You must speak truth. You can bear testimony of the great and good things of the gospel. This is your gift. Neglect it not!

Paul continues, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

As you work with your associates to help them with their faith, you will save them and also yourselves.

Keep yourselves pure

Again Paul's counsel to Timothy: "Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).

Those are simple words. But they are ever so important. Paul is saying, in effect, stay away from those things which will tear you down and destroy you spiritually. Stay away from television shows which lead to unclean thoughts and unclean language. Stay away from videos which will lead to evil thoughts. They won't help you. They will only hurt you. Stay away from books and magazines which are sleazy and filthy in what they say and portray. Keep thyself pure.

The love of money can destroy you

Continuing with the words of Paul: "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). It is the love of money and the love of those things which money can buy which destroys us. We all need money to supply our needs. But it is the love of it which hurts us, which warps our values, which leads us away from spiritual things and fosters selfishness and greed.

Do not be ashamed of your testimony

And now I come to Paul's great statement:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:7-8).

It is not God who has given us the spirit of fear; this comes from the adversary. So many of us are fearful of what our peers will say, that we will be looked upon with disdain and criticized if we stand for what is right. But I remind you that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). Evil never was happiness. Sin never was happiness. Happiness lies

in the power and the love and the sweet simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We need not be prudish. We need not slink off in a corner, as it were. We need not be ashamed. We have the greatest thing in the world, the gospel of the risen Lord. Paul gives us a mandate: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:8).

As deacons, teachers, and priests ordained to the holy priesthood, we can stand tall and, without equivocation or fear, declare our testimony of Jesus Christ.

Turn away from youthful lusts

Further from Paul: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15).

If we were called upon to stand before God and give an accounting of ourselves, could we do it without embarrassment? This is Paul's great plea to his young friend. It is his plea to each of you. He goes on to say, "Shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Timothy 2:16).

He is warning against just fooling around, wasting our time, talking about useless things. Idleness leads to evil.

He continues, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

It was Sir Galahad who said, "My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure" (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Sir Galahad*).

We cannot say it frequently enough. Turn away from youthful lusts. Stay away from drugs. They can absolutely destroy you. Avoid them as you would a terrible disease, for that is what they become. Avoid foul and filthy talk. It can lead to destruction. Be absolutely honest. Dishonesty can corrupt and destroy.

Observe the Word of Wisdom. You cannot smoke; you must not smoke. You must not chew tobacco. You cannot drink liquor. You hold the priesthood of God. You must rise above these things which beckon with a seductive call. Be prayerful. Call on the Lord in faith, and He will hear your prayers. He loves you. He wishes to bless you. He will do so if you live worthy of His blessing.

Become educated and prepare for a mission

You face great challenges that lie ahead. You are moving into a world of fierce competition. You must get all of the education you can. The Lord has instructed us concerning the importance of education. It will qualify you for greater opportunities. It will equip you to do something worthwhile in the great world of opportunity that lies ahead. If you can go to college and that is your wish, then do it. If you have no desire to attend college, then go to a vocational or business school to sharpen your skills and increase your capacity.

Prepare now to go on a mission. It will not be a burden. It will not be a waste of time. It will be a great opportunity and a great challenge. It will do something for you that nothing else will do for you. It will sharpen your skills. It will train you in leadership. It will bring testimony and conviction into your heart. You will bless the lives of others as you bless your own. It will bring you nearer to God and to His Divine Son as you bear witness and testimony of Him. Your knowledge of the gospel will strengthen and deepen. Your love for your fellowman will increase. Your fears will fade as you stand boldly in testimony of the truth.

Be faithful and true

We love you, boys, our dear young associates in this great work. We pray

for you that you may be faithful and true. We count on you to prepare yourselves to take our places in the great work of moving forward the work of God. Get on your knees and pray every day, night and morning. Look to your fathers and mothers, and follow their counsel. Look to your bishop and his counselors. They will lead you in the direction you should go. "Look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

You have come into the world in a great season in this the work of the Lord. No other generation has had quite the same opportunities that you have and will have. Begin now to establish those goals which will bring you happiness—education in your chosen skill or branch of learning, whatever it may be; a

mission in which to surrender yourself entirely to the Lord to do His work; future marriage in the house of the Lord to a wonderful and delightful companion of whom you will be worthy because of the way you have lived.

May the Lord bless you, my dear young friends. May His watch care be over you to preserve and protect and guide you. He has a great work for you. Do not fail Him. I leave my love and my blessing with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder Augusto A. Lim offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 167th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 6, 1997. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 167th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Henry B. Eyring, Charles Didier, and V. Dallas Merrell are seated on the stand; and in the

Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders F. Enzo Busche, Ronald E. Poelman, David E. Sorensen, and Lance B. Wickman are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together. We are especially grateful to have with us this morning Dr. Anatoly Lashinski, chairman of the committee setting Russian policy for religious organizations, reporting directly to President Yeltsin.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened these services by singing "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee."

The choir will now sing "O Thou, Before the World Began," following which Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy, who is president of the Tokyo Temple, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "O Thou, Before the World Began."

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

Our first speaker this morning will be President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

This year, 1997, commemorates the 150th anniversary since the pioneers, under the inspired leadership of Brigham Young, entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake and proclaimed: "This is the right place. Drive on."¹ Much will be said at this conference concerning that epochal event, and thanks will be given to God for His watchful care and guidance.

Tribute to "other pioneers"

On this beautiful Sabbath morning I wish to make a few remarks concerning "other pioneers" who preceded that trek. In doing so, I pause and ponder the dictionary definition of the word *pioneer*: "one who goes before, [showing] others [the way] to follow."²

Pioneers from the Bible

Let us turn back the clock of time and journey to other places, that we might review several who I feel meet the high standard of the word *pioneer*.

Such a one was Moses. Raised in Pharaoh's court and learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he became mighty in words and deeds. One cannot separate Moses, the great lawgiver, from the tablets of stone provided him by God and on which were written the Ten Commandments. They were binding then; they are binding now.

Moses endured constant frustration as some of his trusted followers returned to their previous ways. Though he was disappointed in their actions, yet he loved them and led them, even the children of Israel, from their Egyptian bondage. Certainly Moses qualifies as a pioneer.

Another who qualifies is Ruth, who forsook her people, her kindred, and her country in order to accompany her mother-in-law, Naomi—worshipping Jehovah in His land and adopting the ways of His people. How very important was Ruth's obedience to Naomi and the resulting marriage to Boaz by which Ruth—the foreigner and a Moabite convert—became a great-grandmother of David and therefore an ancestress of Jesus Christ. The book of the Holy Bible that bears her name contains language poetic in style, reflective of her spirit of determination and courage.

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

"Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."³

Yes, Ruth, precious Ruth, was a pioneer.

Other faithful women also qualify, such as Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary Magdalene; Esther; and Elisabeth. Let us not overlook Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, nor fail to include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and some from a later period.

We remember John the Baptist. His clothing was simple, his life spartan, his message brief: faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, and the bestowal of the Holy Ghost by an authority greater than that possessed by himself. He declared, "I am not the Christ, but . . . I am sent before him."⁴ "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh . . . : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."⁵

The River Jordan marked the historic meeting place when Jesus came down from Galilee to be baptized of John. At first John pleaded with the Master, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"⁶ Came the response: "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. . . ."

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."⁷

John freely declared and taught, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."⁸

Of John the Lord declared, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."⁹ Like so many other pioneers through the annals of history, John wore the martyr's crown.

Jesus' Apostles

Many who were pioneers in spirit and action were called by Jesus to be His Apostles. Much could be told of each.

Peter was among the first of Jesus' disciples. Peter the fisherman, in response to a divine call, laid aside his nets and hearkened to the Master's declaration: Come "follow me, and I will make you [a fisher] of men."¹⁰ I never think of Peter without admiring his testimony of the Lord: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹¹

John the Beloved is the only one of the Twelve recorded as being at the Crucifixion of Christ. From the cruel cross, Jesus uttered the magnificent charge to John, referring to His mother, Mary: "Behold thy mother,"¹² and to Mary, "Behold thy son."¹³

The Apostles went before, showing others the way to follow. They were pioneers.

The great reformers

History records, however, that most men did not come unto Christ, nor did they follow the way He taught. Crucified was the Lord, slain were most of the Apostles, rejected was the truth. The bright sunlight of enlightenment slipped away, and the lengthening shadows of a black night enshrouded the earth.

Generations before, Isaiah had prophesied, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people."¹⁴ Amos had foretold of a famine in the land, "not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."¹⁵ The dark ages of history seemed never to end. Would no heavenly messengers make their appearance?

In due time honest men with yearning hearts, at the peril of their very lives, attempted to establish points of reference, that they might find the true way. The day of the Reformation was dawning, but the path ahead was difficult. Persecutions would be severe, personal sacrifice overwhelming, and the cost beyond calculation. The reformers were pioneers, blazing wilderness trails in a desperate search for those lost points of

reference which, they felt, when found would lead mankind back to the truth Jesus taught.

John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, Jan Hus, Zwingli, Knox, Calvin, and Tyndale all pioneered the period of the Reformation. Significant was the declaration of Tyndale to his critics: "I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou doest."¹⁶

Such were the teachings and lives of the great reformers. Their deeds were heroic, their contributions many, their sacrifices great—but they did not restore the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Of the reformers, one could ask: "Was their sacrifice in vain? Was their struggle futile?" I answer with a reasoned "no." The Holy Bible was now within the grasp of the people. Each person could better find his or her way. Oh, if only all could read and all could understand! But some could read, and others could hear, and all had access to God through prayer.

Joseph Smith

The long-awaited day of restoration did indeed come. But let us review that significant event in the history of the world by recalling the testimony of the plowboy who became a prophet, the witness who was there—even Joseph Smith.

Describing his experience, Joseph said:

"I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, . . . *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*"¹⁷

"At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. . . .

" . . . I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a

beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. . . .

" . . . I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. . . .

" . . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

" . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"¹⁸

The Father and the Son, Jesus Christ, had appeared to Joseph Smith. The morning of the dispensation of the fulness of times had come, dispelling the darkness of the long generations of spiritual night.

Volumes have been written concerning the life and accomplishments of Joseph Smith, but for our purposes here today perhaps a highlight or two will suffice: He was visited by the angel Moroni. He translated, from the precious plates to which he was directed, the Book of Mormon, with its new witness of Christ to all the world. He was the instrument in the hands of the Lord through whom came mighty revelations pertaining to the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the course of his ministry he was visited by John the Baptist, Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, and John, that the restoration of all things might be accomplished. He endured persecution; he suffered grievously, as did his followers. He trusted in God. He was true to his prophetic calling. He commenced a marvelous missionary effort to the entire world, which today brings light and truth to the souls of mankind. At length, Joseph Smith died the martyr's death, as did his brother Hyrum.

Joseph Smith was a pioneer indeed.

The ultimate pioneer—Jesus Christ

Turning the pages of scriptural history from beginning to end, we learn of the ultimate pioneer—even Jesus Christ. His birth was foretold by the prophets of old; His entry upon the stage of life was announced by an angel. His life and His ministry have transformed the world.

With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment, a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Promised Messiah, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. During His earthly ministry, He taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick. He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life.

One sentence from the book of Acts speaks volumes: Jesus “went about doing good, . . . for God was with him.”¹⁹

He taught us to pray: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”²⁰

In the garden known as Gethsemane, where His suffering was so great that blood came from His pores, He pleaded as He prayed, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”²¹

He taught us to serve: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”²²

He taught us to forgive: “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”²³

He taught us to love: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”²⁴

Like the true pioneer He was, He invited, “Come, follow me.”²⁵

Let us turn to Capernaum. There Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came to the Master, saying, “My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.”²⁶ Then came the news from the ruler’s house: “Thy daughter is dead.”²⁷

Christ responded, “Be not afraid, only believe.”²⁸ He came to the house, passed by the mourners, and said to them: “Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn,”²⁹ knowing that she was dead. “He . . . put them all out. . . . And he took [her] by the hand, and said unto her, . . . Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. . . . And they were astonished.”³⁰

It is emotionally draining for me to recount the events leading up to the Crucifixion of the Master. I cringe when I read the words of Pilate responding to cries of the throng: “Crucify him. . . . Crucify him.”³¹ Pilate “took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.”³² Jesus was mocked. He was spit upon and a crown of thorns placed upon His head. He was given vinegar to drink. They crucified Him.

His body was placed in a borrowed tomb, but no tomb could hold the body of the Lord. On the morning of the third day came the welcome message to Mary Magdalene, to Mary the mother of James, and to other women who were with them as they came to the tomb, saw the large entrance stone rolled away, and noted the tomb was empty. Two angels said to the weeping women: “Why

seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."³³

Yes, the Lord had indeed risen. He appeared to Mary; He was seen by Cephas, or Peter, then by His brethren of the Twelve. He was seen by Joseph Smith, who declared: "This is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God."³⁴

Our Mediator, our Redeemer, our Brother, our Advocate with the Father died for our sins and the sins of all mankind. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the foreordained but voluntary act of the Only Begotten Son of God. He offered His life as a redeeming ransom for us all.

His mission, His ministry among men, His teachings of truth, His acts of mercy, His unwavering love for us prompt our gratitude and warm our hearts. Jesus Christ, Savior of the world—even the Son of God—was and is the ultimate pioneer, for He has gone before, showing all others the way to follow. May we ever follow Him, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. As quoted by Wilford Woodruff in *The Utah Pioneers* (1880), 23.
2. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 20 vols. (1989), "pioneer," 11:883.
3. Ruth 1:16–17.
4. John 3:28.
5. Luke 3:16.
6. Matthew 3:14.
7. Matthew 3:15–17.
8. John 1:29.
9. Matthew 11:11.
10. Matthew 4:19.

11. Matthew 16:16.
12. John 19:27.
13. John 19:26.
14. Isaiah 60:2.
15. Amos 8:11.
16. Quoted in Roger Hillas, "The History of the Book," *Washington Post*, 10 Apr. 1996.
17. Joseph Smith—History 1:11.
18. Joseph Smith—History 1:13–17.
19. Acts 10:38.
20. Matthew 6:9–10.
21. Luke 22:42.
22. Matthew 25:40.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
24. Matthew 22:37–39.
25. Luke 18:22.
26. Mark 5:23.
27. Mark 5:35.
28. Mark 5:36.
29. Mark 5:39–40.
30. Mark 5:40–42.
31. Mark 15:13–14.
32. Matthew 27:24.
33. Luke 24:5–6.
34. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–23.

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve will now speak to us.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Testimonies of the Savior

It is April 6th. Modern scripture records that Jesus Christ was born on this day.¹ Humbly I speak of this glorious Being to whom each of us owes so very much. I know that what the scriptures teach of Him is true and will use some of them in expressing personal feelings.

Paul testified, "Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."²

Eternal salvation—how precious! But you must obey Him to obtain it.

"Jesus said . . . , I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."³

"And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life."⁴

Shall never die; shall have eternal life—you must be obedient and endure to the end.

I testify that the Lord came "into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice," that He suffered "the pains of all men," and that He was crucified "that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day." I witness that "he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in [Him], . . . or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God."⁵ Repent, be baptized, and have perfect faith in Him. These are some of the essential requirements that must be met.

I know that "there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ."⁶ I witness that Jesus Christ atoned "for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a mer-

ciful God also."⁷ I testify that except for the Atonement of the Holy Redeemer, the demands of justice would prevent every soul born on earth from returning to the presence of God to partake of His glory and exaltation,⁸ for all make mistakes for which we cannot personally appease justice. I witness that except for the "infinite atonement" of Christ, we could not return to God at death and, as Jacob solemnly warned, "our spirits [would] become subject to . . . the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits [would] become like unto him, and we [would] become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, . . . to remain with the father of lies, in misery."⁹

I witness that "redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; . . . unto all those who have a *broken heart and a contrite spirit*; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered."¹⁰ This absolute requisite of "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" prescribes the need to be submissive, compliant, humble (that is, teachable), and willingly obedient. Finally, I witness "how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the *merits, and mercy, and grace* of the Holy Messiah."¹¹

Jesus Christ possessed *merits* that no other child of Heavenly Father could possibly have. He was a God, Jehovah, before His birth in Bethlehem. His Father not only gave Him His spirit body, but Jesus was His Only Begotten Son in the flesh. Our Master lived a perfect, sinless life and therefore was free from the demands of justice. He was and is perfect in every attribute, including love, compassion, patience, obedience, forgiveness, and humility. His *mercy* pays our debt to justice when we repent and obey Him. Even with our best efforts to

obey His teachings we will still fall short, yet because of His *grace* we will be saved "after all we can do."¹²

We must do the essential things in this life

Although our memory of it is withheld, before we came to this earth we lived in the presence of God, our Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. We shouted for joy when given the privilege of coming to this earth to receive a body and to move forward in God's plan for our happiness. We knew that we would be tested here. Our determination was to live obediently to be able to return to be with our Father forever. Part of that testing here is to have so many seemingly interesting things to do that we can forget the main purposes for being here. Satan works very hard so that the essential things won't happen.

The plan is really very simple when considered in its essence. The Lord has told us that we are here to be tried, to be proven, to see whether we will be valiant and be obedient to His teachings. You among all of the people on earth have the best possibility of doing that because you have access to the fulness of the restored gospel and the teachings of the Savior. In quiet moments when you think about it, you recognize what is critically important in life and what isn't. Be wise and don't let good things crowd out those that are essential.

Ordinances and covenants are essential

What are the essential ones? They are related to doctrine. They are centered in ordinances and embrace critical covenants. Those ordinances are baptism and confirmation into His Church and kingdom on earth. For men they include worthy ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood and honoring and using it in service to others. For each adult man and woman, they entail all of the

ordinances of the temple, including one's own personal endowment. They embody the sealing ordinance of the temple where a man and wife are bound so that through obedience they can live together for time and all eternity. When faithful, the children born to that union or later sealed to their parents are joined in love and rejoicing throughout all eternity. To receive all of the blessings of His atoning sacrifice, we are asked only to be obedient to His commandments and to receive *all* of these essential ordinances. The Atonement will not only help us overcome our transgressions and mistakes, but in His time, it will resolve all inequities of life—those things that are unfair which are the consequences of circumstance or others' acts and not our own decisions.

While some may not understand or agree, I testify that it is not sufficient to be baptized and then live an acceptable life, avoiding major transgressions. The Lord has decreed that the additional ordinances and covenants that I have mentioned must be received for exaltation and eternal life. Being worthy of temple ordinances means that you will choose to do what many in the world are not willing to do. You will keep the Sabbath day holy, exercise faith through the payment of tithing and fast offerings, consistently participate in Church worship, give service, and show love and appreciation for your family by helping each member of it. After you have received all of the temple ordinances, you will continue to grow by keeping the covenants made and faithfully "endur[ing] to the end."¹³

Keeping the covenants is not hard when you do it willingly with a "broken heart and a contrite spirit."¹⁴ When obeyed, those covenants bring happiness and joy. They give purpose to life. Difficulty comes when agency is used to make choices that are inconsistent with those covenants. Study the things you do in your discretionary time, that time you

are free to control. Do you find that it is centered in those things that are of highest priority and of greatest importance? Or do you unconsciously, consistently fill it with trivia and activities that are not of enduring value nor help you accomplish the purpose for which you came to earth? Think of the long view of life, not just what's going to happen today or tomorrow. *Don't give up what you most want in life for something you think you want now.*

The Savior and His teachings must have first priority

The essential things must be accomplished during your testing period on earth. They must have first priority. They must not be sacrificed for lesser things, even though they are good and worthwhile accomplishments. After this life, you will be restored to that which you have here allowed yourself to become. Oh, if I but had the capacity to communicate the peace and serenity that come from knowing that you and your family have worthily received all of the saving ordinances and the corresponding covenants are being righteously kept.

I encourage you with every capacity that I possess to receive *all* of the ordinances for salvation and do all you can to have the other members of your family receive those ordinances before departing this earth. You can progress much more rapidly here on earth with your mortal body in this environment of good and evil than you will as a spirit in the spirit world.¹⁵ Compared to the length of a normal life, it doesn't take much time to receive all of the ordinances essential to exaltation. It does take diligence, understanding, and obedience. It does require you to do all within your capacity to qualify for those ordinances and to receive as many as you are able. Where, for reasons beyond your control, you are not able to receive them all, live worthily and do not dis-

qualify yourself through neglect, indifference, or unworthiness. The Lord will make it possible for you to receive all of the blessings He has promised in His time and place.

Whether you intend to or not, when you live as though the Savior and His teachings are only one of many other important priorities in your life, you are clearly on the road to disappointment and likely on the path to tragedy. Is it really wise to forfeit eternal happiness by fulfilling only part of the requirements? I pray that you'll be moved to make needed changes now.

If you have strayed in transgression, please come back. If you have been enticed by the things of the world to forget the things of God, correct your priorities. If you haven't received all of the essential ordinances, decide now to do what is necessary to receive them.

The Atonement gives richness and joy

Oh, how grateful we must be for the Atonement wrought by our Redeemer, Jesus Christ! It gives life richness and joy when we live the pattern described in this scripture:

"They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh *because of their yielding their hearts unto God.*"¹⁶

I witness that "remission of sins [through the Atonement] bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love."¹⁷ I testify that God, your Eternal Father, loves you. He hears your prayers and will answer them.¹⁸ The Redeemer loves you and will help you do the essential things that bring happiness

now and forever. I am a witness of Jesus Christ. I know that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:1.
2. Hebrews 5:8–9.
3. John 11:25–26.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
5. See 2 Nephi 9:21–24.
6. Helaman 5:9.
7. Alma 42:15.
8. See John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882), 179–83; see also Revelation 3:21; 21:7.
9. 2 Nephi 9:7–9.
10. 2 Nephi 2:6–7; italics added.
11. 2 Nephi 2:8; italics added.
12. 2 Nephi 25:23.
13. Omni 1:26.
14. 3 Nephi 12:19.
15. See Melvin J. Ballard—*Crusader for Righteousness* (1966), 212–13.
16. Helaman 3:35; italics added.
17. Moroni 8:26.

18. See Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.

The choir sang “With Songs of Praise.”

President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung “With Songs of Praise.”

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “The Spirit of God.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve will then speak to us, following which the choir will sing “Faith in Every Footstep.”

We will then view a special video presentation prepared for this conference.

The choir and congregation sang “The Spirit of God.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Honoring the pioneers

For the past several months, the attention of the Church has been focused on the extraordinary events surrounding the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here in the Salt Lake Valley and elsewhere throughout the world. It is wonderful to note that the wards and stakes are using the yearlong pioneer sesquicentennial celebration as an opportunity to honor the Utah pioneers of 1847 as well as the remarkable efforts of our pioneers in every land who have blazed spiritual trails with faith in every one of their footsteps.

The handcart built in Siberia and presently moving through the missions of Russia and Ukraine is a wonderful example of the worldwide effort to honor

our pioneers. Plans are for the handcart to be pulled down Emigration Canyon on the final leg of its journey, arriving at This Is the Place State Park on July 22.

This is a year for remembering our past and drawing strength to face and conquer the challenges of today from the exemplary faith and courage of those who faced and conquered the challenges of yesterday. As we honor these great pioneers from many lands, we shall share historical accounts that will often bring tears to our eyes and feelings of pure gratitude to our hearts. Through music, drama, and stirring reenactments, we will be reminded of incredible pioneer journeys, both temporal and spiritual.

We cannot begin to understand the journeys made by those who laid the foundation of this dispensation until we

understand their spiritual underpinnings. Once we make that connection, however, we will begin to see how their journeys parallel our own. There are lessons for us in every footstep they took—lessons of love, courage, commitment, devotion, endurance, and, most of all, faith.

Footsteps of faith

For the Utah pioneers of 1847, their faith was grounded in principle. They left their homes, their temple, and in some cases their families, in search of a place of refuge where they could worship without fear of persecution. There was little that they could carry with them in the way of provisions and material possessions, but each wagon and handcart was heavily laden with faith—faith in God, faith in the Restoration of His Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and faith that God knew where they were going and that He would see them through.

One of those who traveled the Mormon Trail in 1847 referred to it as the “trail of hope.” I love that title: “trail of hope.” It speaks of the universal yearning of each person to find a safe haven, a community of Saints where hearts are united and hope prevails.

Those 19th-century pioneers to whom we pay special tribute during this sesquicentennial year never set out to be heroes, and yet they accomplished heroic things. That is what makes them Saints. They were a band of believers who tried to do the right thing for the right reasons, ordinary men and women who were called on to perform an extraordinary work. At times, they gave in to discouragement and allowed themselves to murmur and complain. But ultimately their faith in God and the man they sustained as their prophet and leader prevailed, and they righted their vision and attitudes along with their wagons. In the process they found joy amid the hardships and trials of the trek.

“Nothing to fear from the journey”

Nearly seven years before the pioneer exodus to the mountains of Utah, William Clayton wrote to his fellow Saints in England, urging them to come to Zion, not realizing that Zion would soon be in wagons and handcarts moving west. He wrote: “Although we are . . . distant from each other I do not forget you. . . . But to the praise of God be it spoken, all I have endured has never hurt or discouraged me, but done me good. . . . We have sometimes been almost suffocated with heat . . . , sometimes almost froze with cold. We have had to sleep on boards, instead of feathers. . . . We have had our clothes wet through with no privilege of drying them or changing them, . . . had to sleep . . . out of doors, in very severe weather, and many such things which you [have] no idea of. . . . [Yet] we have been . . . healthy & cheerful. . . . If you will be faithful, *you have nothing to fear from the journey*. The Lord will take care of his saints.”¹

William Clayton would later pen the lyrics to “Come, Come, Ye Saints” (*Hymns*, no. 30) during the trek across Iowa. He and a host of others would learn even more intimately during the 1,300-mile exodus to Utah that there is “nothing to fear from the journey” if faith is your constant companion.

Lessons for today from the pioneers

Is there a lesson in the pioneer experience for us today? I believe there is. The faith that motivated the pioneers of 1847 as well as pioneers in other lands was a simple faith centered in the basic doctrines of the restored gospel, which they knew to be true. That’s all that mattered to them, and I believe that is all that should matter to us. Our faith needs to be focused on the fundamental truths that God lives, that we are His children, and that Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son and He is our Savior. We need to know that They restored the Church to the

earth in its fulness through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Through the restored gospel of Jesus Christ we learn that our Father's plan for the happiness of His children is clear and quite simple when studied and accepted with real faith.

Traveling from Nauvoo to the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847 is not unlike a young missionary from Idaho traveling to Siberia in late 1993 as one of the first Latter-day Saints to labor in that land. Nearly every day our missionaries arrive in countries where they have little knowledge of the language and where the food, culture, and living conditions are often much different from that which they are accustomed to. And yet they go boldly as modern pioneers, not fearing the journey, walking with faith in every footstep to bring to people everywhere the good news of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our faith can help us be equally bold and fearless during the course of our respective journeys, whether we are parents working with a troubled child, a single parent trying to raise a worthy family, young people struggling to find a place in a wicked and confusing world, or a single person trying to make the journey through life alone. No matter how difficult the trail, and regardless of how heavy our load, we can take comfort in knowing that others before us have borne life's most grievous trials and tragedies by looking to heaven for peace, comfort, and hopeful assurance. We can know as they knew that God is our Father, that He cares about us individually and collectively, and that as long as we continue to exercise our faith and trust in Him there is nothing to fear in the journey. Like the pioneers of 1847 who ventured west along a trail that kept them relatively close to life-sustaining fresh water from rivers, particularly the Platte and the Sweetwater, we need to follow and partake of the Living Water of Christ to refresh our faith and sustain our efforts as we travel the road through mortality.

Great rewards if we journey faithfully

Life isn't always easy. At some point in our journey we may feel much as the pioneers did as they crossed Iowa—up to our knees in mud, forced to bury some of our dreams along the way. We all face rocky ridges, with the wind in our face and winter coming on too soon. Sometimes it seems as though there is no end to the dust that stings our eyes and clouds our vision. Sharp edges of despair and discouragement jut out of the terrain to slow our passage. Always, there is a Devil's Gate, which will swing wide open to lure us in. Those who are wise and faithful will steer a course as far from such temptation as possible, while others—sometimes those who are nearest and dearest to us—succumb to the attraction of ease, comfort, convenience, and rest. Occasionally we reach the top of one summit in life, as the pioneers did, only to see more mountain peaks ahead, higher and more challenging than the one we have just traversed. Tapping unseen reservoirs of faith and endurance, we, as did our forebears, inch ever forward toward that day when our voices can join with those of all pioneers who have endured in faith, singing, "All is well! All is well!" (*Hymns*, no. 30).

And how will we feel then, as we stand shoulder to shoulder with the great pioneers of Church history? How will they feel about us? Will they see faith in our footsteps? I believe they will, particularly as they view our lives and experiences from the expanded perspective of eternity. Although our journeys today are less demanding physically than the trek of our pioneers 150 years ago, they are no less challenging. Certainly it was hard to walk across a continent to establish a new home in a dry western desert. But who can say if that was any more difficult than is the task of living faithful, righteous lives in today's confusingly sinful world, where the trail is constantly shifting and where divine

markers of right and wrong are being replaced by political expediency and diminishing morality. The road we travel today is treacherous, and the scriptures tell us it will continue to be so until the very end. But our reward will be the same as that which awaits worthy pioneers of all ages who live faithfully the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, make right choices, and give their all to build the kingdom of God on earth.

We are the inheritors of a tremendous heritage. Now it is our privilege and responsibility to be part of the Restoration's continuing drama, and there are great and heroic stories of faith to be written in our day. It will require every bit of our strength, wisdom, and energy to overcome the obstacles that will confront us. But even that will not be enough. We will learn, as did our pioneer ancestors, that it is only in faith—*real* faith, whole-souled, tested and tried—that we will find safety and confidence as we walk our own perilous pathways through life.

Jesus Christ has rescued us

We are all bound together—19th- and 20th-century pioneers and more—in our great journey to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and to allow His atoning sacrifice to work its miracle in our lives. While we all can appreciate the footsteps of faith walked by Joseph Smith and his followers from Palmyra to Carthage Jail and across the Great Plains, we should ever stand in reverential awe as we contemplate the path trod by the Master. His faithful footsteps to Gethsemane and to Calvary rescued all of us and opened the way for us to return to our heavenly home.

Let us remember that the Savior is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and there can be no greater promise than to know that if we are faithful and true, we will one day be safely encircled in the arms of His love (see D&C 6:20). He is always there to give encouragement, to

forgive, and to rescue. Therefore, as we exercise faith and are diligent in keeping the commandments, we have nothing to fear from the journey.

Three of my grandsons stood with me on the crest of the hill known as the Eminence last summer. Looking down at the Sweetwater where the Willie Company was stranded, cold and starving, we read from their journals of the joy of their rescue. As John Chislett wrote:

"Just as the sun was sinking beautifully behind the distant hills, . . . several covered wagons . . . were seen coming towards us. The news ran through the camp like wildfire. . . . Shouts of joy rent the air; strong men wept till tears ran freely down their furrowed and sun-burnt cheeks. . . .

"That evening, for the first time in quite a period, the songs of Zion were to be heard in the camp. . . . With the cravings of hunger satisfied, and with hearts filled with gratitude to God and our good brethren, we all united in prayer, and then retired to rest."²

At that moment, standing on the same hill from which the Willie Company first saw their rescuers, I contemplated the joy that will fill our hearts when we fully come to know the eternal significance of the greatest rescue—the rescue of the family of God by the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is through Him that we have promise of eternal life. Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the source of spiritual power that will give you and me the assurance that we have nothing to fear from the journey. I know the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and our unwavering faith in Him will see us safely along our journey through life, to which I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. William Clayton to the Saints in England, from Commerce, Illinois, 10 Dec. 1840, William Clayton Collection, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; punctuation modernized and italics added.

2. As quoted in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856-1860* (1960), 106-7.

The choir sang "Faith in Every Footstep."

Faith in Every Footstep: The Epic Pioneer Journey

Narrator: President Gordon B. Hinckley

The epic pioneer journey of the Latter-day Saints began on the banks of the Mississippi River. Here at Nauvoo they had transformed a swamp into a thriving community of commerce and fellowship. But Nauvoo was not to be a final home, merely a brief rest for a season. The severe persecution that had driven the Saints from Missouri again threatened their lives and their city. The Prophet Joseph Smith and Hyrum were martyred at Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844. Life in Nauvoo was drawing to a close.

Sunday, February 1, 1846, the Saints worshiped together in the City of Joseph. The next day, Brigham Young directed families to be ready to leave with only four hours' notice.

In the bone-chilling cold of that bitter winter, the exodus began. Many of the Saints gathered their belongings and closed the doors of their dwellings for the last time as they turned to what lay across the river—and west.

Nauvoo is peaceful now. Homes and shops have been lovingly restored. This is a place that speaks of industry and commitment. I see their courage and craftsmanship as they built a city to God.

How the Saints must have felt, leaving so much behind—the fields they had cultivated, the trees they had planted, the temple they had built. The men, women, and children walked out of their beautiful homes, climbed aboard their wagons, drove down to the river, there to cross and move slowly over the soil of Iowa, looking back now and again at

what they were leaving and would never see again.

Leaving Nauvoo was a remarkable act of faith. There was much of hardship ahead for these pioneers, but they had faith in their leaders and faith in the Lord and His goodness—faith that He would once again lead His people to the promised land, faith that they would not falter or fall. So they walked out into a wilderness, their journey marked by faith in every footstep.

Narrator: President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency

The way west was slow. Many were ill prepared for the grueling trek. Freezing temperatures, incessant rain, and mud up to the knees tried even the hardest emigrant. They struggled for 131 days just to cross Iowa.

Like the army of Israel of old, they had their cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. Out of the travail of Iowa came the hymn that echoes down the generations: "Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear; / But with joy wend your way" (*Hymns*, no. 30).

Stopping at Garden Grove and Mount Pisgah to set up stations for those who would follow, these faithful pioneers pressed on to the banks of the Missouri and temporary respite for the winter.

Here at Winter Quarters was Zion in the wilderness. President Brigham Young organized the people and pooled their meager resources. Yet despite all they could do, sickness and death stalked the camps.

This monument is placed directly over the graves of an unknown child and seven other pioneers. My heart is deeply touched as I realize just how high a price those noble Saints paid in responding to the call of the prophet to leave their homes and journey west.

So many struggled and lost so much. Truly, these noble pioneers walked a path of pain and a trail of tears. Their journey was over, but their names live on as testaments of their love of truth and faith in the Lord.

**Narrator: President James E. Faust,
Second Counselor in the First Presidency**

When spring came that April of 1847, the Quorum of the Twelve, under the direction of Brigham Young, hand-picked a vanguard company and left Winter Quarters with 143 men, 3 women, and 2 young boys, 72 wagons, 93 horses, 66 oxen, 52 mules, 19 cows, 17 dogs, and some chickens.

Between that refuge and the promise of Zion stood a vast plain and the fertile Platte River, their lifeline as they pushed farther into the American West. Moving across Nebraska, they marked the rolling miles and journeyed past Chimney Rock, a solitary formation jutting out of the prairie.

Into this land speckled with sage and air swirling with dust, tired oxen lumbered, wagon wheels creaked, brave men and women toiled, and occasionally wolves howled. Even today, signs of their crossing are carved into the landscape.

The pioneers left the North Platte and now followed the Sweetwater, a stream they would ford many times. Camping at the round outcropping called Independence Rock, a few of these 19th-century travelers left their names on the granite stone.

Past Independence Rock, the wagons skirted the side of Devil's Gate, a deep gash in the hillside and often men-

tioned in their journals. The trail soon turned upward and increasingly rocky.

Here at Rocky Ridge is holy ground. This very spot is one of the highest points on the trail west. The pioneers who came over this ridge faced discouragement, some even death, as they inched their way up this sharp slope. I hold in my hand a square nail and a piece of metal jolted loose from a wagon or a handcart. Imagine facing this ridge in a wagon. Then imagine pulling a handcart.

For some, the punishing climb of Rocky Ridge would be fatal. The Martin and Willie Handcart Companies of 1856 were caught in early blizzards near this summit. Rescue came from Salt Lake but too late to save close to 200 souls who perished in the cold and deep snow.

Martin's Cove sheltered many during that agonizing and poignant time. A memorial at Rock Creek honors those buried here for their faith in the face of enormous adversity.

In the heroic effort of the handcart pioneers, we learn a great truth. All must pass through a refiner's fire, and the insignificant and unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful. Yet this is part of the purging to become acquainted with God.

Narrator: President Monson

With the Wind River peaks to the north, the pioneer trail crossed South Pass—the only major break between mountain ranges and the most direct route to the Great Basin. Entering northeastern Utah, they worked their way slowly through Echo Canyon, a narrow passageway flanked by red, overhanging cliffs.

This final stretch would try what little strength was left. Ahead loomed a

broken succession of hills piled on hills, and mountains in every direction. Hearts full of enthusiasm to be so near their journey's end often sank as they knew there was only one way to go: up and over.

On this high summit they named Big Mountain, the pioneers gazed for the first time on their new home: a glistening mountain valley on the far horizon. What joy they must have felt! The countless sacrifices and struggles along the way were nearly over. The Salt Lake Valley was in sight. Although much hardship still lay ahead, they had endured. With feet worn and weary with fatigue, they had kept step with their faith.

Big Mountain holds a special place in my heart. A pioneer ancestor, Gibson Condie, came over this summit on his way to help rescue the stranded handcart pioneers. At the call of the prophet, he journeyed to this very spot in the bitter winter of 1856. The snow was 16 feet deep on the road. How grateful I am for this pioneer ancestor, who, leaving the comfort of home and family, risked his own safety to help those in such desperate need.

Narrator: President Faust

President Young arrived in the valley on a Saturday, July 24th. These pioneers had come so far and given so much, and they paused on the Sabbath to worship and give thanks for their safe arrival.

They came "one of a city, and two of a family" (Jeremiah 3:14) across a continent to a new life in the desert. What else but a divine restoration would prompt such an endeavor and require such a sacrifice? They had walked with faith, knowing that God lives and He knew where those steps would take them.

Now in this valley home, they took fresh courage for the tasks ahead. There were shelters to erect, land to cultivate, crops to plant, and the temple to build.

Narrator: President Hinckley

Rising above the Salt Lake Valley is a dome-shaped peak. Brigham Young saw it in a vision before the Saints left Nauvoo. He saw an ensign descend upon the hill and heard the voice of Joseph Smith say, "Build under [that] point . . . and you will prosper and have peace" (quoted by George A. Smith, in *Deseret News* [semiweekly], 29 June 1869, 3).

When Brigham Young first arrived in the valley, he immediately recognized the peak. On the morning of July 26, 1847, the men who would eventually comprise the new First Presidency, along with several members of the Twelve, climbed its slopes.

This small group of priesthood leaders gazed out upon the valley below. "This is whereon we will plant the soles of our feet," President Young said, "and where the Lord will place his name among his people" (quoted by Erastus Snow, in *Deseret News*, 22 Oct. 1873, 5).

As I now stand at Ensign Peak and see the valley below, I marvel at the foresight of that little group. These prophets, dressed in old, travel-worn clothes, standing in boots they had worn for more than a thousand miles, spoke of a millennial vision. It was both bold and audacious. It was almost unbelievable.

Here they were, almost a thousand miles from the nearest settlement to the east and almost eight hundred miles from the Pacific coast. They were in an untried climate. They had never raised a crop here. They had not built a structure of any kind.

They were exiles, driven from their fair city on the Mississippi into this desert region of the West. But they were possessed of a vision drawn from the scriptures and words of revelation: "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12).

This great pioneering movement of more than a century ago goes forward with latter-day pioneers. Today pioneer blood flows in our veins just as it did with those who walked west. It's the essence of our courage to face modern-day mountains and our commitment to carry on. The faith of those early pioneers burns still, and nations are being blessed by latter-day pioneers who possess a clear vision of this work of the Lord.

The footsteps that made such a deep impression over the heartland of America make similar impressions in countries across the world—from Belgium to Brazil and France to the Philippines.

Step by faithful step, we walk together toward a glorious destiny, building the kingdom of God on earth and preparing the minds and hearts of people everywhere to come unto Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of the world.

President Hinckley

Now my brothers and sisters, following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing the great hymn of our migration, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Recipients of a magnificent heritage

With that picture as a backdrop I wish to say something in recapitulation of what we have already heard and seen on this, the birthday of the Church. As we have been reminded a number of times, this is a great anniversary year, and I wish to go on record concerning the magnitude of what our forebears accomplished and what this means to us. It is a story with which most of you are familiar, but it is worth another telling.

It is a story so large in scope, so fraught with human suffering and the workings of faith, that it will never grow old or stale.

Whether you are among the posterity of the pioneers or whether you were baptized only yesterday, each is the beneficiary of their great undertaking.

What a wonderful thing it is to have behind us a great and noble body of progenitors! What a marvelous thing to be the recipients of a magnificent heritage that speaks of the guiding hand of the Lord, of the listening ear of His prophets, of the total dedication of a vast con-

gregation of Saints who loved this cause more than life itself! Small wonder that so many hundreds of thousands of us—yea, even millions—will pause this coming July to remember them, to celebrate their wondrous accomplishments, and to rejoice in the miraculous thing that has grown from the foundation they laid.

The pioneers' remarkable achievements

Permit me to quote to you from Wallace Stegner, not a member of the Church but a contemporary at the University of Utah who later became professor of creative writing at Stanford and a Pulitzer Prize winner. He was a close observer and a careful student. He wrote this concerning these forebears of ours:

"They built a commonwealth, or as they would have put it, a Kingdom. But the story of their migration is more than the story of the founding of Utah. In their begira they opened up southern Iowa from Locust Creek to the Missouri, made the first roads, built the first bridges, established the first communities. They transformed the Missouri at

Council Bluffs from a trading post and an Indian agency into an outpost of civilization, founded settlements on both sides of the river and made Winter Quarters . . . and later Kaneshville . . . into outfitting points that rivaled Independence, Westport, and St. Joseph. . . . Their guide books and trail markers, their bridges and ferries, though made for the Saints scheduled to come later, served also for the Gentiles."

He continues: "The Mormons were one of the principal forces in the settlement of the West. Their main body opened southern Iowa, the Missouri frontier, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah. Samuel Brannan's group of eastern Saints who sailed around the Horn in the ship *Brooklyn*, and the Mormon Battalion that marched 2,000 miles overland from Fort Leavenworth to San Diego, were secondary prongs of the Mormon movement; between them, they contributed to the opening of the Southwest and of California. Battalion members were at Coloma when gold gleamed up from the bedrock of Sutter's millrace. . . . Brigham Young's colonizing Mormons, taking to wheels again after the briefest stay, radiated outward from the Salt Lake, Utah, and Weber Valleys and planted settlements that reached from Northern Arizona to the Lemhi River in Idaho, and from Fort Bridger in Wyoming to Genoa in Carson Valley . . . , and in the Southwest down through St. George and Las Vegas to San Bernardino."¹

That is a capsule account of their remarkable achievements.

The journey west

In a period of seven years, our people, who had fled the extermination order of Governor Boggs of Missouri, came to Illinois and built the largest city then in the state. It was on the shores of the Mississippi, where the river makes a great sweeping bend. Here they con-

structed brick homes, a school, chartered a university, erected an assembly hall, and built their temple, reportedly the most magnificent structure then in the entire state of Illinois. But hatred against them continued to enflame. It culminated in the death of their leader, Joseph Smith, and his brother Hyrum, who were shot and killed at Carthage on June 27, 1844.

Brigham Young knew they could not stay there. They determined to move west, to a faraway place where, as Joseph Smith had said, "the devil cannot dig us out."² On February 4, 1846, wagons rolled down Parley's Street to the river. Here they were ferried across and began to roll over the soil of Iowa. The weather subsequently turned bitter cold. The river froze; they crossed on the ice. Once they said good-bye to Nauvoo, they consigned themselves to the elements of nature and to the mercy of God.

When the ground thawed, it was mud—deep and treacherous mud. Wagons sank to their axles, and teams had to be doubled and tripled to move them. They cut a road where none had been before.

Finally reaching the Grand Encampment on the Missouri, they built hundreds of shelters, some very crude and others more comfortable. It was anything to get out of the treacherous weather.

All during that winter of 1846 in those frontier establishments, forges roared and anvils rang with the making of wagons. My own grandfather, barely out of his teens, became an expert blacksmith and wagon builder. No vocation was more useful in those days than that of the ability to shape iron. He would later build his own wagon and with his young wife and baby and his brother-in-law set off for the West. Somewhere on that long journey, his wife sickened and died and his brother-in-law died on the same day. He buried them both, tear-

fully said good-bye, tenderly picked up his child, and marched on to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

In the spring of 1847, the wagons of the first company pulled out of Winter Quarters and headed west. Generally they followed a route along the north side of the Platte River. Those going to California and Oregon followed a route on the south side. The road of the Mormons later became the right-of-way of the Union Pacific Railroad and the transcontinental highway.

"This is the right place"

As we all know, on July 24, 1847, after 111 days, they emerged from the mountain canyon into the Salt Lake Valley. Brigham Young declared, "This is the right place."³

I stand in reverent awe of that statement. They might have gone on to California or Oregon, where the soil had been tested, where there was ample water, where there was a more equable climate. Jim Bridger had warned them against trying to grow crops in the Salt Lake Valley. Sam Brannan had pleaded with Brigham to go on to California. Now they looked across the barren valley, with its saline waters shimmering in the July sun to the west. No plow had ever broken the sun-baked soil. Here stood Brigham Young, 46 years of age, telling his people this was the right place. They had never planted a crop or known a harvest. They knew nothing of the seasons. Thousands of their numbers were coming behind them, and there would yet be tens of thousands. They accepted Brigham Young's prophetic statement.

Homes soon began to spring from the desert soil. Trees were planted, and the miracle is that they grew. Construction of a new temple was begun, a task that was to last unremittingly for 40 years. From that 1847 beginning to the coming of the railroad in 1869, they

came by the tens of thousands to their Zion in the mountains. Nauvoo was evacuated. Its temple was burned by an arsonist, and its walls later fell in a storm.

Missionary work had begun in England in 1837. It spread from there to Scandinavia and gradually to Germany and other countries. All who were converted wanted to go to Zion.

That gathering was not a haphazard operation. Church agents were responsible for every detail. Ships were commissioned to bring the immigrants to New Orleans, New York, and Boston. The ultimate goal was always the same: the valley of the Great Salt Lake, from which place many of them would spread in all directions to found new cities and settlements, more than 350 of them in the Rocky Mountain area.

Hundreds died on that long trail. They died of cholera and black canker, of sheer exhaustion and hunger and the bitter cold.

Sufferings of the handcart pioneers

Most noble, as we've heard, among those who paid a terrible price were the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies of 1856.

There were not wagons enough to carry all who were converted in England and western Europe. If they were to come to Zion, they would have to walk, pulling a small cart behind them. Hundreds did so, and traveled faster than did the ox teams. But these two companies in 1856 literally walked with death. They started late, and no one knew they were coming. Their carts were not ready. A few who could afford wagons were assigned to travel with them to give assistance. They started west singing as they went. Little did they know what lay ahead of them.

They walked beside the Platte, ever westward. Near Fort Laramie their troubles began. Snow commenced falling.

Their rations were reduced. They knew they were in desperate circumstances as they slowly crept over the high plains of Wyoming. Some 200 perished in that terrible, tragic march.

Legion are the stories of those who were there and who suffered almost unto death and who carried all of their lives the scars of that dreadful experience. It was a tragedy without parallel in the western migration of our people.

When all is said and done, no one can imagine, no one can appreciate or understand how desperate were their circumstances. I wish to pay tribute to the people of the Riverton Wyoming Stake, who have done so much to identify and complete the temple work for and memorialize those who walked that march of death and terrible suffering. I could recount story after story, but there is no time for that. I mention very briefly only one.

At Rock Creek Hollow, on property the Church now owns, is the common grave of 13 who perished in one night. Among them was a nine-year-old girl from Denmark who was traveling alone with another family. Her name was Bodil Mortensen.

In October of 1856, wind-driven heavy snow was already two feet deep as those of the James G. Willie Company tried to find some shelter from the terrible storm. Bodil went out and gathered brush with which to make a fire. Returning, she reached her cart with the brush in her arm. There she died, frozen to death. Starvation and bitter cold drained from her emaciated body the life she had fought for.

We thank the Lord today that all of this is now behind us, as much as a century and a half behind us.

We stand today as the recipients of their great effort. I hope we are thankful. I hope we carry in our hearts a deep sense of gratitude for all that they have done for us.

Great things are expected of us

It is now 1997, and the future is ahead. As great things were expected of them, so are they of us. We note what they did with what they had. We have so much more, with an overwhelming challenge to go on and build the kingdom of God. There is so much to do. We have a divine mandate to carry the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. We have a charge to teach and baptize in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Said the resurrected Savior, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."⁴

We are engaged in a great and consuming crusade for truth and goodness. Fortunately we live in a season of goodwill. There has come down to us an inheritance of respect and honor to our people. We must grasp the torch and run the race.

Our people are found in positions of responsibility across the world. Their good reputation enhances the work of the Lord. Wherever we may be, whatever the circumstances in which we live, "if there [be] anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, [let us] seek after these things."⁵

The little stone envisioned by Daniel is rolling forth in majesty and power. There are some who still scorn. Let us live above it. There are still those who regard us as a peculiar people. Let us accept that as a compliment and go forth showing by the virtue of our lives the strength and goodness of the wonderful thing in which we believe.

At a time when families all across the world are falling apart, let us solidify our own, let us strengthen them, let us nurture them in righteousness and truth.

With so great an inheritance, we can do no less than our very best. Those who have gone before expect this of us. We have a mandate from the Lord. We have a vision of our cause and purpose.

Let us seek out the righteous of the earth who will listen to our message of salvation. Let us bring light and truth and understanding to a generation that is prone in its disillusionment to look for other things.

God has blessed us with wonderful facilities in which to teach the living truth. We now have meetinghouses scattered across the continents. Let us use them to nurture our people with "the good word of God."⁶

We now have temples far and wide and are building more, that the great work of salvation for the dead may go forward with an ever-increasing momentum.

Our forebears laid a solid and marvelous foundation. Now ours is the great opportunity to build a superstructure, all fitly framed together with Christ as the chief cornerstone.

Our great season of opportunity

My beloved brethren and sisters, how blessed we are! What a wonderful inheritance we have! It involved sacrifice, suffering, death, vision, faith, and knowledge and a testimony of God the Eternal Father and His Son, the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

The covered wagons of long ago have been replaced by airplanes that thread the skies. The horse and buggy have been replaced by air-conditioned automobiles that speed over ribbons of highway. We have great institutions of

learning. We have vast treasures of family history. We have houses of worship by the thousands. Governments of the earth look upon us with respect and favor. The media treat us well. This, I submit, is our great season of opportunity.

We honor best those who have gone before when we serve well in the cause of truth. May the Almighty smile with favor upon us as we seek to do His will and go forward as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."⁷

For this I humbly pray, as I both look back to the past and forward to the future in this anniversary year, and leave my testimony and blessing with you in the name of Him who is our Master, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (1964), 6-7.
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (1972), 332.
3. Quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:224.
4. Mark 16:15.
5. Articles of Faith 1:13.
6. Jacob 6:7.
7. 1 Peter 2:9.

The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 167th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 6, 1997. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 167th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We note that Elders Dallin H. Oaks, W. Eugene Hansen, and Carlos H. Amado are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall. Elders Hugh W. Pinnock, Lino Alvarez, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Bishop Richard C. Edgley are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Craig Jessop and accompanied by John

Longhurst and Clay Christiansen, will provide the music for this session.

The choir will begin this service by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

Elder Loren C. Dunn offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "I Stand All Amazed at the Love Jesus Offers Me." Then Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "I Stand All Amazed."

Elder L. Tom Perry

Rededication of the early Saints

After arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, the Mormon pioneers found establishing settlements in the desert to be a real challenge. Daily they encountered trials and hardships that kept reminding them that their new life was very different from the one to which they had been accustomed. There were homes to build, land to develop, irrigation ditches to dig, gardens to plant, wood to chop, and cattle to herd. Also there were constant immigrations into Utah, drought, and the grasshopper plague, all making the economy of this new territory very uncertain. Because of the great effort required to provide for their families, some of the early pioneers drifted into spiritual lethargy. This was of grave concern to the early Church leaders. They

believed that some of their struggles were the direct result of the Saints' laxity in keeping the commandments.

In 1856 the First Presidency commenced a reform movement. Church leaders traveled throughout the territory crying repentance to the Saints. They sent the block teachers out with a list of questions to ask the families. Some of these questions were:

Have you betrayed your brethren or sisters in anything?

Have you committed adultery?

Have you taken the name of Deity in vain?

Have you been intoxicated with strong drink?

Have you paid your debts?

Do you teach your family the gospel of salvation?

Do you pray night and morning with your family?

Do you attend your ward meetings? (Adapted from "Questions to Be Asked the Latter-day Saints," in *Church History in the Fulness of Times* [Church Educational System manual, 1993], 366.)

The Saints were challenged by their leaders to rededicate themselves to serving the Lord and keeping His commandments, and they accepted their leaders' counsel and repented.

The Holy Ghost will direct us

In 1997 we have many of the same concerns, although our world is very different. All these questions would still be very appropriate if asked today. Moreover, the list could probably be expanded due to new sources of temptation that the early pioneers could not have anticipated. Increasingly, the balance between living in the world and not being of the world is becoming more delicate. Publications, radio, television, and the Internet have surrounded us with worldliness. Some of the television programming has caused such a negative public outcry that a rating system has been established so viewers can evaluate the content of the programs. Surely this is an admission that there is a great deal available to us that must be avoided. The question is whether or not we can trust others to make rating decisions for us. We are fortunate to have been blessed with a special power to direct us in making important decisions between right and wrong.

In that special, sacred hour when the Savior realized that His earthly ministry was about at an end, He gathered His Twelve together in what we call the Last Supper. He gave them hope that they would not be left alone after He had departed from them. He comforted them with these words:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Upon receiving this blessed assurance, the other Judas, not Iscariot, asked, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14:22).

Jesus answered and said unto him:

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. . . .

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:23, 26).

After the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, the promised Comforter was given to those who would submit themselves to be baptized by water and be numbered among His Saints. On the day of Pentecost there was a great manifestation that was given to the Twelve, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost. Peter called on those assembled to repent and be baptized and then they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

A similar event occurred when the Savior appeared to the Nephites.

The power to bestow the Holy Ghost has been restored

Dark days followed the establishment of the Savior's Church as apostasy entered in among the membership of the Church. Priesthood authority was removed from the earth because of the unrighteousness of the people.

Light returned to the world through Joseph Smith when he received the First Vision in 1820. For a decade, the Prophet Joseph Smith was carefully pre-

pared to reestablish God's Church. He received priesthood authority—first the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist, then the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John. Revelations were given to Joseph as God's voice was heard from the heavens. A communication link between God and His prophet was restored.

As a small congregation gathered on April 6 of 1830 to organize the Church, the Prophet Joseph Smith asked those present if they were willing to accept him and Oliver Cowdery as their teachers and special advisers. Those present raised their hands in support.

"Although they had previously received the Melchizedek Priesthood, [Joseph and Oliver] then ordained each other to the office of elder. They did this to signify that they were elders in the newly organized church. The sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered next. . . . Joseph and Oliver then confirmed those who had previously been baptized as members of the Church of Jesus Christ and bestowed upon them the gift of the Holy Ghost" (*Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 67–68).

What a tremendous privilege it is to be numbered among those who, by the power of the priesthood, have been baptized by water and then have had hands laid upon their heads and received the Holy Ghost.

Elder LeGrand Richards, describing the gift of the Holy Ghost, said:

"To me, the gift of the Holy Ghost is as important to man as sunshine and water are to the plants. You take them away, and the plants would die. You take the Holy Ghost out of this Church, and this Church would not be any different than any other church. And it is manifest in so many ways in the lives and the devotion of the members of the Church" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 109; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 76).

Experience with heeding the Holy Spirit

Gifts have only limited value unless they are used. The Holy Ghost will be our constant companion if we submit ourselves to the will of our Father in Heaven, always remembering Him and keeping His commandments.

I remember a critical time in my life and how grateful I was when a still, small voice gave me direction to make an important decision. I had been with a retail firm for a number of years. We had enjoyed extraordinary success. We wanted to expand the business but needed a great deal of capital. In an attempt to raise the money, we contacted the best financial advisers we could find. They encouraged us to merge with a larger firm. The merger was successfully completed, and I was asked to sign a five-year contract to give continuity to management. Within a matter of months I found myself in a very difficult situation. The new owners wanted me to violate a trust that I felt I just could not do. After long discussions, they continued to insist and I continued to refuse. Seeing there was no way to break the deadlock, I agreed to leave the company. The timing for me was devastating. I had a wife who was seriously ill and required a lot of medical attention, a daughter away to college, and a son on a mission. I spent the next year just getting enough consulting work to pay my expenses.

After struggling for about one year, a company called me from California and invited me to come out and talk to them about working for them. I went out and negotiated a very good contract; I was delighted with the opportunity. I told them that I had to return home and discuss it with my family before I could give an answer. I returned home and after a careful discussion, I convinced my family that it was the right thing to do. In the process of calling the firm to accept the offer, a voice just as strong and powerful as I have ever heard came to me

and said, "Say no to the offer." I could not ignore the voice, so I turned the offer down, but I was distressed. I could not comprehend why I had been told to do such a thing. I went upstairs to my bedroom, sat on the bed, opened the scriptures, and they fell open to the Doctrine and Covenants, section 111. This was the only section given in the state of Massachusetts, where my home was at that particular time. These words literally jumped out of the page and met my eye:

"Concern not yourselves about your debts, . . . I will give you power to pay them. . . .

"Tarry in this place, and in the regions round about" (D&C 111:5, 7).

A great peace came to my soul. Within just a few days I was offered a fine position in Boston. A few months later I had the great privilege of hosting a conference in which President Harold B. Lee, then First Counselor in the First Presidency, was the featured speaker. The conference was a glorious success as we feasted on the words of President Lee. The following July, President Joseph Fielding Smith passed away and President Lee became the prophet. Three months later I was asked to come to Salt Lake, where I received a call to leave my profession and join the General Authorities.

I have often wondered what would have happened if I had not heeded the Holy Spirit in its counseling me not to leave Boston.

What the Holy Ghost can mean to us

Parley P. Pratt gave us a vision of what the gift of the Holy Ghost could mean to us when he said:

"The gift of the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops,

cultivates and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being" (*Key to the Science of Theology*, 9th ed. [1965], 101).

I bear witness of the power and comfort the gift of the Holy Ghost is to those who live worthy of it. What a reassurance it is for us to know that we are not left alone to find the course that we must follow to merit the eternal blessings of our Father in Heaven. We do not need man-made rating systems to determine what we should read, what we should watch, what we should listen to, or how we should conduct our lives. What we do need to do is live worthy of the continued companionship of the Holy Ghost and have the courage to follow the promptings that come into our lives. May the Lord bless us that we may ever be mindful of this great and precious gift, even the gift of the Holy Ghost, I humbly pray in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Perry. We just heard from Elder Perry, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Note please, the presence of Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who spoke yesterday morning. We are just delighted to have him here. Our hearts go out today in

prayer for the quick recovery of Brother James Paramore, who has had surgery.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

He will be followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack. She and her counselors were released yesterday as the Relief Society general presidency.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Stay "on the boat"

Early in our married life when Sister Nelson and I lived in Minneapolis, we decided to enjoy a free afternoon with our two-year-old daughter. We went to one of Minnesota's many beautiful lakes and rented a small boat. After rowing far from shore, we stopped to relax and enjoy the tranquil scene. Suddenly, our little toddler lifted one leg out of the boat and started to go overboard, exclaiming, "Time to get out, Daddy!"

Quickly we caught her and explained, "No, dear, it's not time to get out; we must stay in the boat until it brings us safely back to land." Only with considerable persuasion did we succeed in convincing her that leaving the boat early would have led to disaster.

Children are prone to do such dangerous things simply because they have not acquired the wisdom their parents have. Similarly, we as children of our Heavenly Father may foolishly want to get "out of the boat" before we arrive at destinations He would like us to reach. The Lord teaches over and over that we are to endure¹ to the end.² This is a dominant theme of the scriptures. One example may serve to represent many passages that convey a similar message:

"Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion . . . , for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb."³

Blessings bestowed by God are always predicated upon obedience to law.⁴ Applied to my analogy, we are first to get "on the boat" with Him. Then we are to *stay* with Him. And if we don't get "out of the boat" before we should, we shall reach His kingdom, where we will be lifted up to eternal life.

If we endure, we will be lifted up

The term *lifted up* relates to a physical law that can be illustrated by a simple demonstration.⁵ I will use a spool of thread and blow into the axial hole of the spool. The force of my breath will move a piece of tissue paper away from me. Next I will take an ordinary card and a straight pin. I will place the pin through the card. With the pin in the hole of the spool, I will hold the card close to the spool. I will again blow into the hole of the spool. As I blow, I will let go of the card so that it can respond to physical forces. Before I proceed, would you like to predict what will happen? Will I blow the card away from me, or will the card be lifted up toward me? Are you ready? [Elder Nelson demonstrates that blowing down the axial hole of the spool lifts the card up toward the spool.]

Did you notice? As long as I had sufficient breath, the card was lifted up. But when I could endure no longer, the card fell. When my breath gave out, the opposing force of gravity prevailed. If my energy could have endured, the card would have been lifted up indefinitely.⁶

Energy is always required to provide lift over opposing forces. These same laws apply in our personal lives. Whenever an undertaking is begun, both the energy and the will to endure are essential. The winner of a five-kilometer race is declared at the end of *five* kilometers, not at one or two. If you board a bus to Boston, you don't get off at Burlington. If you want to gain an education, you don't drop out along the way—just as you don't pay to dine at an elegant restaurant only to walk away after sampling the salad.

Whatever your work may be, endure at the beginning, endure through opposing forces along the way, and endure to the end. Any job must be completed before you can enjoy the result for which you are working. So wrote the poet:

Stick to your task till it sticks to you;
Beginners are many, but enders are few.

Honor, power, place, and praise
Will [always] come . . . to the one who stays.

Stick to your task till it sticks to you;
Bend at it, sweat at it, smile at it too;
For out of the bend and the sweat
and the smile

Will come life's victories, after
awhile.⁷

Sometimes the need to endure comes when facing a physical challenge. Anyone afflicted with a serious illness or with the infirmities of age hopes to be able to endure to the end of such trials.⁸ Most often, intense physical challenges are accompanied by spiritual challenges as well.

To endure, we must be surely converted

Think of the early pioneers. What if they had not endured the hardships of their westward migration? There would be no sesquicentennial celebration this year. Steadfastly they endured—through

persecution,⁹ expulsion,¹⁰ a governmental order of extermination,¹¹ expropriation of property,¹² and much more. Their enduring faith in the Lord provided lift for them as it will for you and for me.

The Lord's ultimate concern is for the salvation and exaltation of each individual soul. What if the Apostle Paul's conversion had not been enduring? He never would have testified as he did at the end of his ministry: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."¹³

What if Jesus had wavered in His commitment to do His Father's will?¹⁴ His Atonement would not have been accomplished. The dead would not be resurrected. The blessings of immortality and eternal life would not be.¹⁵ But Jesus did endure. During His final hour, Jesus prayed to His Father, saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do."¹⁶

Early in His mortal ministry, Jesus became concerned about the commitment of His followers. He had just fed the 5,000,¹⁷ then had taught them the doctrines of the kingdom. But some had murmured, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?"¹⁸ Even after He had fed them, many lacked the faith to endure with Him. He turned to the Twelve and said, "Will ye also go away?"

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, . . . thou hast the words of eternal life.

"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."¹⁹

Peter's answer defines the real core of commitment. When we know without a doubt that Jesus is the Christ, we will want to stay with Him. When we are surely converted, the power to endure is ours.

Enduring in the covenant of marriage

This power to endure is critical in those two most important relationships

we enter into in life. One is marriage; the other is membership in the Lord's Church. These are also unique in that they are both covenant—not contractual—relationships.

Marriage, especially temple marriage, and family ties involve covenant relationships. They cannot be regarded casually. With divorce rates escalating throughout the world today, it is apparent that many spouses are failing to endure to the end of their commitments to each other. And some temple marriages fail because a husband forgets that his highest and most important priesthood duty is to honor and sustain his wife.²⁰ The best thing that a father can do for his children is to "love their mother."²¹

President Gordon B. Hinckley made a statement recently that each Latter-day Saint husband should heed: "Magnify your [wife]," he said, "and in so doing you will magnify your priesthood."²² To his profound advice we might couple the timeless counsel of Paul, who said, "Let every one of you . . . love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."²³ Enduring love provides enduring lift through life's trials. An enduring marriage results when both husband and wife regard their union as one of the two most important commitments they will ever make.

Enduring in our covenants with God

The other commitment of everlasting consequence is to the Lord.²⁴ Unfortunately, some souls make a covenant with God—signified by the sacred ordinance of baptism—without a heartfelt commitment to endure with Him. Baptism is an extremely important ordinance. But it is only initiatory. The supreme benefits of membership in the Church can be realized only through the exalting ordinances of the temple. These blessings qualify us for "thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers"²⁵ in the celestial kingdom.

The Lord can readily discern between those with superficial signs of activity and those who are deeply rooted in His Church. This Jesus taught in the parable of the sower. He observed that some "have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended."²⁶

Loyalty to the Lord carries an obligation of loyalty to those called by the Lord to lead His Church. He has empowered that men be ordained to speak in His holy name.²⁷ As they guide His unsinkable boat safely toward the shore of salvation, we would do well to stay on board with them.²⁸ "No waters can swallow the ship where lies / The Master of ocean and earth and skies."²⁹

Nevertheless, some individuals want to jump "out of the boat" before reaching land. And others, sadly, are persuaded out by companions who insist that they know more about life's perilous journey than do prophets of the Lord. Problems often arise that are not of your own making. Some of you may innocently find yourselves abandoned by one you trusted. But you will never be forsaken by your Redeemer, who said, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say."³⁰

Without a strong commitment to the Lord, an individual is more prone to have a low level of commitment to a spouse. Weak commitments to eternal covenants lead to losses of eternal consequence. Laments later in life are laced with remorse, as expressed in these lines:

For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"³¹

We are speaking of the most important of all blessings. The Lord said, "If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal

life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”³²

Proper priorities help us endure

Each of you who really wants to endure to the glorious end that our Heavenly Father has foreseen should firmly establish some personal priorities. With many interests competing for your loyalty, you need to be careful first to stay safely “on the boat.” No one can serve two masters.³³ If Satan can get you to love anything—fun, flirtation, fame, or fortune—more than a spouse or the Lord with whom you have made sacred covenants to endure, the adversary begins to triumph. When faced with such temptations, you will find that strength comes from commitments made well in advance. The Lord said, “Settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you.”³⁴ He declared through His prophet Jeremiah, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”³⁵

When priorities are proper, the power to endure is increased. And when internalized, those priorities will help keep you from “going overboard.” They will protect you from cheating—in marriage, in the Church, and in life.

If you really want to *be* like the Lord—more than *anything* or *anyone* else—you will remember that your adoration of Jesus is best shown by your emulation of Him. Then you will not allow any other love to become more important than love for your companion, your family, and your Creator. You will govern yourself not by someone else’s set of rules but by revealed principles of truth.

The Lord will help us endure

Your responsibility to endure is uniquely yours. But you are never alone.

I testify that the lifting power of the Lord can be yours if you will “come unto Christ” and “be perfected in him.” You will “deny yourselves of all ungodliness.” And you will “love God with all your might, mind and strength.”³⁶

The living prophet of the Lord has issued a clarion call: “I invite every one of you,” said President Hinckley, “to stand on your feet and with a song in your heart move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building the kingdom. Together we shall *stay* the course and *keep* the faith.”³⁷

I pray that each of us may so endure and be lifted up at the last day, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. The word *endure* comes from two Latin roots. The prefix *en* means “within.” The remainder comes from the verb *durare*, which means “to be firm or solid.” Thus, to *endure* means “to become firm within yourself.” That meaning carries into the original languages of the Bible.

In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, the root word *aman* means “to render firm” or “to be faithful, to trust.” It was often translated as “faithful,” but never as “faith” alone. *Aman* meant more than faith. It was not a passive term; it meant “a firm resolve to be faithful.” *Aman* was also the Hebrew root for words that were translated into related terms, such as “verified,” “believe,” “long continuance,” “assurance,” “establish(ed),” “sure,” “trust,” “steadfast,” “stand fast,” and others.

In the Greek language of the New Testament, the verb *hupoméno* was used. It means “to remain,” “stay,” or “continue.” *Hupo* (or *hypo*) means “under,” as in *hypodermic* (“under the skin”) or *hypothermia* (“low temperature”). To *endure* connotes a commitment *within* one’s soul.

2. See Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13; 2 Nephi 33:4; Omni 1:26; 3 Nephi 15:9; D&C 14:7; 18:22; 20:29. This promise has been confirmed by both our Father in Heaven and by the Lord Jesus Christ. From the great Elohim, we have this pronouncement: "The words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (2 Nephi 31:15). And from the Savior, we have this promise: "Whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, . . . him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world" (3 Nephi 27:16).
3. 1 Nephi 13:37; see also Mosiah 23:22; Alma 13:29; 36:3; 37:37; 38:5; 3 Nephi 27:21–22; Ether 4:19; D&C 5:35; 9:14; 17:8; 75:16. For additional emphasis, scriptures teach the negative consequences of disobedience to this commandment. For example, "If they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned; for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it" (2 Nephi 9:24; see also 2 Nephi 31:16; Mormon 9:29).
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
5. This demonstration of Bernoulli's principle in physics was first shown to the author on 17 August 1996 by Elder Norman C. Boehm, then an Area Authority of the Church residing in Sacramento, California.
6. The law of lift is at work whenever airplanes fly. It is a "component of the total aerodynamic force acting on an airfoil or on an entire aircraft or winged missile perpendicular to the relative wind and normally exerted in an upward direction, opposing the pull of gravity" (*American Heritage Dictionary* 3rd ed. [1992], "lift," 1040).
7. "Stick to Your Task," in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 255–56.
8. In his 95th year, President Joseph Fielding Smith publicly expressed the hope that he would be able "to endure to the end in this life" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 92; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 27). He who served so faithfully and well all of his days provided a model for all of us to follow.
9. See Joseph Smith—History 1:20, 22–24, 27, 58, 60–61, 74.
10. The pioneers were driven from Ohio to Missouri to Illinois and finally to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.
11. The early pioneers were forced out of Missouri under threat of an order signed by Missouri's governor directing that the "Mormons must be treated as enemies and *must be exterminated* or driven from the state" (*History of the Church*, 3:175).
12. In 1887, the Congress of the USA took the unprecedented step of eliminating the Church's legal existence by revoking its corporate charter and authorizing federal receivers to assume ownership of virtually all of the Church's property and other assets, including its most sacred houses of worship—temples—in Logan, Manti, St. George, and Salt Lake City (see *The Late Corporation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints v. United States*, 136 U.S. 1 [1890]).
13. 2 Timothy 4:7.
14. See 3 Nephi 27:13.
15. See Moses 1:39.
16. John 17:4; italics added. See also John 4:34.
17. See Matthew 14:21; 16:9; Mark 6:44; 8:19; Luke 9:14; John 6:10.
18. John 6:60.
19. John 6:67–69.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:22.
21. This statement has been made by many leaders of the Church. For example, see Howard W. Hunter, in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50; David O. McKay, as quoted by Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference

- Report, Oct. 1982, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 77.
22. First session of member fireside conference in Lima, Peru, 9 Nov. 1996.
 23. Ephesians 5:33.
 24. In addition, worthy men are privileged to qualify for the oath and covenant of the priesthood, which will bless all men, women, and children whom they serve (see D&C 84:33–48).
 25. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
 26. Mark 4:17.
 27. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 21:5; 68:4.
 28. See Acts 27:30–31; 1 Nephi 18:21–23.
 29. “Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” *Hymns*, no. 105.
 30. Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
 31. John Greenleaf Whittier, “Maud Muller,” *The Complete Poetical Works of Whittier* (1892), 48.
 32. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7. The Prophet Joseph included this concept of endurance in the thirteenth article of faith: “We have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things.”
 33. See Matthew 6:24.
 34. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28.
 35. Jeremiah 31:33.
 36. Moroni 10:32.
 37. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 72; italics added.

Sister Elaine L. Jack

Laying a small stone at the gate of Relief Society

I grew up just a stone's throw from the Alberta Temple in Cardston, Canada. In this small Mormon community at the foot of the Canadian Rockies, a temple stood as a powerful symbol of the strength and grandeur of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I made my most meaningful covenants within the walls of that temple.

Those walls are very significant to me. My grandfather John F. Anderson, a skilled stonemason from Aberdeen, Scotland, was called to dress the white granite stone for this holy temple. In 1915 at the laying of the cornerstone, he had the honor of acting as the chief mason under the supervision of Elder David O. McKay. In 1923, before the temple was dedicated, my grandfather laid the very last stone. Then, in his journal he recorded, “It was not the capstone, but a small stone at the front gate entrance.”

Today, I lay my small stone at the front gate entrance of Relief Society.

In the book of Omni, itself a small stone in the middle of the Book of Mormon, Amaleki writes: “I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, . . . and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved” (Omni 1:26).

The Prophet Joseph Smith described offering “your whole soul” as serving God with all your “heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2). It is to put on the altar of God your time, talents, gifts and blessings, your willingness to serve, to do all that He asks. My grandfather offered to the Lord the stone he had placed so carefully. Today, I offer my years of service in the general Relief Society.

In 1991, at the invitation of President Hinckley, I returned to my childhood home in Canada to attend the rededication of the Alberta Temple. I will always remember the power that

filled the room as the session concluded and we stood to sing, "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning!" My heart was touched by the familiar words: "We'll sing and we'll shout with the armies of heaven, / Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb!" ("The Spirit of God," *Hymns*, no. 2). Hosanna is a righteous shout for joy, and this was a joyous occasion!

To our chorus the choir added the great "Hosannah Anthem." The words were meaningful then as I reflected on my grandfather's work to build the walls of that noble temple: "The house of the Lord is completed. May our offering by Him be accepted" (in *The Choirbook* [1980], 70). They strike me even more dramatically today as I complete my "house" for the Lord.

This Relief Society presidency has been building

I find many parallels with building a temple and fulfilling a calling. We begin with bare ground, and we start to work. We survey the situation, pray for inspiration, thoughtfully formulate plans, send them for review, adjust, and plan again. We firm up a foundation and then add walls, a roof, and even gardens. Each administration builds on the solid bedrock of the past.

For the past seven years this Relief Society presidency has been building. We have added a Churchwide literacy effort to our education focus; we have emphasized the principle of watching over and caring for our sisters through visiting teaching; we have continued to place home and family at the center of our attention and honored the divine nature of women as they nurture, sacrifice, teach, and inspire. Wonderful things have happened because of the women of this Church, who have tended children and tended each other, taught self-reliance and taught of the Savior.

How I have loved working so closely with the wonderful women of this

Church as they have offered their souls to the Lord. To their stones, I add my own. I pray that it may be accepted.

"Something extraordinary"

One of my prized memories of these past few years was the sesquicentennial in 1992, when we celebrated the founding of Relief Society, one of the oldest, largest, and, in my eyes, the most successful women's organizations in the world. It is still thrilling for me to remember the simultaneous broadcast to every continent of the world, linking sisters for the first time from Taiwan, Zimbabwe, Germany, Mexico, Korea, Australia, and America.

Emma Smith, the first president of this organization, said to the sisters, "We are going to do something extraordinary" (Minutes of the Female Relief Society, 17 Mar. 1842, 7, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). Our celebration was indeed "something extraordinary." What began in 1842 with 20 women in Nauvoo, Illinois, now involves nearly four million women on every continent and in almost every country in the world. But what is significant is that it began with one woman, Margaret Cook, who offered to sew shirts for the men working on the Nauvoo Temple. She needed cloth and could not afford to buy it. Sarah Kimball offered the cloth, and within weeks the Relief Society was organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith under the inspiration of the Lord. It began with a small offering—at the front gate—and it has grown to a major force for good around the world, one stone at a time.

The Lord helps us prepare our offerings

One of the things I recognize is that if we are obedient, faithful, and earnest, the Lord helps us prepare our offerings. We learn this from Nephi, who was told, "Thou shalt construct a ship, after the

manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters" (1 Nephi 17:8). Nephi was not from a seaside community; he had never built a boat. But his response was so full of faith and accountability: "Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?" (1 Nephi 17:9). Without hesitation or question, Nephi began to prepare an offering to the Lord in the shape of a ship.

When I was called to serve in this assignment, I, like Nephi, went to the Lord for help. My tools came in the form of two strong and capable counselors, Chieko Okazaki and Aileen Clyde. As a presidency we have been fortunate to have a board of 12 noble women, whose contribution has reflected dedication and skill, and an office staff, whose service has been generously and patiently given. Together, we have done "this work with holiness of heart" (Mosiah 18:12). And we have been blessed with the prayers and goodness of Relief Society women in all parts of the world, good women who take seriously the Lord's charge, "Be not weary in well-doing" (D&C 64:33).

Expressions of gratitude

I want to express my gratitude to the many priesthood leaders who have counseled and directed us. They have needed our confidence and support just as we have needed their understanding and priesthood power. The Lord has called men of valor, wisdom, and heart to lead this Church. I have seen God inspire our leaders; I have seen them act decisively, compassionately, and carefully. I trust them; they have trusted us.

I know I speak for the women of this Church when I say to President Hinckley, President Monson, President Faust, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, we stand by you, we support you, we

know you are latter-day prophets with the keys to the kingdom of God.

I also pay tribute to my husband, Joe, who has blessed me with his steadiness, his sense of humor and good judgment, and his righteous hands. My four sons have followed his lead as loyal supporters. I took it as the ultimate compliment when one of them said, "We've been training Mom to be a Relief Society president for a long time, and she finally got it right!"

Look forward with hope

Our offerings embrace both the work we do and the heart with which we do it. The Lord calls this "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20). This union constitutes the soul. Amaleki spoke of offering "your whole souls" to Jesus Christ (Omni 1:26). Brothers and sisters, the time is past when we can merely believe in this gospel; we must be passionate in our belief and in our commitment to Jesus Christ and His plan. We must know, unequivocally, that He is with us, that He will guide and direct us. In His name we shape our offering. For the past few years I have represented all the women of this Church, a far-reaching responsibility. I believe that the Lord will measure my efforts by my heart and my spirit, as He does yours.

Today, Relief Society represents the hope expressed by President Emmeline B. Wells, who served in the early years of this century. Her guidance had helped Relief Society hold fast to its cherished traditions while going forward with faith in God and hope in the future. Fifty years later President Belle Spafford said, "Relief Society is only on the threshold of its divine mission" (in *History of Relief Society, 1842-1966* [1966], 140). Today, we are ready to step over that threshold into a new dimension of spirituality and light. I look forward with a perfect brightness of hope to the offerings of Relief Society sisters in the new century

that is before us. Our joy in the gospel of Jesus Christ and our place in His plan will draw people to us and change lives. We will lift and inspire a world so desperately in need of goodness. This new presidency will build an even greater sense of purpose and contribution. I commit my full support to President Smoot and her counselors as they add new stones to the building of the kingdom of God. Surely the strength of today will serve as a foundation upon which the women of tomorrow will build.

This Church has been built and will continue to grow through the steady efforts of the members who quietly do their part, who are struggling with daily challenges, who are humble, patient, and long-suffering. These are the hearts that fill with joy when they sing in dedication of their own offerings, "The Lord is extending the Saints' understanding" (*Hymns*, no. 2).

My heart is full of gratitude and great joy. Rejoice with me in bearing

testimony of the Savior: "Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us. He was followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack, who was released yesterday as the president of the Relief Society of the Church. I think she's going to continue as a member of Relief Society all the days of her life. She's converted.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "How Firm a Foundation."

Then we will hear from Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

Bishop H. David Burton

All of our lives have been blessed through the great service of Sister Jack and her counselors. I'm sure I represent each of you in expressing our thanks.

The parable of the good Samaritan

Faithful disciples following the Savior heard gospel principles taught by thought-provoking short stories known as parables. After hearing many parables, "the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" (Matthew 13:10). The Savior responded, "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:13).

A lawyer chose to challenge the Savior on a point of doctrine. Attempting to

entrap Jesus, he asked, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). Jesus responded with a question of His own: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). The response of the lawyer, as recited from the law, was perfect: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27). Jesus acknowledged the answer and then replied, "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28).

Having failed to confound the Master, the lawyer was embarrassed. He sought justification by making a further inquiry: "And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). We should be very grateful for the lawyer's second question.

From it came one of the most insightful of the Savior's parables.

You remember the setting: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, . . . leaving him half dead" (Luke 10:30). Since our Primary days, we have heard about this certain man. We wonder at the failure of the priest and the Levite to render aid, and we say: "Surely, I would have helped. Surely, I would have helped. Surely, I would not have looked the other way."

The parable continues: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him" (Luke 10:33).

The prophet Moroni was granted a vision of our day. The Book of Mormon record states:

"For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel . . . more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted. . . .

"Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?" (Mormon 8:37, 39).

Moroni was troubled by what he saw. Are we troubled enough to set aside our love of substance and hear the cry of the hungry, the needy, the naked, and the sick? Can we say, "I would have responded if I had seen a person in need, as did the Samaritan?"

The parable continues: "And [he] went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke 10:34). Upon completing the parable, the Savior asked the lawyer, "Which now of these three . . . was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" (Luke 10:36).

He quickly identified the one who had shown mercy—the kind and caring

traveler from Samaria. Jesus admonished the lawyer to "*go, and do thou likewise*" (Luke 10:37; italics added).

Modern-day Samaritans

May I tell you about several of the many Samaritans who are "pouring in oil and wine" to ease the plight of the needy around the world?

In March of 1996, a volunteer team consisting of a radiologist, two technicians, and a biomedical engineer installed a mammography machine and a film processor in a hospital in Poland. The equipment was purchased by the Church with funds generously contributed for humanitarian assistance. Physicians and technologists came from area hospitals to be trained in the use of the machines. Since observing the benefits of the machines, the Polish government has purchased 45 more. Many lives will be saved and much suffering avoided by early detection of abnormalities.

Cambodia has suffered nearly 30 years of war. Thousands perished, and survivors have experienced misery and deprivation. In 1994, following an emergency food donation by the Church, an offer was extended to assist Cambodians in becoming more self-reliant in basic food production and processing. Several skilled volunteer couples have established a small cannery and a poultry feed mill. Technical courses have been developed and taught to many. A new era in agriculture is being born through the unselfish efforts of modern good Samaritans.

Many of us regularly "*go, and do . . . likewise*" when we dispatch our surplus clothing to Deseret Industries. In 1996, over 8.5 million pounds of clothing were sorted and distributed to those in great need. Much clothing has been sent to needy populations in Russia—coats to provide warmth in freezing weather; gloves to prevent frostbite; dresses, shirts, and sweaters. A Russian official

wrote, "We do thank God and each one of you for the great help you have been to our people."

Providing in the Lord's way

The prophet Alma, in describing his day, said, "They did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted" (Alma 1:27). Even when they prospered, "they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst . . . ; they were liberal to all, . . . whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need" (Alma 1:30).

Good Samaritanism is contagious. Providing in the Lord's way humbles the rich, exalts the poor, and sanctifies both (see D&C 104:15-18). The giver helps those in need by sharing what he has received. The receiver accepts the offering with gratitude. As the receiver rises to his full potential, he then is able to reach out to help others.

Good Samaritanism starts in the home as parents teach children by example and precept. Acts of assistance, kindness, and concern among family members reinforce the desire to "go, and do thou likewise."

"Go, and do thou likewise"

Tucked away in the Uintah Basin of eastern Utah are several small communities. Jedadiah lives in one of these friendly towns. He is a handsome, blond 11-year-old. Jeddy loves academics and is extremely interested in sports. He is excited to soon be eligible to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. Jeddy's body cannot do the many things that he would like it to do. The cystic fibrosis that exists in his lungs makes breathing rather difficult.

Amanda, Jeddy's big sister, is a lovely 16-year-old who displays her love

for him in a host of ways. She is a source of comfort when times are difficult. She is his link to school, seeing that assignments are brought home daily. A neighbor said, "Amanda is a real heroine in her family." She understands the significance of "go, and do thou likewise." Jeddy travels to Salt Lake City only to go to the hospital. For a special reason he is looking forward to October general conference. It is a family tradition that Grandfather takes his grandsons to Salt Lake for general conference following their 12th birthday. Jeddy can hardly wait; neither can Grandpa.

Recently, a sweet 93-year-old sister joined her eternal companion on the other side of the veil. They were blessed with four devoted children. This couple shared their musical talents on thousands of occasions. Many saddened spirits were uplifted in times of mourning as these "good Samaritans" blended their voices in strains of hope and encouragement. Many children will feel the love of the Savior as they sing Primary songs composed by this sweet sister. As her health declined, loving children spent much time and energy and emotion in meeting her needs. A valiant daughter devoted herself to her mother's care. They will continue to "go, and do thou likewise."

In a mountain valley, a small community is the home of a monastery with a declining number of aging monks. A stake Relief Society president, with many other compassionate service responsibilities, regularly checks on the well-being of the monks. She is the first to deliver goodies on days when they are permissible. She cares about their welfare just as she does about the members of her stake.

Bishops regularly call upon volunteer labor to grow and process commodities to fill bishops' storehouses. Last year, nearly 270,000 days of labor were volunteered in keeping shelves

filled and available for use by bishops. Many of us have fond remembrances of our time volunteering on welfare projects. I can still hear a farm manager's cries of anguish as he observed the damage done to several acres of sugar beets because we had mistaken newly emerging beet plants for weeds. The blessings we received for our service turned out to be a "Scotch blessing."

President Monson said, "We have a responsibility to extend help as well as hope to the hungry, to the homeless, and to the downtrodden both at home and abroad" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 3; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 4).

The resources of the Lord's storehouse

Picture a small, one-room apartment which is home for a family of six. The room is dirty and cluttered. The family has not been to church in years.

As the ward welfare committee discussed the family's needs, there was a feeling of discouragement, for bishops, over the years, had helped the family often. In the discussion, a new idea began to dawn. Perhaps, if the committee called upon the resources of the Lord's storehouse—the talents and skills of ward members—even this difficult situation could be assisted.

The committee first focused on future possibilities as well as immediate needs. As possibilities turned to reality, hope and optimism replaced gloom and depression. Filled with hope, the family committed to help improve their own situation. The committee also went to work. A hairstylist gave the family haircuts. A dentist volunteered, and for the first time in years, a mother was not embarrassed to smile. A new pair of glasses allowed this mother to once again read to her children. A financial specialist worked with the family in budgeting their funds. A three-year-old received much needed physical therapy.

Slowly the family began to believe their life could be different. The apartment, once dirty and disorganized, began to show signs of order and cleanliness. Curtains went up on the windows. Just a year later, invitations were extended by this family to an open house for their three-bedroom home.

A wounded family was found by the side of the road, a family suffering just as much as the traveler from Jerusalem in Jesus' day. The family's cries were heard, and their wounds were bound. The modern "good Samaritans" followed the divine injunction to "*go, and do thou likewise.*" Spiritual lives were also rescued. Today, this family is active in the Church and preparing to receive the blessings of the temple.

Relieving suffering is Christlike

Bishops use consecrated fast offerings to supply needs beyond those which can be provided by the storehouse. President Hinckley suggested we think "of what would happen if the principles of [the] fast day and the fast offering were observed throughout the world. The hungry would be fed, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered. . . . The giver would not suffer but would be blessed by his small abstinence. A new measure of concern and unselfishness would grow in the hearts of people everywhere" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 52–53).

To help relieve suffering is to cultivate a Christlike character. We are charged, as were those who listened at the feet of the Savior 2,000 years ago, to "*go, and do thou likewise.*" The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that it is our responsibility "to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever he finds them" (*Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, 732).

May we be generous with our time and liberal in our contributions for the care of those who suffer. May we commit to the principles of Good Samaritanism and be ever mindful of the need to “go, and do thou likewise,” I pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

Elder L. Edward Brown of the Seventy will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder L. Edward Brown

God is our Father

As our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, met with His disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, He taught them a pattern for prayer. This prayer, which is known to us as the Lord's Prayer, deserves our thoughtful consideration (see Matthew 6:9–13; 3 Nephi 13:9–13).

The Lord counseled, or perhaps even commanded, “After this manner therefore pray ye” (Matthew 6:9). Now focus your minds, and your hearts, on how He began this noble prayer: “Our Father [who] art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). What a stunning moment it was! What a revelation! “Our Father,” He declared, “Our Father.”

Oh, He could have chosen so many ways to begin the prayer: “O mighty Creator of heaven and earth, O mighty God who is omnipresent, omniscient, or omnipotent.” These grand titles contain grand and noble truths. But He taught in one single word, “Father,” so very much that we need to know, that indeed we long to know. God is our Father. And we are His children.

Prophets of God proclaim that “all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny” (“The Family:

A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

As a child enjoys a satisfying and secure relationship with his or her own father, he or she can relate naturally to his or her Heavenly Father. The child senses that he is a child of God and that God is his Father. That feels normal and that feels right, because it is right. We so proclaim that “in the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). They knew Him then. They will naturally and intuitively know Him now. What a tragedy for an innocent child to be abused such that he or she would find it difficult to reach out to his or her Heavenly Father.

The prayer of a young boy

Some years ago, some close friends of ours loaned us their cabin in Island Park, Idaho. When we arrived at the cabin, we found that the key that we had been given to unlock the front door didn't work. We tried to undo windows and pry open screens, all to no avail.

Suddenly our son Steven, who was about seven years old at the time, shouted to us that he had just successfully opened the front door. Steven, with a big grin on his face, was standing triumphantly inside the front doorway. I was amazed. I asked him how he did that.

He responded with wonderful, child-like spontaneity: "I bowed my head and prayed. When I looked up, my eyes spotted this big rock by the front steps, and I thought, 'There is a key under that rock.' And sure enough there it was." The prayer of a child had been heard. I thank the Lord for his mother, who had taught him to find keys in moments of crisis.

The Lord does communicate with us

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I bear earnest and solemn witness to you that the Lord does communicate with us as individuals. Never, never fall victim to the heinous thought that He does not care for you, that He does not know you. That is a satanic lie, one designed to destroy you.

Just two weeks ago, I was sending E-mail, or electronic messages, through our personal computer in our apartment in Tokyo, Japan, to a nephew in China; a son in Pocatello, Idaho; and another nephew in Longview, Washington. In the midst of formulating these E-mail messages, a miracle occurred. Our son-in-law in Salt Lake City sent us an instant, on-screen E-mail message. He simply asked, "Are you there?" I immediately responded, "I am here." And we "spoke" with one another via the miracle of E-mail.

Of course, God can and does communicate with us. According to the Doctrine and Covenants, section 88, verses 6 to 13, there is a light which "proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space." There is a light "in all things." It gives "life to all things." It is the "law by which all things are governed, even the power of God." This light "giveth you light [and] is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings."

Our Father has a superb communication system through which He transmits messages and feelings. "Yea,

behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost . . . , which shall dwell in your heart. . . . This is the spirit of revelation" (D&C 8:2-3). He knows and communicates with His sheep and they hear His voice (see John 10:14-16).

We must pray in the name of Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us to pray and covenants that answers will be forthcoming. "Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name," He declares (3 Nephi 18:19). "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21).

Note His insistence that "ye must always pray . . . in my name." There is "no other name given . . . whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (Mosiah 3:17).

The power of the Savior's name

We read this powerful account in the book of Moses, chapter 1. In verse 3, the Lord declares to Moses, "Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless?" Moses must have been overwhelmed with that announcement. Imagine what he must have felt with the next declaration as recorded in verse 4 of the same chapter: The Lord says, "And, behold, thou art my son." This is the Lord God Almighty, and "Endless is [His] name," He declares. And then He says to Moses, "Thou art my son." What a moment. If the Lord were to appear to you, He would say the same thing.

Following the Lord's appearance to Moses, Satan appeared to him. He commanded Moses, saying, "Son of man, worship me" (Moses 1:12). Moses looked at Satan, and with confidence in the

Lord's recent revelation, he rebuked him, saying to Satan: "Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee?" (Moses 1:13).

Moses had learned something about himself. He was a son of God. Oh, how important it is that our children be reminded of this truth. And Moses commanded Satan to leave, but to no avail. And Satan was angry. Moses again commanded him to depart, and Satan cried and ranted upon the earth, again refusing to leave. (See Moses 1:18-19.)

Moses then realized that he had a major challenge on his hands. This was no ordinary person. He was fearsome, angry, and powerful. Moses wanted no part of this and commanded boldly: "Depart from me, Satan, for this one God only will I worship, which is the God of glory. And now Satan began to tremble, and the earth shook" (Moses 1:20-21).

Here was a power that was dark and bitter. How could Moses withstand such? In this great moment of crisis, "Moses received strength, and called upon God, saying: In the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence, Satan" (Moses 1:21). He now appealed to a power beyond his own. He tapped into a source of strength and authority through the Lord Jesus Christ, a power which Satan could not defy. "And it came to pass that Satan cried with a loud voice, with weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and he departed hence, even from the presence of Moses, that he beheld him not" (Moses 1:22).

Our prayers will be heard

Years ago, one of our colleagues shared this tender experience with us. His young daughter, Kim, had just learned to count. In fact, she could count all the way from one to ten. They were so excited they called Grandma. "Hi, Grandma. Do you want to hear me count?" Then she began to count, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen." Perhaps the Savior smiled and was pleased that Kim could count from one to ten.

When we use these sacred words, "in the name of Jesus Christ," they are much more than a way to get out of a prayer or out of a testimony or out of a talk. We are on holy ground, brothers and sisters. We are using a name most sublime, most holy, and most wonderful—the very name of the Son of God. We are now able to come unto the Father through His Beloved Son. What power and reassurance and peace come when we really pray in His name. This conclusion to the prayer may, in many ways, be the most important part of the prayer. We can appeal to the Father through His victorious Son with confidence that our prayers will be heard. We can ask and receive, we can seek and find and subsequently find the open door.

I testify to you in that holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, that God is our Father. We are His children. Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son in the flesh. He is our beloved Savior and Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Robert D. Hales

The process of conversion

The Savior, as a caring friend, said to Peter, who had recently come to follow the Savior:

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art con-

verted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

What is this process of conversion that each son and daughter of God must experience if they are to help others return back into His presence?

The first seeds of conversion begin with an awareness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and a desire to know the truth concerning His restored Church. "Let this desire work in you" (Alma 32:27). A desire to know the truth is like a seed which grows in the fertile ground of faith, patience, diligence, and long-suffering (see Alma 32:27-41). There have been some miraculous conversions recorded in the scriptures. The miraculous conversion of Saul is one such example, illustrated when he asked two vital questions: "Who art thou, Lord? . . . [and] What wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:5-6). On occasion individuals can have such experiences, but for the most part, conversion happens over a period of time as study, prayer, experience, and faith help us to grow in our testimony and conversion.

When Abinadi fearlessly taught the gospel of Jesus Christ to the wicked King Noah and his priests, only Alma recognized the truth. Alma then had to demonstrate great faith in the words of Abinadi as he sought to bring about a mighty change of heart. This change of heart strengthened his conversion with a desire to forsake his sins. The conversion of each member of the Church is not unlike that of Alma (see Mosiah 17).

We come out of the world into the kingdom of God. In the conversion process, we experience repentance, which brings about humility and a broken heart and contrite spirit, preparing us for baptism, remission of sins, and receiving the Holy Ghost. Then, over time and through our faithfulness, we overcome trials and tribulations and endure to the end.

Learning to become a fellow citizen

I think of what the first members of the Church left behind. Many had to leave their families and friends, their nation of birth, and many of their ways of life. They traveled across an ocean and walked across a great nation to come to Zion so that they might have the fellowship of the Saints.

It is no different today. When new members come out of the world into the kingdom of God, they leave much behind them. Oftentimes they too must leave behind friends and even family as well as social contacts and a way of life that is not compatible with the standards of the Church.

After baptism, the new member of the Church must learn how to become a fellow citizen with the Saints in the kingdom of God through study, prayer, member example, and nurturing. Each member of the Church is developing daily a deeper personal commitment, testimony, and conversion as they serve in their families and in Church callings.

Once in the kingdom of God as a newly baptized member, we honor the restored priesthood. Honoring the priesthood and being obedient in living the commandments are important elements in the conversion process. Adult male members receive the Aaronic Priesthood soon after baptism. After a period of time, if worthy, they should receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, and each individual in the family shares the blessings of the priesthood in the home. Women are welcomed and enjoy the blessings of sisterhood in the Relief Society. Youth develop friendships as they associate in the Young Men and Young Women organizations. The children are blessed as they are taught and feel the love of caring teachers in the Primary.

Our obedience to the commandments leads us to service and sacrifice in

accepting callings in the priesthood quorums and the auxiliary organizations.

We faithfully progress for at least one year after baptism and prepare ourselves to enter the temple of the Lord. In the holy temple we receive our sacred endowments, which teach us how we must live to return into the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Then we are sealed for time and all eternity. Our children come into the world protected, born in the eternal covenants we have taken together as husband and wife. If we enter the waters of baptism after our family is grown, our children are sealed to us as though they were born in the covenant.

All of this time our testimonies continue to grow, and as they do they become a protection for us "that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . it shall have no power over you" (Helaman 5:12).

Knowing the truth and gaining a testimony strengthen us to stay on the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life. As testimony grows, we become more and more converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we follow Him, we commit ourselves to serve Him by serving others.

Provide the soil that nurtures the seed

Brothers and sisters, the Church is growing rapidly as our missionary force introduces the gospel in all parts of the world to those who are prepared with ears to hear. They join the Church with great faith, with a testimony of Jesus Christ, with love in their hearts, and then they face the realities of reordering their lives to reflect the Lord's will. They lose the close association with the missionaries who brought them the light.

They come to our wards and branches feeling as though they are strangers. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fel-

lowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). We read in the scriptures about seeds and about the sower of seeds (see Matthew 13; Alma 32). We are taught that a seed can grow, become a tree, and bear fruit. But we have to have good soil to accept the good seed, and that is one of our roles in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—that we provide the soil which nurtures the seed so it can grow and bear fruit and the fruit remains (see John 15:16). Many are strong enough to endure to the end. Without receiving a warm hand of fellowship, some become discouraged and unfortunately may lose the spirit that brought them to the waters of baptism. What was once a centerpiece in their existence is pushed aside for what they may perceive to be an offense or more pressing matters of the day, or it is simply lost in the shuffle of living. To labor for the conversion of one's self and others is a noble and joyful task.

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:15–16).

Be aware of new members' needs

Have you ever pondered the sorrow of losing one and what sadness there must be when many are lost? That is what the Lord feels. It is what our prophet feels. And that is what I hope that you and I can feel, that we can show a determination to nurture those who have experienced the joys of feeling the Spirit, being baptized, and gaining a testimony and who are in the process of overcoming trials and tribulations and

achieving an enduring conversion that will last eternally.

Amid the busyness of our day and concerns of what we are trying to accomplish in our individual lives and within our families, we sometimes are not aware of the needs of the new member who has just entered the kingdom. As we are committed to be by the side of each new member, could we walk with them along the straight and narrow path that leads to the temple, going with them to the temple so that in our friendship we can have joy and rejoice with them as we move together toward eternal life?

"Nevertheless, the people of the church did have great joy because of the conversion of the Lamanites, yea, because of the church of God, which had been established among them. And they did fellowship one with another, and did rejoice one with another, and did have great joy" (Helaman 6:3).

Visualize for a moment a shepherd tending his sheep. The shepherd is studying and praying diligently to get close to God. As the shepherd concentrates on his personal relationship with God, he loses track of time and circumstance. He is not aware of his sheep wandering away or being ravaged by evil marauders. The shepherd awakes from his personal pondering to the reality that some of his sheep are missing and he must go forth and find them, bringing them back.

We whose conversion is sufficient must reach out to those who wander. As we do, we will find great joy in gathering the Lord's sheep.

The example of Ammon

Ammon, the Nephite missionary, provided an example for us. He had chosen to serve the Lamanite king and was sent to watch the flocks of Lamoni. When a band of renegades attacked and scattered the sheep, Ammon's fellow servants had fear and began to weep. What did Ammon say? "Be of good

cheer and let us go in search of the flocks, and we will gather them together and bring them back unto the place of water" (Alma 17:31).

Now, we may read this as a story about some shepherds trying to round up some missing sheep, but the message is much more powerful and significant than that. Ammon was a missionary with noble intentions to bring the king and his kingdom back to the fold of righteousness, to the well of living water. The challenge looked daunting to those who could see only, in everyday terms, sheep strung out on hillsides and not enough manpower to round them up. They were discouraged and fearful that the king would discover their loss.

Ammon not only led the force to recapture the sheep, he drove away the evil men who caused the problems; and his heroic efforts persuaded the king to follow him and to follow the Savior. Ammon teaches us that no matter our circumstances, we can be an example to others, we can lift them, we can inspire them to seek righteousness, and we can bear testimony to all of the power of Jesus Christ.

To become one in the family of Saints requires established members of the Church to warmly welcome new members with open arms. In like manner, it also requires a sincere effort on the part of new members to come to church and participate with the other members of the Church. Being one transcends gender, age, marital status, and economic standing.

Feed the Lord's sheep

Conversion requires consecrating our lives to caring for and serving others who need our help and to sharing our gifts and talents. The Lord didn't say tend my sheep when it is convenient, watch my sheep when you aren't busy. He said feed my sheep and my lambs, help them survive this world, keep them

close to you. Lead them to safety—the safety of righteous choices that will prepare them for eternal life.

A member's challenge is similar to the many lessons that Jesus' disciples and Apostles learned after they responded to His sincere invitation to "come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). In the New Testament many lessons Peter, the senior Apostle, learned are shared with us because these are lessons we must also learn in our conversion process.

After the Crucifixion, Peter went fishing with the disciples. He was now the senior Apostle, but he did not realize what was expected of him. He had forgotten that he was to be a fisher of men. From the boat one of the fishermen recognized the resurrected Lord on the shore. Peter bounded ashore to greet the Savior and was met with a direct question that plumbed the depths of his conversion. Peter was still learning, as we must continue to learn. "Lovest thou me?" asked the Savior three times (John 21:15–17). "Lovest thou me?" Peter was hurt and taken aback. "Thou knowest that I love thee," he replied (John 21:17). Then counseled the Savior, "Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17).

Like Peter, many are converted and leave the things of this world to follow the Lord. Like Peter, when we are called to be fishers of Father's children, do we go "a fishing" (John 21:3) and forget to feed His lambs and sheep? Like Peter, when those around us are suffering or feeling fearful and need our fellowship and help, do we sleep at the garden gate? (see Matthew 26:36–46).

Like Peter, as we have our own individual learning experiences, will we be able to respond in the same manner Peter did when the Lord asked him, "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter, now converted, answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:15–16).

"Strengthen thy brethren"

Brothers and sisters, do we really understand the teachings of the Savior, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren"? (Luke 22:32). Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep. Feeding the lambs could well be missionary labors working with newly baptized members, who must be nurtured and given caring warmth and fellowship in the family of Saints. Feeding the sheep could well refer to the mature members of the Church, some active and some less active, who need to be cared for and brought back to the flock.

We have learned well the message of one prophet, "Every member [is] a missionary!" (David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122). Hopefully, we will respond to an equally urgent plea that every member be a friend, a fellow-shipper, nurturing and caring for all our brothers and sisters—fully active members, new members, and less-active members alike.

Last night in priesthood meeting we received an entreaty from President Hinckley regarding our new members. He urgently petitioned us to care for our new members with these statements: "I ask of you, each of you, to become a part of this great effort. . . . Brethren, let us help them as they take their first steps as members. . . . [This] is a work for home teachers and visiting teachers. It is a work for the bishopric, for the priesthood quorums, for the Relief Society, the young men and young women, even the Primary. . . . Your friendly ways are needed. . . . That one who was lost need not have become lost. But if he is out . . . somewhere in the shadows, and if it means leaving the ninety and nine, we must do so to find him."

May our personal supplication in response to the prophet's entreaty be:

Help me reach a friend in darkness;
Help me guide him through the
night.

Help me show thy path to glory
By the Spirit's holy light. . . .

Help me find thy lambs who wander;
Help me bring them to thy keep.
Teach me, Lord, to be a shepherd;
Father, help me feed thy sheep.
("Help Me Teach with Inspiration,"
Hymns, no. 281)

That we may follow our prophet's plea, become converted, and then strengthen our brothers and sisters is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, the Logan-Ogden combined Institute choirs, the Ricks College combined men's chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir, and to their conductors and their organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference. It has been a prayer unto the Lord.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for their coverage of the conference. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who will be our concluding speaker.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Redeemer of Israel." And the benediction will be offered by Elder John E. Fowler of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Nothing to fear and everything to gain

This has been a wonderful conference. The Spirit of the Lord has been here. The music has been inspirational. The talks and prayers have touched us with a desire to do better. We have appreciated all who have spoken and wish that all of the General and Area Authorities and general officers might have been heard from. That would have taken about a week.

We have been reminded that ours is a great inheritance. The past is behind us. It is the future with which we must be concerned. We face great opportunities

and great challenges. Our critics at home and abroad are watching us. In an effort to find fault, they listen to every word we say, hoping to entrap us. We may stumble now and again. But the work will not be materially hindered. We will stand up where we fell and go forward.

We have nothing to fear and everything to gain. God is at the helm. We will seek His direction. We will listen to the still, small voice of revelation. And we will go forward as He directs.

His Church will not be misled. Never fear that. If there were any disposition on the part of its leaders to do so, He could

remove them. All of us are beholden to Him for life and voice and strength.

Let us be good citizens of the nations in which we live. Let us be good neighbors in our communities. Let us acknowledge the diversity of our society, recognizing the good in all people. We need not make any surrender of our theology. But we can set aside any element of suspicion, of provincialism, of parochialism.

The living reality of the Savior

"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Articles of Faith 1:1). This is our primary declaration of faith. We speak unabashedly of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. We declare without equivocation the fact of His great act of Atonement for all mankind. That act brought assurance of universal resurrection and opened the way to exaltation in our Father's kingdom.

This is the burden of our declaration to the world. It is the substance of our theology. It is the wellspring of our faith. Let no one ever say that we are not Christians.

To those who have been released during this conference, we express our deep gratitude for your past performance. You have done so very, very well. Thank you for your great contributions. To those of you newly sustained, we wish for you great satisfaction and happiness in the work which you will do. All of us at some time will be released by one process or another. It matters not where we serve in this great cause, but how we serve.

We each make a contribution

Brigham Young and a handful of others are remembered from our pioneer history. But what of the unsung, the unheralded, the unrecognized who lived the gospel, loved the Lord, and did their daily work without fanfare or applause? Will their eternal reward be any less? I think not.

So it is with us. We each make our own contribution, and that contribution adds up to the building of the cause. Your contribution is as acceptable as ours. Jesus said, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mark 9:35).

Brethren and sisters, we're all part of one great family. Each has a duty; each has a mission to perform. And when we pass on, it will be reward enough if we can say to our beloved Master, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

May each of you go safely to your homes. May you live together in love and appreciation and respect one for another. May you know the smile of heaven upon your lives.

Our love reaches out to you. We love you very much. We leave our blessing with you. We do so as servants of the living God and in the name of our divine Redeemer. God be with you till we meet again, as we conclude this great and wonderful conference, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel."
Elder John E. Fowler offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Logan-Ogden combined Institute choirs, conducted by Don Castleton. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

At the general priesthood session a Ricks College combined men's choir provided the music. Kevin Brower and Steve Greason conducted the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell	80
Honoring the pioneers; Footsteps of faith; "Nothing to fear from the journey"; Lessons for today from the pioneers; Great rewards if we journey faithfully; Jesus Christ has rescued us	
Brough, Elder Monte J.	35
"How come we 'got choosed'"? The divine nature of our callings; "I have chosen you"; A taxi ride in New Delhi; Divine calling of missionaries; Church service is based on revelation	
Brown, Elder L. Edward	108
God is our Father; The prayer of a young boy; The Lord does communicate with us; We must pray in the name of Jesus Christ; The power of the Savior's name; Our prayers will be heard	
Burton, Bishop H. David	104
The parable of the good Samaritan; Modern-day Samaritans; Providing in the Lord's way; "Go, and do thou likewise"; The resources of the Lord's storehouse; Relieving suffering is Christlike	

C

Child, Elder Sheldon F.	38
His word was as good as his bond; Nephi and Zoram could be trusted; Honesty is essential today; Be honest with God by keeping covenants; Rewards of honesty	
Church Audit Committee Report for 1996	26
Church Statistical Report for 1996	27

E

Eyring, Elder Henry B.	31
The Savior wants to lead us to safety; He counsels us through prophets; Follow the prophet or choose another influence; Those with priesthood keys lead us to safety; Accept counsel humbly; Follow counsel for the safety of others; Be patient when counsel seems not to apply	

F

Faith in Every Footstep: The Epic Pioneer Journey	84
----------------------------------------------------------------	----

Faust, President James E. (Saturday morning session) 21

Temple blessings in Nauvoo; Temple building in the Salt Lake Valley; Temples from ancient times until now; Temples answer our deepest questions; All may receive temple blessings; Temple blessings help us endure

Faust, President James E. (priesthood session) 56

Priesthood is the greatest power; Serving as a junior home teaching companion; Lessons learned from visiting a shut-in; Counsel to bishops; Safety in sustaining our leaders; Prepare for priesthood service; Righteousness necessary for priesthood power; Priesthood is a marvelous blessing

G**General Authorities Present 1****General Priesthood Session 49****Goaslind, Elder Jack H 54**

Ordinary men can do extraordinary tasks; Rescuing the handcart companies; The sacrifice of pioneer young men; Inspiration received by Dan Jones; More than they could have imagined; We can perform mighty miracles

H**Haight, Elder David B. 51**

"Let the mountains shout for joy"; The basics haven't changed; Aaronic Priesthood boys should remember the basics; The Oakley, Idaho, football team; Be clean, obedient, and prepared

Hales, Elder Robert D. 110

The process of conversion; Learning to become a fellow citizen; Provide the soil that nurtures the seed; Be aware of new members' needs; The example of Ammon; Feed the Lord's sheep; "Strengthen thy brethren"

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session) 3

New assembly building; New temples; General Relief Society presidency; New Quorums of Seventy; A wonderful season of the Lord's work

- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session)..... 66**
 Urgent need to fellowship converts; Striving to rekindle a convert's faith; Converts should be remembered and nourished; Everyone can help in this work; Nothing of greater importance; Paul's counsel to young men; Be an example and speak truth; Keep yourselves pure; The love of money can destroy you; Do not be ashamed of your testimony; Turn away from youthful lusts; Become educated and prepare for a mission; Be faithful and true
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) 87**
 Recipients of a magnificent heritage; The pioneers' remarkable achievements; The journey west; "This is the right place"; Sufferings of the handcart pioneers; Great things are expected of us; Our great season of opportunity
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session) 115**
 Nothing to fear and everything to gain; The living reality of the Savior; We each make a contribution
- Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. 46**
 Tribute to mothers; Sacrifices made by young mothers; Mothers do God's work; Your children will call you blessed; Rely on the Savior forever

J

- Jack, Sister Elaine L. 101**
 Laying a small stone at the gate of Relief Society; This Relief Society presidency has been building; "Something extraordinary"; The Lord helps us prepare our offerings; Expressions of gratitude; Look forward with hope

M

- Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 12**
 Appreciation for faith and prayers; No immunity from trials; The greatest truth; The fellowship of Christ's sufferings; We will praise Jesus' loving-kindness; Gratitude for the precious Comforter
- Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 61**
 "If you build it, [they] will come"; Missionaries build bridges; The covenant of baptism; Share the truth; Fellowship investigators; Give callings to new converts; Miraculous conversions; White carnations for new members; Spare no effort in reactivation; Reactivation efforts in two stakes; Turning point in a priest's life

Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session)	72
Tribute to “other pioneers”; Pioneers from the Bible; Jesus’ Apostles; The great reformers; Joseph Smith; The ultimate pioneer—Jesus Christ	
Music, Summary of Conference	117

N

Nelson, Elder Russell M.	96
Stay “on the boat”; If we endure, we will be lifted up; To endure, we must be surely converted; Enduring in the covenant of marriage; Enduring in our covenants with God; Proper priorities help us endure; The Lord will help us endure	

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	28
“Bishop, help!”; Duties of the bishopric; Bishops seek to unify the flock; The Lord speaks through His servants; “Help the bishop!”; Fulfill callings diligently; Provide for ourselves and our families; Be considerate of leaders’ time; The offices of the bishopric are sacred	

P

Packer, President Boyd K.	8
Study of doctrines improves behavior; Untidy soldiers in World War II; The shame of being spiritually unclean; Repentance can cleanse us; Wickedness never was happiness; Through the Atonement we can repent; Like Joseph F. Smith, we can be clean; Poetic expression of testimony	
Perry, Elder L. Tom	92
Rededication of the early Saints; The Holy Ghost will direct us; The power to bestow the Holy Ghost has been restored; Experience with heeding the Holy Spirit; What the Holy Ghost can mean to us	
Pinegar, Sister Patricia P.	13
Unite in caring for the souls of children; Many dangers threaten our families; Parenting is a godly responsibility; Follow the example of the Father and the Son; Receive blessings from temple attendance; Receive inspiration from the Lord; Young people should prepare; The prophet’s counsel	
Priesthood Session, General	49

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	25
Saturday Morning Session	2
Scott, Elder Richard G.	77
Testimonies of the Savior; We must do the essential things in this life; Ordinances and covenants are essential; The Savior and His teachings must have first priority; The Atonement gives richness and joy	
Simmons, Elder Dennis E.	41
“My peace I give unto you”; Peace in the midst of tribulation; Peace through the still, small voice; Surrender to the power of the Spirit; Fruits of the Spirit; Comfort is available to all	
Summary of Conference Music	117
Sunday Afternoon Session	91
Sunday Morning Session	71
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	5

T

Taylor, Elder Jerald L.	43
Gratitude for a loving family; Gratitude for a living prophet; Gratitude for the Lord Jesus Christ; Learn to use the key called repentance; Testimony of the Savior	

W

Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	16
Great things are happening; “Walk the path of faith”; “True to the faith”; “No hypocrisy and no deception”; Faith in every footstep; Be true to your covenants; An eternal calling; Five suggestions; Value of regular spiritual checkups	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



4 02970 48000

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-seventh
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 4 and 5, 1997

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-seventh
Semiannual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
October 4 and 5, 1997

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Report of the 167th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 167th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 4, 1997, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 4 and 5, 1997. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 4, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard,

Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goaslind, Harold G. Hillam, and Earl C. Tingey

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*¹ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Dallas N. Archibald, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, Cree-L Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Carl B. Pratt, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:*² Richard D. Allred, Lino Alvarez, L. Edward Brown, C. Max Caldwell, Eran A. Call, Sheldon F. Child, Quentin L. Cook, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, John E. Fowler, Duane B. Gerard, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, Augusto A. Lim, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, V. Dallas Merrell, Dale E. Miller, Lynn G. Robbins, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L.

¹Elders Yoshihiko Kikuchi and Andrew W. Peterson were excused.

²Elder Bruce D. Porter was excused.

Staheli, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Jerald L. Taylor, Richard E. Turley Sr., Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and Richard B. Wirthlin

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 167th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 4, 1997, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 167th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We greet all of you who are participating in the Tabernacle; and in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Jeffrey R. Holland, Loren C. Dunn, and Merrill J. Bateman are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Rex D. Pinegar, Ronald E. Poelman, Carlos H. Amado, and Cecil O. Samuelson are in attendance.

All of the General Authorities are with us except Elder Kikuchi, who is serving as president of the Tokyo Temple; Elder Andrew W. Peterson, who is recovering from a recent accident; and Elder Bruce D. Porter, who is recuperating following surgery.

We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, Young Men, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand.

We are pleased to have with us government, education, and civic leaders.

The music for this session will be by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Hark, All Ye Nations!" Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder L. Aldin Porter offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, it is a great pleasure to welcome you again to a general conference of the Church. You have come from far and wide. You have come with the expectation of being inspired and blessed and of drawing nearer to the Lord. The Tabernacle is filled to capacity. I am pleased to report that we broke ground last July 24th for the large new assembly building which is going up on the block to the north of us. It will seat some 21,000, about three and a half times the capacity of this Tabernacle. We have been promised that it will be ready to use for the April conference of the year 2000. We will have a great new building for a great new century.

An environment of goodwill

We meet today under very favorable circumstances. For the most part the world is at peace, and what a priceless boon this is. We walk, generally, in an environment of goodwill. It is true that many do not care for us, and some few may even hate us, using every opportunity to lash out against us. But these are few and they are largely ineffectual. Never before has the Church had a better reputation than it has now. This is because of you, my brethren and sisters. The opinions of people concerning us for the most part arise out of personal and individual experiences. It is your friendliness, your concern for others, and the good examples of your lives that result in the opinions held by others concerning the Latter-day Saints.

Extensive, favorable press coverage

The media have been kind and generous to us. This past year of pioneer celebrations has resulted in very extensive, favorable press coverage. There have been a few things we wish might have been different. I personally have been

much quoted, and in a few instances misquoted and misunderstood. I think that's to be expected. None of you need worry because you read something that was incompletely reported. You need not worry that I do not understand some matters of doctrine. I think I understand them thoroughly, and it is unfortunate that the reporting may not make this clear. I hope you will never look to the public press as the authority on the doctrines of the Church.

Notwithstanding these occasional blips we have been treated very well, and we are grateful to the writers and the editors who have dealt with us honestly and generously.

Two weeks ago this morning I had the opportunity to speak to the Religion Newswriters Association. They were gracious and receptive. There was nothing of contention or argument. I have great respect for these people and great appreciation.

Now the sun is setting on our celebration and there is much serious work to be done. I intend to speak more of this tomorrow morning.

Thanks to those being released

We are releasing at this conference a number of the Seventy and also the presidency of the Young Women of the Church. This is in conformity with a policy of five years of service.

These faithful and able brothers and sisters have served so very well. Without complaint of any kind they have gone wherever they were sent. They have freely given of their talents and devotion in carrying forward the work of the Lord at home and abroad. This cause is much the stronger because of their efforts.

To their spouses and families, particularly in the case of the Young Women presidency, we express thanks for enduring the inconveniences of sharing their

wives and mothers with the entire Church.

We extend our love and blessing to each one who is being released and wish for them continuing satisfaction concerning the service they have given and much of happiness wherever their paths lead them.

May the Spirit of the Lord be with us

At this time I wish only to invite the Spirit of the Lord to be with us as we go forward with another great conference. May all who speak be inspired in their remarks. May the prayers lift our thoughts to high and sacred levels. May the music bring beauty and spiritual nourishment to each of us.

I wish that all of the General Authorities could speak to us. Unfortu-

nately, that is not possible. But we shall all be as one as our hearts reach out to you, our beloved brothers and sisters, in testimony of this great work. God is our Father, who watches over His kingdom. Jesus is the Christ, whose name this Church bears. He stands at its head. The gospel has been restored and is moving with power across the earth. Our faith is made secure by the things which we know to be true.

May the blessings of the Lord attend us I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

President Boyd K. Packer

O suns and skies and clouds of June,
And flowers of June together,
Ye cannot rival for one hour
October's bright blue weather.¹

Called to serve

Several years ago we were looking for something to inspire a conference of mission presidents. In a very interesting way we found it in a long-unused Primary songbook. The song, entitled "Called to Serve," teaches in a few simple lines the message that I bring to you today.

Called to serve Him, heav'nly King
of glory,
Chosen e'er to witness for his name,
Far and wide we tell the Father's
story,
Far and wide his love proclaim.

Called to know the richness of his
blessing—

Sons and daughters, children of a
King—
Glad of heart, his holy name con-
fessing,
Praises unto him we bring.

Onward, ever onward, as we glory in
his name; . . .
God our strength will be; press
forward ever,
Called to serve our King.²

The willingness of Latter-day Saints to respond to calls to serve is a representation of their desire to do the will of the Lord. That arises from the individual witness that the gospel of Jesus Christ, restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith and contained in the Book of Mormon, is true.

Our baptism is a call to lifelong service to Christ. Like those at the waters of Mormon, we are "baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that

[we] have entered into a covenant with him, that [we] will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon [us.]”³

Service given because we care

But the response to calls, to positions, is only a small part of the service given by members of the Church.

I see two kinds of service: one, the service we render when we are called to serve in the Church; the other, the service we willingly give to those around us because we are taught to care.

Over the years I have watched one dear sister give service far beyond any calling to teach or lead in the Church. She sees a need and serves—not “Call me if you need help,” but “Here I am; what can I do?” She does so many small things, like holding someone’s child in a meeting or taking a child to school who has missed the bus. She always looks for new faces at church and steps forward to make them welcome.

Her husband knows that when they attend a ward social, he can generally count on her saying, “Why don’t you go along home. I see they are a little short on help to clear up and do the dishes.”

He came home one evening to find her putting the furniture back in place. That morning she had the feeling that she should see how an elderly sister with a heart condition was managing a wedding breakfast for a grandchild who had come from out of state to be married in the temple.

She found the woman sitting alone at the church, in despair, surrounded by the things she had brought in preparation. Somehow there had been a double booking of the hall. In a few hours the guests would arrive. Whatever could she do?

This attentive sister took the older sister home with her and put her down to rest. Then she went to work moving the furniture around. When the guests

arrived, a beautiful wedding breakfast was ready to be served.

She learned that spirit of service from her mother. The spirit of service is best taught at home. We must teach our children by example and tell them that an unselfish spirit is essential to happiness.

“Be anxiously engaged in a good cause”

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power,” and He “went about doing good.”⁴ Each one confirmed as a member of the Church has the same gift and the same obligation.

The Lord said, “Behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.”⁵

The Lord said to the Church:

“Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

“For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.

“But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned.”⁶

Sometimes because of age or health or the needs of a family, we may not be called to serve. John Milton, the blind poet, wrote, “They also serve who only stand and wait.”⁷ To attend, to tithe, and to learn is to serve, and we often speak of serving as a worthy example.

No service in the Church or in the community transcends that given in the home. Leaders should be very sure that a call to serve in the Church will not weaken the family.

The pattern for official callings

The pattern for official callings was established in the early days of the Church. The fifth article of faith teaches "that a man [and, for that matter, a woman] must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

It is not in the proper spirit for us to decide where we will serve or where we will not. We serve where we are called. It does not matter what the calling may be.

I was present at a solemn assembly when David O. McKay was sustained as President of the Church. President J. Reuben Clark Jr., who had served as First Counselor to two Presidents, was then sustained as Second Counselor to President McKay. Sensitive to the possibility that some might think that he had been demoted, President Clark said: "In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines."⁸

When there is a need for someone to serve, the leaders talk about it and pray about it—often more than once. They seek a confirmation from the Spirit, for calls should be made prayerfully and accepted in the same spirit.

There follows an interview to determine worthiness and to explore personal circumstances. No calling is more important, no service more enduring, than parenthood. Generally callings in the Church help parents to be better parents. Nevertheless, leaders should use both judgment and inspiration to make certain that a call does not make it measurably difficult for parents to serve as parents.

One who has authority to issue a call must rely on inspiration to avoid overburdening those who are always willing.

You should be given time to pray about the call so that, despite any feeling of inadequacy, you may have a settled feeling. You may be asked to counsel with your spouse.

There is another part of a call which is required by revelation: "It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church."⁹ So that it will be known to the Church who is called to serve, names are presented in an appropriate meeting for a sustaining vote. That vote is not just to approve; it is a commitment to support.

Following the sustaining, there is an ordination or setting apart. The pattern was set in the early Church when the Lord promised, "I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant." He further promised, "You shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the peaceable things of the kingdom."¹⁰

When leaders set someone apart, they do more than authorize service. They pronounce a blessing. It is a marvelous thing to receive a blessing from the Lord Jesus Christ through the hands of His servants. That blessing can cause changes in the life of the one called or in the family.

How leaders should issue calls

Leaders must learn how to issue calls. When I was a young man, I heard Elder Spencer W. Kimball speak in a stake conference. He said that as a new stake president in Arizona, he left his office in the bank to call a man to be stake leader of the young men.

He said, "Jack, how would you like to be leader of the young men in the stake?"

Jack responded, "Aw, Spencer, you don't mean me. I couldn't do anything like that."

He tried to persuade him, but Jack refused the call.

Brother Kimball went back to his office to brood over his failure. He knew the stake presidency had been inspired to make the call. Finally it came to him: he had made a terrible mistake! Of course, Jack would not respond.

Perhaps he recalled what the prophet Jacob had said when he "taught them in the temple, *having first obtained mine errand from the Lord.*"¹¹

President Kimball now did as Jacob had done in ancient times. He "obtained [his] errand from the Lord."

He returned to ask Jack to forgive him for not doing it right and started over: "Last Sunday the stake presidency prayerfully considered who should lead the young men in the stake. There were several names; yours was among them. We all felt that you were the man. We knelt in prayer. The Lord confirmed to the three of us, by revelation, that you were to be called to that position."

Then he said, "As a servant of the Lord, I am here to deliver that call."

Then Jack said, "Well, Spencer, if you are going to put it that way . . ."

President Kimball replied, "I am putting it that way!"

Of course, Jack would not respond to a casual invitation from Spencer, but he could not refuse a call from the Lord through Stake President Kimball. He served faithfully and with inspiration.

We do not ask to be released

While we do not ask to be released from a calling, if our circumstances change it is quite in order for us to counsel with those who have issued the call and then let the decision rest with them. Nor should we feel rejected when we are released by the same authority and with

the same inspiration by which we were called.

One of the great influences in my life was to work closely for many years with Belle S. Spafford, general president of the Relief Society, surely one of the greatest women of this dispensation.

One day she told me that as a young woman she explained to her bishop that she was willing to serve but preferred a call to teach. The following week she was called as a counselor to the ward Relief Society president. "I did not relish the call," she said. "The bishop had misunderstood." She told him bluntly Relief Society was for old women. Except for the counsel of her husband, she would have refused the call.

Several times she asked to be released. Each time the bishop said he would pray about it.

One night she was seriously injured in an automobile accident. After some time in the hospital, she was recovering at home. A terrible laceration on her face became infected. The worried doctor told her, "We can't touch this surgically; it's too close to the main nerve in your face."

That Sunday night as the doctor left the Spafford home, the bishop, returning from a late meeting, saw the lights on and stopped in.

Sister Spafford later told me, "In that pathetic condition I tearfully said, 'Bishop, now will you release me?'"

Again he said, "I will pray about it."

When the answer came, it was, "Sister Spafford, I still can't get the feeling that you should be released from Relief Society."

Belle S. Spafford served for 46 years in the Relief Society, nearly 30 years as general president. She was an influence for good in the Church and was respected by women leaders worldwide.

At a meeting of the World Council of Women in Suriname, citing age and failing health, she submitted a letter of

resignation as an officer. She showed me their letter of refusal—they needed her wisdom, her strength of character.

She often spoke of being tested in her calling. Perhaps the greatest test came when, as a young woman, she learned to respect the power and authority inherent in the priesthood and that an ordinary man serving as bishop can receive direction from the Lord in calling members to serve.

The Lord honors those who serve Him

The spirit of service does not come by assignment. It is a feeling that accompanies a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Lord said, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."¹²

"For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory."¹³

I bear witness that the power and inspiration of calls is present in the Church. I bear witness that the gospel is true and say God bless you who serve, bless you for what you do; and bless you

who serve, bless you for what you are! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Helen Hunt Jackson, "October's Bright Blue Weather," in Hazel Felleman, sel., *The Best Loved Poems of the American People* (1936), 566.
2. *Hymns*, no. 249.
3. Mosiah 18:10.
4. Acts 10:38.
5. D&C 58:26.
6. D&C 58:27–29.
7. John Milton, "On His Blindness," in *The Complete Poems of John Milton*, ed. Charles W. Eliot (1909), 84.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154.
9. D&C 42:11.
10. D&C 36:2.
11. Jacob 1:17; italics added.
12. John 12:26.
13. D&C 76:5–6.

The chorus sang "I Believe in Christ."

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Twelve, has just spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "I Believe in Christ."

Elder Richard B. Wirthlin of the Seventy will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Carl B. Pratt, also a member of the Seventy.

Elder Richard B. Wirthlin

As a young missionary in Switzerland, I was strongly impressed with the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to change dramatically people's lives for the better, bringing to those who follow the precepts of the restored gospel peace of mind, self-worth, and joy. Such feelings are not always easy to achieve. After all,

we live in an often mean and brutal world. Our societies too frequently reflect violence, hatred, and immorality.

Our day foreseen

The Apostle Paul accurately described our day in his letter to Timothy:

"In the last days," he said, "perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . despisers of those that are good, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; . . . Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."¹

Information, not wisdom

Clearly, the stresses and strains that assault us cannot be attributed to a lack of knowledge. In fact, a current weekday edition of the *New York Times* contains more information than the average person was likely to come across in a whole lifetime in 17th-century England.²

But unfortunately, the explosive increase in information has not led to a parallel increase in true wisdom. For example, Medicare has one of the largest data banks in the world. Yet it sent an official letter to a retired housekeeper which explained the reason for terminating her benefits in this way: "Your benefits have been denied because of your death. If you believe this information is not correct, please contact the Social Security Administration."³

Situational ethics

Many have referred to the current era as the information age. But it is ironic that, in an information-rich era, the biggest threat to our world's societies, rich or poor, and to each of us personally is the absence of moral clarity and purpose. Take the United States, for example, where 96 percent say they believe there is a God;⁴ yet a full 79 percent also believe that "there are few moral absolutes—what is right or wrong [they believe] usually varies from situation to situation."⁵

Societies structured by situational ethics—the belief that all truths are relative—create a moral environment defined by undistinguished shades of gray.

An imperative need: a consistent moral compass

We cannot cope with the confusions and the challenges of this world unless we use a clear and consistent moral compass that will unerringly take us through our own personal trials and the tugs and pulls of our own temptations—a compass that will chart our way to peace of mind, self-worth, and joy.

Four absolute truths

This moral compass is built around four absolute truths. The first absolute truth is that there is a loving Father in Heaven, and His Son, Jesus Christ, is our personal Savior—a more certain truth than any worldly fact. This concept is expressed with unmatched eloquence in 1 John: "Hereby perceive we the *love* of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."⁶ Nothing could provide a truer "north" for every person's own moral compass.

The second absolute truth is that there is an adversary—Satan, the tempter—who would lead us away from God and His infinite peace.

Note that the Hebrew translation for *devil* is the "spoiler."⁷ Satan is the spoiler because he would confound our moral compass and spoil our journey back to a loving Father in Heaven.

Satan, "the father of . . . lies,"⁸ increasingly uses various devices, ancient and modern, to confuse us. He would convince us that joy *is not* where it is. And contrarily, he would have us believe that joy *is* where it is *not*. One of Satan's most spiritually damaging lies, which undermines our sense of self-worth and hope, is that we cannot be forgiven of our sins.

The third absolute truth is that all of us choose our own course, endowed by agency. This truth is clearly expressed in

the Book of Mormon: "Wherefore, men are free . . . free to choose liberty and eternal life, . . . or to choose captivity and death, . . . for [the devil] seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."⁹

Yes, who we are is the sum of all the choices we make. We should always remember that our choices do not begin with the act, but in the mind with the idea. As a poet stated:

Sow a thought, and you reap an act;
Sow an act, and you reap a habit;
Sow a habit, and you reap a character;
Sow a character, and you reap a destiny."¹⁰

Given our agency, we are therefore individually responsible for our ideas, acts, habits, character, and, yes, even our destiny.

The fourth absolute truth is that the temptations of the devil can always be overcome by renewed faith in God and by repentance. Yes, when we stray from that narrow and straight way, marked by our moral compass, our footing can be restored on the road that surely leads to salvation and eternal life.

When Christ went to the Garden of Gethsemane, clearly knowing of His impending Crucifixion, He prayed to His Father for His Apostles as well as for each of us. In that prayer, He commands us to avoid evil, but in His infinite compassion He also asks the Father to "keep [us] from the evil."¹¹

The light will shine out of darkness

Life will bring to each of us challenges and setbacks—both dark days and better ones. But remember these words of Paul:

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. . . .

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; . . . cast down, but not destroyed."¹²

Paul also reminds us gently, in fitting words for an information age, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."¹³

Yes, we can experience wisdom, peace of mind, self-worth, and joy not only in the life to follow but in the life each of us lives today by walking in the Savior's footsteps, guided by an unfailing compass calibrated on these four eternal and absolute truths.

Expressions of gratitude

In closing, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, his Counselors, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, my brethren in the Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. I thank them for the inspiration that I have seen translated into so many actions that build and strengthen the members of the Church, and nonmembers as well. I express heartfelt gratitude to my family, who give unstinting support, and for the healing grace of prayer and priesthood blessings which recently I have felt so powerfully and personally. I am grateful for a living and loving Father in Heaven, for His Only Begotten Son, and for the peace and joy this knowledge brings. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 3:1–4, 7.
2. See Richard Saul Wurman, *Information Anxiety* (1989), 32.
3. 1997 *Page a Day Notes: The 365 Stupidest Things Ever Said* (1996).
4. 1997 Gallup study, in *Emerging Trends*, Apr. 1997, 1.
5. 1990 Wirthlin Worldwide study.
6. 1 John 3:16; italics added.

7. Bible Dictionary, "Devil," 656; see also Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (1970), 252.
8. 2 Nephi 2:18; see also Ether 8:25.
9. 2 Nephi 2:27.
10. Anonymous, quoted in John Bartlett, ed., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (1968), 1100.
11. John 17:15.
12. 2 Corinthians 4:6, 8-9.
13. 1 Corinthians 1:25.

Elder Carl B. Pratt

Love for Latin America

Brothers and sisters, I bring you greetings from the Saints of southern Mexico. I was born in Mexico, as were my father and my grandfather before me. Although I was raised and educated in the United States from about six years of age, I retained throughout my life a love for and a fascination with Latin America, its wonderful people, and its kaleidoscope of cultures. Although as a child I was always aware of my family roots in Mexico and their role in the establishment of the Lord's kingdom there, my real love began when, as a young missionary in Argentina, I watched people, prepared by the Spirit, eagerly accept the gospel and I saw the peace and joy that it brought to their lives. My growing love was not just for Latin America but for the work of the Lord among the people there.

So in 1975, when I was less than four years out of law school, there was no hesitation on my part when I was offered a position as Church legal counsel in South America. With three small children, my wife and I moved to Montevideo, Uruguay. We were blessed with five more children in the ensuing years, born to us in various countries of South America. Our children have been raised in the Spanish-speaking countries of the world, and each one has a deep appreciation for the diversity in their cultural and linguistic heritage.

Unfolding of the Lord's work

In the past 22 years we have had a front row seat to watch the explosive unfolding of the Lord's work in Latin America. Literally millions have joined the Church in these years, and we have seen it grow from a mere handful of stakes to over 700 at the present time. We have six functioning temples and five more under construction in these countries. What a tremendously exciting time to be alive and to be involved in this great work of blessing our Father's children.

Yes, these past years have been incredibly exciting, challenging, and immensely enriching for us as a family, but we have learned much more than geography, culture, and language. We have learned new and deeper meanings for words like *love*, *joy*, *service*, and *sacrifice*. For example, we have watched families save for years and then travel for up to 72 hours on a cramped bus, with small children over poor roads, just to be able to enjoy the blessings of the sacred ordinances of the temple. We have watched humble, devoted priesthood and auxiliary leaders strive to build the kingdom and to bless the lives of the Saints, but without having the advantages of telephones or personal vehicles.

Differences in wards' welcoming spirits

We have also learned that no one culture, people, or country has a corner

on love, warmth, or kindness. As we would periodically return to the United States to visit family and friends, it would be our privilege to attend various wards in several different states. It wasn't until our children became adolescents that we began to notice differences in the spirits of the various wards. Some wards our children loved to visit because they quickly found friends among the youth, and we all received a warm and hearty welcome. But there were other wards to which our children returned with less enthusiasm, and there was a noticeable absence of the warm and hearty welcome.

We then began to observe that in some wards we visited in the United States as well as in Latin America, if we had been investigators or new members, we would not have felt very welcome. The Apostle Paul taught the Ephesians, "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). And yet, on occasion we felt like "strangers and foreigners" in the very Church of Jesus Christ to which we belonged.

Improve our fellowshiping skills

These experiences helped us become aware of the discomfort that newcomers might occasionally feel in coming to our chapels, and these made us conscious of the need we *all* have to improve what we call our fellowshiping skills. We have occasionally observed wards in Latin America, Spain, and in the United States where humble new converts to the Church have *not* been received with open arms or warm *abrazos*, and so we have all seen a need to improve our retention of new converts.

Brothers and sisters, we have the richest blessings that God can give to His children. We have the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We ought to be the most open, friendly, happy, kind, considerate, thoughtful, loving people in

the whole world. Now, we do pretty well at fulfilling callings, at going to meetings, at paying our tithing; but have we learned to truly live the second great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"? (Matthew 22:39). This is not something that can be assigned to the elders quorum or to the visiting teachers; this has to spring from the heart of every true disciple of Christ, a person who will look automatically and without being asked for opportunities to serve, to uplift, and to strengthen his fellowman.

Act as the Savior's disciples

We are reminded of the Savior's words, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Will nonmembers, new converts, and visitors to our chapels recognize us as His disciples by the warmth of our greeting, by the ease of our smiles, by the kindness and genuine concern that shine in our eyes?

Let us pay more attention to those who are new to our congregations. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught: "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? . . . And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" (Matthew 5:46-47).

In building the kingdom of God, every positive act, every friendly greeting, every warm smile, every thoughtful, kind note contributes to the strength of the whole. It is my prayer that we may be open and outgoing, friendly, and helpful to all who come among us. But let us give special care and concern for the new converts to the Church. When we detect a halting step or a stumble as they begin their journey on the gospel path, let us be there to lift and support with words of kindness and concern; let us be available to give gentle, loving counsel that will strengthen and sustain. Let us conscientiously look for occasions to show that love which the Savior admonished us to

have when He said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another" (John 13:34).

I testify that this is the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He lives, that He directs this great work, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Richard B. Wirthlin, followed by Elder Carl B. Pratt, both of the Seventy, have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God," following which we shall hear from Sister Mary Ellen Smoot, who was sustained as Relief Society general president at April conference.

She will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."

Sister Mary Ellen Smoot

Brothers and sisters, we thank you for the tremendous response to the general Relief Society meeting. One woman came up to me and said, "I'm so excited! Just give me my marching orders. I'm ready to go."

I'm not here to give marching orders—you can find those on your knees. But with the enthusiasm I felt in her voice, she could tackle and solve any problem in her family, ward, or neighborhood. In every auxiliary we need to circle our wagons and prepare for increased numbers.

"Seek for the things of a better"

In the 25th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord instructed Emma Smith: "And verily I say unto thee that thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better."¹

What are "the things of a better"? Pioneers, past and present, have shown us. Walk with me in the shoes of several pioneers and you will see, as I have, how Saints have put aside the things of this world and found "the things of a better."

Help lost sheep feel the Savior's love

In my hand I am holding a pair of pioneer shoes. They were made by a modern-day pioneer, Brother Robert King, while he was serving as a missionary in Nauvoo. He was the first member of his family to join the Church, or so he thought. Brother King and his wife are currently serving as family history missionaries, and in the course of his research, he discovered that his great-grandfather Reed and his great-uncle Abraham joined the Church in 1835. But Reed was lost. He wandered down unknown paths, and the tender seedling of faith within him died.

Such falling away concerns me. As I have traveled and met new converts, their eyes ablaze with the joy and peace their newfound faith has brought them, I have seen them make great sacrifices to join the fold. We must honor their sacrifice by loving them and strengthening them. My desire is to plead with our sisters to stop worrying about a phone call or a quarterly or monthly visit, and whether that will do, and concentrate instead on nurturing tender souls. Our responsibility is to see that the gospel

flame continues to burn brightly. Our charge is to find the lost sheep and help them feel our Savior's love. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell says, "It is easier to find and to help 'the one' when the 'ninety and nine' are securely together."²

By strengthening each other spiritually, building faith and fellowship, we wear the shoes of pioneers.

Understand our past and gain strength for the future

Allow me to tell you the rest of Brother King's story. Remember that the seed of faith was planted in the lives of both his great-grandfather Reed and his great-uncle Abraham. What became of Abraham? He kept the faith. Feeling fulfilled in the cause, Abraham endured the persecutions and trials of the pioneer migration west. Due to Abraham's commitment to the cause of Zion, his posterity includes more than 2,000 members of the Church today.

Just as Abraham is loved and revered for being a courageous pioneer in his family, so will be my friend Robert King. He pioneered his way through a lost line of family history and caught up with his great-grandfather Reed. Because Brother King chose to seek for "the things of a better" and don his pioneer shoes, he is a conduit through which generations, both past and future, will receive the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we feel of that pioneer spirit and come to know and understand our past, we will gain strength for the future. Brothers and sisters, let us put on our pioneer shoes, search our past, write our family histories.

A plaque hanging on the wall of my home invites me to remember where I came from—each day. It reads, "No matter if a tree grows to more than a thousand feet in height, each leaf, each day, must return to its roots for nourishment."³

No matter what our family history may be, we all can root ourselves in the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive spiritual nourishment on a daily basis. This year we have been strengthened by the lives of the pioneers of the past. May we carry on by strengthening ourselves spiritually and then nurturing the faith of those we serve.

Importance of family histories

While driving along one morning, Sister Carol Petranek, stake Relief Society president in Silver Spring, Maryland, received inspiration regarding their upcoming women's conference. She felt that each sister should be asked to write a brief narrative of the first woman in her family to join the Church. The sisters then compiled their stories into a book, which I hold in my hand, entitled *A Heritage of Sisterhood*. It is filled with stories of faith and commitment.

Sister Donna Packer, wife of President Boyd K. Packer, had similar promptings. She diligently researched and wrote the history of the Packer family into a colorful and moving story, which reads much like a historical novel. The book details a rich legacy of pioneer spirit and faith.

During the course of her research, Sister Packer became acquainted with those who own Groombridge Place, the family estate in England. President and Sister Packer were invited to stay at the estate. President Packer put his thoughts and feelings to poetry. I would like to share the closing verse of that poem:

Our heritage, like life itself,
We keep and yet pass on.
In doing so, we pay the debt
We owe to those now gone.
What came from them, we
hold in trust—
Stored treasure that will last.
Like Groombridge Place, our
lives are built
On footings from the past.⁴

The stronger our spiritual footings, the greater our capacity to build the kingdom—and the greater our joy. As you write your family histories, as you tend to lost sheep, as you nurture the seedlings of faith in others, you will find yourself saying, “Is it already the end of the day?” rather than “Will this day ever end?” Pioneer women did not have time to wallow in discouragement. They were too busy working their way toward Zion.

Faithful pioneers, past and present

I share President Hinckley’s optimism as I have witnessed modern-day pioneers on the frontiers of the gospel as well as in its well-established stakes and wards. That same faith that emanates from early Church history I experienced firsthand in Mendoza, Argentina.

I will never forget Sister Elda Nelly Sanchez. She’s a pioneer even in her sickbed. This valiant woman has raised a righteous family and served faithfully as the Church has grown from its infancy in Argentina. But now she suffers from the ravages of cancer. As I was ushered into her bedroom, her countenance glowed with wisdom and testimony. She expressed her gratitude for the gospel of Jesus Christ and said of her illness, “I am grateful for where I am and what I am going through because I know that my Heavenly Father loves me.”⁵

Like Sister Sanchez, we can feel of our Heavenly Father’s love. He knows our circumstances and our sorrows and will not leave us comfortless. We need only to seek “for the things of a better,” and we will feel of His perfect love.

An early pioneer woman named Eliza Cheney was able to put aside the things of the world because she had nurtured the seed of faith within her. While at Winter Quarters, Eliza received a letter from her parents offering her any amount of money to denounce her newfound religion and come home. She

tightened the laces on her pioneer shoes. Even in such bitter conditions, Eliza’s faith burned bright. She wrote back to her parents:

“I have not the most distant idea [of returning], neither has Nathan . . . , our cause is just and must be onward. . . . I did not embrace this work hastily: I came into it understandingly. I weighed the subject, I counted the cost, I knew the consequence of every step I took. . . .

“If I could be among the numberless through that John saw whose robes were washed white in the blood of the lamb[,] I must[,] like them, come up through much tribulation and instead of thinking it hard that I have these difficulties to pass through, I count it all joy that I am counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”⁶

Help converts feel that they belong

Brothers and sisters, whether on the plains of Nebraska, in Argentina, the highways of Maryland, or within the walls of our own homes, the simple faith of a true pioneer is powerful and eternal. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said, “Significantly, . . . Church members did not become inactive while crossing the plains, when the sense of belonging and being needed was so profound.”⁷

Do our precious converts, our reactivated and longtime members have that same sense of belonging and being needed? If not, we must nurture their tender souls. It made all the difference for Brother King’s great-uncle Abraham Owen Smoot. And it will make the difference for you and me.

I thank my Father in Heaven for all the pioneers of the past and present who have put aside the things of the world. As we emulate their simple faith and virtues, we will find peace. May we don our pioneer shoes and choose the better part is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. D&C 25:10.
2. *Deposition of a Disciple* (1976), 35.
3. Thought penned by Rosemary Nelson.
4. "Ancestral Home," in Donna Smith Packer, *On Footings from the Past* (1988), 402.
5. Used with permission.
6. Quoted in Mary Ellen Smoot and Marilyn Sheriff, *The City In-Between: History of Centerville, Utah* (1975), 379.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 56; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 37.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

President Hinckley as an example of "spiritual capacity"

Those invited by the First Presidency to speak at general conference are not assigned subjects. Speakers pray for inspiration and prepare according to promptings they receive. I have been impressed to speak on "spiritual capacity."

A verse of scripture opens a door of opportunity for each of us: "There is a spirit in man," said Job, "and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."¹ To take advantage of such an opportunity, we need more than a verbal incentive. We need an example—someone to show us how spiritual capacity can be developed. I have selected as a model for my message President Gordon B. Hinckley.² I hope he will pardon me. My motive in doing so is not one of adulation, but of emulation. We can draw upon his example in order to improve our own spiritual attributes.

This year, Sister Nelson and I have had the privilege of accompanying President and Sister Hinckley to 11 countries³ for which I have had some responsibilities. That has given us a rare opportunity to observe him closely under a variety of conditions. His teachings are always inspiring and relevant. They should be studied carefully and applied individually. They represent the word of the Lord for His people.⁴

But my purpose is not to review the content of President Hinckley's messages. Instead, I would like to focus upon

his spiritual capacities. He has developed many, including "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence."⁵

His humility, for example, is so sincere that he would have me point only to the Lord Jesus Christ as our great exemplar.⁶ Of course, He is! The Master said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done."⁷ We must never lose sight of the Savior's enduring standard as the ultimate for each of us.

But we can also learn much from a man who has spent his entire lifetime in striving to be more like the Lord. More than 87 years ago, Gordon B. Hinckley was an infant cradled in the arms of his loving parents. That newborn babe looked much as any other, I presume. An infant's body is tiny, and its spiritual capacities are undeveloped. While the body may reach the peak of its maturation in a few years, the development of the spirit may never reach the limit of its capacity, because there is no end to progression.

President Hinckley's personality, manner, and native intelligence have always been uniquely his. To these inborn attributes, however, he has added spiritual capacities, and they are continuing to increase.

Education and a mission

Both his parents and he understood the importance of education and a mission. After his graduation from the uni-

versity, he faced a major decision in 1933, when he was called to go on a mission. At that time, most young men in the Church were not able to serve because of a global economic depression that deprived nearly everyone of available cash. Earlier, his wonderful mother, with foresight and faith, had established a small savings account for his mission. Though she died before his call, her fund sent him on his way.

Shortly after Elder Hinckley's labors began in England, he became discouraged and wrote to his father. After reading that letter, his father's wise reply closed with these words: "Forget yourself and go to work."⁸ Thanks to noble parents and a crucial decision to remain, Elder Hinckley completed his mission with honor. Now he often states that the good things that have happened to him since have all hinged upon that decision to stay. On his mission, he developed good habits of study, work, communication, budgeting, time management, and more. There he learned that nothing is too hard for the Lord.⁹

The power of prayer

Long ago, President Hinckley harnessed the power of prayer. I have watched him pray over many weighty matters and receive inspired answers. Prayer invites those ennobling attributes of the spirit that are ultimately "bestowed upon all who are true followers of . . . Jesus Christ."¹⁰

Building love at home

Hobbies can aid in spiritual development. Worthy music, dance, art, and writing are among the creative activities that can enrich the soul. A good hobby can dispel heartache and give zest to life.¹¹ Through the years, one of President Hinckley's hobbies has been his home. As a young father, he learned how to build. He acquired the skills nec-

essary to remodel a house and make needed repairs. And more important, he has built and maintained the trust of his wife and their children. Together they have established—and are still adding to—wonderful memories with their children and grandchildren, who know that they are part of "a chosen generation . . . called . . . out of darkness into [the] marvellous light"¹² of the Lord. From the Hinckleys' parental example, we can learn a great lesson. Love at home comes when companions cultivate their commitment to keep the commandments of God.

Love of learning

President Hinckley's love of learning is catalyzed by curiosity. He grasps every opportunity to learn from others. On one occasion, I heard him quiz a local security officer for nearly an hour regarding crime control in a major city. I have heard him converse with building contractors, reporters, and those who specialize in the arts, architecture, business, government, law, medicine, and other disciplines. He knows their vocabularies, their challenges, and their strengths.

His remarkable ability as a writer has been gained by his living close to the Spirit. Similar skills can come to others too, for scriptures state that such has been "given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration."¹³

Remarkable sense of humor

Through the years, President Hinckley has developed a remarkable sense of humor. You have heard his quip that "Sister Hinckley and I are learning that the so-called golden years are laced with lead."¹⁴ I might add a pun, President. We are grateful to be led by that kind of lead. It gives ballast to balance one who might lean too far in any direction. And it gives stability to character.

Perseverance in spite of adversity

While I focus upon President Hinckley, Sister Hinckley should also be included. They have been married for 60 years and have long been one in spirit, while maintaining their individuality. They do not waste time pondering the past or fretting about the future. And they persevere in spite of adversity.

While going from a chapel to an airport in Central America, their vehicle was involved in an accident. Sister Nelson and I were traveling behind them and saw it occur. A truck loaded on top with unsecured metal rods approached them at an intersection. To avoid a collision, its driver suddenly stopped the truck, launching those iron rods like javelins to pierce the Hinckleys' car. Windows were smashed; fenders and doors were dented. The accident could have been very serious. While shattered glass was being removed from their clothing and skin, President Hinckley said, "Thank the Lord for His blessing; now let's continue on in another car."

Compassion and sympathy

Among President Hinckley's spiritual attributes is that of compassion. He is sympathetic to people and feels a strong urge to help them. I have watched him weep with those who mourn and rejoice when Saints are blessed. Such compassion can come to anyone whose heart has truly been touched by the Spirit of the Lord.

President and Sister Hinckley have demonstrated that the capacity to understand increases as one learns and then teaches with diligence.¹⁵ Unless illness interferes, age does not diminish—it augments—the capacity for spiritual development.

An unprecedented pace

Each President of the Church, armed with the Holy Ghost as a constant

companion, inherits an enormous workload at an age when most men would be retired. President Hinckley sets a pace that is unprecedented. In 1996, he visited missionaries, members, and friends of the Church in 23 nations on four continents. During that year, he gave more than 200 major discourses. His stride in 1997 continues to follow that same pattern. His strenuous schedule is driven by his determination to be "anxiously engaged"¹⁶ in building the kingdom of God. Often I have heard him say, "I don't know how to get anything done except getting on my knees and pleading for help and then getting on my feet and going to work." Unshakable faith, hard work, and contagious optimism epitomize our prophet.

I have watched President Hinckley, in speaking before great congregations, depend upon the Holy Ghost, who serves "to enlighten and ennoble the mind, to purify and sanctify the soul, to incite to good works, and to reveal the things of God."¹⁷

President Hinckley has achieved spiritual supremacy over physical feelings. Even when entitled to normal complaints of "jet lag" or "burnout," he is attentive. I believe that his personal antidote for fatigue is enthusiasm¹⁸ for the work. He is energized by the Lord, who said, "I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind . . . [and] fill your soul with joy."¹⁹

Inspired decisions

One of our most memorable experiences occurred when we visited the temple construction site in Guayaquil, Ecuador. There President Hinckley recounted to us how that property was selected. On a prior visit, he had been shown several possible locations, but none seemed to satisfy him. While prayerfully searching, he asked about ground on a hill not far from the airport. But it was said to be *not* for sale. Presi-

dent Hinckley directed that they visit that property anyway. There he received inspiration from the Almighty that this was the right place for the temple. Now we were privileged to stand on that spot reserved by the Lord and then procured for this sacred purpose. Our joy was indescribable.

The prophet makes major decisions on a daily basis. This he does with great capacity. Meanwhile, he encourages each of us to make choices that will "give us growth and joy in this life and eternal life in the world to come."²⁰

Enriched with enthusiasm and enlightened by the Almighty

This President of the Church calls many people to serve, knowing that much is required of them. He is keenly aware of their opportunities and risks. "Yes, this work requires sacrifice," he said. "It requires effort, it means courage to speak out and faith to try. . . . It needs men and women of solemn purpose."²¹ "We know that there are some limits on what you can do, but we know also that there need be no limits on enthusiasm, planning, thoughtful consideration, and effort."²²

Brothers and sisters, the spirit that dwells within each of us can be enriched with enthusiasm and enlightened by the Almighty. The process of spiritual growth is revealed in the scriptures: "Intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; . . . [and] light cleaveth unto light."²³ "That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day."²⁴

Prophets speak the will of the Lord

Gratefully, we follow prophets who have been given a divine commission:

"Whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation."²⁵

While we follow prophetic teachings, we can develop our spiritual capacities by emulating one such as President Gordon B. Hinckley. I thank God for this prophet. He is the Lord's anointed. Willingly I follow him. I love him and sustain him. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Job 32:8. The word *spirit* in this verse was translated from the Hebrew noun *ruwach*, which means "wind, air, breath, mind, or spirit." The Greek noun for spirit is *pneuma*. It is the root from which English words such as *pneumatic tires* and *pneumonia* are derived. *Pneuma* also means "air, breath, mind, or spirit." It is used 385 times in the Greek New Testament.
2. Twenty-four years ago, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley was impressed to speak of his experiences accompanying President Harold B. Lee to nations abroad (see Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 164-65; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 124-25).
3. United States of America, Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador, and Venezuela.
4. See Amos 3:7; D&C 68:4.
5. D&C 4:6.
6. Among the many scriptural commandments, see 3 Nephi 27:27; Mormon 7:10.
7. John 13:15. If we love Him, we will keep His commandments (see Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:10; John 14:15; D&C 124:87).
8. See Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1996), 64.

9. See Jeremiah 32:17; Luke 1:37.
10. Moroni 7:48.
11. See Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 34; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 25–26.
12. 1 Peter 2:9.
13. Moses 6:5; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 6:5.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 93; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 70.
15. See D&C 88:78.
16. D&C 58:27.
17. James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (1968), 167; see also D&C 121:26.
18. The word *enthusiasm* comes from Greek roots *en*, meaning “in,” and *theos*, meaning “God”—“God within us.”
19. D&C 11:13; see also D&C 124:88.
20. Gordon B. Hinckley, “*Caesar, Circus, or Christ?*” Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (26 Oct. 1965), 8.

21. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1969, 115.
22. Bonneville International Corporation Management Seminar, 23 Feb. 1992.
23. D&C 88:40.
24. D&C 50:24.
25. D&C 68:4.

The chorus sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

President Hinckley

Sister Mary Ellen Smoot of the Relief Society has spoken to us, followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Mormon Youth Chorus then sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

President Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker.

President Thomas S. Monson

The birth and childhood of the Savior

In Salt Lake City, a touch of autumn is in the air. Daylight hours grow fewer and the weather turns cooler, reminding one and all that winter is just around the corner. The Christmas season will soon be upon us.

Inevitably, the spirit of Christmas inspires kind deeds, touches human hearts, and prompts one's mind to reach back to that humble stable in faraway Bethlehem, to a time when the prophecies of the prophets, both in that area and here on the American continent, became a living reality. Christ the Lord was born.

Precious little is written concerning the childhood of Jesus. One might suppose that His birth was so revolutionary in its magnitude as to dominate accounts of His boyhood. We marvel at the ma-

ture wisdom of the boy who, leaving Joseph and Mary, was found in the temple, “sitting in the midst of the doctors,”¹ teaching them the gospel. When Mary and Joseph expressed their concern about His absence, He asked of them the penetrating question: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?”²

The sacred record declares of Him: “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”³ An obscure passage describes the transition from child to man: He “went about doing good.”⁴

Because of Jesus Christ the world has changed—the divine Atonement has been made, the price of sin has been paid, and the fearful spectacle of death yields to the light of truth and the assurance of resurrection. Though the years roll by, His birth, His ministry, His legacy

continue to guide the destiny of all who follow Him as He so invitingly urged.

Importance of teaching children

Children are born each day—even each hour—to mothers who have, with their hand in God’s hand, entered the valley of the shadow of death, that they might bring forth a son, a daughter, to grace a family, a home, and in a way a portion of the earth.

Those precious days of infancy bond mother and father to son or daughter. Every smile is noted, every fear comforted, every hunger abated. Step by step the child grows. The poet wrote that each child is “a sweet new blossom of Humanity, / Fresh fallen from God’s own home to flower on earth.”⁵

The child grows in wisdom and also in stature. Learning and doing become priorities to be addressed.

There are those who dismiss these responsibilities, feeling they can be deferred until the child grows up. Not so, the evidence reveals. Prime time for teaching is fleeting. Opportunities are perishable. The parent who procrastinates the pursuit of his responsibility as a teacher may, in years to come, gain bitter insight into Whittier’s expression: “Of all sad words of tongue or pen, / The saddest are these: *‘It might have been!’*”⁶

Dr. Glenn Doman, a prominent author and renowned scientist, reported a lifetime of research in the statement: “The newborn child is almost an exact duplicate of an empty . . . computer, although superior to such a computer in almost every way. . . . What is placed in the child’s brain during the first eight years of his life is probably there to stay.”⁷ “If you put misinformation into his brain during [this period], it is extremely difficult to erase it.”⁸

This evidence should provoke a renewal of commitment in every parent: “I must be about my Father’s business.”

Children learn through gentle direction and persuasive teaching. They search for models to imitate, knowledge to acquire, things to do, and teachers to please.

Four suggestions

Parents and grandparents fill the role of teacher. So do siblings of the growing child. In this regard, I offer four simple suggestions for your consideration:

1. Teach prayer,
2. Inspire faith,
3. Live truth, and
4. Honor God.

Teach prayer

First, *teach prayer*. “Prayer is the simplest form of speech / That infant lips can try; / Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach / The Majesty on high.”⁹

We learn to pray by praying. One can devote countless hours to examining the experiences of others, but nothing penetrates the human heart as does a personal, fervent prayer and its heaven-sent response.

Such was the example of the boy Samuel. Such was the experience of young Nephi. Such was the far-reaching prayer of the youth Joseph Smith. Such can be the blessing of one who prays. Teach prayer.

Inspire faith

Next, *inspire faith*. This sesquicentennial year of the epic pioneer trek to the valley of the Great Salt Lake has inspired more music, more drama, more involvement by youth and adults than perhaps any other occasion in our history. We as families have learned more of Church history—the glory and the suffering, the hardship and sorrow, then victory upon arrival in the valley—than can be estimated. Some years ago, Bryant S. Hinckley, the father of our President, prepared a book entitled *The*

Faith of Our Pioneer Fathers. Accounts which the volume contains are so well written and set forth. This past year they were retold by the score. Countless members looked back on their own pioneer heritage. Hundreds of youth—even thousands throughout the world—pulled and pushed handcarts and walked their own pioneer trail.

I think that there isn't a member of this Church today who has not been touched by the year now drawing to its close. Those who did so much for the good of all surely had as their objective to inspire faith. They met the goal in a magnificent manner.

Live truth

Third, *live truth*. At times the most effective lesson in living truth is found close to the home and dear to the heart.

At the funeral service of a noble General Authority, H. Verlan Andersen, a tribute was expressed by a son. It has application wherever we are and whatever we are doing. It is the example of personal experience.

The son of Elder Andersen related that years earlier, he had a special school date on a Saturday night. He borrowed from his father the family car. As he obtained the car keys and headed for the door, his father said, "The car will need more gas before tomorrow. Be sure to fill the tank before coming home."

Elder Andersen's son then related that the evening activity was wonderful. Friends met, refreshments were served, and all had a good time. In his exuberance, however, he failed to follow his father's instruction and add fuel to the car's tank before returning home.

Sunday morning dawned. Elder Andersen discovered the gas gauge showed empty. The son saw his father put the car keys on the table. In the Andersen family the Sabbath day was a day for worship and thanksgiving, and not for purchases.

As the funeral message continued, Elder Andersen's son declared, "I saw my father put on his coat, bid us good-bye, and walk the long distance to the chapel, that he might attend an early meeting." Duty called. Truth was not held slave to expedience.

In concluding his funeral message, Elder Andersen's son said, "No son ever was taught more effectively by his father than I was on that occasion. My father not only knew the truth, but he also lived it." Live truth.

Honor God

Finally, *honor God*. No one can surpass the Lord Jesus Christ in setting an example of living this goal. The fervency of His prayer at Gethsemane says it all: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."¹⁰ His example on the cruel cross of Golgotha speaks volumes: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."¹¹

The Master taught so everlastingly to all who would listen a simple yet profound truth as recorded in Matthew. We learn that after Jesus and His disciples descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, they paused at Galilee and then went to Capernaum. The disciples said unto Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."¹²

I think it significant that Jesus so loved these little ones who recently had left the preexistence to come to earth. Children then and children now bless

our lives, kindle our love, and prompt good deeds.

Is it any wonder that the poet Wordsworth speaks thus of our birth: "Trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home: / Heaven lies about us in our infancy!"¹³

Learning from our children

It is in the home that we form our attitudes, our deeply held beliefs. It is in the home that hope is fostered or destroyed. Wrote Dr. Stuart E. Rosenberg in his book *The Road to Confidence*: "Despite all new inventions and modern designs, fads and fetishes, no one has yet invented, or will ever invent, a satisfying substitute for one's own family."¹⁴

We ourselves can learn from our children and grandchildren. They have no fear. They have no doubt concerning our Heavenly Father's love for them. They love Jesus and want to be like Him.

Our grandson, six-year-old Jeffrey Monson Dibb, accompanied by his six-year-old girlfriend, paused at an end table in his house on which there was a picture of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. The young girl pointed to the picture and asked, "Who is that man?"

Jeff replied, "Oh, that's Elder Jeffrey Holland of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. He's named after me!"

This same namesake of Elder Holland's, along with his girlfriend, went for a walk one day. They marched up the front steps of a home, not knowing who lived there or what affiliation they might have with the Church. They knocked on the front door, and a woman answered. Without the slightest hesitation, Jeff Dibb said to her, "We are the visiting home teachers. May we come in?" They were ushered into the living room and were asked to be seated. With total faith the children addressed the woman, "Do you have a treat for us?" What could she do? She produced a treat, and they had a nice conver-

sation. The impromptu teachers departed, uttering a sincere "Thank you."

"Come back again," they heard the woman say, with a smile on her face.

"We will," came the reply.

The parents of the two youngsters heard of the incident. I am certain they were restrained in counseling the little ones. Perhaps they remembered the words from the scriptures: "And a little child shall lead them."¹⁵

When sorrow comes to children

The sound of laughing children, joyfully playing together, can give the impression that childhood is free from trouble and sorrow. Not so. Children's hearts are tender. They long for the companionship of other children. In the famous Victoria and Albert Museum in London hangs a masterpiece on canvas. Its title is simply *Sickness and Health*. Depicted is a small girl in a wheelchair. Her face is pale; her countenance reflects sadness. She watches an organ-grinder perform while two little girls, carefree and happy, frolic and dance.

Sadness and sorrow at times come to all, including children. But children are resilient. They bear up beautifully to shoulder the burden they may be called upon to endure. Perhaps the lovely psalm describes this virtue: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."¹⁶

A walker for Raymond

May I now paint a picture of such a situation. In faraway Bucharest, Romania, Dr. Lynn Oborn, volunteering at an orphanage, was attempting to teach little Raymond, who had never walked, how to use his legs. Raymond had been born with severe clubfeet and was completely blind. Recent orthopedic surgery performed by Dr. Oborn had corrected the clubfeet, but Raymond was still unable to use his legs. Dr. Oborn knew that a

child-size walker would enable Raymond to get on his feet, but such a walker was not available anywhere in Romania. I'm sure fervent prayers were offered by this doctor who had done all he could without a walking aid for the boy. Blindness can hamper a child, but inability to walk, to run, to play can injure his precious spirit.

Let us turn now to Provo, Utah. The Richard Headlee family, learning of the suffering and pitiful conditions in Romania, joined with others to assemble a 40-foot container filled with 40,000 pounds of needed supplies, including food, clothing, medicine, blankets, and toys. The project deadline arrived, and the container had to be shipped that day. No one involved with the project knew of the particular need for a child-size walker. However, at the last possible moment, a family brought forth a child's walker and placed it in the container.

When the anxiously awaited container arrived at the orphanage in Bucharest, Dr. Oborn was present as it was opened. Every item it contained would be put to immediate use at the orphanage. As the Headlee family introduced themselves to Dr. Oborn, he said, "Oh, I hope you brought me a child's walker for Raymond!"

One of the Headlee family members responded, "I can vaguely remember something like a walker, but I don't know its size." Another family member was dispatched back into the container, crawling among all the bales of clothes and boxes of food, searching for the walker. When he found it, he lifted it up and cried out, "It's a little one!" Cheers erupted—which quickly turned to tears, for they all knew they had been part of a modern-day miracle.

There may be some who say, "We don't have miracles today." But the doctor whose prayers were answered would respond, "Oh, yes we do, and Raymond is walking!" She who was inspired to give

the walker was a willing vessel and surely would agree.

Kristin and Erika Bestor

Who was the angel of mercy touched by the Lord to play a vital role in this human drama? Her name is Kristin. She is the daughter of Kurt and Melodie Bestor. Kristin was born with spina bifida, as was her younger sister, Erika. The two children have spent long days and worrisome nights in the hospital. Modern medicine, lovingly practiced, along with help from our Heavenly Father have brought a measure of mobility to each. Neither is downhearted. Both inspire others to carry on. Last month Kristin and Erika entertained guests celebrating the 75th anniversary of Primary Children's Medical Center. They sang with their father and mother, and then the girls movingly sang a duet. Each person in the audience had red-rimmed eyes; handkerchiefs were everywhere displayed. These girls, this family, had overcome sorrow and brought joy to the lives of others.

Kristin's father said to me that evening, "President Monson, meet Kristin. She is the one who felt impressed to send her walker to Romania, hoping that some child there would be benefited."

I spoke to Kristin as she sat in her wheelchair. "Thank you for listening to the Spirit of the Lord. You have been the instrument in the Lord's hands to answer a doctor's prayer, a child's wish."

Later, as I walked out of that celebration held for the benefit of children, I looked upward toward the heavens and offered my own "Thank you" to God for children, for families, for miracles in our time.

"There are angels among us"

Let us earnestly follow His direction: "Suffer the little children to come

unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."¹⁷

A popular song includes the words, "There are angels among us." These angels are quite frequently the precious little ones God, our Father, has entrusted to our earthly care. To them may we *teach prayer, inspire faith, live truth, and honor God*. Then we shall have heavenly homes and forever families. For what higher gift could we wish? For what greater blessing could we pray? None!

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 2:46.
2. Luke 2:49; see also 2:46–49.
3. Luke 2:52.
4. Acts 10:38.
5. Gerald Massey, "Woody and Won," in Burton Stevenson, ed., *The Home Book of Quotations* (1934), 121.
6. John Greenleaf Whittier, "Maud Muller," *The Complete Poetical Works of Whittier* (1892), 48; italics added.
7. Glenn Doman, *How to Teach Your Baby to Read* (1979), 43, 45.
8. Doman, *How to Teach Your Baby*, 44.
9. "Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire," *Hymns*, no. 145.
10. Luke 22:42.
11. Luke 23:34.
12. Matthew 18:1–5.
13. William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," stanza 5, lines 1–9.
14. *The Road to Confidence* (1959), 121.
15. Isaiah 11:6.
16. Psalm 30:5.
17. Mark 10:14.

President Hinckley

Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has been our concluding speaker.

We express our thanks to the Mormon Youth Chorus for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. The chorus will now sing "Our Savior's Love." The benediction will be given by Elder Dale E. Miller of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "Our Savior's Love."

Elder Dale E. Miller offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 167th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 4, 1997, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Farmington Family Choir, under the direction of Sister Jane Felstead with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session. We welcome you to the second general session of the 167th semiannual conference of the Church.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the

world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders L. Tom Perry, Gene R. Cook, and D. Todd Christofferson are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall and Elders L. Lionel Kendrick, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Gary J. Coleman, and W. Craig Zwick are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by the Farmington Family Choir, under the direction of Sister Jane Felstead with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ. We shall begin with the choir singing "Faith of our Fathers," after which the invocation will be offered by Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Faith of our Fathers."
Elder F. Melvin Hammond offered the invocation.

President Monson

This lovely choir will now sing "Mother, Tell Me the Story" and "Love Is Spoken Here." President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for our sustaining vote.

The choir sang "Mother, Tell Me the Story" and "Love Is Spoken Here."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom

Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elders J. Richard Clarke, Dean L. Larsen, and Robert E. Wells; that they be designated as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy; and that Elder Larsen be released as Church historian and recorder. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation for their service, please manifest it.

With gratitude for their service as members of the Second Quorum of the

Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders Lino Alvarez, C. Max Caldwell, John E. Fowler, Augusto A. Lim, V. Dallas Merrell, F. David Stanley, and Kwok Yuen Tai. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders John A. Grincer, David W. Eka, [and Patrick C. H. Wong, whose name was inadvertently not listed with those to be read] as Area Authority Seventies. Those in favor, manifest it. Those opposed may also manifest it.

Since the April general conference, Elder F. David Stanley was called to succeed Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone as first counselor in the Young Men general presidency.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elder F. Burton Howard as first counselor and Elder Glenn L. Pace as second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, and Elder F. David Stanley as first counselor and Elder Robert K. Dellenbach as second counselor in the Young Men general presidency. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation to all of these brethren, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Glenn L. Pace as first counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, Elder Neil L. Andersen as second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, Elder Robert K. Dellenbach as first counselor in the Young Men general presidency, and Elder F. Melvin Hammond as second counselor in the Young Men general presidency. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks and sincere appreciation Sisters Janette Hales Beckham, Virginia H. Pearce, and Carol B. Thomas as the Young Women general presidency. We also release all members of the Young Women general board. All who wish to join in an expression of gratitude for the excellent service of these wonderful sisters may do so.

It is proposed that we sustain Sisters Margaret Dyreng Nadauld, Carol Burdett Thomas, and Sharon Greene Larsen as the Young Women general presidency. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

We shall now ask the new Young Women general presidency to take their places on the stand.

President Monson

Welcome, sisters, to your new assignments.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker. Elder Robert D. Hales, also of the Quorum of the Twelve, will then speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Richard D. Allred of the Seventy.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Gratitude for a "delay en route"

Brothers and sisters, I renew but also widen and deepen my specific ex-

pressions of everlasting gratitude given in April conference.

I have been mercifully granted what might be called a "delay en route."

Whether short or long, it is a wonderful blessing from the Lord! I have thereby learned, however, that there is another side to the "Why me?" question, since some are not granted any "delay en route" at all. Whichever side of that question, what is needed is mortal submission, even when there is no immediate divine explanation. Thus we are to press forward, whatever the length of the near horizon, while rejoicing in what awaits us on the far horizon.

Becoming more Christlike

In bringing to pass the beneficent Atonement, certain things were utterly unique to Jesus. These cannot be replicated by us, the beneficiaries of the glorious Atonement with its gift of universal resurrection but also its proffer of eternal life (see Moses 6:57–62). Obviously, unlike our precious Savior, we surely cannot atone for the sins of mankind! Moreover, we certainly cannot bear all mortal sicknesses, infirmities, and griefs (see Alma 7:11–12).

However, on our smaller scale, just as Jesus has invited, we can indeed strive to become "even as [He is]" (3 Nephi 27:27). This process of developmental repentance occurs when we truly take His yoke upon us, thus finally qualifying for God's greatest gift—eternal life (see Matthew 11:29; D&C 6:13; 14:7). It is this latter dimension of the Atonement—now more appreciated by me—on which my brief focus will fall.

Mortality presents us with numerous opportunities to become more Christlike: first, by coping successfully with those of life's challenges which are "common to man[kind]" (1 Corinthians 10:13). In addition, there are also our customized trials such as experiencing illness, aloneness, persecution, betrayal, irony, poverty, false witness, unreciprocated love, et cetera. If endured well now, "all these things" can be for our good and can "greatly enlarge the soul,"

including an enlarged capacity for joy (D&C 122:7; 121:42). Meek suffering often does the excavating necessary for that enlarging! My admiration goes to my many spiritual superiors who so exemplify for us all. In the world to come, to these, the most faithful, our generous Father will give "all that [He] hath" (D&C 84:38). Brothers and sisters, there isn't any more!

These next examples from the Atonement are nonexclusive to Jesus, and special guidance is found in His instructive, personalized words about the Atonement.

Passing through our mortal experiences

As He began to feel the awful weight of the approaching Atonement, Jesus acknowledged, "For this cause came I into the world" (John 18:37). We too, brothers and sisters, came "into the world" to pass through our particularized portions of the mortal experience. Even though our experiences do not even begin to approach our Master's, nevertheless, to undergo this mortal experience is why we too are here! Purposefully pursuing this "cause" brings ultimate meaning to our mortal lives. And we are greatly helped if we enter with faith that pavilion of perspective—the plan of salvation. Then the search for meaning is ended, even though further and resplendent discoveries await us. Alas, as Church members we sometimes behave like hurried tourists, scarcely venturing beyond the entry point.

We also must not "shrink"

Next, as we confront our own lesser trials and tribulations, we too can plead with the Father, just as Jesus did, that we "might not . . . shrink"—meaning to retreat or to recoil (D&C 19:18). Not shrinking is much more important than surviving! Moreover, partaking of a bit-

ter cup without becoming bitter is likewise part of the emulation of Jesus.

Continuing, we too may experience moments of mortal aloneness. These moments are nothing compared to what Jesus experienced. Nevertheless, since our prayers may occasionally contain some “whys,” we too may experience God’s initial silence (see Matthew 27:46).

Certain mortal “whys” are not really questions at all but are expressions of resentment. Other “whys” imply that the trial might be all right later on but not now, as if faith in the Lord excluded faith in His timing. Some “why me” questions, asked amid stress, would be much better as “what” questions, such as, “What is required of me now?” or, to paraphrase Moroni’s words, “If I am sufficiently humble, which personal weakness could now become a strength?” (see Ether 12:27).

The Savior comprehends all human suffering

President Brigham Young spoke of what evoked the “why” from Jesus, saying that during the axis of agony which was Gethsemane and Calvary, the Father at some point withdrew both His presence and His Spirit from Jesus (see *Journal of Discourses*, 3:205–6). Thereby Jesus’ personal triumph was complete and His empathy perfected. Having “descended below all things,” He comprehends, perfectly and personally, the full range of human suffering! (D&C 88:6; see also D&C 122:8). A spiritual sung in yesteryear has an especially moving and insightful line: “Nobody knows the troubles I’ve seen; nobody knows but Jesus” (see also Alma 7:11–12). Truly, Jesus was exquisitely “acquainted with grief,” as no one else (Isaiah 53:3).

Greater empathy and meekness

By sharing as best we can in the sufferings and sicknesses of others, we too

can develop our empathy—that everlasting and vital virtue. We can also further develop our submissiveness to God’s will, so that amid our lesser but genuinely vexing moments we too can say, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). When heartfelt, this expression of obedience constitutes real petition followed by real submission. It is much more than polite deference. Rather, it is a deep yielding in which one’s momentary uncertainty gives way to the certainty of Father’s rescuing love and mercy, attributes which drench His plan of salvation.

We too can learn greater meekness by giving more “glory . . . to the Father” (D&C 19:19) in lieu of our attention-getting behavior or any arrogant views of personal accomplishment, such as, “My power and the might of mine [own] hand hath gotten me this wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:17). Jesus, who accomplished the most by far, was also the most glad to give all the glory to the Father. Alas, even when you and I do place something on the altar, we sometimes hang around as if waiting for a receipt.

Becoming completed and finished

Amid the array of mortal tutorials, we too should strive to “[finish our] preparations” for the third and everlasting estate, which lies ahead—thanks be to Jesus’ glorious Atonement (D&C 19:19). By so doing, we too can become “completed” and “finished,” having finally attained our varied individual potentials (see Matthew 5:48, footnote b).

Though in a much smaller measure, we too may suffer the intensified, interactive pain of “body and spirit”—physical and mental anguish (D&C 19:18). Whatever the grim physical agonies of Jesus’ Crucifixion, surely His utterly unique sufferings in spirit were absolutely enormous, as He bore our sins to atone for them and our sicknesses to understand them “according to the flesh”

(see Alma 7:11–12). Intensification can be part of tutoring. Otherwise we may be like superficial students comfortably coasting and merely auditing a course. Then comes the intensifying moment: we suddenly find ourselves enrolled for credit, and it's pass or fail!

Irony, the crust on the bread of adversity

Periodically, we too will experience a measure of irony, that hard crust on the bread of adversity. Jesus met irony constantly as He was taunted by circumstances. For instance, this earth is Jesus' footstool, but at Bethlehem there was "no room . . . in the inn" and "no crib for his bed," as "foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 2:7; *Hymns*, no. 206; Luke 9:58; see also Acts 7:49–50). The Most Innocent suffered the most when some of His subjects did unto Him "as they listed" (D&C 49:6). Bearer of the only salvational name, yet the Lord of the Universe lived modestly as a person "of no reputation" (Philippians 2:7; see also Acts 4:12; 2 Nephi 25:20; Abraham 3:27). Christ "constructed" the universe, yet in little Galilee He was known merely as "the carpenter's son" (Matthew 13:55).

You and I, when impacted by lesser irony, are so much more brittle, often forgetting that some tests by their very nature are unfair, especially when crusty irony is present.

Jesus' attributes are our example

Thus, brothers and sisters, along with the great and free gift of the universal and personal resurrection there is also the personal possibility of meriting eternal life. Though stretched by our challenges, by living righteously and enduring well we can eventually become sufficiently more like Jesus in our traits and attributes, that one day we can dwell in the Father's presence forever and

ever. By so living now, our confidence will "wax strong in the presence of God" then (D&C 121:45). Confirmingly, the Prophet Joseph declared, "If you wish to go where God is, you must be like God, or possess the principles which God possesses" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 216).

Again, our experiences surely do not approach those of Jesus, yet the same principles and processes apply. His perfected attributes exemplify what can be much further developed by each of us. There is certainly no shortage of relevant clinical experiences, is there? Strange as it seems, we sometimes respond better to larger challenges than to the incessant small ones. For example, impatience with a spouse may occur while a more public challenge is managed quite well. One can be sincerely grateful for his major blessings but regularly murmur over minor irritations. One can have humility that is hierarchical: being humble up, but not humble down. Enduring large tests while failing the seemingly small quizzes just won't do. Such shortcomings must be addressed if we are really serious about becoming more like Jesus.

Avoiding discouragement

While so striving daily, we will fall short. Hence the avoidance of discouragement is so vital. So where is the oft and much needed resilience to be found? Once again, in the glorious Atonement! Thereby we can know the lifting tide flowing from forgiveness.

Furthermore, by applying the Atonement we can continue to access the other nurturing gifts of the Holy Ghost, each with its own rich resilience. The Holy Ghost will often preach sermons to us from the pulpit of memory. He will comfort us and reassure us. The burdens not lifted from us, He will help us to bear, thus enabling, even after we err, to continue with joy the soul-stretching

journey of discipleship. After all, while the adversary clearly desires our lasting misery, the Father and the Son truly and constantly desire our everlasting happiness (see 2 Nephi 2:27).

Being valiant in our testimony of Jesus

Brothers and sisters, Christ paid such an enormous, enabling price for us! Will we not apply His Atonement in order to pay the much smaller price required for personal progress? (see Mosiah 4:2). Being valiant in our testimony of Jesus, therefore, includes being valiant in our efforts to live more as He lived (see D&C 76:79). We certainly cannot enter His kingdom without receiving the restored ordinances and keeping their associated covenants, but neither can we enter His kingdom without having significantly developed our charity and the other cardinal attributes (see Ether 12:34). Yes, we need the essential ordinances, but we also need the essen-

tial attributes. Yes, we need to keep our covenants, but we also need to develop our character. Do we not sing, "More holiness give me," pleading that we can be "more, Savior, like thee"? (*Hymns*, no. 131).

Making our blessings count

During this special process, how can you and I better insure that the precious blessings given by God are fully received by us? For my part, I desire that my blessings, including the recent "delay en route," bring about my needed and greater spiritual refinement in addition to my grateful acknowledgment. Yes, you and I should count our blessings, but we should also make them count! Furthermore, since the focus in extremity falls on the things of eternity, such should be our focus in whatever remains of mortal brevity. This is my earnest prayer for me and for you in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Instituting the sacrament

Elder Maxwell, may I express appreciation that you have been allowed to tarry for a while to teach us, to love us, that we might serve with you.

I too would like to speak of the Savior. The Last Supper, just before the death of Christ, was significant in many ways. The Passover meal recalls centuries of God's mercy in what Jesus said held promise of an even greater mercy to come: His atoning sacrifice.

The time had come for the conclusion of Christ's ministry on earth. It was the Passover season. The people were celebrating and rejoicing in the goodness of God for having saved their forefathers. Jesus had assembled His Apostles in the Upper Room for the Last Supper.

He gave a foreshadow of the events to come, of His atoning sacrifice so that all mankind—those who had lived, those who were then living, and all those who would ever live on earth—would benefit from His atoning sacrifice. By Him and through Him all men would be resurrected. Mercy would overcome justice. Provision was made that we could repent from our sins, be obedient to His commandments, and be able to return to His presence. This was doctrine that was not easy for those who lived in His time to understand. At the conclusion of the evening, He instituted the sacrament.

We read "that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you:

this do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24).

He took the cup, saying: "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For [whenever] ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye [proclaim] the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:25-26). He said that this sacrament would be done in remembrance of Him. "This do in remembrance of me" were His words (Luke 22:19).

Remembering and knowing the Savior

Therefore, for all who come unto Christ and take His name upon them through baptism, there is great responsibility to be worthy to participate weekly in the sacrament in order that they may renew their baptismal covenant, take His name upon them, renew their promise to keep all of His commandments, remember Him, know Him, and comprehend His greatness.

Creator of worlds without number

To remember and know Jesus Christ is to know He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Jesus Christ of the New Testament. He was the firstborn spirit child of Heavenly Father and the Only Begotten in the flesh. Moses was told:

"And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth.

"And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten.

"... And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them....

"And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered

unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

"And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words" (Moses 1:32-33, 35, 37-38).

Just think of what science and astronomy tell us about the expanse of the solar system and the universe. Our solar system centers on the sun, one of a huge group of stars on the order of 100 billion stars swirling around a huge pinwheel-shaped mass called the Milky Way galaxy, which is about 100,000 light-years across. Astronomers cannot see to the end of the universe, but evidence suggests that the vastness of space contains billions of galaxies stretching for an expanse of 5 billion to 15 billion light-years away from the sun. Compared with such distances, our solar system occupies a very tiny amount of space. The universe is virtually incomprehensible to man (see *Compton's Encyclopedia*, "Solar System," 375).

We sing in praise:

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands
have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling
thunder,
Thy pow'r thru-out the universe displayed;
Then sings my soul, my Savior God,
to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou
art!
["How Great Thou Art," *Hymns*, no. 86]

God knows all these things. His Son, Jesus Christ, was at His right hand and participated with Him in the creation of this world and many other worlds. This is the same Jesus who came to earth as a babe in Bethlehem. This is what the scriptures mean when they speak of the condescension of God.

His mortal ministry

Jesus Christ is a member of the Godhead, which is comprised of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Jesus participated in the Great Council of Heaven, where it was decided that earth, a mortal world, would be created and that our spirits would dwell in a temporal, physical body. In mortality we have the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ and learn to keep His commandments.

Jesus knew that after His sojourn here in mortality and after the completion of His mission and His atoning sacrifice, He would return to His heavenly kingdom and sit at the right hand of God. When we comprehend His divinity and His greatness, we remember Him with reverence and humility. When we read of the Nativity and the birth of a babe in Bethlehem; of the growing-up years of the youth of Jesus in Nazareth; of His mission around the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, and Cana; and then of His final days in Jerusalem and His sacrifice, we are in remembrance of Him. All of these things are brought to mind.

We can relate a number of miracles during Christ's ministry showing He could overcome the elements of the earth in terms of calming the sea, turning the water to wine, feeding the multitudes from scraps of bread and fish, as well as individual acts of healing the lame, the blind, the deaf; casting out devils; restoring Lazarus from the dead after four days. All of these miracles were manifestations of His divine power, culminating in His Atonement and His Resurrection.

He gave us a higher law

At the time of Jesus, the people of Jerusalem were living the law of Moses, "an eye for an eye" (Matthew 5:38), a preparatory law which was contained in the Old Testament. Jesus tried to bring them to live a higher law. When He was resurrected, He said, "In me is the law of

Moses fulfilled" (3 Nephi 9:17). Jesus taught how to progress beyond the behavioral law of Moses when He gave the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer. He taught a law of love, a law of forgiveness of one another. He taught that we should do unto others as we would want others to do unto us. He taught that we should love the Lord with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves. When the people, still thinking in terms of the law of Moses mentality, asked, "Who is our neighbor?" He gave the parable of the good Samaritan, showing that the compassion that He was teaching should go across cultural and ethnic lines and applies to all. Many people who had been keeping the law of Moses rejected His gospel of love.

How do we know if we have progressed from the "eye for an eye" mentality and accepted His gospel to forgive and love one another? How we treat our family members, our neighbors, business associates, and all we meet will reveal if we have taken His name upon us and do always remember Him. How we conduct our lives, all we do and all we say, reflects on how we remember Him. If we truly love Him, we will keep His commandments as He has asked. Very simply, He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

He is our friend

We pray to our Father in Heaven in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the great Mediator. Though omnipotent and omniscient, all-powerful and all-knowing, He is our friend. After counseling early Brethren of the Church to "set in order your own house," He said, "I will call you friends, for you are my friends" (D&C 93:43, 45). With all of His greatness, He has said that He is our friend. We have been asked to be a friend to our neighbors and to teach them the gospel, and to be a friend to new converts, that the fruit of our labors may re-

main (see John 15:16). Our prophet has asked us to be a friend. Can our prophet expect anything less?

We can always have His Spirit with us

When we are baptized in His name and always remember Him and keep His commandments, He gives us the greatest blessing He can give us: that is to always have His Spirit to be with us. That Spirit of the Lord is light. "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world" (D&C 11:28; see also 3 Nephi 9:18). "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). This is "the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed" (D&C 88:13). Light and darkness cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Where the light of Christ is found, the darkness of Lucifer, even Satan, must depart, defeated. May we follow the light and choose the right.

His atoning sacrifice

What we must remember about the Savior is that He and He alone had the power to lay down His life and take it up again. He had the ability to die from His mortal mother, Mary, and the ability to overcome death from His immortal Father. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, went willingly and deliberately to His death, having told His followers that this would happen. Why? one might ask. The answer: to give immortality to all mankind and the promise of eternal life to those who believed in Him (see John 3:15), to give His own life for a ransom for others (see Matthew 20:28), to overcome Satan's power, and to make it possible for sins to be forgiven. Without Jesus' Atonement, there would be an impassable barrier between God and mortal

men and women. When we comprehend the Atonement, we remember Him with awe and gratitude.

"Early on the first day of the week . . . , Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed [and that the tomb was empty]. . . .

"She turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. . . .

"Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.'

"Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' . . .

"Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord'" (The Holy Bible, New International Version, John 20:1, 14–16, 18).

As we remember the Savior, we remember an empty tomb, a symbol that the Lord has risen and a promise to all of the Resurrection and life after death.

Because of our Savior's Atonement, in death's darkness there is no sting, in death's depression there is no victory. His resurrected light dispels the darkness, defeating the prince of darkness, with a brightness of eternal hope.

Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who slept: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21–22).

The Light and Life of the World

A knowledge of our Savior, Jesus Christ, was given to us by Isaiah—that the Lord will guide us always. He will satisfy our needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen our frame. We will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail (see Isaiah 58:11).

We remember Jesus as the Bread of Life, as the Living Water, as the Light and Life of the World as we come and follow Him, that by Him and through

Him we will be saved. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

We are not left alone

When the time for the Atonement was near, the disciples were concerned how long Jesus would remain with them. He told them that He would not tarry with them for long but that He would leave a Comforter with them, the Holy Ghost (see John 14:26). For you and me, we have to understand the loving nature of our Savior. We are not left alone. He has given us this day, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, a restoration of the gospel in these latter days. He has provided another testament of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon. He has restored the priesthood and the keys that He gave to Peter, James, and John when He was with them and they were His Apostles. They came to Joseph Smith and restored those same keys in 1829. Additional priesthood keys were brought by Elijah, Moses, and Elias after the appearance of the Savior in the Kirtland Temple on April 3rd of 1836. These keys have been given for the ordinances of the temple (see D&C 110).

We have not been left alone. We have the light of Christ and the Holy Ghost to lead and guide us in an other-

wise very dark and dreary world. The keys of the priesthood have been restored to make available all of the ordinances that are necessary, that we may return to His presence.

Come unto Christ and follow Him

May we follow our Savior, Jesus Christ, and always remember Him in all that we do and all that we say and in all of the acts of charity given one to another, that we may know that these things are done in remembrance of Him.

I testify that our Lord Jesus Christ lives and guides and directs His Church by revelation through His prophet this very day and time. "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ" (2 Nephi 25:26). We believe in Christ, we remember Him, and we testify of Jesus Christ our Lord and our Redeemer with the knowledge that He will come again to earth to reign in glory as King of Kings.

May all who profess to be Christians, all who know and testify of Jesus, come unto Him and follow His teachings and example, being one as Heavenly Father and Jesus are one in purpose, to unite ourselves, to lift and strengthen each other, and take upon us one another's burdens as our Savior has taken our burdens upon Him, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard D. Allred

We have patriarchs today

Have you ever wanted to know what the Lord would have you do with your life? Have you ever contemplated what you could do that would be of most worth to you? Have you pondered what life holds for you? If you have, you are not alone. It is a natural thing to wonder

what is the purpose of your life and where it will take you.

The Bible cites that patriarchs, under inspiration and by the laying on of hands, revealed to certain persons the will of the Lord and what life had in store for them.

In this day are there no patriarchs? Are the heavens closed? Has revelation

ceased, and is communication between the Lord and His children confined to the writings of the prophets of old as contained in the Bible? Is there no opportunity for revelation? Is there no divine source whereby life's important questions can be answered?

I attest that there is such a source available to you.

I testify to you that today the heavens are open and since the spring of the year of 1820, when the boy prophet Joseph Smith Jr. saw the Father and the Son and received an answer to his sincere prayer, there has always been one of the Lord's anointed here on earth through whom the Lord has and does reveal His word.

I witness to you that the Lord's prophet to all the world, he who holds all the keys pertaining to the last dispensation today, is Gordon B. Hinckley, prophet, seer, and revelator, and the President of the Lord's kingdom here upon the earth, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

It was through the Prophet Joseph Smith that the Lord restored the priesthood, the fulness of the gospel, and "the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth" (Articles of Faith 1:6).

Receiving a patriarchal blessing

Patriarchs are charged with the duty of blessing the members of the Church. "Patriarchal blessings contemplate an inspired declaration of the lineage of the recipient. A patriarchal blessing also includes an inspired and prophetic statement of the life possibilities and mission of the recipient. It may include such blessings, promises, advice, admonitions, and warnings as the patriarch may be prompted to give. It should always be made clear that the realization of all promised blessings is conditioned upon faithfulness and the Lord's will" (*Informa-*

mation and Suggestions for Patriarchs [1970], 3-4).

Patriarchal blessings are obtained by worthy members of the Church who are recommended by their bishops. "Every worthy member is entitled to and should receive a patriarchal blessing" (*Information and Suggestions*, 2).

You may feel that you are unimportant, too old, and that the Lord has no blessing for you. Or perhaps you have sinned and even though you have repented consider yourself unworthy of a blessing or to receive a blessing. If that is so, I suggest that you make an appointment with your bishop, seek his advice, follow his counsel, and actively and humbly solicit the blessings of heaven.

Patriarchal blessings are inspired

I can testify to you that these blessings are inspired and are personal revelations to the recipient. Patriarchal blessings are a guideline or similar to a road map that indicates the paths that may be traveled and destinations that may be reached if we stay within those paths. They may bring comfort and joy and encouragement when we have need to look, to listen, and to feel of the contents of these blessings so that we may go forward on life's journey, not alone, but with the accompanying Spirit of our Father in Heaven.

A blessing for a physically challenged daughter

A patriarch received a call one afternoon from a concerned mother of a young daughter who was physically challenged from birth. This dear mother asked if her daughter could possibly receive a patriarchal blessing. The patriarch informed her that if her daughter could obtain a recommend from the bishop, he was sure that the Lord had a blessing for her. A short time later the patriarch was informed that the bishop

had given this sweet young girl a recommend to receive a patriarchal blessing.

An appointment was made. The blessing was given and gratefully received. Her lineage was given. She received a blessing suited to her needs and unique situation. Lives, focus, and attitudes were changed. She was told that through her cheerful acceptance of the efforts and sacrifices of those who loved and cared for her, she would be blessing their lives, and to accept their offerings graciously and willingly.

Live worthy of the revealed blessings

The Lord loves His children and wants to bless them and wants all of them to return to Him and dwell in His presence for time and all eternity (see Moses 1:39). The Lord is willing to pronounce His blessing upon those who love Him and keep His commandments.

It is my sincere prayer that all who desire a blessing at the Lord's hand may

live worthy so as to obtain it, and that we who have received a patriarchal blessing may so live as to always be worthy of the blessings that have been revealed to us through the Lord's servant, the patriarch, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Neal A. Maxwell and Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Richard D. Allred of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "True to the Faith." Elder Eran A. Call, followed by Elder Richard J. Maynes, both of the Seventy, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "True to the Faith."

Elder Eran A. Call

I humbly pray that the Spirit of truth might be with us that we might understand one another, be edified, and rejoice together.¹

Gratitude for faithful parents

As Nephi, I, too, was "born of goodly parents; therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" and have been "highly favored of the Lord in all my days."²

My father was a marvelous example of faith, integrity, and commitment to the gospel. My mother died when I was seven, but in my tender youth she taught me the truths of the gospel. She was a woman of great faith; because of her faith and prayers and a miraculous healing, I have sight in my left eye today. Fa-

ther was out of town. I severely burned the pupil of my eye with a hot metal lid lifter from our wood-burning stove. Mother exercised her faith and prayed fervently to Heavenly Father as she held me lovingly in her arms. Her prayers were heard and my eye was healed. I am very grateful to have been raised in a loving home by goodly parents.

Modern challenges to the home

The home is being threatened and challenged more today than ever before. Today less than half of the children born in the United States, and in many countries in the world, will spend their entire childhood in an intact family.³ Infidelity, divorce, abortion, and abandoned homes are on the increase. The father is rapidly

losing his traditional role as caregiver, breadwinner, protector, moral educator, and head of the family.

During 1960 to 1990, a 30-year period, births outside of marriage in the United States increased 500 percent and divorce increased 400 percent.⁴ As Church members, we are not free from these sinful practices.

The home and the family are the fundamental unit of society: as the homes are and families are, so will be the community, the city, the state, and the nation. There is no public morality without private virtue. I repeat, there is no public morality without private virtue. As Latter-day Saints, we have been given much and much is expected of us. We have been taught what is right and true. Let us, therefore, be "doers of the word, . . . not hearers only,"⁵ deceiving ourselves.

Suggestions for parents

As husbands, wives, and parents, how can we avoid the pitfalls and temptations of the troubled world we live in? I offer a few time-tested and proven ways that we can be doers, and not hearers only:

- Parents and family members should love, honor, and respect each other.
- Attend Church meetings together regularly.
- Read the scriptures and pray together daily.
- Hold family home evening and have fun together.
- Live lives of virtue and integrity so you can sleep at night, knowing you have done your best with a conscience void of offense to anyone. A virtuous life is built step by step, brick by brick. Beware of small sins that erode integrity.
- Communicate, talk, take time for each other. A teenager comes home from a date and seems to be concerned—

what a marvelous opportunity for loving parents to listen and help.

- Faithfully pay your tithes and offerings.
- Avoid unnecessary debt.
- Never make major purchases nor decisions without prayer and mutual agreement as equal partners as husband and wife.

Counsel from ancient and modern prophets

We have been taught by ancient and modern prophets that "the establishment of a home is not only a privilege, but marriage and . . . proper training of children is a duty of the highest order."⁶

The prophets of Israel taught, "Ye shall teach . . . your children [the commandments] when thou sittest in thine house."⁷

Isaiah taught, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."⁸

"I give unto you a commandment, to teach . . . your children."⁹

Lehi did exhort his family with all the love of a tender parent.¹⁰

President Harold B. Lee said, "The greatest of the Lord's work you brethren will ever do as fathers will be within the walls of your own home."¹¹

We should always remember President David O. McKay's warning from this pulpit 33 years ago: "No other success can compensate for failure in the home. The poorest shack in which love prevails over a united family is of greater value to God and future humanity than any other riches. In such a home God can work miracles and will work miracles."¹²

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators, two years ago solemnly proclaimed to the world our beliefs concerning marriage, parents, and the family. I challenge each of you to read, study, and live by this inspired proclamation. May it become the

guideline and standard by which we live in our homes and raise our children.

Our homes should be a sanctuary

Our homes can be, and should be, a refuge and a sanctuary from the troubled world we live in; may we make them such by striving daily to keep sacred the holy covenants we have made.

May we join with John of old who said, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth,"¹³ I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See D&C 50:22.
2. 1 Nephi 1:1.

3. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *Atlantic Monthly*, Apr. 1993, 47.
4. See David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (1995), cited in Alexander B. Morrison, *Zion: A Light in the Darkness* (1997), 15.
5. See James 1:22.
6. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 496.
7. Deuteronomy 11:19.
8. Isaiah 54:13.
9. Moses 6:58.
10. See 1 Nephi 8:37.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 130.
12. Quoting J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5.
13. 3 John 1:4.

Elder Richard J. Maynes

Celestial goals and everyday life

Brothers and sisters, this afternoon I would like to direct my message toward the young men and young women who are growing up in these troubled times. Many of you young people have established, at least in the back of your minds, lofty goals which probably include missions, education, temple marriage, successful careers, and, of course, the safe return to your Heavenly Father's presence in the celestial kingdom.

One of the great challenges of being a teenager is successfully connecting these celestial goals with your everyday life. This is difficult because our lives are jammed so full of worldly stuff. You're involved with schoolwork; dozens of activities which include music, dance, sports, various clubs; and, of course, many throughout the world work part-time jobs as well. Mixed in with this hectic schedule are weekend activities

such as games, dances, Scouting activities, and parties. Everywhere you go you're bombarded with temptation from peers, television, movies, and music. Wow! What an adventure!

The real trick is trying to balance the importance of what is happening next Friday night with what's going to be happening 2, 5, or 10 years from now. You might be asking, "What does Friday night have to do with two years from now?" Well, it could have a lot to do with it, depending on where you are and what you are doing.

If you want to reach your potential in the future, if you want to become the person the Lord wants you to be, you had better work on it today, because it is a true principle that we become what we do. If we want to be a successful university student, we had better be successful in high school. If we want to live a celestial life in the hereafter, we had better

live a celestial life here on earth. Our futures are truly connected to our past.

Future success built during teenage years

One of the great purposes of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to teach us of our eternal potentials. The purpose of the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ is to help us reach that potential.

It is important for you young people to recognize that the foundation of your future success, both temporally and spiritually, is being built while in your teenage years. If those years are fractured with sin and go unrepaired, then the structure of your life will be built upon a weakened foundation. Your future will be less secure and certainly more stressful.

Connecting daily life with lofty goals

We all realize that in today's society, the family, and particularly our youth, is under assault throughout the entire world. The prophet Isaiah saw our day and that it would be a day turned upside down. This prophecy and warning is found in Isaiah 5:20-21:

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

"Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"

As young people growing up in this upside-down world, you have quite a challenge confronting the various pressures of modern-day life. How will you make it through your teenage years spiritually prepared for your celestial future? How will you connect your celestial goals with your everyday life?

I have yet to meet a businessman, educator, artist, or athlete who has attained a high level of excellence in their chosen field who has not successfully been able to connect the vision of their

future to their everyday life. It is very likely that a goal or vision not connected to everyday life by specific action will become just another unrealized dream with nothing more than hope to support it.

So how is it done? How do we connect our hectic daily life to these lofty celestial goals? The answer is simple.

Continual daily dedication

Let's take an example we can all relate to. Suppose you have a midterm test coming up in geometry in two weeks. One of your goals is to get an A in geometry. How do you go about reaching that goal? Do you wait until the last minute and cram the night before the test? This technique is filled with risk. Instead of truly understanding the material, the attempt is to learn enough that somehow you can make it through the test successfully. Unfortunately, instead of being totally prepared and confident about the subject, you walk into the classroom a little bit nervous, with a lot of hope that the teacher will ask you the questions which you happen to know. I have a feeling I'm not the only one here today who has experienced this uneasy feeling.

Now let's take another student who, with the same goal of attaining an A in geometry, realizes that he doesn't want to count on the intangibles of luck and hope. So, instead of cramming, he or she sets aside a little time every day to calmly and in depth study the subject. This gives the necessary time to digest and properly understand the material. If confusion arises on any given topic, there's plenty of time to ask the teacher for help. What's the result from this second technique? A deeper understanding of the material? Increased self-confidence going into the test? Less reliance on hope? I think so.

Is it actually possible to go into the classroom knowing beforehand that you will get an A on the test because of your

preparation? I know it is. I've seen it done.

Therefore, if you want to get an A in the classroom, continual daily dedication is the answer. If you want to get an A in your celestial goals, the same daily technique needs to be applied.

Young friends, it is very difficult to cram for a mission, and it is equally difficult to cram for a temple marriage. Don't take the risk. Be wise. Prepare yourselves daily. Study the scriptures. Communicate with your Heavenly Father in prayer. Attend seminary. Keep yourselves clean and prepared. Understand that what happens on Friday night will ultimately impact your celestial future.

You will receive celestial blessings

If these seemingly little things seem tiresome, tedious, or time consuming, carry on! The little things that confound the wise also confound Satan. Remember, celestial blessings are on their way.

How else can you protect yourself against the pressures and evils of the world? Three hours of church on Sunday? Not likely. Just like in your studies, a concerted daily effort is the only sure way to come out victorious. The Lord wants you to succeed, and He will be with you. He will help you and support

and sustain you in your time of need if you are true to His plan. If you stay close to Him on a daily basis, He will stay close to you, and you will reap untold blessings in every aspect of your life, especially the most important, the spiritual.

And when the day comes to enter the classroom door of the temple, you will be at peace, your conscience will be clean, your self-confidence high, and you will know in your heart that you will receive an A in the most important of all your subjects: your celestial future.

Young brothers and sisters, it will ultimately be your love of the Lord which will help you commit and then stay true to your celestial daily plan. I know the Lord lives and His desire and hope for us all is a celestial future. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elders Eran A. Call and Richard J. Maynes of the Seventy have spoken to us.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker, and he will be followed by Elder Richard G. Scott, also of the Quorum of the Twelve, who will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is a privilege for me to meet together with you in another general conference of the Church. In these wonderful gatherings, I love to hear the word of the Lord and feel the presence of His Spirit. My heart is warmed by the fellowship we share as Latter-day Saints.

Companionship with the Saints

One of the many benefits of membership in the Church is that of compan-

ionship with the Saints. During the time of my assignment in Europe, we held memorable stake conferences for the military servicemen in Germany. Many of our good brothers and sisters drove long distances to attend the meetings. A number of them arrived the night before and slept on the floor of the cultural hall. No matter the sacrifice, they came with glad hearts seeking the companionship of fellow Latter-day Saints and the chance to be instructed and edified by

Church leaders. When we come together, we are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."¹

Ours is the commandment and the blessing to "meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of [our] souls."² In general conferences and in other Church meetings around the world, we come together seeking companionship—the good company of brothers and sisters in the gospel and the comfort of sweet communion with the Spirit of God. In our worship services, the presence of that Spirit fills our hearts with love for God and for our fellow Saints.

Companionship of family

Of course, our best friends are those with whom we live as members of our family. Loving parents, brothers and sisters, children, and the extended family help to shape our destiny. My best friend is Elisa—my eternal companion. She is the heart of our home and has inspired us to draw nearer to the Lord. "Motherhood is near to Divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels."³ Her service is exemplified by the words of a familiar hymn:

Each life that touches ours for good
Reflects thine own great mercy,
Lord;

Thou sendest blessings from above
Thru words and deeds of those who
love.

What greater gift dost thou bestow,
What greater goodness can we know
Than Christlike friends, whose gentle
ways

Strengthen our faith, enrich our
days.⁴

The sweet companionship of eternal marriage is one of the greatest blessings God has granted to His children. Certainly, the many years I have shared with my beautiful companion have brought me the deepest joys of my life. From the beginning of time, marital companionship of husband and wife has been fundamental to our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness.

Our lives are touched for good, and we are both edified and ennobled as we savor the sweet blessings of association with dear members of the family.

Companionship of friends

The compassion of Christlike friends deeply touches and changes our lives. We should well remember that the Lord often sends "blessings from above / Thru words and deeds of those who love." Love is the very essence of the gospel of Christ. In this Church, prayers for help are often answered by the Lord through the simple, daily service of caring brothers and sisters. In the goodness of genuine friends, I have seen the reflected mercy of the Lord Himself. I have always been humbled by the knowledge that the Savior regards us as His friends when we choose to follow Him and keep His commandments.⁵

Pioneer cooperation

Our pioneer sesquicentennial celebrations this year have reminded us of the strength that our forebears found in working together. They had a great spirit of cooperation. It took a companionship to pull their handcarts. These wagon trains and handcart companies were communities on wheels. By revealed design, the pioneers traveled in well-organized companies with clear lines of responsibility. The strong helped bear the burdens of the weak. Through the spirit of cooperation they overcame

great hardship and established Zion in the West.

Companions in Church service

Many of our assignments in the Church are shared with companions. Ever since the Lord sent out His disciples two by two, companionships have advanced the work of the Kingdom. The Lord's law of witnesses requires that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."⁶ When the grieving women came to the empty tomb that first glorious Easter morn, it was two heavenly messengers who declared, "He is not here, but is risen."⁷

After the Lord's ascension from the Mount of Olives, two messengers bore testimony of the risen Lord. And both the Father and the Son *together* visited Joseph Smith to begin the glorious work of the Restoration. In bearing testimony and establishing truth, two are better than one.

Building on this divine model, the home teaching and visiting teaching programs of the Church have thus been organized. Companionships are called "to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen [others]."⁸ We would hope that new converts would be given special attention by home teachers and visiting teachers. All assigned brothers and sisters may magnify their responsibilities to care for and nurture those whom they are called to serve. Local leaders prayerfully make these assignments under the direction of priesthood authority and the spirit of revelation. So when your leaders ask you to serve, we hope that you will respond as if the Lord Himself were asking because, indeed, so He is: "Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."⁹

When you visit your assigned members, you bring with you the light of the gospel, the love and Spirit of the Lord. Those who are strong can help "bear the

infirmities of the weak."¹⁰ Work closely with your assigned companion to carry out your visits with all diligence, and remember that companions can bless and strengthen each other as well as ministering to those they visit. President Hinckley has pleaded with us to do all we can to comfort our brothers and sisters "who cry out in pain and suffering and loneliness and fear. . . . Lift them in the spirit of love into the embrace of the Church."¹¹

Companionships also constitute the basic organization in the 318 missions of the Church. Just as the disciples of old, our more than 56,000 missionaries go two by two "into all the world"¹² to proclaim the good news of the gospel. In this wonderful work of saving souls, there is tremendous fellowship and camaraderie. When Alma was reunited with the sons of Mosiah after 14 years of missionary service, he "did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord."¹³ Missionary reunions are still a great time of rejoicing.

Once people "have gotten into this strait and narrow path, . . . [they] must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ."¹⁴ President Hinckley has asked us repeatedly to extend the hand of fellowship to newly baptized members. He reminds us that "it is not an easy thing to become a member of this Church."¹⁵ New converts need to form new friendships; they need constant companions who encourage them, answer their questions, and "keep them in the right way."¹⁶

Companionship of the Holy Ghost

In our weekly sacrament meetings, we "partake of bread and [water], in remembrance of the Lord Jesus,"¹⁷ to keep His commandments that we may be worthy of the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. It is one of the choicest blessings that we can receive. Faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, and confir-

mation, followed by virtuous living, qualify us to receive the guiding companionship of the Spirit of God. It is through the power and influence of the Holy Ghost that the Lord keeps His promise to be with us always and "not leave [us] comfortless."¹⁸ As a caring touch comforts a frightened child in the night, so the warmth of the Holy Ghost can touch our hearts and calm our fears. As the soothing voice of a loving parent can quiet the crying babe, the whisperings of the Spirit can hush the nagging worries of our lives.

As new converts receive the Holy Ghost, they experience "a mighty change . . . in their hearts."¹⁹ Great missionary that he is, President Hinckley finds his deepest satisfaction in the transformation that comes with conversion. Answering a reporter in a press interview, President Hinckley said: "The most satisfying experience I have is to see what this gospel does for people. It gives them a new outlook on life. It gives them a perspective that they have never felt before. It raises their sights to things noble and divine. Something happens to them that is miraculous to behold. They look to Christ and come alive."²⁰

Being a good companion

Valued companionships begin with a personal commitment to be an exemplary companion. I was taught the importance of such caring attention and loving personal influence many years ago on Temple Square. When I was a young man, I was on my way to a session of general conference when someone took my elbow. It was President David O. McKay. "Come with me, Joseph," President McKay said. "I'll help you find a good seat."

For those few moments as we walked toward the Tabernacle, President McKay seemed to focus his entire attention on me. He spoke reverently of his love for the Lord and his love for the members of the Church. He looked me straight in

the eye as he firmly shared his testimony with me.

"I want you to know, Joseph," he said, "that the President of the Lord's Church does receive inspiration and revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ." At that moment, the Spirit whispered to my heart that President David O. McKay was telling me the truth. I knew then that he was truly a prophet of God. That testimony has remained with me throughout my life, filling me with reverence and respect for the office our prophet holds.

I felt his love and was enriched by his humble act of kindness during those few minutes together. I don't think that I was ever quite the same after that. I then resolved that I would try to be as good a companion to others as he had been to me.

Shun false companions

For all the blessings of righteous companionship, there are also the dangers and evils of falling in with bad company. We know that there "must needs be . . . an opposition in all things."²¹ The prodigal son fell in with the wrong crowd. In the company of undesirable companions, he "wasted his substance with riotous living."²² Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah went about "rebellious against God"²³ and "seeking to destroy the church."²⁴ They later repented.

We know that we are often judged by the company we keep. We know how influential classmates, friends, and other peer groups can be. If any of our companions are prone to be unrighteous in their living, we are better off seeking new associations immediately. Our friends should be companions who inspire us, who help us rise to our best.

"God be with you till we meet again"

When true friends sing the well-known hymn "God Be with You Till We

Meet Again,"²⁵ we offer a prayer that the Holy Ghost will accompany our loved ones after we leave them. This hymn is a deeply moving expression of our need for companionship with one another and with the Spirit of God.

Our most common English expression of farewell is the word "good-bye," and this came to us over the years as a contraction for the expression "God be with you." In a day when people recognized our dependence on God more publicly, this wonderful phrase was used at times of departure to express love. It is still a sweet expression invoking the companionship of God during periods of separation. The phrase "good-bye," then, when fully understood, means, "If we can't be together, if we must part, if I can't be with you—then may God be with you."

Tomorrow afternoon, we will say fond good-byes to each other. May God be with each of you, my beloved brothers and sisters. May you give and receive the blessings of righteous companionship. May each of you be one who touches the lives of others for good.

I bear you my witness that God lives, that He loves His children. I know that God has called a prophet in our day, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, restored His true Church to bless His children. In His Church there is comfort, joy, and safety in the company of valued companions. Of these truths I bear my witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Ephesians 2:19.
2. Moroni 6:5.
3. "Message of the First Presidency," in *Deseret News: Weekly Church Edition*, 3 Oct. 1942, 5. Quoted in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 9; or *Ensign*, May 1974, 8. See also Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 90–95; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 67–70.
4. "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good," *Hymns*, no. 293.
5. See John 15:14; D&C 84:63; 93:45.
6. 2 Corinthians 13:1; D&C 6:28.
7. Luke 24:6.
8. D&C 20:53.
9. D&C 1:38.
10. Romans 15:1.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 118; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 86.
12. Mark 16:15.
13. Alma 17:2.
14. 2 Nephi 31:19–20.
15. In Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 66; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.
16. See Moroni 6:4.
17. Moroni 6:6; see also D&C 20:75.
18. John 14:18.
19. See Alma 5:13; see also verses 12, 14; Mosiah 5:2.
20. In Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 48.
21. See 2 Nephi 2:11.
22. See Luke 15:13.
23. See Mosiah 27:11.
24. See Mosiah 27:10.
25. *Hymns*, no. 152.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Each member can be a missionary

There are few things in life that bring as much joy as the joy that comes from assisting another to improve his or her life. That joy is increased when those

efforts help someone understand the teachings of the Savior and that person decides to obey them, is converted, and joins His Church. There follows great happiness as that new convert is strengthened during the transition to a new life,

is solidly grounded in truth, and obtains all of the ordinances of the temple with the promise of all the blessings of eternal life. President McKay showed us how to obtain such joy with his profound clarification of our responsibility to share the gospel: "Every member a missionary."¹ I know many more would follow that charge were they to realize that there are many different ways to fulfill that responsibility. I will describe some of them. But first, why has each of us been asked to be a missionary?

The Savior emphasized the vital importance of sharing the gospel when He said to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."² He charged His servants to "seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God."³

Lehi taught his son Jacob:

"Redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah. . . .

" . . . He offereth himself a sacrifice for sin . . . unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

"Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah."⁴

Joseph Smith understood the charge of God to share truth with the world. During the most difficult times of his life, he sent forth his loyal supporters to proclaim the gospel when they were urgently needed to support him. In the midst of the trial and deprivation of Liberty Jail he said:

"For there are many yet on the earth . . . who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, . . . who are only kept from

the truth because they know not where to find it. . . .

"Therefore, . . . let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed."⁵

Steps to enduring conversion

How seriously have you personally taken the Lord's charge to share His gospel? It is a lifelong responsibility. It is to be addressed differently according to the various seasons of your life. Not everyone can be a full-time missionary. If you can, do it. If not, seek other ways to serve that meet your present circumstances.

As you ponder how to serve, consider where you can best participate in the steps that must unfold for a family or an individual to receive enduring conversion and full gospel blessings. First, the family or individual needs to be identified and prepared to receive the gospel. There follows a *doctrinal conversion*—that is, an understanding of new doctrines and prayer for confirmation of their truthfulness. As the teachings are practiced and the commandments lived, a testimony is gained, and conversion and baptism result. This effort is best performed by full-time missionaries working with stake missionaries, supported by caring members. They systematically present doctrinal principles and are carefully trained to teach and testify of these truths.

Simultaneously with doctrinal conversion there must be a *social transition*. Friends, habits, customs, and traditions not in harmony with the life of a Latter-day Saint are abandoned, replaced by new friends and activities that support a new life. Of the two important changes that must occur in a convert's life—the gaining of a testimony, or doctrinal conversion, and learning how to live as a Latter-day Saint, or the social transi-

tion—the latter is the most difficult to achieve. It is best accomplished with the love and support of members. Your worthy example and caring support can lead them through each step required to learn to live as a Latter-day Saint.

This social transition requires careful nurturing and help to teach new patterns of life, to introduce new friends, and to assist the new converts to be obedient and begin to serve in the Church. In his last conference message, as the representative of the Lord, President Hinckley stressed this vital role of members and leaders to help each new convert feel comfortable and be sustained in living the requirements of a new life. He said, "With the ever increasing number of converts, we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way."⁶

Three categories of service

As you ponder and pray about how you can serve as a member missionary, consider three categories of service available to you and determine which best meets your current circumstances. I will review each category briefly.

Serving without a formal call

As you prayerfully seek and cultivate missionary opportunities in your daily activities, you will find many ways to serve. They include helping to find, convert, and retain new members. The stake or full-time missionaries can teach you how to do that.

You can help the full-time and stake missionaries bring new investigators to church and make them feel comfortable. Let them know that they have a new friend. Strengthen that friendship by inviting them to your home or to Church activities with you. You can support them in obeying the commandments. Such valuable missionary service is not

difficult because it can be carried out in the normal routine of your daily life.

There are other ways you may not think of as missionary service. For example, a young mother can teach each growing son to prepare to be a missionary to preach the gospel and to share his testimony of truth. As mother and father cultivate that thought throughout his growing years, he will be a missionary. That is excellent missionary service.

You may choose to identify your ancestors and arrange for the ordinance work for them to be done in the temples, or if near a temple, have the blessing of performing those ordinances vicariously yourself. President Kimball said:

"Missionary work is not limited to proclaiming the gospel to . . . people now living on the earth. [It] is also continuing beyond the veil among [those] who have died either without hearing the gospel or without accepting it while they lived on the earth. Our great part . . . is to perform on this earth the ordinances required for those who accept the gospel over there. . . . I hope to see us dissolve the artificial boundary line . . . between missionary work and temple and genealogical work, because it is the same great redemptive work!"⁷

You in the United States and Canada can use our television and radio messages to generate potential interest in a family member, neighbor, friend, or acquaintance to learn more of the gospel. Simply ask if they have seen the Church messages. The family messages are a valuable resource to strengthen families. Our television messages with free offerings of instructive videocassettes, a copy of the Book of Mormon or Bible have prompted many to seek solutions to life's problems. Invite those who have heard these messages to a family home evening, a Church activity or meeting. Then introduce them to the missionaries.

Start today to find excitement and joy as you seek to find the missionary opportunities around you.

Serving a part-time mission

Part-time missionary calls are for 4 to 30 hours a week while living at home. They include traditional service such as a stake missionary or a ward mission leader. There are also a wide variety of other part-time service opportunities in almost every branch of Church activity, such as the temple, family history, welfare, education, and public affairs. If you have a particular talent to share, contact your bishop. There will almost certainly be a need for your skills.

Serving a full-time mission

President Hinckley extends the call for missions of 40 hours or more a week at home or elsewhere in the world. If you are a physically able, emotionally stable young man, pray about the opportunity and responsibility you have to the Lord to prepare yourself to be a full-time missionary. That includes understanding the scriptures, being obedient, keeping yourself clean, pure, and worthy to be endowed in the temple. When of age, accept a call by the President of the Church to serve for two years as an emissary of the Lord. I encourage you with every capacity that I have to pray about a full-time mission for the fulfillment it will bring to your life as you bless others to find the truth and receive the ordinances of salvation. Everything that I cherish in life today began to mature from my sacred experience as a full-time missionary.

There is an urgent need in the Church today for missionary couples, not to go first-contacting or teaching the discussions, unless you want to do so, but for meaningful missionary service in all of the activities of the Church throughout the world. There is far greater flexibility in the service opportunities of

couples than for single elders or sisters. In consultation with your bishop, you can indicate your own preferences for missionary service. We must train a growing number of fathers and mothers and priesthood and auxiliary leaders throughout the world who want very much to serve the Lord but simply do not know how to do it. You can help them as a leadership missionary couple. You can serve in temples, family history, educational and medical activities, welfare service projects, public affairs, and visitors' centers. There is a need for almost every discipline of life. There is undoubtedly a need somewhere in the world for your unique capacities and talents. Often special health considerations can be accommodated. The feelings you express to the bishop are communicated in a recommendation for a call. The President of the Church has made it possible for those calls to be inspired of the Lord, taking into consideration your special needs and desires as a couple. Stake presidents and bishops are kept aware of current full-time missionary needs. If you cannot find anyone locally to identify potential missionary opportunities, write to the Missionary Department at headquarters. We will send you a list of the current needs. I encourage each couple with available time to prayerfully consider a full-time mission. You will be greatly blessed for the courage to accept a call. Your children and grandchildren will be positively influenced for good as witnessed by many couples who have honorably served, some on their third, fourth, or fifth mission.

Participate in some way

Don't wait to be asked. I invite each of you to come forth to participate some way in the glorious and varied opportunities for missionary service and in strengthening and sustaining those who embrace the gospel as new members.

You stake presidents and bishops have the privilege to prayerfully seek guidance to identify and call individuals to prepare to serve a full-time or part-time mission. While some will approach you, a greater number can be identified and encouraged to submit papers for a call through your prayerful efforts. Church service has always been based on an inspired call rather than volunteerism.

The Lord has asked us to do this work

Why every member a missionary? Because that is what the Lord has asked us to do. Prayerfully consider it. There are those who would forever call you the angel of understanding and compassion that led them to the truth, fortified them in their faith, or helped them learn to serve the Lord. Do it. Talk to your bishop. Let him help you see the possibilities for joy unbounded in some aspect of "every member a missionary." You will find a renewal of life, excitement, and a deep feeling of personal fulfillment from having the courage to accept a call as a missionary. I know that the Savior will help you proclaim His word. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 121–22.
2. Mark 16:15–16; italics added.
3. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38; italics added; see also D&C 84:106; 108:7.
4. 2 Nephi 2:6–8; italics added; see also Alma 29:2.

5. D&C 123:12, 17.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 66; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.
7. "The Things of Eternity—Stand We in Jeopardy?" *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 3.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin and Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will begin immediately thereafter.

We express gratitude to the lovely Farmington family choir—families seem to be an expression of a theme in these sessions—for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon.

The choir will now sing in closing "How Will They Know?" Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy.

The choir sang "How Will They Know?"

The benediction was offered by Elder Lynn G. Robbins.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 167th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 4, 1997. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir—Mormon Youth Chorus combined men. Craig Jessop and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Welcome, brethren, to this general priesthood session. These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and literally thousands of halls across the world. Various of the General Authorities are in these larger gatherings tonight.

We announce that during this afternoon's session Elders J. Richard Clarke, Dean L. Larsen, and Robert E. Wells of the First Quorum of the Seventy were accorded emeritus status. Elders Lino Alvarez, C. Max Caldwell, John E. Fowler, Augusto A. Lim, V. Dallas Merrell, F. David Stanley, and Kwok Yuen Tai were released as Seventies. Elders John A. Grincer and David W. Eka were sustained as Area Authority Seventies. Sisters Margaret D. Nadauld, Carol B. Thomas, and Sharon G. Larsen were called to succeed Sisters Janette Hales Beckham, Virginia H. Pearce, and Carol B. Thomas as the Young Women presidency.

I'd like to mention one matter, and that is that Elder Andrew Peterson of the Seventy was very seriously injured a week ago. There have been all kinds of stories about how it happened. He was

not joyriding on a motorcycle on the Sabbath day. I haste to make that clear. It was a most unfortunate and tragic accident, and he's very seriously ill. Our hearts and prayers reach out to him and to his family.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the Tabernacle Choir—Mormon Youth Chorus combined men, under the direction of Brothers Craig Jessop and Robert Bowden, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall now begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Glory to God on High," following which Elder Dallas N. Archibald of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Glory to God on High."

Elder Dallas N. Archibald offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now favor us with "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then speak to us. He will be followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Stand for truth and right

It is a privilege, brethren, to speak to you this evening. Brethren, holding the priesthood is more than just a great blessing. It also carries with it significant responsibilities such as watching over

the Church; honoring all women, especially our wives, our mothers, our daughters, our sisters; visiting the home of each member, exhorting each "to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties"¹ and to "stand as wit-

nesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.”²

When we covenant in the waters of baptism to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places,” we’re not talking solely about fast and testimony meetings. It may not always be easy, convenient, or politically correct to stand for truth and right, but it is always the right thing to do—always.

Joseph F. Smith was 19 when he returned from his mission in Hawaii. As he traveled from California to his home in Utah, he was confronted one morning by a “wagonload of profane drunks . . . , shooting their guns, yelling wildly, and cursing the Mormons.” One of the drunks, “waving a pistol,” came toward him. Although Joseph “was terrified, he felt it would be unwise and useless to run . . . , and so he advanced toward the gunman as if he found nothing out of the ordinary in his conduct. ‘Are you a ——— Mormon?’ the stranger demanded. Mustering all the composure he could, Joseph answered evenly while looking the man straight in the eye, ‘Yes, siree; dyed in the wool; true blue, through and through.’ Almost stunned by this wholly unexpected response, the gunman stopped, dropped his hands to his sides, and, after looking incredulously at Joseph for a moment, said in a subdued tone, ‘Well, you are the ——— pleasantest man I ever met! Shake. I am glad to see a fellow stand for his convictions.’ So saying, he turned and walked away.”³

As priesthood holders, we have a sacred duty to always stand for truth and right. The priesthood, by definition, is God’s authority given to man to do the things that He would do if He were here. That means we are not only His witnesses, we are His representatives.

Today’s secret combinations

Standing for truth and right is not solely a Sunday thing. Every day our

neighborhoods and communities are in desperate need of our support and our commitment to safety and law and order. Crime, in all its pervasive manifestations, is a serious worldwide evil and a moral problem about which Church leaders have great concern. The social, economic, and moral costs of crime are incalculable. It is no respecter of race, religion, nationality, age, culture, or socioeconomic status.

The Book of Mormon teaches that secret combinations engaged in crime present a serious challenge, not just to individuals and families but to entire civilizations. Among today’s secret combinations are gangs, drug cartels, and organized crime families. The secret combinations of our day function much like the Gadianton robbers of the Book of Mormon times. They have secret signs and code words. They participate in secret rites and initiation ceremonies. Among their purposes are to “murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God.”⁴

If we are not careful, today’s secret combinations can obtain power and influence just as quickly and just as completely as they did in Book of Mormon times. Do you remember the pattern? The secret combinations began among the “more wicked part” of society, but eventually “seduced the more part of the righteous” until the whole society was polluted.⁵

Young people are most susceptible

Today’s young people, just as those “of the rising generation”⁶ in Book of Mormon times, are the most susceptible to the influence of gangs. Our young men and young women see it all around them. There is an entire subculture that celebrates contemporary gangs and their criminal conduct with music, clothing styles, language, attitudes, and behav-

iors. Many of you have watched as trendy friends have embraced the style as something that was "fashionable" and "cool," only to be dragged into the subculture because of their identification with gangs. We've all heard the tragic stories of unsuspecting wanna-bes who have been victimized by gangs simply because they were wearing the wrong color in the wrong neighborhood.

Priesthood holders must do all they can

The Book of Mormon teaches that the devil is the "author of all sin" and the founder of these secret combinations.⁷ He uses secret combinations, including gangs, "from generation to generation according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men."⁸ His purpose is to destroy individuals, families, communities, and nations.⁹ To a degree, he was successful during Book of Mormon times. And he is having far too much success today. That's why it is so important for us as priesthood holders to take a firm stand for truth and right by doing what we can to help keep our communities safe.

Several years before Christ came to the American continent, the Lamanites exercised such great faith and courage that they completely destroyed the influence of the Gadianton robbers in their society by "preach[ing] the word of God among . . . them."¹⁰ Brethren, we are now in a similar position to "stand as witnesses of God" by setting an example, keeping Church standards, and sharing our testimony with those around us.

The Savior has promised that if we will "keep all the commandments and covenants by which [we] are bound; . . . [He] will cause the heavens to shake for [our] good, and Satan shall tremble and Zion shall rejoice upon the hills and flourish."¹¹ He has even promised that the day will come when, "because of the

righteousness of his people, Satan [will have] no power" over the hearts of men.¹²

Support the efforts of homes and communities

As a Church, we recognize that the gospel of Jesus Christ, with its saving truths and teachings, provides the most effective preventative and rehabilitative assistance in overcoming criminal behavior. Parents bear the first and greatest responsibility to teach their children principles of gospel living and good citizenship. There are, however, those who have little or no support at home. We need to be aware of them and do all we can to bless their lives. They need positive role models who demonstrate integrity by honoring their covenants and keeping their promises.

To you brethren who are fathers, bishopric members, and youth leaders: Please remember that all young men and young women have a great need to feel loved, respected, and valued and to succeed in ways that will help them gain a sense of confidence and self-worth. Appropriate and uplifting activities should be planned that will provide a safe and wholesome environment in which our youth and their nonmember friends can strengthen one another and draw closer to the Savior.

We should also support the efforts of individuals, organizations, communities, and governments to assist them and help prevent crime. We should work within our respective legal and judicial systems to enact and enforce laws that provide necessary protection against criminals while ensuring essential rights and freedoms. And we should volunteer to support and assist government leaders in promoting programs designed to protect and strengthen families and communities.

Counsel to young men

Many of you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood may find yourselves on the front line of a battle against those who intend to do things that are morally wrong. I do not believe that you can stand for truth and right while wearing anything that is unbecoming one who holds the priesthood of God. To me, it is impossible to maintain the Spirit of the Lord while listening to music or watching movies or videos that celebrate evil thoughts and use vulgar language.

I know it is sometimes hard to stand for truth and right. Yet we need to be positive examples if we are to help others find a better way. Thankfully, we can draw strength from those who have gone before us. While the road they walked may have been different from the road we walk today, the courage required to be faithful is similar, and their experiences are instructive.

Whittling and whistling troop

As a boy growing up in Nauvoo, George Q. Cannon learned to cope with those who would do harm to others. In his own words, he tells how he and a group of boys his age did their part to defend the Saints against potential troublemakers:

"It was . . . a common practice . . . , when engaged in conversation or in making a bargain, to take out . . . pocket knives and commence whittling; frequently, . . . accompanying the whittling by whistling. No person could object, therefore, to the practices of whittling and whistling. Many of the boys of the city had each a large bowie knife made, and when a man came to town who was known to be a villain, and was there for evil purposes, a few of them would get together, and go to where the obnoxious person was, and having previously provided themselves with pine shingles,

would commence whittling. The presence of a number of boys, each [harmlessly] whittling . . . was not a sight to escape the notice of a stranger. . . . His first [reaction] . . . would be to . . . ask what this meant. The boys would make no reply, but with grave faces, keep up their [harmless] whistling. . . . What could the man do? If he was armed, he could shoot; but the resolute expression of the boys' faces, and the gleaming knives . . . would convince him that discretion was the better part of valor. . . . The most we ever knew them to do was to stand for awhile and curse and threaten. . . . Then they would walk off . . . , followed by the troop of boys vigorously whittling and whistling."¹³

Now, I'm not suggesting that we begin issuing bowie knives to our deacons. But I am suggesting that George Q. Cannon and his youthful associates exhibited great courage and faith by their actions. They saw something that needed to be done, and they did it safely within the context of what was appropriate for the times. I'm impressed by their willingness to take a stand against wicked intentions of others.

Simple things we can do

Dealing with crime is very complex. However, there are some simple things that we can do in our day to prevent others from drifting toward gangs and crime. We can avoid the temptation of being cliquish at school or at church. All of us can refrain from finding fault or alienating anyone by our words or actions. Nothing is more hurtful than to feel left out or made fun of. Therefore, we must never do anything that may drive others toward being accepted by a gang because they feel rejected by us. Many new families are moving in among us. Brethren, reach out the hand of friendship and make everyone feel welcome and secure in our neighborhoods and in our Church.

Guard against spreading rumors or saying unkind things or allowing anything to occur that may hurt another. Make friends with your neighbors, watch out for each other, and help build a spirit of unity, peace, and love among them. These may seem like small things, but I assure you, if we do these kinds of things, they may be every bit as effective in keeping people away from evil and crime as whittling and whistling were in the days of Nauvoo. True friendship may well be the best thing that we can do to help reach those who may be drifting toward unsafe and morally damaging activities and counterfeit forms of belonging.

Don't rationalize bad choices

There are countless stories that could be told of bright, talented priesthood holders who have influenced for good the lives of others. Unfortunately, there are also stories of those who fell short of their potential because they were unwilling to take such a stand for truth and right. Some young men and young women have rationalized their bad choices, saying that "we all make mistakes." But you must understand that there is a big difference between an honest mistake made in a moment of spiritual weakness and a willful decision to disobey persistently the commandments of God. Those who deliberately choose to violate God's commandments or ignore the standards of the Church, even when promising themselves and others that someday they will be strong enough to repent, are stepping onto a dangerously slippery slope upon which many have lost their spiritual footing. While it is true that some young people have made remarkable recoveries from sin through the process of repentance, the

sad reality is that others have lost their way because of the paths they have chosen to follow.

A great army of priesthood holders

These are difficult times in which we are living. In some respects, it is perhaps the most challenging age of all time. We want you young men to know that we are aware of that. But we are also aware that God has reserved some of His strongest spirit children for these perilous days. While God's laws and standards of right and wrong are under attack at every turn, we are a great army of priesthood holders who are prepared to make a valiant stand for truth and right. Brethren, let us stand, shoulder to shoulder, as bearers of the priesthood of God and as followers of Christ and do what we can to make this a better, safer, and happier world. Let us be "witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places," I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. D&C 20:47.
2. Mosiah 18:9.
3. Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph F. Smith: Patriarch and Preacher, Prophet of God* (1984), 43–44.
4. Helaman 6:23.
5. Helaman 6:38.
6. 3 Nephi 1:30.
7. Helaman 6:30; see 2 Nephi 26:22.
8. Helaman 6:30.
9. See 2 Nephi 9:9.
10. Helaman 6:37.
11. D&C 35:24.
12. 1 Nephi 22:26.
13. "History of the Church," *Juvenile Instructor*, 30 Sept. 1871, 158.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

Responsibilities of priesthood holders

This vast assembly of brethren reminds us that the purposes and destiny of the Church rest in large measure on the shoulders of those who bear the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. Though the Aaronic is the lesser and an appendage to the greater, or Melchizedek, each is everlasting and essential to the Lord's work. Said President John Taylor: "When both of these Priesthoods are carried out and united in their purity, the glory of the Lord will be manifested upon Mount Zion, in the Lord's house, both operating according to their callings, position and authority."¹

With this aim in view, there lies before us the duty to hold fast all those who are newly converted and baptized, rekindle the faith of those who have drifted away, and protect the budding devotion of our youth.

Newly baptized converts make an abrupt departure from past habits and ways. They are frequently alone in the Church, without the support of family and familiar faces. They stand on a path that is strait, narrow, and true. It is also new and can be a bit baffling.

There are those who were once on this same path who have wandered away. Their faith has grown dim. To them, the prospect of full fellowship seems remote and perhaps unwanted. They "hide" from the Church and feel hidden from God.

Overcome perils through the gospel

We love and admire you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. Your vitality is infectious, your abilities astounding, your association invigorating. But we know of other forces interested in you. They are dark and ominous. Wicked men and women parade before you ferocious temptations and deceptions. Their

intent is to destroy you. They can exact a terrible toll.

To make it possible for us to escape these perils, Heavenly Father provided a Savior.² The atoning sacrifice of our Lord is the most important single event in the history of all created things. This, then, is the gospel—that God lives and is our Father, Christ is the beloved Son of God, His Atonement is real, His earthly kingdom is established, and a celestial inheritance awaits those who embrace and abide by the everlasting principles upon which it rests.³

Blessings of the Aaronic Priesthood

The gospel is imparted and received in two ways—one comes before the other. The first contains a lesser portion which prepares; thereafter comes the greater portion which fulfills. The substance of each is found in the ordinances and workings of the Holy Priesthood—beginning in the Aaronic, culminating in the Melchizedek. Those who are "faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods . . . and the magnifying their calling . . . become . . . the church and kingdom, and the elect of God."⁴

The lesser portion of the gospel encompasses vital, saving truths and rests on the cornerstones of obedience and sacrifice. These truths school men and women, boys and girls in the fundamentals of righteousness. They consist of repentance, baptism, and observance of the law of carnal commandments unto the remission of sins. Carnal commandments are those that enable us to overcome the lusts, passions, and desires of our natural, or mortal, bodies and minds. Principal among these are the Ten Commandments.⁵ This lesser portion of the gospel will nourish those who are new in the Church, lead back those who have strayed, help young people recognize and overcome the temptations

and deceptions of the world. Without this preparation, the fulness of gospel blessings cannot be realized or enjoyed.

The responsibility for administering this preparatory portion of the gospel is entrusted to the Aaronic Priesthood:

"And the lesser [or Aaronic] priesthood . . . holdeth the key of the . . . preparatory gospel;

"Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments."⁶

Blessed is the man so called and ordained, for his devoted service in the Aaronic Priesthood will not only save others but himself as well.⁷ It is the same whether the man is new in the Church, returning after a long absence, or of younger years. As he administers these principles, ordinances, and commandments, he himself is schooled. Aaronic Priesthood service readies men for the fulness of the everlasting gospel, for the oath and covenant and spiritual blessings "which belongeth to the [Melchizedek] priesthood."⁸ In every sense, the Aaronic Priesthood is truly preparatory. And for you younger men, there are additional opportunities.

Worthiness, not age, qualify for the work

The world uses age as a means of defining one's readiness for manhood. For example, age is used to determine when a young person is sufficiently mature and responsible to drive an automobile. To youth, the long-awaited time arrives. To their parents, it is a time of sheer terror.

The world also uses age to establish when a man is sufficiently wise and responsible to vote, to make contracts, to be held fully and legally accountable. We call this the age of majority, the time when one ceases to be a minor.

Because youth and age are so visible in the Aaronic Priesthood, we could mistakenly assume they somehow deter-

mine the powers and effectiveness of this priesthood. *Remember, please remember: In the Church, it is worthiness and the power of God that qualify men for the work. Expectation, opportunity, and service contribute more to one's growth than do birthdays. In the kingdom of God, the age of majority begins with ordination.*

Mighty works of the Aaronic Priesthood

Think about the mighty works of Samuel, John the Baptist, Mormon, and Joseph Smith. Each was called while in his youth; each was qualified by God for the great tasks at hand; each performed his duties to the everlasting blessing of us all.

Such works can be the hallmark of the Aaronic Priesthood today. It is, in some measure, a matter of perspective. As we look upon a young Aaronic Priesthood bearer, do we see a boy, or a man "called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands"?⁹ How we view him has a bearing on how he views himself. Let me illustrate.

Pretend for a moment that my hand represents Aaronic Priesthood authority. These four fingers represent its four offices: deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop. Select one of these offices, say that of a deacon. Next to the others, he stands a little shorter, a little less robust. But as the hand is seriously impaired by the loss of its little finger, so the priesthood is impaired if we view a deacon as merely a boy.

In the eyes of God, there is more power and authority in the hand of an Aaronic Priesthood bearer than there is among all of the world's rich, famous, and influential people. Their works will end; his will not. They can do nothing in the name of the Lord; he can do whatever the Lord requires of him, for he is on the Lord's errand. He can strengthen the new convert, bring a change of heart to those who seem lost, and bolster other young people in their faith.

Acting in his Aaronic Priesthood office, he:

- Extends the hand of fellowship and friendliness.
- Teaches, declares, and bears witness of the truth.
- Sees that members meet together often and that none are overlooked.
- Collects fast offerings to care for the poor.
- Administers the holy sacrament.
- Visits members in their homes and enfolds them in the safety of the Church.
- Searches out his ancestors, submits their names to the Family File, and presents himself at the temple to be baptized and confirmed for those who did not receive these ordinances while on earth.
- As a priest, performs baptisms and ordains, by the laying on of hands, other priests, teachers, and deacons.
- Is an example of virtue, moral courage, and wholesome manhood in his family, among his friends, and in the community and nation where he dwells.¹⁰

Commitment of Aaronic Priesthood holders

In my mind I can hear you of the Aaronic Priesthood saying, with a fervor and conviction characteristic of men like Mormon and Joseph Smith:

"We are sons of our Heavenly Father and disciples of Jesus Christ. We act in 'faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God.'¹¹

"As a bearer of the Aaronic Priesthood:

- I will live the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹²
- I will magnify priesthood callings.¹³
- I will give meaningful service.¹⁴
- I will prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.¹⁵
- I will commit to, prepare for, and serve an honorable full-time mission.¹⁶

• I will live worthy to receive temple covenants and prepare to become a worthy husband and father."¹⁷

"Behold the man!"

Our vision of you and your work looks beyond the outward appearance of a boy and sees instead a bearer of the holy priesthood outfitted with its attendant powers, duties, and blessings.

To men of old there came in time
The priesthood named for Aaron.
Through Levites, priests, and prophets too,
It served to bless God's children.

Then came the Savior of the world
And sought out one named John,
To be baptized by this same power
And mark salvation's dawn.

In latter days this selfsame power
Was again restored to earth,
That gospel truths from first to last
Might in one's soul find birth.

Aaronic Priesthood, truth sublime,
In preparation come—
That redemption might be had
Through God's Beloved Son!

And he who ministers these powers—
'Tis not a boy that can.
With priesthood mantle on him fixed
We say, "Behold the man!"¹⁸

God bless you, noble men of the Aaronic Priesthood, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Items on Priesthood, Presented to the Latter-day Saints* (1881), 30.
2. See Moses 6:57–68.
3. See D&C 76:40–44; 3 Nephi 27:13–21; D&C 39:5–6; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 121.
4. D&C 84:33–34; see also verses 32–41.
5. See Joseph Smith Translation, Exodus 34:1–2; D&C 84:27; Exodus 20.

6. D&C 84:26–27.
7. See James 5:19–20.
8. D&C 84:39; see also D&C 107:18–19.
9. Articles of Faith 1:5; see also Hebrews 5:4.
10. See D&C 20:46–60; 84:106–110.
11. D&C 4:5.
12. See 1 Corinthians 9:14.
13. See D&C 107:99.
14. See D&C 4:2–3.
15. See D&C 84:33–39.
16. See 3 Nephi 5:13.
17. See D&C 110:7–9; text is adapted from the Aaronic Priesthood mission state-

ment in *Aaronic Priesthood Leadership Handbook* (1991), 6.

18. Poem by Keith B. McMullin.

President Hinckley

We've heard from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve and Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now speak to us.

President James E. Faust

My dear brethren, I greet you in love and gratitude for your faith and devotion. We have had a great day of conference. Great has been the music; inspirational have been the messages.

Marvelous time in the Church's history

We are concluding a marvelous year celebrating the struggles and heroism of the pioneers who arrived in the Salt Lake Valley 150 years ago. We appreciate so much the hundreds of thousands of faithful Church members across the whole world who have contributed to this great commemoration.

Significantly, all of these activities have been under the prophetic leadership of our inspired President, Gordon B. Hinckley. Now he is directing us to become pioneers of the future with all its exciting opportunities. Faith in every future footstep will fulfill prophetic vision concerning the glorious destiny of this Church.

There has never been a more marvelous time in the history of this Church. More temples are under construction and being planned than ever before. As an important first step in this

future pioneering, President Hinckley has broken ground for a great new hall to be built close to the temple in Salt Lake City. From there the word of the Lord in general conference will be spoken to more of God's children, both in the hall and by satellite or other electronic means.

"Be not afraid, only believe"

Tonight I speak with special emphasis to you young priesthood bearers who will take this Church into the future. You do not follow the ways of the world by engaging in unwholesome activities or wearing strange clothes and ornaments. We are proud of you. We have great confidence in you.

I take as my text the profound but simple message of the Savior to the ruler of the synagogue. You will recall that the ruler was told that his daughter was dead and that he should not trouble the Master about it. When the Savior came into the house of this grieving father, He said: "Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. . . . And he took the [girl] by the hand, and said . . . , I say unto thee, arise. And

straightway the damsel arose, and walked. . . . And they were astonished with a great astonishment.”¹

The Savior’s words to the leader of the synagogue capture the essence of this story: “Be not afraid, only believe.”² These five words comprise my message to you.

We must believe in God, the Eternal Father; and in His Son, Jesus Christ; and in the Holy Ghost.³ We must believe in the Atonement and the Resurrection of the Savior. We must believe in the words of the prophets, both ancient and modern. We should also believe in ourselves.

Believing requires action

Believing requires action. If you prepare to walk down the path of life, you can be rewarded beyond your dreams and expectations. But to achieve this, you must work very hard, save, be wise, and be alert. You must learn to deny yourselves of worldly gratification. You must be faithful in paying tithes; you must keep the Word of Wisdom; you must be free from other addictions. You must be chaste and morally clean in every respect. You should accept and be faithful in all of the calls that come to you. Steadiness and toil will serve you better than brilliance.

Action is inhibited by fear. You young men, along with the young sisters, are the future of the Church and, in some measure, of the world. You rightly have concerns about measuring up and finding your place in life. You more often recognize your inadequacies rather than your strengths.

Some of you may have concerns about leaving home and going into the unknown, such as the mission field. Some of you in your 20s and 30s are timid about taking on the responsibilities of marriage and family. You are properly concerned about your education—your training—to learn to use

your minds and your hands. You must acquire a skill to be able to compete in today’s world.

We belong to the greatest cause on earth

You have fears about being accepted. You worry about being popular in your age-group. It is natural to want to belong.

Recently I heard of a good man who, after being married in the temple and having four children, fell away from the Church. His physical appearance became shabby and his demeanor sad as he became a drug addict, an alcoholic, and then a chain-smoker. He continued in this destructive lifestyle for many years. However, in time, with the help of a good wife, home teachers, a caring bishop, and our loving Heavenly Father, he eventually started on the long road back. One of the proudest days in his life came when he once again qualified for a temple recommend. Looking back on those bad years, he later admitted, “All I ever wanted was to belong.” Seeking acceptance from the wrong source brought untold misery and pain.

Please be assured, brethren, that we all belong. Nothing is more important or precious to any of us than belonging to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We belong to the greatest cause on earth—that of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We have been endowed with the greatest power on earth—that of the holy priesthood.

We are not alone in our struggles

If you take each challenge one step at a time, with faith in every footstep, your strength and understanding will increase. You cannot foresee all of the turns and twists ahead. My counsel to you is to follow the direction of the Savior of the world: “Be not afraid, only believe.”

We are not alone in our mortal struggles. As the prophet Elisha teaches, unseen hosts watch over us. In his day, Syria was at war against Israel, and the prophet Elisha counseled the king of Israel against entrapment. The king of Israel followed that counsel and saved himself again and again. This stirred up the king of Syria, who sent by night "horses, and chariots, and a great host" and surrounded the city.

"And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?"

Then the prophet answered, saying, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

"And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."⁴ With the help of the Lord, the prophet Elisha was able to save Israel.⁵

We can overcome all of our fears

We can overcome all of our fears, not all at once, but one at a time. As we do so we will grow in confidence. The following is the story of a young man who encountered a fear that each one of us has faced or will face at some time in our lives.

It was a hot July afternoon, and the chapel was filled for stake priesthood meeting. There was a young priest sitting on the stand in "contained nervousness," and after the hymn the stake president announced him as the next speaker.

He spread out his notes, and as he did so his quivering hands betrayed his fear. He began to speak, but soon his speech quickened to a gabble, his words wild and repetitive. Worse followed as

he began to stammer and then stopped speaking altogether.

A heavy silence settled on the room. Who has not felt the terror of standing before an awesome audience? Everyone thought he would sit down, but no, he stayed on his feet, his head down. A few ominous seconds ticked by, and then he squared his shoulders and blurted out: "Brethren, I ask for an interest in your faith and prayers that I might have sureness of speech."

Then he went back to where he had left off, speaking quietly but clearly. Soon his voice rose to its natural resonance, and he delivered his message to its full conclusion. It was not so much his message that thrilled those who were there. It was the image of that young man, unflinching even though he felt himself teetering on a precipice of fear, taking up the banner of courage and rallying himself for the cause of truth.⁶

Taking the Church into the future

Each of you has been endowed with unique talents and abilities. That, coupled with some special powers of the priesthood, will help you tremendously in any endeavor. It will be a great challenge to be in the royal army that takes the Church into the future under the guidance of the Lord and His leaders. It will also be a most rewarding and exciting experience. It will require great faith, sacrifice, discipline, commitment, and effort. I have every confidence that you are equal to it.

Confidence in Church leaders

Believing includes faith and trust in the Savior and in the principles of the gospel, and it also includes having total confidence in the President of the Church, the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the other General Authorities as the ser-

vants of the Lord. It also means believing that they receive inspiration to direct the affairs of the Church. This belief was one of the strengths of the pioneers.

Recounting the faith of that great band of early Saints, Elder Ben E. Rich said: "This country was unknown to them. They believed that God had given to President Young a vision of the future home for the Latter-day Saints. They had faith in their leader, and they were willing to go into the unknown with him. . . . Who should ever forget the faith, . . . the bravery, of those who had such confidence in Brigham Young as to follow him into these valleys of the mountains."⁷ As modern-day pioneers looking to the future, we must be willing to go into the unknown, having the same confidence and commitment in following President Hinckley and the other constituted authorities of the Church.

We must actively avoid evil

Believing involves faith and good works. We cannot be passive; we must actively avoid evil. This means that we do not trifle with sacred things. Families in this day and time should not only avoid evil but avoid the very appearance of evil. To combat these influences, families must have family prayer, family home evening, and family scripture study.

How corrosive is the daily diet of pornography, immorality, dishonesty, disrespect, abuse, and violence that comes from so many sources. If we are not careful it will shake our spiritual moorings. Once we internalize these evils, it is very difficult to purge ourselves of them.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks gave wise counsel on this subject while serving as president of Brigham Young University. He said:

"We are surrounded by the promotional literature of illicit sexual relations, on the printed page and on the screen. For your own good, avoid it. Pornographic or erotic stories and pictures are

worse than filthy or polluted food. The body has defenses to rid itself of unwholesome food. With a few fatal exceptions bad food will only make you sick but do no permanent harm. In contrast, a person who feasts upon filthy stories and pornographic or erotic pictures and literature records them in this marvelous retrieval system we call a brain. The brain won't vomit back filth. Once recorded, it will always remain subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind and drawing you away from the wholesome things in life."⁸

The most challenged generation in history

In some ways we are the most challenged generation in the history of the world. We seem to be living in a time foreseen by King Benjamin. Said he, "And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them." Now comes this powerful warning: "But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish."⁹

Remain faithful to the end

I would like to say a word to you brethren who are a little older. President J. Reuben Clark Jr., a Counselor in the First Presidency, used to say from this pulpit, "Brethren, I hope I can remain faithful to the end." At that time, President Clark was in his 80s.

As a young man, I could not understand how this wise, learned, experienced, righteous Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ could have any concern for his own spiritual well-being. As I ap-

proach his age, I now understand. I have the same concern for myself, for my family, and for all of my brethren of the priesthood. Over my lifetime, I have seen some of the most choice, capable, and righteous of men stumble and fall. They have been true and faithful for many years and then get caught in a web of stupidity and foolishness which has brought great shame to themselves and betrayed the trust of their innocent families, leaving their loved ones a legacy of sorrow and hurt.

My dear brethren, all of us, young and old, must constantly guard against the enticements of Satan. These evil influences come to us like tidal waves. We must choose wisely the books and magazines we read, the movies we see, and how we use modern technology, such as the Internet.

Promise of transcendent blessings

The great powers of the priesthood are beyond our understanding. They are everlasting. Through this power the universe was set in order. I promise you brethren transcendent blessings as you live righteously. I say this without hesitation or equivocation because of the promises from the Lord in the oath and the covenant of the priesthood, found in the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

"They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

"And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him."¹⁰

If we believe and are faithful, we are promised all that the Father has. If we receive all that the Father has, there is nothing more for us to receive in this life or the life to come. We should remember that in our challenges and struggles against the powers of evil and darkness, "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." We belong to the greatest cause on earth. We are the pioneers of the future. Let us go forth like the armies of Helaman and build the kingdom of God. Like the royal army, let us be "united, bold, and strong," "marching forth to conquer on life's great battlefield."¹¹ All of these hopes, blessings, and opportunities will come to us if we will only believe and be not afraid. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Mark 5:39, 41–42; see also verses 35–42.
2. Mark 5:36.
3. See Articles of Faith 1:1; Mosiah 4:9.
4. 2 Kings 6:14–17.
5. See 2 Kings 6:18–23.
6. See Wayne B. Lynn, *Lessons from Life* (1987), 51–52.
7. Ben E. Rich, in Conference Report, Apr. 1911, 104.
8. Quoted in "Things They're Saying," *New Era*, Feb. 1974, 18.
9. Mosiah 4:29–30.
10. D&C 84:33–38.
11. "Behold! A Royal Army," *Hymns*, no. 251.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel."

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang
 "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel."

President Thomas S. Monson

This has been a conference session marked by spirituality, and I know that you, as I, have been edified. The statement has been made, "Where the President is, there is strength, and to know that he is with us and is presiding is a strength to the entire Church."¹

President Hinckley programmed an energy-consuming regimen during the past year and has borne his witness to vast thousands of members and others throughout the nations of the world. For many, the experience was one never before enjoyed by devoted members in faraway places with strange-sounding names. He appreciates our prayers in his behalf.

Letter received by President Hinckley

In addition to so many other responsibilities, the President of the Church receives a great deal of correspondence each day. I am reminded of one such letter and share it with you. I have changed the name of the young man who wrote the letter. It begins:

"Dear President,

"Hi. My name is David Smith. I live in an area where the starlings are very bad, and they are making nests in my step-grandpa's boat and in my dad's barn and all over the place. My step-grandpa and my dad both think I should shoot them, but my mom doesn't. I know the law says it is okay, but I am not asking your opinion as a hunter. I am asking your opinion as a Church leader.

"Sincerely, David Smith

"P.S. A starling is a black bird that eats other bird's eggs and other bad things."

Each letter which comes in is answered. A response to this particular letter was sent by the secretary to the First Presidency, F. Michael Watson.

"Dear David:

"I have been asked to acknowledge your letter of April 30 addressed to the President of the Church about the problems you have been having with starlings.

"The Church does not have an official policy on this matter. The Brethren feel it should be left up to your parents to give you appropriate guidance.

"I hope this information is helpful to you.

"Sincerely yours, F. Michael Watson"

President Hinckley cannot possibly answer every letter personally, nor can he be everywhere. Neither can those of us who assist him reach each member in every nation. However, the wisdom of the Lord provided us guidelines whereby we who hold the priesthood of God can serve, can teach, can testify to the families of the Church. Yes, I speak of home teaching.

The Lord's counsel on home teaching

Let us review the counsel of the Lord and His prophets concerning this vital endeavor.

The bishop of each ward in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints assigns priesthood holders as

home teachers to visit the homes of members every month. They go in pairs; often a youth holding the Aaronic Priesthood accompanies an adult holding the Melchizedek Priesthood.

The home teaching program is a response to modern revelation commissioning those ordained to the priesthood to "teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church; . . . and visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties; . . . to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them; And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking."²

President David O. McKay admonished: "Home teaching is one of our most urgent and most rewarding opportunities to nurture and inspire, to counsel and direct our Father's children. . . . It is a divine service, a divine call. It is our duty as home teachers to carry the divine spirit into every home and heart. To love the work and do our best will bring unbounded peace, joy, and satisfaction to a noble, dedicated teacher of God's children."³

From the Book of Mormon, Alma "consecrated all their priests and all their teachers; and none were consecrated except they were just men. Therefore they did watch over their people, and did nourish them with things pertaining to righteousness."⁴

Making appointments

In performing our home teaching responsibilities, we are wise if we learn and understand the challenges of the members of each family. A home teaching visit is also more likely to be successful if an appointment is made in advance.

The late John R. Burt, with whom I served for many years in ward and stake positions, told of an experience when as a boy he went home teaching with a de-

vout and outspoken high priest—with-out warning—to a less-active family. They had come at a bad time. A poker game was under way in a smoke-filled living room. As the home teachers viewed the room, the high priest senior companion turned to young Brother Burt and exclaimed, "This congregation needs repentance! Please lead us in singing a hymn."

Instead, the junior companion said, "I think we had best leave and come back another night."

Some years ago, when the Missionary Executive Committee was comprised of Spencer W. Kimball, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson, Brother and Sister Hinckley hosted a dinner for the committee members and our wives. We had just finished a lovely dinner in the beautiful home—which Brother Hinckley constructed and on which he did most of the actual work—when suddenly there was a knock at the door. President Hinckley opened the door and noted his home teacher standing there. The home teacher said, "I don't have with me my companion, but I felt I should come tonight. I didn't know you would be entertaining company."

President Hinckley graciously invited the home teacher to come in and sit down and instruct three Apostles and their wives concerning our duty as members. With a bit of trepidation, the home teacher did his best. President Hinckley thanked him for coming, after which the home teacher made a prompt retreat.

Be a genuine friend

Abraham Lincoln offered this wise counsel, which surely applies to home teachers: "If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend." President Ezra Taft Benson urged, "Above all, be a genuine friend to the individuals and families you teach."⁵

As the Savior declared to us, "I will call you friends, for you are my friends."⁶ A friend makes more than a dutiful visit each month. A friend is more concerned about helping people than getting credit. A friend cares. A friend loves. A friend listens. And a friend reaches out.

Some who are here will remember the story President Romney used to tell about the so-called home teacher who once went to the Romney home on a cold night. He kept his hat in his hand and shifted nervously when invited to sit down and give his message. "Well, I'll tell you, Brother Romney," he responded. "It's cold outside, and I left my car engine running so it wouldn't stop. I just came by so I could tell the bishop I made my calls."

Brother Romney, after relating this experience in a meeting of priesthood holders, then said, "We can do better than that, brethren—much better!"

Home teachers can see living miracles

Home teaching answers many prayers and permits us to see the occurrence of living miracles. Let me illustrate using situations with which I have been intimately acquainted in years past, as well as in the present period of time.

The proprietor of Dick's Cafe in St. George, Utah, is such an example. Dick Hammer came to Utah during the Depression years with the Civilian Conservation Corps. During that period, he met and married a Latter-day Saint young woman. He opened his cafe, which became a popular meeting spot. Home teacher to the Hammer family was Willard Milne. Since I knew Dick Hammer and had printed his menus, I would ask my friend Brother Milne when I visited St. George, "How is our friend Dick Hammer coming?"

The reply would generally be, "Slowly."

The years passed by, and just a year or two ago Willard said to me: "Brother

Monson, Dick Hammer is converted and is going to be baptized. He is in his 90th year, and we have been friends all our adult lives. His decision warms my heart. I've been his home teacher for many years—perhaps 15 years."

Brother Hammer was indeed baptized and a year later entered that beautiful St. George Temple and there received his endowment and sealing blessings.

I asked Willard, "Did you ever become discouraged teaching for such a long time?"

He replied, "No, it was worth the effort. I am a happy man."

Some years ago, before my leaving to become president of the Canadian Mission headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, I had developed a friendship with a man by the name of Shelley who lived in the ward but did not embrace the gospel, irrespective of the fact that his wife and children had done so. As I served as a mission president, had I been asked to name anyone I knew not likely to become a member of the Church, I believe I would have thought of Shelley.

After I was called to the Twelve, I received a telephone call from Shelley. He said, "Bishop, will you seal my wife, my family, and me in the Salt Lake Temple?"

I answered hesitantly, "But, Shelley, you first must be a baptized member of the Church."

He laughed and responded, "Oh, I took care of that while you were in Canada. My home teacher was a school crossing guard, and every weekday as he and I would visit at the crossing, we would discuss the gospel."

I had the privilege to see this miracle with my own eyes and feel the joy with my heart and soul. The sealings were performed; a family was united. Shelley died not long after this period, but not before he publicly thanked his home teachers for their faithful service.

Bring families to full fellowship

Elder Mark E. Petersen, when discussing activation of members, would frequently declare, "The challenge is one of lack of conversion." We, the priesthood of the Church, cannot afford to leave families in a cocoon, isolated from the body of the Church.

Long years ago, Joseph Lyon of Salt Lake City shared with me the lesson of a lecture which a minister from another faith observed as he spoke to the Associated Credit Men of Salt Lake. The minister boldly proclaimed: "Mormonism is the greatest philosophy in the world today. The biggest test for the Church will come with the advent of television and radio, which tend to keep people away from the Church." He then proceeded to relate what I've called the "hot coals" story. He described a warm fireplace where the pieces of wood had burned brightly, with the embers still glowing and giving off heat. He then observed that by taking in hand brass tongs, he could remove one of the hot embers. That ember would then slowly pale in light and turn black. No longer would it glow. No longer would it warm. He then pointed out that by returning the black, cold ember to the bed of living coals, the dark ember would begin to glow and brighten and warm. He concluded: "People are somewhat like the coals of a fire. Should they absent themselves from the warmth and spirit of the active church membership, they will not contribute to the whole, but in their isolation will be changed. As with the embers removed from the heat of the fire, as they distance themselves from the intensity of the spirit generated by the active membership, they will lose that warmth and spirit."

The reverend closed his comments by observing, "People are more important than the embers of a fire."

As years come and then go and life's challenges become more difficult, the

visits of home teachers to those who have absented themselves from Church activity can be the key which will eventually open the doors to their return.

With this thought in mind, can we brethren not reach out to those for whom we are responsible and bring them to the table of the Lord to feast on His word and to enjoy the companionship of His Spirit, and be "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God"?*

Our home teachers have been angels

President Ezra Taft Benson said that home teaching is "priesthood compassionate service."⁸ Not long ago I received a touching letter from Sister Mori Farmer. It tells of two home teachers and the loving service they provided the Farmer family during a time when the family was experiencing some difficult financial circumstances. At the time the service was provided, the Farmer family was out of town attending a family reunion.

I share with you first a letter written to the Farmer family by their home teachers, which the family found taped to their garage door when they returned home. It begins: "We hope you had a great family reunion. While you were gone, we and about 50 of our friends had a great party at *your* house. We want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the years of unselfish service you both have given to us. You have been Christlike examples of untiring service to others. We can never repay you for that—but just thought we'd like to say thanks. Signed, your home teachers."

I quote now from Sister Mori Farmer's letter to me:

"[After reading the note from our home teachers] we entered the house with great anticipation. What we found shocked us so much we were at a loss for

words. I stayed up all night crying over the generosity of the people in our ward.

"Our home teachers had decided that they would fix our carpet while we were away. They had moved the furniture out into the front yard so the carpet could get stretched and finished. One man in the ward stopped and asked what was going on. He returned later with several hundred dollars' worth of paint and said, 'We might as well paint the house while everything is out.' Others saw the cars out front and stopped to see what was going on, and by week's end 50 people were busy repairing, painting, cleaning, and sewing.

"Our friends and fellow ward members had fixed our poorly laid carpet, painted the entire house, repaired holes in the drywall, oiled and varnished our kitchen cabinets, put curtains on three windows in the kitchen and family room, done all the laundry, cleaned every room in the house, had the carpets cleaned, fixed broken door latches, and on and on. In trying to make a list of all the wonderful things they did for us, we filled three pages. All of this had been accomplished between Wednesday and our return on Sunday.

"Almost everyone we talked to told us, with tears in their eyes, what a spiritual experience it had been to participate. We have been truly humbled by this experience. As we look around our home, we are reminded of their kindness and of the great sacrifice of time, talents, and money they made for our family. Our home teachers have truly been angels in our lives, and we will never forget them and the wonderful things they have done for us."

The Savior is our Exemplar

Other instances could well be cited. However, I turn to one example to describe the type of home teachers we should be. There is one Teacher whose life overshadows all others. He taught of

life and death, of duty and destiny. He lived not to be served, but to serve; not to receive, but to give; not to save His life, but to sacrifice it for others. He described a love more beautiful than lust, a poverty richer than treasure. It was said of this Teacher that He taught with authority and not as did the scribes. In today's world, when many men are greedy for gold and for glory and are dominated by the philosophies of men, remember that this Teacher never wrote—once only He wrote on the sand, and wind destroyed forever His handwriting. His laws were not inscribed upon stone, but upon human hearts.⁹ I speak of the Master Teacher, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. The biblical account says of Him, He "went about doing good."¹⁰ With Him as our unfailing Guide and Exemplar, we shall qualify for His divine help in our home teaching. Lives will be blessed. Hearts will be comforted. Souls will be saved.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Oct. 1967; or *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1968, 26.
2. D&C 20:42, 47, 53-54.
3. David O. McKay, "A Divine Service," *Priesthood Home Teaching Handbook* (1963), as quoted in Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 60-61; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 49.
4. Mosiah 23:17-18.
5. Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 61; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 50.
6. D&C 93:45.
7. Ephesians 2:19.
8. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 225.
9. See Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 99; or *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 91.
10. Acts 10:38.

President Hinckley

We have just heard from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

We remind you brethren that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic

rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the men of the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus for the music given us this evening.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "I Need Thee Every Hour."

The benediction will be offered by Elder Donald L. Staheli of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now brethren, it becomes my privilege to speak to you, and I will repeat some things that have been said during this conference with the hope of giving emphasis to them. This has been a wonderful meeting, and if the counsel we have received is heeded, we shall all be the better for it.

Temples planned or under construction

I believe that no member of the Church has received the ultimate which this Church has to give until he or she has received his or her temple blessings in the house of the Lord. Accordingly, we are doing all that we know how to do to expedite the construction of these sacred buildings and make the blessings received therein more generally available.

With the dedication of the St. Louis Temple last June, we have 50 working temples. We will soon dedicate the Vernal Utah Temple. The next dedication is scheduled for June of 1998 in Preston, England.

I am pleased to report that the temples in Colombia; Ecuador; the Dominican Republic; Bolivia; Spain; Recife and Campinas, Brazil; Mexico; Boston; New York; and Albuquerque are all moving forward either in planning or in various stages of construction. Our previously

announced plan to construct a temple in Venezuela is also going forward, and we are hopeful of acquiring a site in the very near future. We continue to work on permits of various kinds, against some opposition, for temples in Billings, Montana; and Nashville, Tennessee.

I am now pleased to announce our intent to build temples in Houston, Texas; and in Pôrto Alegre, Brazil. All of this speaks of our great interest in vigorously moving forward this important work. Altogether I think we have about 17 temples in some course of construction, and that is a prodigious undertaking.

Small temples will be built

But there are many areas of the Church that are remote, where the membership is small and not likely to grow very much in the near future. Are those who live in these places to be denied forever the blessings of the temple ordinances? While visiting such an area a few months ago, we prayerfully pondered this question. The answer, we believe, came bright and clear.

We will construct small temples in some of these areas, buildings with all of the facilities to administer all of the ordinances. They would be built to temple

standards, which are much higher than meetinghouse standards. They would accommodate baptisms for the dead, the endowment service, sealings, and all other ordinances to be had in the Lord's house for both the living and the dead.

They would be presided over, wherever possible, by local men called as temple presidents, just as stake presidents are called. They would have an indefinite period of appointment. They would live in the area, in their own homes. One counselor would serve as temple recorder, the other as temple engineer. All ordinance workers would be local people who would serve in other capacities in their wards and stakes.

Patrons would be expected to have their own temple clothing, thereby making unnecessary the construction of very costly laundries. A simple laundry would take care of baptismal clothing. There would be no eating facilities.

These structures would be open according to need, maybe only one or two days a week—that would be left to the judgment of the temple president. Where possible, we would place such a building on the same grounds as the stake center, using the same parking lot for both facilities, thereby effecting a great savings.

One of these small temples can be constructed for about the same cost it takes just to maintain a large temple for a single year. It can be constructed in a relatively short time, several months. I repeat that none of the essentials would be missing. Every ordinance performed in the house of the Lord would be available. These small buildings would have at least half the capacity of some of our much larger temples. They could be expanded when needed.

Now as you hear me say these things, I think stake presidents in many areas will say this is exactly what we need. Well, let us know of your needs, and we will give them prayerful and careful con-

sideration, but please don't expect things to happen all at once. We need a little experience for this undertaking.

The operation of such temples will require some measure of sacrifice on the part of our faithful local Saints. They not only will serve as ordinance workers; it will be expected that they will clean the buildings and take care of them. But the burden will not be heavy; in view of the blessings, it will be light indeed. There will be no paid employees; all of the work of operation will represent faith and devotion and dedication.

We are planning such structures immediately in Anchorage, Alaska; in the LDS colonies in northern Mexico; and in Monticello, Utah. In areas of greater Church membership we will build more of the traditional temples, but we are developing plans that will reduce the costs without any reduction in terms of the work to be performed therein. We are determined, brethren, to take the temples to the people and afford them every opportunity for the very precious blessings that come of temple worship.

Retain every convert

Now, so much for that matter. What I say next you have heard me say before, and you have heard others speak of it. I hope we keep talking about it and then doing something about it. I do so because I am so concerned with it.

With the increase of missionary work throughout the world, there must be a comparable increase in the effort to make every convert feel at home in his or her ward or branch. Enough people will come into the Church this year to constitute more than 100 new average-size stakes. Unfortunately, with this acceleration in conversions, we are neglecting some of these new members. I am hopeful that a great effort will go forward throughout the Church, throughout the world, to retain every convert who comes into the Church.

This is serious business. There is no point in doing missionary work unless we hold on to the fruits of that effort. The two must be inseparable.

A letter from a former convert

I should like to read you a letter. It is of a kind that we occasionally receive. A man writes:

"I feel compelled to write to you after reading your comments from the April general conference. I was especially moved by your comments on 'Converts and Young Men.' I was reading the article on the Internet and was touched by your words. Your perception of converts and their special needs was especially moving to me since I was a convert to the Church. I wanted to write to you and tell you that I agree with all of your statements, and that had more members been aware of the needs of a convert I would probably have stayed in the Church.

"I was converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1994. This was after a long period of time in which I was searching for the true church. I had explored just about every denomination and church but never found what I was looking for. From my first contact with the missionaries, I knew that they were presenting something to me that would change my life. I listened to what they had to say, and I heard what I was looking for all those years. I don't know if there are words to describe how I felt after hearing their message. I was finally at peace. It all made sense. I earnestly studied the Church and felt as if I had found a 'home.' I decided to be baptized on October 8, 1994. It was one of the greatest days of my life.

"However, after my baptism, things with the Church changed. I suddenly was thrown into an environment where I was supposed to know what was going on. I now was not the focus of attention but

just another member. I was treated as if I was in the Church for years.

"I had been told that there would be six discussions following my joining the Church. They never took place. At this same time, I was feeling intense pressure from my fiancée to not be in the Church. She was extremely anti-Mormon [in her] beliefs and didn't want me to be a part of it. We fought often about the Church. I thought that I could make her see my side of the story. I thought that if I just had more time to participate in the Church, she wouldn't think of it as a bad thing or as a cult. I thought that she would see from my example that this was the true Church and she would come to accept it.

"I used the missionaries for a lot of support. They helped . . . to think of ways to convince my fiancée that I had made the right decision. That worked until the missionaries were transferred. They moved away, and I was basically left alone. At least, that is how I thought. I looked to the members for support, but there was none. The bishop helped, but he could only do so much. I gradually lost my 'warm, fuzzy feeling' about the Church. I felt like a stranger. I began to doubt the Church and its message. Eventually, I started to listen more to my fiancée. Then I made a decision that maybe I had rushed into the Church too quickly. I wrote my bishop and asked that my name be removed from the Church records. I allowed this to be done. That was a low point in my life.

"Now, it's two years since I left the Church. I have gone back to [my old church] and haven't been involved with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since then. I am constantly praying and asking God to guide me. I know in my heart that He will guide me to His true Church. However, I don't know if that is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or if it even exists at all. I regret that I left the Church and had my

name removed from the records, but at the time I felt that there was no other option. The experience left a bad impression with me, and it would be difficult to overcome.

"As the Church prepares to implement a program for the retention of new converts, I wanted you to know . . . that I think a lot of new converts may have similar experiences to mine. I know that there are people who are joining the Church against the advice of friends and family. This is a big step for them, and they should be supported at this critical time. I know from my past that had the support been there, I would not be writing this letter to you.

"Thank you for your time," and he signs the letter.

What a tragedy. What a terrible tragedy. I believe the writer still has a testimony of this work. That testimony has been with him since the time he was baptized, but he has felt neglected and of no consequence to anyone.

Someone has failed, failed miserably. I say to bishops throughout the world that with all you have to do—and we recognize that it is much—you cannot disregard the converts. Most of them do not need very much. As I have said before, they need a friend. They need something to do, a responsibility. They need nurturing with the good word of God. They come into the Church with enthusiasm for what they have found. We must immediately build on that enthusiasm. You have people in your wards who can be friends to every convert. They can listen to them, guide them, answer their questions, and be there to help in all circumstances and in all conditions. Brethren, this loss must stop. It is unnecessary. I am satisfied the Lord is not pleased with us. I invite you, every one of you, to make this a matter of priority in your administrative work. I invite every member to reach out in friendship and love for those who come into the Church as converts.

You will hear much about this in the months to come. I mention it now only to give my wholehearted endorsement.

Young men are a marvelous generation

Permit me now to speak of another matter. I wish to speak to every boy who is listening tonight. And I express appreciation for what the other Brethren have said to them.

First, let me say that we honor and respect you young men. You represent a marvelous generation in this Church. I have said again and again that I believe this is the best generation we have ever had. You and the young women are tremendous. You study the scriptures. You pray. You attend seminary at sacrifice to yourselves. You try to do the right thing. You have testimonies of this work, and most of you live accordingly. I compliment you most generously! I express to you our great love for you. I wish only to say one or two things, adding to the things I have previously said, which I hope will be encouraging as you go forward with your lives.

I could wish for you nothing better than to see in your lives total loyalty to the Church, total faith in its divine mission, total love for the work of the Lord with a desire to move it forward, and total dedication in performing your duties as members of the Aaronic Priesthood.

Be virtuous in thought and deed

You live in a world of terrible temptations. Pornography, with its sleazy filth, sweeps over the earth like a horrible, engulfing tide. It is poison. Do not watch it or read it. It will destroy you if you do. It will take from you your self-respect. It will rob you of a sense of the beauties of life. It will tear you down and pull you into a slough of evil thoughts and possibly of evil actions. Stay away from it. Shun it as you would a foul disease, for it is just as deadly. Be virtuous

in thought and in deed. God has planted in you, for a purpose, a divine urge which may be easily subverted to evil and destructive ends. When you are young, do not get involved in steady dating. When you reach an age where you think of marriage, then is the time to become so involved. But you boys who are in high school don't need this, and neither do the girls.

We receive letters, we constantly deal with people who, under the pressures of life, marry while very young. There is an old saying, "Marry in haste, repent at leisure." How true that is.

Have a wonderful time with the young women. Do things together, but do not get too serious too soon. You have missions ahead of you, and you cannot afford to compromise this great opportunity and responsibility.

The Lord has said, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly" (D&C 121:45).

Stay away from alcohol and drugs

Stay away from alcohol. Graduation from high school is no reason for a beer bust. Better stay away and be thought a prude than go through life regretting it ever afterwards. Stay away from drugs. You cannot afford to touch them. They will utterly destroy you. The euphoria will quickly pass, and the deadly, strangling clutches of this evil thing will embrace you in their power. You will become a slave, a debauched slave. You will lose control of your life and your actions. Do not experiment with them. Stay free of them!

Walk in the sunlight, strength, and virtue of self-control and of absolute integrity.

Become educated and serve missions

Get all the schooling you can. Education is the key that unlocks the door of opportunity. God has placed upon this

people a mandate to acquire knowledge "even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118; see also D&C 109:7, 14).

You are a peculiar people. Of course you are. You have bypassed the things of the world. You are on your way to something higher and better. You have education to be obtained. You have marriage before you as a great and sacred opportunity in the house of the Lord.

You have missions to perform. Each of you should plan for missionary service. You may have some doubts. You may have some fears. Face your doubts and your fears with faith. Prepare yourselves to go. You have not only the opportunity; you have the responsibility. The Lord has blessed and favored you in a remarkable and wonderful way. Is it too much to ask that you give two years totally immersed in His service?

Stand up and walk as sons of God

My young brethren, you are something special. You must rise above the ordinary. You must put on the whole armor of God and walk with virtue. You know what is right. You know what is wrong. You know when and how to make the choice. You know that there is a power in heaven on which you can call in your time of extremity and need. Pray with fervency and with faith. Pray to the God of heaven, whom you love and who loves you. Pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His very life for you. Stand up and walk as becomes the sons of God.

We love you. We pray for you. We count on you so very, very much. May you be watched over and safeguarded and blessed of the Lord.

Sisters are not obligated to go on missions

Now I wish to say something to bishops and stake presidents concerning missionary service. It is a sensitive matter.

There seems to be growing in the Church an idea that all young women as well as all young men should go on missions. We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work. They can get in homes where the elders cannot.

I confess that I have two granddaughters on missions. They are bright and beautiful young women. They are working hard and accomplishing much good. Speaking with their bishops and their parents, they made their own decisions to go. They did not tell me until they turned in their papers. I had nothing to do with their decision to go.

Now, having made that confession, I wish to say that the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve are united in saying to our young sisters that they are not under obligation to go on missions. I hope I can say what I have to say in a way that will not be offensive to anyone. Young women should not feel that they have a duty comparable to that of young men. Some of them will very much wish to go. If so, they should counsel with their bishop as well as their parents. If the idea persists, the bishop will know what to do.

I say what has been said before, that missionary work is essentially a priesthood responsibility. As such, our young men must carry the major burden. This is their responsibility and their obligation.

We do not ask the young women to consider a mission as an essential part of their life's program. Over a period of many years, we have held the age level higher for them in an effort to keep the number going relatively small. Again to the sisters I say that you will be as highly respected, you will be considered as being as much in the line of duty, your efforts will be as acceptable to the Lord and to the Church whether you go on a mission or do not go on a mission.

We constantly receive letters from young women asking why the age for sister missionaries is not the same as it is for elders. We simply give them the rea-

sons. We know that they are disappointed. We know that many have set their hearts on missions. We know that many of them wish this experience before they marry and go forward with their adult lives. I certainly do not wish to say or imply that their services are not wanted. I simply say that a mission is not necessary as a part of their lives.

Now, that may appear to be something of a strange thing to say in priesthood meeting. I say it here because I do not know where else to say it. The bishops and stake presidents of the Church have now heard it. And they must be the ones who make the judgment in this matter.

That is enough on that subject.

Expression of love and blessing

Now in closing, I simply want to express my love for each of you. You men and boys provide the leadership for this great organization, which is moving across the world in a marvelous and miraculous manner. I have not the slightest concern about the future. This Church has become a great builder of leaders. One sees them everywhere. Converts of only a few years are serving as bishops and stake presidents and in other capacities. What a wonderful thing you are doing, my brethren.

Husbands, live the gospel. Be kind to your wives. You cannot serve acceptably in the Church if there is conflict at home. Fathers, be kind to your children. Be companionable with them. As hard as you may labor in gathering the necessities of the world, no asset you will ever have will compare with the love and loyalty of the woman with whom you joined hands over the altar in the temple, and the affection and respect of your children.

May each of you be blessed in your vocational pursuits whatever they may be, so long as they are honorable. May you look upon the Church as your great

and good friend, your refuge when the world appears to be closing around you, your hope when things are dark, your pillar of fire by night and your cloud by day as you thread the pathways of your lives. May the Lord be mindful of you and merciful and kind to you. May you find great joy in that which you do in His service is my humble prayer, with an ex-

pression of love and affection for each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder Donald L. Staheli offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 167th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 5, 1997. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Lead Me into Life Eternal." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 167th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference. We acknowledge the

presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

We have with us the great Tabernacle Choir. Under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley with Brother John Longhurst at the organ, they opened these services by singing "Lead Me into Life Eternal."

The choir will now sing "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," following which Elder John B. Dickson of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

Elder John B. Dickson offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We will now be pleased to listen to President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President James E. Faust

The "weightier matters of the law"

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I have prayed earnestly that you might understand my words this morn-

ing in the spirit which is intended. I therefore seek your faith and prayers in my behalf.

Jesus of Nazareth described His ultimate work: "This is my work and my

glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”¹ His work is accomplished through His gospel, which carries the impress of the Savior Himself. I humbly wish to speak of the essence of the gospel. The Savior taught that judgment, mercy, and faith are the “weightier matters of the law.”²

The Savior gave us a higher law

I wish to state unequivocally that the commandments of God must be kept to receive the blessings and promises of the Savior. The Ten Commandments are still a vital thread in the fabric of the gospel of Christ, but with His coming came new light and life, which bring a fuller measure of joy and happiness. Jesus introduced a higher and more difficult standard of human conduct. It is simpler as well as more difficult because it focuses on internal rather than external requirements: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.³ Love your neighbor as yourself.⁴ When smitten, turn the other cheek.⁵ When asked for a coat, give your cloak also.⁶ Forgive, not just once but seventy times seven.⁷ This was the essence of the new gospel. There was more emphasis on *do* than *do not*. More moral agency was given to each of us.

Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the dispensation of the fulness of times, established the Church by revelation as the receptacle of gospel truth. He brought more light, warmth, and joy into the Church through the numerous lofty revelations, such as how the priesthood should be exercised: “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned.”⁸ This high standard of conduct, if lived, will bring to fruition the promise: “Men are, that they might have joy.”⁹

Over the centuries dogmatism, coercion, and intolerance have too often pol-

luted the living water of the gospel, which quenches our spiritual thirst eternally.¹⁰ The Savior observed this in His day:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

“Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.”¹¹

Similarly, Paul said, “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”¹²

We are not only to avoid evil, not only to do good but, most important, to do the things of greatest worth. We are to focus on the inward things of the heart, which we know and value intuitively but often neglect for that which is trivial, superficial, or prideful.

Timeless laws of the gospel

The saving principles and doctrines of the Church are established, fixed, and unchangeable. Obedience to these absolutes is necessary to enjoy “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”¹³ However, the manner in which the Church administers complex and varied worldwide challenges changes from time to time. Under guidance from living prophets, new guidelines and procedures are put in place. I welcome these inspired changes. They are proof of the truthfulness of the restored gospel.

I have some fear, however, that some members consider guidelines and procedures to be as important as the timeless, immutable laws of the gospel, such as “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”¹⁴ Rather than some legalistic definition of adultery, the Savior’s more enlightened direction is that the thought is father to the deed: he that “looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”¹⁵

Responsibility for moral judgments

Who decides what is right and wrong in given circumstances? Where does the responsibility for the making of moral judgments rest? With mature individuals, of course, it rests with each individual. In the case of children, the responsibility of giving moral guidance rests with the parents. They know the disposition, understanding, and intelligence of each child. Parents spend a lifetime seeking to establish and maintain good communications with each of their children. They are in the best position to make the ultimate moral decisions as to the welfare and well-being of their offspring. The higher principles of the gospel—justice, mercy, and faith—are very important in all family relationships.

Many years ago when I was a bishop, a conscientious father came to me for counsel. He felt that the many and frequent activities of the Church made it difficult to have as much family togetherness as he and his wife deemed necessary. The children had the idea that they were not loyal to the Church if they did not participate fully in every recreational activity. I told this caring father that Church activities were to help him and his wife rear their children. They as parents had not only the right but the duty to determine the extent of their family's involvement in social activities. Family unity, solidarity, and harmony should be preserved. After all, a family is the basic, permanent unit of the Church.

Three sources of guidance

There are three sources of guidance for making moral judgments. First is the guidance of the Holy Ghost. This is always a sure compass for those who have been baptized and received this supernal gift. The second source is the wise counsel of priesthood leaders whom the Lord has put in place to guide us. Third, the constant demonstration of love should

temper all our judgments. Sometimes this means discipline.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was once asked how he governed so diverse a people. His answer was, "I teach the people correct principles and they govern themselves."¹⁶ This statement is just as true today as it was in Joseph's time. There must be listening ears and obedience to the living prophet of the Church. President Marion G. Romney stated it well:

"It is an easy thing to believe in the dead prophets, but it is a greater thing to believe in the living prophets. I will give you an illustration.

"One day when President Grant was living, I sat in my office across the street following a general conference. A man came over to see me, an elderly man. He was very upset about what had been said in this conference by some of the Brethren, including myself. I could tell from his speech that he came from a foreign land. After I had quieted him enough so he would listen, I said, 'Why did you come to America?'

"'I came here because a prophet of God told me to come.'

"'Who was the prophet?' I continued.

"'Wilford Woodruff.'

"'Do you believe Wilford Woodruff was a prophet of God?'

"'Yes,' said he.

"'Do you believe that his successor, President Lorenzo Snow, was a prophet of God?'

"'Yes, I do.'

"'Do you believe that President Joseph F. Smith was a prophet of God?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"Then came the 'sixty-four dollar question.' 'Do you believe that Heber J. Grant is a prophet of God?'

"His answer: 'I think he ought to keep his mouth shut about old age assistance.'"¹⁷

Today we have a living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, whom we sustain as the prophet of our day. He has

warned us "to speak up for moral standards in a world where filth, sleaze, pornography, and their evil brood are sweeping over us as a flood." His counsel to us in our day is: "Stand up for integrity in your business, in your profession, in your home, in the society of which you are a part."¹⁸

Justice cannot be separated from mercy

Indeed, moral standards must be maintained. In large measure, those who are disobedient punish themselves. As the Lord said through Jeremiah: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee."¹⁹ Those entrusted with judicial responsibility in the kingdom of God must see that the Church remains clean so that the living waters of life flow unimpeded.

However, true religion is not looking primarily for weaknesses, faults, and errors. It is the spirit of strengthening and overlooking faults even as we would wish our own faults to be overlooked. When we focus our entire attention on what may be wrong rather than what is right, we miss the sublime beauty and essence of the sweet gospel of the Master.

Judgment, the weightier matter of the law mentioned by the Savior, cannot be separated from the other two: mercy and faith. Shakespeare wrote of "the quality of mercy." Speaking through Portia, he said, "We do pray for mercy; / And that same prayer doth teach us all to render / The deeds of mercy."²⁰ I am frank to admit that when I say my prayers, I do not ask for justice; I ask for mercy.

The Prophet Joseph's mercy

One of the great examples of mercy in our time was extended by the Prophet Joseph to W. W. Phelps during the troubles of the Saints in the state of Missouri. Elder Phelps fell into apostasy. After suffering buffetings, on June 29,

1840, while in Dayton, Ohio, W. W. Phelps wrote to the Prophet Joseph:

"I have seen the folly of my way, and I tremble at the gulf I have passed. . . . I will repent and live, and ask my old brethren to forgive me, and though they chasten me to death, yet I will die with them, for their God is my God. The least place with them is enough for me, yea, it is bigger and better than all Babylon. . . .

" . . . I have done wrong and I am sorry. . . . I have not walked along with my friends according to my holy anointing. I ask forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ of all the Saints, for I will do right, God helping me. I want your fellowship; if you cannot grant that, grant me your peace and friendship, for we are brethren, and our communion used to be sweet."²¹

To this the Prophet Joseph replied:

"It is true, that we have suffered much in consequence of your behavior—the cup of gall, already full enough . . . , was indeed filled to overflowing when you turned against us. One with whom we had oft taken sweet counsel together, and enjoyed many refreshing seasons from the Lord—'had it been an enemy, we could have borne it.' . . .

"However, the cup has been drunk, the will of our Father has been done, and we are yet alive. . . . And having been delivered from the hands of wicked men by the mercy of our God, we say it is your privilege to be delivered from the powers of the adversary, . . . and again take your stand among the Saints of the Most High, and by diligence, humility, and love unfeigned, commend yourself to our God, and your God, and to the Church of Jesus Christ.

"Believing your confession to be real, and your repentance genuine, I shall be happy once again to give you the right hand of fellowship, and rejoice over the returning prodigal. . . .

"Come on, dear brother, since the war is past,

“‘For friends at first, are friends again at last.’

“Yours as ever, Joseph Smith, Jun.”²²

W. W. Phelps remained true and faithful and wrote the words to the marvelous hymn “Praise to the Man,” affirming his great love and admiration for the Prophet Joseph:

Praise to the man who communed
with Jehovah!

Jesus anointed that Prophet and
Seer.

Blessed to open the last dispensation,
Kings shall extol him, and nations
revere.²³

Childlike faith

The childlike faith of a follower of the divine Christ is a choice spiritual gift. It can be enjoyed by young and old. In the early days of the Church, a young boy by the name of Will Cluff, 10 years of age, living in Nauvoo, had a remarkable, pure faith. He had an experience to which many of us can relate.

His family was poor and had only one cow, which they depended on for food. In the spring of 1842 the cow strayed off. One evening in August his father came home very weary and discouraged. He and Will's brothers had spent much of the summer looking for the cow. Will said, “Father, if you will let me take Charley (an old horse) I will go and find the cow.” His father reluctantly said he could.

Early next morning Will rode to the Big Mound, three miles east and in the prairie country. Here he had often herded cows with other boys from Nauvoo. He got off the horse and, holding it by the bridle, knelt down and fervently prayed the Lord to direct him which way to go to find the cow. He climbed back on the horse and rode south, a course he was impressed to take even though there were numerous bunches of cattle in every direction.

After traveling a few miles in the open prairie and passing hundreds of cattle, Will came to a fence. He dismounted and let down the stake, led his horse in, put up the fence, then rode three miles across the field. He again found himself in the open prairie with numerous bunches of stock in every direction. When he had gone about a quarter of a mile from the field, he rode right on to the cow, feeding alone some distance from any other animals.

Will started to drive the cow in the direction of the city. He arrived late in the evening, full of joy and thankful to his Father in Heaven.²⁴

Sins of omission

I fear that some of our greatest sins are sins of omission. These are some of the weightier matters of the law the Savior said we should not leave undone. These are the thoughtful, caring deeds we fail to do and feel so guilty for having neglected them.

As a small boy on the farm during the searing heat of the summer, I remember my grandmother Mary Finlinson cooking our delicious meals on a hot woodstove. When the wood box next to the stove became empty, Grandmother would silently pick up the box, go out to refill it from the pile of cedar wood outside, and bring the heavily laden box back into the house. I was so insensitive and interested in the conversation in the kitchen, I sat there and let my beloved grandmother refill the kitchen wood box. I feel ashamed of myself and have regretted my omission for all of my life. I hope someday to ask for her forgiveness.

Higher gospel requires us to look inward

We are directed into the pathway to the kingdom of God by the Savior's own words. Said He, “The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you,”²⁵ and “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”²⁶ We are

shown the way into the kingdom of God on earth in the same way.

Those who extend judgment, mercy, faith, and forgiveness exhibit a greatness of soul and mind consistent with the spirit of the Lord's teachings and example. This higher gospel requires that we look inward to our own souls, for we cannot deceive the Lord. We are told that "the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there."²⁷ Those of us who hold the holy apostleship always wish to fulfill our responsibility by testifying of the divinity of the Savior. I feel compelled to do so. I have had a testimony all of my life. Recently, however, there has come into my soul an overpowering witness of the divinity of this holy work. This sure witness is more certain than ever before in my life. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. Matthew 23:23.
3. See Matthew 7:12.
4. See Matthew 22:37–39.
5. See Luke 6:29.
6. See Matthew 5:40.
7. See Matthew 18:21–22.
8. D&C 121:41.
9. 2 Nephi 2:25.
10. See John 4:14.

11. Matthew 23:23–24.
12. 2 Corinthians 3:6.
13. D&C 59:23.
14. Exodus 20:14.
15. Matthew 5:28.
16. Quoted by John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:57–58.
17. In Conference Report, Apr. 1953, 125.
18. "Stand Up for Truth," *Brigham Young University 1996–97 Speeches* (1997), 24.
19. Jeremiah 2:19.
20. *The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1, lines 184, 200–202.
21. *History of the Church*, 4:142.
22. *History of the Church*, 4:163–64.
23. *Hymns*, no. 27.
24. Adapted from W. W. Cluff, "A Boy's Faith," Stan and Sharon Miller, comps., *Especially for Mormons*, 5 vols. (1971–87), 2:115–16.
25. Luke 10:9.
26. Matthew 4:17.
27. 2 Nephi 9:41.

The choir sang "The Iron Rod."

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust of the First Presidency has just spoken to us. The choir has sung "The Iron Rod."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Twelve will now address us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Importance of studying the gospel

The scriptures have recorded, "And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come" (D&C 130:19).

The acquisition of knowledge is a fundamental part of the Lord's eternal plan for His children. To make certain

that there are resources available for those who seek this knowledge, He has instructed His prophets through the ages to make a record of His dealings with them. The first earthly family, even the family of Father Adam, followed these instructions:

"And then began these men to call upon the name of the Lord, and the Lord blessed them;

"And a book of remembrance was kept, in the which was recorded, in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration;

"And by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled" (Moses 6:4-6).

Continuing our studies on through the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants, we find repeated instructions to study the gospel of our Lord and Savior. The Lord understands us perfectly. He knows that to be truly converted we must understand how He deals with His children here on earth. Gaining a knowledge of Him is fundamental to our mortal training. We also need to have a thirst and a desire to become acquainted with the doctrines of the kingdom.

In mortality, learn first of God

President Spencer W. Kimball gave us some instructions about the knowledge we should seek and in what sequence. Using Peter and John as examples, he taught:

"Peter and John had little secular learning, being termed ignorant. But they knew the vital things of life, that God lives and that the crucified, resurrected Lord is the Son of God. They knew the path to eternal life. This they learned in a few decades of their mortal life. Their righteous lives opened the door to godhood for them and creation of worlds with eternal increase. For this they would probably need, eventually, a total knowledge of the sciences. But whereas Peter and John had only decades to learn and do the spiritual, they have already had nineteen centuries in which to learn the secular or the geology of the earth, the zoology and physiology and psychology of the creatures of the earth. Mortality is the time to learn first of God and the gospel and to perform

the ordinances. After our feet are set firmly on the path to eternal life we can amass more knowledge of the secular things" (*President Kimball Speaks Out* [1981], 91).

Development of the seminary program

Given this instruction from a prophet of God, I want to talk to you great young people of the Church, who have so much of your life ahead of you.

The Church has recognized from the very beginning the need for you to have an opportunity to gain the most fundamental knowledge you need in order to obtain life eternal.

During the early history of the Church, elementary and secondary schools were established. A university was opened in the Nauvoo period. Three years after the Saints arrived in Utah, the University of Deseret was opened.

As the increased numbers of LDS youth began attending public secondary schools, it became apparent to Church leaders that there was a need to provide religious curriculum to complement the students' regular secular studies. In 1912 the Church began building seminaries on Church-owned properties adjacent to public high schools, where students could take daily classes in religion.

Inspired service of John M. Whitaker

We learn of the dedication which was given to the seminary program in its very beginning by reading from a diary of John M. Whitaker, one of the early instructors of the seminary program. In April of 1915 he was employed as an instructor in the Granite Seminary with a salary of \$1,500 per year. He found little to work with as he assumed his new position. His diary records:

"I had to start without the least scratch, or outline, and I thought out many approaches to the new problem before me. I had taught several years at

the University of Deseret. But there I knew my course well, but to commence a course now, where here-to-fore the Bible alone had been the guide, and to meet the need of the hour when students of the age coming into high school and junior work, with strict outlines and supervision, with everything before them and now coming from the discipline of high school requirements, into religion class work where they could come if they desired or remain away, . . . but to take religion which was frowned down upon during the week days, only for Sundays, was a task too great to undertake alone. So I did as I have always done when presented with a task, went in humility and prayer to my Father in Heaven and in my simplicity told him my problem and asked for inspiration, guidance, wisdom and courage for the task before me. . . . I was unknown to most of the Faculty and students of the Granite High and so during the summer I thought out how best to make a beginning."

He became enthusiastic about the beginning of the year in teaching at Granite High School and looked forward to registration day, on September 3, 1915. A crowd of students was on hand, and his journal entry describes the event: "Commenced a very important period of my life and one that will, I am sure affect the destiny of thousands of the youth of Zion, if the plans maturing in my mind blossom into fruition" (quoted in Lyman Clarence Pedersen Jr., "John Mills Whitaker: Diarist, Educator, Churchman" [master's thesis, University of Utah, 1960], 167).

His diary records events step-by-step which led to the tremendous success he had in carrying forward this program over the years. Significant is the statement of the late S. Dilworth Young, one of the Seventy, who was one of Brother Whitaker's earliest seminary students:

"Had Elder A. Theodore Tuttle been clairvoyant, he would have seen in the year 1914 a fourteen-and-a-half-year-

old stripling entering the first seminary instituted by the Church. Across the street from Granite High School a building had been constructed—one room in size—a teacher employed, and the school opened to students. I was that stripling. There died yesterday the third teacher of that particular seminary. The teacher was John M. Whitaker.

"I should like to make a short tribute to Brother Whitaker. He likely did not know the profound influence he had upon me as a boy, as I studied minutely under him and Guy C. Wilson before him, the detail of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. I look back upon it now, realizing that there was where I got my first detailed knowledge of these standard works. Could I have enough influence I would see to it that every boy and every girl in the Church had a like experience under a man of faith" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1960, 80).

The service of John M. Whitaker is an example of thousands of instructors who over the years have devoted their lives to building testimonies in hundreds of thousands of young people who have availed themselves of the opportunity of taking advantage of seminary classes.

Establishment of institutes

To facilitate religious training of students attending non-LDS colleges and universities, the Church established institutes of religion adjacent to college campuses, beginning in 1926. The success of the seminaries and institutes resulted in the spread of these programs to many, many parts of the world.

The Church periodically checks the pulse and measures the progress of the institute programs. This last year an institute study revealed the following: of those graduating from institute, 96 percent received temple endowments; 98 percent of those receiving their endowments had their marriages performed in

the temple; 96 percent of the men graduating from institute served missions.

Testimony from a Russian student

We have testimonies from seminary students throughout the world. Listen to a page from a diary coming from Russia:

"Today is the happiest morning in this year; today is the first morning seminary day.

"How and when originate this thought about daily morning seminary. I remember there was a lesson from our CES teachers that mentioned about the daily seminary program in the United States and Europe and that got stuck in my mind. At that lesson I felt the power of the Holy Ghost, which brought a thought unto me that we should have seminary here. Then I felt that the Lord endows everything for this job: possibility, strength, and help. We have to have just willingness to accept such a gift.

"After that meeting I felt great inspiration. Some mothers got frightened a little with the idea because children will have to get up early in the morning and in school, they are overloaded, and some finish the school this year and will be entering higher educational institutions. But fathers who have priesthood completely supported me, having said that daily studying of the scriptures is so needed for youth, will teach them discipline, and also will help them gain the Holy Ghost, which during the daytime and school lessons will help to withstand the temptations of Satan" (comments from early-morning seminary teachers from Vyborg, Russia, fall 1996).

This testimony, and so many others we have received from the four corners of the earth, help us to catch the spirit of these two great programs. They offer you young people a special paved road that will lead you to life eternal, which is the greatest gift God has given to His children.

Counsel from President Hinckley

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said this about our seminary and institute programs:

"Take advantage of every opportunity to enlarge your understanding of the gospel. Make the effort to participate in seminary and institute programs" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 63; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 42).

"Our great program of Church education moves forward. The work of training students through the seminary and institute program is constantly being enlarged. . . . We urge all for whom it is available to take advantage of it. We do not hesitate to promise that your knowledge of the gospel will be increased, your faith will be strengthened, and you will develop wonderful associations and friendships" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 69; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 47).

Blessings of seminary and institute

I would like to add my testimony to that of our great prophet-leader. I know the power that comes from associations in the seminary and institute programs. It has enriched my life, and I know it will do the same for you. It will put a shield of protection around you to keep you free from the temptations and trials of the world. There is a great blessing in having a knowledge of the gospel. And I know of no better place for the young people of the Church to gain a special knowledge of sacred things than in the institute and seminary programs of the Church.

Many years ago I had the privilege of teaching early-morning seminary. The class was held between 6:30 A.M. and 7:30 A.M. each school day. For two years I watched sleepy students stumble into class, challenging their instructor to wake them up. After prayer was offered and an inspirational thought given, I watched bright minds come alive to increase their

knowledge of the scriptures. The most difficult part of the class was to terminate the discussion in time to send them on to their regular high school classes. As the school year progressed, I watched each student gain greater confidence, closer friendships, and a growing testimony of the gospel.

A few years ago I was in a grocery store in a city not far from here when I heard someone call out my name. I turned to greet two of my former seminary students. They were now husband and wife. They introduced me to their four beautiful children. As we visited I was amazed with the number of seminary classmates they still had contact with after all these years. It was an evidence of a special bonding that had occurred in that very early morning seminary class. As we parted, a scripture came into my mind: "I will call you friends, for you are my friends, and ye shall have an inheritance with me" (D&C 93:45). There is a special strength we gain from associations with each other, especially in gospel settings.

Take advantage of this opportunity

Plan on completing the full four years of seminary. You know the institute is available for all students and non-students between the ages of 18 and 30.

Are you enrolled? If not, I invite you to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. And to you who are enrolled, study diligently to learn the gospel. I promise you that the foundation you receive in these two great programs will bless you throughout your lives. This is my witness to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Glorious Things Are Sung of Zion."

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Twelve has spoken to us, and the Tabernacle Choir has sung to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy and Sunday School general president will then speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Harold G. Hillam

A letter from 1899

This historic letter that I hold in my hand was typed 98 years ago. Each sheet is placed in a plastic, sealed envelope to protect it. Though written nearly a century ago, the words contained on these pages have a great deal of significance for us today.

The year 1899 marked a jubilee celebration—the 50-year anniversary of the organization of the first Sunday School

of the Church. As a culmination of that jubilee year, a time capsule in the form of a beautiful hand-carved box was filled with items considered to have meaning for those who would be present at its opening 50 years in the future.

Accordingly, in 1949 the time capsule was opened, and among other historical items was this letter addressed to the "General Sunday School Authorities of A.D. 1949." The letter includes the following:

"The establishment of the first Sunday Schools in the Rocky Mountains was attended with hardships and discouragements. The people were in a dry and barren land and were subjected to many privations. It required all their time and strength to secure the necessities of life; yet in the midst of it all, with the limited facilities at hand, they began the education of their children."

The letter continues: "Now brethren, we can but dimly see what the next fifty years will do for the youth of Zion. The methods of today may be entirely abandoned for new ones to be discovered in the future."

"It is probable that when you receive this Jubilee box, many of us, whose names are signed to this greeting, will have passed to the other side with the great army of Sunday School workers, and the greeting therefore of those of us who have gone to the great beyond, will be to you as a voice from the dead."

"This Sunday School work has been to us a labor of love and our interest does not merely exist for today, but extends into the future."

"... We beseech you that whatever may be the methods employed, whatever may be the changes wrought in the fifty years to come, that you never forget for an instant the object of the great Sunday School work, viz: To teach the children the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; to make Latter Day Saints of them."

The letter was signed by the general Sunday School presidency, as well as 21 other board members, including Joseph F. Smith and Heber J. Grant, both of whom later served as President of the Church.

Technological advances of our day

The letter was prophetic. Indeed, the signers may have seen only dimly what the next 50 years would bring for the youth of Zion. During that time the communication methods of the late 19th

century were totally replaced by tremendous advances in the dissemination of information. Even the typewriter used to prepare this 1899 document was at the time a recent novelty and was the cutting edge in communication! The first broadcast of the human voice was still two years away. The first radio network broadcast was 21 years in the future, and general conference would not be transmitted over radio for another 25 years.

Could the writers of this 1899 letter have imagined, even dimly, the technological advances—the radio, color television, computers, the Internet, or the programming—that are present today, they would have been astounded to learn that just one small computer disk would contain large collections of the greatest of books and talks known to mankind. They would have seen that with just a few keystrokes of the computer, one could open the scriptures and with ease cross-reference them with other great talks and writings of the prophets, and with the attending light and knowledge which comes from God.

Tools can be used to teach good or evil

Sadly, they also would have seen that the very same tools that teach light and truth can, with the same ease but with different strokes of the keys, bring to view some of the most vile, sordid, wicked, and immoral material.

Indeed, we have been blessed with magnificent tools and methods which can be used to assist in teaching, but as with all tools, they are to be used with wisdom and discretion if they are to bless and simplify our lives. Just as fire under control brings so many comforts and benefits, a fire improperly used or out of control wreaks havoc and destruction.

Use technological tools wisely

As we prepare for another 50 or 100 years, we might also see but dimly what

lies ahead. We must learn to make wise use of the tools and technology that we have.

Wise use of our technology would include care in that which we invite into our homes by the way of television, videos, computers, including the Internet. There is much that is good and edifying in the media, but there is also much that is gross, immoral, and time-consuming, enticing us to be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). During the Second World War when gasoline was in short supply and rationed, I remember signs saying, “Is this trip necessary?” Today, with ever increasing demands on everyone and time in short supply, might we ask ourselves before we turn on the video game, the television, the computer, or access the many programs available, “Is this trip necessary?”

Perhaps every person who is listening might also ask these questions of himself or herself and expect an honest reply: “Is the information I am receiving from this tool of learning edifying and adding truth into my life? Are the hours I am investing an effective use of my valuable time? Does this computer game assist me in fulfilling my responsibilities and goals?” If the answer is not a resounding yes, then we should have the courage and determination to click the off button and direct our lives to more important tasks.

Importance of dedicated teachers

Despite the staggering technological advances of the past century, one of the elements of this 1899 letter still remains constant: that is, the importance of well-trained, humble, dedicated, and loving teachers.

Everyone can remember a special teacher who has made a profound difference in their life. I will ever be thankful to Miss Hamilton, my second-grade teacher. She was also my Sunday School teacher. I can still recall her saying,

“Now remember, always be a good boy!” and “I am so proud of you.” She always made me feel very important. I grew to love her, and I’m sure she loved me. That school year was a glorious one. I hated to see it come to a close. The news traveled fast in the small town of Sugar City, Idaho, and one summer day my mother called me in the house to inform me of the disastrous news: my dear Miss Hamilton had gone and gotten married! And she didn’t even check with me to see if it was all right.

Our daughter-in-law, also a teacher, received a note at the end of a school year from one of her third-grade students. He wrote, “Miss Scoresby, I will miss you more than my pet gerbil that died.”

We are a church of teachers

We are in essence a church of teachers. Regardless of life’s circumstances or the nature of one’s calling, all members of the Church have the opportunity to teach and to testify. The very nature of our lives bears witness of what we believe and teaches all who come within our sphere of influence.

Many, perhaps most, adult members of the Church, however, find themselves in a position to teach in a more direct manner. Leaders, parents, and called teachers have the specific responsibility to constantly improve their teaching abilities so they can prepare, train, and edify those who fall within their stewardship. President David O. McKay reminded us that “the proper training of childhood is man’s most important and sacred duty” (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 220). The Lord has made it clear that parents shall “teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28).

Feed the spirit and nourish the soul

There is power in the doctrines of the Church—hence the need for us all

to be ever learning and constantly fortifying ourselves spiritually. President Hinckley has said: "The forces against which we labor are tremendous. We need more than our own strength to cope with them. To all who hold positions of leadership, to the vast corps of teachers and missionaries, to heads of families, I should like to make a plea: In all you do, feed the Spirit—nourish the soul. . . . I am satisfied that the world is starved for spiritual food" (in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1967, 89; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1967, 85–86).

President Hinckley made that statement nearly 30 years ago at a general conference. Then, how much more need

have we to be spiritually fortified today! Indeed, inspired gospel teaching among all members of the Church is a lifeline to the spiritual stability and growth of members of all ages.

Technology will surely advance and methods will certainly change, but the personal touch by a dedicated, loving teacher who radiates the Spirit is the key to filling the desire of the writers of this 1899 document, which was to teach the children and others the "principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; to make Latter Day Saints of them." In the name of the greatest teacher of all, even Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Spiritual hunger in our day

Some time ago I read an essay referring to "metaphysical hunger"¹ in the world. The author was suggesting that the souls of men and women were dying, so to speak, from lack of spiritual nourishment in our time. That phrase, "metaphysical hunger," came back to me last month when I read the many richly deserved tributes paid to Mother Teresa of Calcutta. One correspondent recalled her saying that as severe and wrenching as physical hunger was in our day—something she spent virtually her entire life trying to alleviate—nevertheless, she believed that the absence of spiritual strength, the paucity of spiritual nutrition, was an even more terrible hunger in the modern world.

These observations reminded me of the chilling prophecy from the prophet Amos, who said so long ago, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."²

Modern spiritual calamities

As the world slouches toward the 21st century, many long for something, sometimes cry out for something, but too often scarcely know for what. The economic condition in the world, speaking generally and certainly not specifically, is probably better than it has ever been in history, but the human heart is still anxious and often filled with great stress. We live in an "information age" that has a world of data available literally at our fingertips, yet the meaning of that information and the satisfaction of using knowledge in some moral context seems farther away for many than ever before.

The price for building on such sandy foundations is high. Too many lives are buckling when the storms come and the winds blow.³ In almost every direction, we see those who are dissatisfied with present luxuries because of a gnawing fear that others somewhere have more of them. In a world desperately in need of moral leadership, too often we see what Paul called "spiritual wickedness in high places."⁴ In an absolutely terrifying way,

we see legions who say they are bored with their spouses, their children, and any sense of marital or parental responsibility toward them. Still others, roaring full speed down the dead-end road of hedonism, shout that they will indeed live by bread alone, and the more of it the better. We have it on good word, indeed we have it from the Word Himself, that bread alone—even a lot of it—is not enough.⁵

Many walk away from the Bread of Life

During the Savior's Galilean ministry, He chided those who had heard of Him feeding the 5,000 with only five barley loaves and two fishes, and now flocked to Him expecting a free lunch. That food, important as it was, was incidental to the real nourishment He was trying to give them.

"Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead," He admonished them. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."

But this was not the meal they had come for, and the record says, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."⁶

In that little story is something of the danger in our day. It is that in our contemporary success and sophistication we too may walk away from the vitally crucial bread of eternal life; we may actually *choose* to be spiritually malnourished, willfully indulging in a kind of spiritual anorexia. Like those childish Galileans of old, we may turn up our noses when divine sustenance is placed before us. Of course the tragedy then as now is that one day, as the Lord Himself has said, "In an hour when ye think not the summer shall be past, and the harvest ended," and we will find that our "souls [are] not saved."⁷

Light and hope have been restored

I have wondered this morning if someone within the sound of my voice

might feel he or she or those they love are too caught up in the "thick of these thin things," are hungering for something more substantial and asking with the otherwise successful young man of the scriptures, "What lack I yet?"⁸ I have wondered if someone this morning might be wandering "from sea to sea," running "to and fro" as the prophet Amos said,⁹ wearied by the pace of life in the fast lane or in trying to keep up with the Joneses before the Joneses refinance. I have wondered if any have joined our conference hoping to find the answer to a deeply personal problem or to have some light cast on the most serious questions of their heart. Such problems or questions often deal with our marriages, our families, our friends, our health, our peace—or the conspicuous lack of such cherished possessions.

It is to those who so hunger that I wish to speak this morning. Wherever you live, and at whatever point in age or experience you find yourself, I declare that God has through His Only Begotten Son lifted the famine of which Amos spoke. I testify that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life and a Well of Living Water springing up unto eternal life. I declare to those who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and especially to those who are not, that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Firstborn Son did appear to the boy prophet Joseph Smith and restored light and life, hope and direction to a wandering world, a world filled with those who wonder, "Where is hope? Where is peace? What path should I follow? Which way should I go?"

Come and follow Jesus

Regardless of past paths taken or not taken, we wish to offer you this morning "the way, the truth, and the life."¹⁰ We invite you to join in the adventure of the earliest disciples of Christ who also yearned for the bread of life—those who

did *not* go back but who came to Him, stayed with Him, and who recognized that for safety and salvation there was no other to whom they could ever go.¹¹

You will recall that when Andrew and another disciple, probably John, first heard Christ speak, they were so moved and attracted to Jesus that they followed Him as He left the crowd. Sensing that He was being pursued, Christ turned and asked the two men, "What seek ye?"¹² Other translations render that simply "What do you want?" They answered, "Where dwellest thou?" or "Where do you live?" Christ said simply, "Come and see."¹³ Just a short time later He formally called Peter and other new Apostles with the same spirit of invitation. To them He said, Come, "follow me."¹⁴

It seems that the essence of our mortal journey and the answers to the most significant questions in life are distilled down to these two very brief elements in the opening scenes of the Savior's earthly ministry. One element is the question put to every one of us on this earth: "What seek ye? What do you want?" The second is His response to our answer, *whatever that answer is*. Whoever we are and whatever we reply, His response is *always* the same: "Come," He says lovingly. "Come, follow me." Wherever you are going, first come and see what I do, see where and how I spend my time. Learn of me, walk with me, talk with me, believe. Listen to me pray. In turn you will find answers to your own prayers. God will bring rest to your souls. Come, follow me.

The gospel satisfies spiritual hunger

With one voice and one accord, we bear witness that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way to satisfy ultimate spiritual hunger and slake definitive spiritual thirst. Only He who was so mortally wounded knows how to heal our modern wounds. Only One who was with

God, and was God,¹⁵ can answer the deepest and most urgent questions of our soul. Only His almighty arms could have thrown open the prison gates of death that otherwise would have held us in bondage forever. Only on His triumphant shoulders can we ride to celestial glory—if we will but choose through our faithfulness to do so.

God is forgiving and merciful

To those who may feel they have somehow forfeited their place at the table of the Lord, we say again with the Prophet Joseph Smith that God has "a forgiving disposition,"¹⁶ that Christ is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, [is] long-suffering and full of goodness."¹⁷ I have always loved that when Matthew records Jesus' great injunction, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,"¹⁸ Luke adds the Savior's additional commentary, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful"¹⁹—as if to suggest that mercy is at least a beginning synonym for the perfection God has and for which all of us must strive. Mercy, with its sister virtue forgiveness, is at the very heart of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the eternal plan of salvation. Everything in the gospel teaches us that we can change if we need to, that we can be helped if we truly want it, that we can be made whole, whatever the problems of the past.

Now, if you feel too spiritually maimed to come to the feast, please realize that the Church is not a monastery for perfect people, though all of us ought to be striving on the road to godliness. No, at least one aspect of the Church is more like a hospital or an aid station, provided for those who are ill and want to get well, where one can get an infusion of spiritual nutrition and a supply of sustaining water in order to keep on climbing.

God will never desert us

In spite of life's tribulations and as fearful as some of our prospects are, I testify that there is help for the journey. There is the Bread of Eternal Life and the Well of Living Water. Christ has overcome the world—our world—and His gift to us is peace now and exaltation in the world to come.²⁰ Our fundamental requirement is to have faith in Him and follow Him—always. When He bids us to walk in His way and by His light, it is because He has walked this way before us, and He has made it safe for our own travel here. He knows where the sharp stones and stumbling blocks lie hidden and where thorns and thistles are the most severe. He knows where the path is perilous, and He knows which way to go when the road forks and nightfall comes. He knows all this, as Alma says in the Book of Mormon, because He has suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind . . . , that he may know . . . how to succor his people according to their infirmities.”²¹ *To succor* means “to run to.” I testify that in my fears and in my infirmities the Savior has surely run to me. I will never be able to thank Him enough for such personal kindness and such loving care.

President George Q. Cannon said once: “No matter how serious the trial, how deep the distress, how great the affliction, [God] will never desert us. He never has, and He never will. He cannot do it. It is [against] His character [to do so]. He is an unchangeable being. . . . He will stand by us. We may pass through the fiery furnace; we may pass through deep waters; but we shall not be consumed nor overwhelmed. We shall emerge from all these trials and difficulties the better and the purer for them, if we only trust in our God and keep His commandments.”²²

We will lie down in green pastures

Those who will receive the Lord Jesus Christ as the source of their salvation will always lie down in green pastures, no matter how barren and bleak the winter has been. And the waters of their refreshment will always be still waters, no matter how turbulent the storms of life. In walking His path of righteousness, our souls will be forever restored; and though that path may for us, as it did for Him, lead through the very valley of the shadow of death, yet we will fear no evil. The rod of His priesthood and the staff of His Spirit will always comfort us. And when we hunger and thirst in the effort, He will prepare a veritable feast before us, a table spread even in the presence of our enemies—contemporary enemies—which might include fear or family worries, sickness or personal sorrow of a hundred different kinds. In a crowning act of compassion at such a supper He anoints our head with oil and administers a blessing of strength to our soul. Our cup runneth over with His kindness, and our tears runneth over with joy. We weep to know that such goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and that we will, if we desire it, dwell in the house of the Lord forever.²³

Hear the Savior's invitation

I pray this morning that all who are hungering and thirsting, and sometimes wandering, will hear this invitation from Him who is the Bread of Life, the Fountain of Living Water, the Good Shepherd of us all, the Son of God: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”²⁴ Truly He does fill “the hungry with good things,” as His own mother Mary testified.²⁵ Come, and feast at the table of the Lord in what I testify to be His true and living Church, led by a true and living prophet, President Gordon B.

Hinckley, whom it is now our pleasure to hear. I pray for these blessings and bear witness of these truths in the sacred and holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Arthur Hertzberg, quoted by Harold B. Lee in *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1975), 349.
2. Amos 8:11.
3. See Matthew 7:24–29.
4. Ephesians 6:12.
5. See Matthew 4:4; John 1:1.
6. John 6:49, 51, 66.
7. D&C 45:2; see also Jeremiah 8:20.
8. Matthew 19:20.
9. Amos 8:12.
10. John 14:6.
11. See John 6:68.
12. John 1:38.
13. John 1:39.
14. Matthew 4:19.
15. See John 1:1.
16. Joseph Smith, comp., *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 42.
17. *Lectures on Faith*, 42.
18. Matthew 5:48.
19. Luke 6:36.

20. See D&C 59:23.

21. Alma 7:11–12.

22. "Freedom of the Saints," in Brian H. Stuy, comp., *Collected Discourses*, 5 vols. (1987–92), 2:185.

23. See Psalm 23.

24. Matthew 11:28–29.

25. See Luke 1:53.

The choir sang "How Lovely Are the Messengers."

President Hinckley

Elders Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy and Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "How Lovely Are the Messengers."

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "I Know My Father Lives." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard E. Turley Sr. of the Seventy.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at two o'clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Appreciation for the pioneers

The celebrations of 1997 are largely over. The last wagon has rolled to a stop. The last handcart has come to rest. We have had a wonderful year when we have commemorated the great migration of our forebears to these western valleys.

We have bowed in remembrance of their sacrifices, the many who died along the way and who were lovingly placed in graves whose location we know not.

We have shared, to a very small degree, the terrible suffering of those caught in the Wyoming snows of 1856.

We have seen the fulfillment of Isaiah's promise, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isaiah 35:1).

We cannot detract from their accomplishments. We cannot add to their glory. We can only look back with reverence, appreciation, respect, and resolution to build on what they have done.

Season of a thousand opportunities

The time has now come to turn about and face the future. This is a season of a thousand opportunities. It is

ours to grasp and move forward. What a wonderful time it is for each of us to do his or her small part in moving the work of the Lord on to its magnificent destiny.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

Something, my brothers and sisters, is happening in this Church, something wonderful. As we walk in the small world of our individual wards and branches, we are scarcely aware of it. And yet it is real, and it is tremendous. We are growing. We are expanding. Enough people will come into the Church this year to constitute more than 600 new wards or branches.

A month from now we will reach the 10 million mark in membership. It took over a century, 117 years, from the organization of the Church in 1830 to 1947, to reach one million. More of our members now live outside the U.S. than in the U.S. We have been out among our people. It has been glorious to meet with them, to speak with them, to share testimonies with them. They are enthusiastic.

Meeting with the Navajo Nation

We were recently with the Navajo Nation at Window Rock in Arizona. It was the first time that a President of the Church had met with and spoken to them in their capital. It was difficult to hold back the tears as we mingled with these sons and daughters of Father Lehi. In my imagination I have seen him weeping for his progeny who for so long have walked in poverty and pain.

But the shackles of darkness are falling. Some of them now are men and women of achievement. They have partaken of the fruits of education. They have come to know and love the gospel. They have become pure and delightful.

But there is so much more to do among them. Alcohol and drugs literally destroy many of them. We must do more

to help. As I look to the future, I envision the Spirit of the Lord being poured out upon these people. Education will unlock the door of opportunity, and the gospel will bring new light and understanding into their lives.

Worldwide growth of the Church

We have been with thousands of these wonderful people in South America. We recently flew from Asunción, Paraguay, to Guayaquil, Ecuador, over the high and forbidding peaks and narrow valleys of that vast area. Everywhere there were Indian villages and small cities. Our missionaries are working with these good people, bringing the light of the everlasting gospel into their lives. Many years ago Sister Hinckley and I took the little train that runs from Cuzco, Peru, to Puno on Lake Titicaca. In Puno we met with a little handful of native members, the first General Authority ever to do so. Today we have two stakes of Zion in Puno, their stake presidents and bishops drawn from their number.

We have now been in all the nations of South America and Central America, and we have seen miracles, with great gatherings of 30,000, 40,000, and 50,000 in football stadiums. These are all Latter-day Saints. In each case as we left there was a great waving of handkerchiefs, with tears in their eyes and tears in ours.

In the nation of Brazil alone there will be approximately 50,000 people join the Church this year. That is the equivalent of 16 or 17 new stakes in just 12 months. The São Paulo Temple cannot accommodate all who wish to come. We are building three new temples in that nation and will yet have to build others.

These are strong and wonderful Latter-day Saints in whose hearts beat the same testimonies of Jesus and this work as beat in yours.

We must construct meetinghouses by the score to accommodate the needs of these ever increasing numbers.

I stand in amazement, knowing the history of this Church, when I realize there is not a city in the United States or Canada of any consequence which does not have a Latter-day Saint congregation. It is the same in Mexico. It is the same in Central and South America. Likewise in New Zealand and Australia, in the islands of the sea, and in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines.

In Europe our congregations are everywhere. What a remarkable thing it is to contemplate that each Sabbath there are more than 24,000 wards and branches across the world in which the same lessons are taught and the same testimonies are borne.

This cause will roll on to fill the earth

Now, what of the future? What of the years that lie ahead? It looks promising indeed. People are beginning to see us for what we are and for the values we espouse. The media generally treat us well. We enjoy a good reputation, for which we are grateful.

If we go forward, never losing sight of our goal, speaking ill of no one, living the great principles we know to be true, this cause will roll on in majesty and power to fill the earth. Doors now closed to the preaching of the gospel will be opened. The Almighty, if necessary, may have to shake the nations to humble them and cause them to listen to the servants of the living God. Whatever is needed will come to pass.

The key to the great challenges facing us and to the success of the work will be the faith of all who call themselves Latter-day Saints. Our standards are certain and unequivocal. We need not quibble about them. We need not rationalize them. They are set forth in the Decalogue written by the finger of the Lord on Mount Sinai. They are found in the

Sermon on the Mount spoken by the Lord Himself. They are found elsewhere in His teachings, and they are found plainly set forth in the words of modern revelation. From the beginning these have served as our code of conduct. They must continue to so serve.

Teach the gospel to every nation

The future will be essentially the same as the past, only much brighter and greatly enlarged. We must continue to reach out across the world, teaching the gospel at home and abroad. A divine mandate rests heavily upon us. We cannot run from it. We cannot avoid it.

Declared the risen Lord to those He loved:

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

The figure of Moroni, atop many of our temples, is a constant reminder of the vision of John the Revelator:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:6-7).

There must be no diminution in our effort to carry the gospel to the people of the earth. In the future even more of our young men must prepare themselves to go out in service to the Lord. Our Christian acts must precede them and accompany them wherever necessary. I am grateful for the humanitarian aid we have been able to extend to the poor and the unfortunate. This very day hungry children are eating food in North Korea because of the aid which you have sent.

In a world where there is so much of hunger and suffering, where death walks hand in hand with little children, we must continue and enlarge our efforts, not permitting politics or other factors to hold back the hand of mercy.

Extend the great work done in temples

As we look to the future we must extend the great work carried forward in the temples, both for the living and the dead. If this people cannot be saved without their dead, as the Prophet Joseph declared, then we must make it possible for many more to accomplish this work. We now have 50 operating temples. We need twice that number, and as I explained last evening, we have in place a program to reach that goal to accommodate the needs of the people. Those on the other side, who are not dead but who are alive as to the spirit, will rejoice and be made glad as they awaken and go forward on their way to "immortality and eternal life" (Moses 1:39).

Let us love our neighbors

But there are many other things we must do as we move forward the work to a new and promising century. Simply put, we must be better Latter-day Saints. We must be more neighborly. We cannot live a cloistered existence in this world. We are a part of the whole of humanity.

A lawyer cometh unto Jesus, asking, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

Let us love the Lord, yes, with all our strength and power. And let us also love our neighbors. Let us banish from our lives any elements of self-righteousness. Many regard us with suspicion, as having only one interest and that is to convert them. Conversion is more likely to come as a consequence of love. Let us be friendly. Let us be helpful. Let us live the Golden Rule. Let us be neighbors of whom it might be said, "He or she was the best neighbor I ever had."

Keep the Sabbath holy

And as we move forward into a wonderful future, there are what some may regard as the lesser commandments but which are also of such tremendous importance.

I mention the Sabbath day. The Sabbath of the Lord is becoming the play day of the people. It is a day of golf and football on television, of buying and selling in our stores and markets. Are we moving to mainstream America as some observers believe? In this I fear we are. What a telling thing it is to see the parking lots of the markets filled on Sunday in communities that are predominately LDS.

Our strength for the future, our resolution to grow the Church across the world, will be weakened if we violate the will of the Lord in this important matter. He has so very clearly spoken anciently and again in modern revelation. We cannot disregard with impunity that which He has said.

Observe the Word of Wisdom

We must observe the Word of Wisdom. As we read our newspapers, as we watch the television news, these remarkable words first spoken in 1833 come to life before our very eyes: "In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you" (D&C 89:4). People are

becoming increasingly health conscious. We have a running start on the world, a code so simple and easily understood. Not long ago I met Dr. James E. Enstrom of the University of California at Los Angeles. He is not a member of the Church. He speaks with complete objectivity. His studies indicate that actuarially speaking, Latter-day Saints live about 10 years longer than their peers.

Who can set a price on 10 years of life? What a remarkable and wonderful blessing is this Word of Wisdom.

Pay tithing

Reporters whom I have met simply cannot believe that we pay 10 percent of our income as tithing. I explain that this is a spiritual phenomenon. We pay because we are obedient to the commandment of the Lord. We pay because we have faith in His munificent promises. Let us teach our children while they are yet young of the great opportunity and responsibility of paying tithing. If we do so, there will be another generation, and yet another, who will walk in the ways of the Lord and merit His promised blessing.

Nurture love in our families

Perhaps our greatest concern is with families. The family is falling apart all over the world. The old ties that bound together father and mother and children are breaking everywhere. We must face this in our own midst. There are too many broken homes among our own. The love that led to marriage somehow evaporates, and hatred fills its place. Hearts are broken; children weep. Can we not do better? Of course we can. It is selfishness that brings about most of these tragedies. If there is forbearance, if there is forgiveness, if there is an anxious looking after the happiness of one's companion, then love will flourish and blossom.

As I look to the future, I see little to feel enthusiastic about concerning the

family in America and across the world. Drugs and alcohol are taking a terrible toll, which is not likely to decrease. Harsh language one to another, indifference to the needs of one another—all seem to be increasing. There is so much of child abuse. There is so much of spouse abuse. There is growing abuse of the elderly. All of this will happen and get worse unless there is an underlying acknowledgment, yes, a strong and fervent conviction, concerning the fact that the family is an instrument of the Almighty. It is His creation. It is also the basic unit of society.

I lift a warning voice to our people. We have moved too far toward the mainstream of society in this matter. Now of course there are good families. There are good families everywhere. But there are too many who are in trouble. This is a malady with a cure. The prescription is simple and wonderfully effective. It is love. It is plain, simple, everyday love and respect. It is a tender plant that needs nurturing. But it is worth all of the effort we can put into it.

Our future can be glorious

Now, in closing, I see a wonderful future in a very uncertain world. If we will cling to our values, if we will build on our inheritance, if we will walk in obedience before the Lord, if we will simply live the gospel, we will be blessed in a magnificent and wonderful way. We will be looked upon as a peculiar people who have found the key to a peculiar happiness.

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

Great has been our past, wonderful is our present, glorious can be our future.

Arise, O glorious Zion,
 Thou joy of latter days,
 Whom countless Saints rely on
 To gain a resting place.
 Arise and shine in splendor
 Amid the world's deep night,
 For God, thy sure defender,
 Is now thy life and light.
 ["Arise, O Glorious Zion,"
Hymns, no. 40]

We have glimpsed the future, we
 know the way, we have the truth. God

help us to move forward to become a
 great and mighty people spread over the
 earth, counted in the millions, but all of
 one faith and of one testimony and of
 one conviction, I humbly pray in the
 name of our great Redeemer and Savior,
 even Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Know My Father
 Lives."

Elder Richard E. Turley Sr. offered
 the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 167th Semi-
 annual General Conference commenced
 at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 5, 1997.
 President James E. Faust, Second Coun-
 selor in the First Presidency, conducted
 this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the
 music, with Jerold Ottley conducting
 and Richard Elliott at the organ.

President Faust made the following
 remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who
 presides at this conference, has asked
 that I, Brother Faust, conduct this ses-
 sion.

We welcome you this afternoon to
 the fifth and concluding session of the
 167th Semiannual General Conference
 of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-
 day Saints.

We also send our greetings and bless-
 ings to members of the Church and many
 friends everywhere who are participating
 in these proceedings by radio, television,
 cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by
 Jerold Ottley and accompanied by Rich-
 ard Elliott, will provide the music for
 this session.

The choir will begin this service by
 singing "Come, We That Love the
 Lord." The invocation will be offered by
 Elder Jack H Goaslind of the Presidency
 of the Seventy and Young Men general
 president.

The choir sang "Come, We That
 Love the Lord."

Elder Jack H Goaslind offered the
 invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "Come,
 Come, Ye Saints." Elder David B. Haight
 of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
 will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye
 Saints."

Elder David B. Haight

Testimony of the prophet's words

I have prayed for the Spirit of the Lord and all the faith necessary that I might say a few words that are in my heart, that I might encourage you in some way in your believing and living the principles of the gospel.

This morning we heard from President Hinckley one of the most stirring outlines for our future that I ever remember hearing. I was very moved by it. In just imagining and visualizing what lies ahead of us, I know all he is saying to be true. As I've had the opportunity to work with him for some years now and to feel of his spirit, his understanding, his desire, his deep faith, and the inspiration that comes to him in that office, I knew this morning that we were hearing words of the future from a prophet.

As I now reflect upon the cycle of life and as that cycle moves forward and as I think of what lies ahead for the Church, I feel a little like a British friend who said, "Wouldn't it be nice to roll the life cycle back 50 years and have another go at it." And even though I've had the opportunity to declare and teach and preach and bear witness of the Savior worldwide, I cherish the time that I still have that's yet allotted to me.

"Come, Come, Ye Saints"

You have just listened to the strains of "Come, Come, Ye Saints" (*Hymns*, no. 30). My first opportunity to really become acquainted with "Come, Come, Ye Saints" was in a little stone tabernacle in southern Idaho, where I grew up as a boy. Inside that little tabernacle built out of lava rock by the local members of the Church back in the late 1880s, there was a stand, a podium similar to what we have here, and then a pipe organ in the back, like this beautiful pipe organ we have here but smaller. This was before

electricity and motors, and it had a pump system. The way air got into the pipe organ was through a bellows system. Someone would sit on a stool and pump the lever at the back of the organ. It was always a great privilege to a young man to be selected to sit on that stool and pump the organ.

In that little tabernacle, when we would sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," I felt the spirit and power of the music would raise the roof. You could feel it because of the power, the faith, and the testimony of the members. In that little tabernacle we would have Aaronic Priesthood choruses where we'd learn to sing. It was there we would sing "A Mormon Boy." We don't hear that song much anymore. I wish we would. "A Mormon boy, a Mormon boy, / I am a Mormon boy. / I might be envied by a king, / For I am a Mormon boy" (Evan Stephens, in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* [1996], 296).

That made a great impression upon me. Just think of that for a moment. "I might be envied by a king." Here's a king with all the power, all the pomp, all the wealth the king would have. But I was beginning to learn that we held, as members of the Church, blessings, priesthood blessings, knowledge, information that the king wouldn't know about and didn't have. "I might be envied by a king, for I am a Mormon boy."

William Clayton's faith

As you were listening to this beautiful rendition by the choir, I was thinking of William Clayton. His father was a teacher, and William had received a good education. He was a good penman, he was good with figures, and he was good at writing and keeping records. He was taught and baptized by the Heber C. Kimball missionary group in the early

days of the Church in England. They understood and accepted him readily because of his education and his penmanship. He was just a bright young fellow, 23 years old. Soon he was being used as a secretary, a scribe, or as a bookkeeper by the little organization of the Church over there.

By the time he was 24, he and his wife wanted to go to Nauvoo, so they sailed for America. In Nauvoo he met the Prophet and other leaders of the Church. They used him in interesting ways again because he wrote a beautiful hand and he was a good speller. They could use a young man of that kind. But after the martyrdom of the Prophet he sided with Brigham Young and the Twelve and became one of their scribes and the secretary.

After the martyrdom of the Prophet, he left with the Brigham Young company and had the experience in Iowa that inspired the writing of this wonderful song that we have today. They left in February; it was now April. Slogging through the fields with the wagons and the horses and the teams and the rain and the mud in Iowa, they were discouraged. The going was difficult; people were dying, and babies were born. They were moving slowly, only traveling a few miles a day. In their discouragement, William Clayton wrote in his journal that he sat on a wagon tongue and wrote a song, hoping it would encourage and give some renewed hope and faith to the Saints.

So he wrote "Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear." It was difficult. They were discouraged. "But with joy wend your way. / Though hard to you this journey may appear, / Grace shall be as your day." He was giving them encouragement to keep going, that the situation would get better.

Then he wrote those wonderful lines, "We'll find the place which God for us prepared, / Far away in the West." Even though we're stuck here in the mud and discouraged, this will all change. If we

have the courage and the faith, the Lord will answer our prayers; it will all come about. It gave them hope and encouragement. "We'll find the place which God for us prepared, / Far away . . . / Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid"—stirring, inspirational words.

"All is well"

And then the last verse that the choir sang so beautifully this morning, "And should we die before our journey's through, / Happy day! All is well!" So if we die, we've done our best. We're going to die sometime, as we all know. So "Happy day! All is well!"

"But if our lives are spared again / To see the Saints their rest obtain." We'll see if the wagon wheels will stay on and if the rims will stay on the little handcarts and if we can keep up that courage and the strength through our prayers and we'll get there. "If our lives are spared again / To see the Saints their rest obtain." If we get there, then "All is well! All is well!"—if we get there and if we have the courage to make it work.

And in his journal he wrote, "I've composed a new song—'All is well'" (*William Clayton's Journal* [1921], 19). I like that original title, "All Is Well! All Is Well!" which explains our lives if we live as we should. We have the outline, we have the procedures, we have the information, and if we can get there and if our lives are spared again, then we will be able to sing "All is well! All is well!" That hymn has become the Church's "national anthem."

We have a great heritage

So on this 150th anniversary of that great event which President Hinckley alluded to this morning, I want to add my congratulations to the committee who, under the appointment of the First Presidency, were able to put together that marvelous celebration. Wards and

stakes all over the world have produced wonderful and unusual ways to celebrate the Sesquicentennial.

My grandfather Horton David Haight was 15 when the second company arrived in the valley, the company following the Brigham Young company, so he would have walked across the plains. So when we sing of walking with "faith in every footstep," I have a grandfather who did that. At 15 you were not riding in the wagon; you were out where the action was, hitting the horses and the oxen and doing whatever would need to be done. And the girl that he later married, Louisa Leavitt, turned 11 when her family arrived in the valley. So Grandmother would have walked across also.

So with that great heritage, I am saying to all of you what a wonderful year this has been, and what a wonderful future we have for the Church, as has been outlined by our prophet this morning. But all of these things are dependent upon how we live, how we accept the truths that we know about, how we live the principles of the gospel, and what kind of examples we become to those people we work and associate with.

The great moment of my life

When I was a young boy, about 12 years old, I loved to play baseball. The only piece of athletic equipment that we had around our house was an old baseball mitt. We didn't have footballs in those days. We didn't have a lot of other things. I thought the great moment in my life would be that I would be playing baseball for the New York Yankees, and this was back in the days when the Yankees were a great team. I would be playing for them in the World Series, the games tied 3 and 3. Now in the deciding game, guess who would get up to bat? As I stood at the plate, the pitcher would pitch the ball exactly where I'd want it, I'd knock it out of Yankee Stadium, and I would become the hero of the World

Series. I thought that would be the great moment of my life. But I want you to know that that isn't true.

A few years ago I sat in the Los Angeles Temple in a little sealing room with my wife, Ruby. We had our sons there with their wives—they'd been married just for a short time—and our sweet daughter was kneeling at the altar, holding the hand of the young man she was to be sealed to. And as I looked around the room, I then realized that this was the great moment of my life because I had in that room everything that was precious to me—everything. My wife was there, my eternal sweetheart and companion. Our three children were there with their eternal companions. And I thought, David, in your youth you had things all wrong. You thought some worldly event of some kind might be the great event of your life. But now I was witnessing that great event. I was there, I was feeling it, I felt a part of it; and I knew in that little white sealing room—clean, sweet, pure in that room—with all of my family there, that this was the great moment of my life.

I leave you my love, my witness, that this work is true. As Latter-day Saints we need to be true to the faith that we profess—true to it, true to the stirring testimonies that we have been given, true to Him whose name we have taken—and to so live and to declare and to help in the spreading of this work, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We're all very proud of Brother Haight. He's in his 91st year. Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us and given us a wonderful message.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Sister Janette Hales Beckham, who was released yesterday as Young Women general president.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

"Therefore, what?"

A few years ago I showed one of my senior brethren a talk I had prepared for future delivery. He returned it with a stimulating two-word comment: "Therefore, what?" The talk was incomplete because it omitted a vital element: what a listener should do. I had failed to follow the example of King Benjamin, who concluded an important message by saying, "And now, if you believe all these things see that ye do them" (Mosiah 4:10).

For many months we have studied the lives and accomplishments of our pioneers, early and modern. We have thrilled to some modern reenactments, in which many have been blessed to participate. I was humbled to walk in the footsteps and wagon trails of my 31 pioneer ancestors for 13 miles over the Wyoming heights called Rocky Ridge, and for 5 miles on the trail 3 of them later followed down El Cajon Pass to settle what is now San Bernardino, California.

Now after all these studies and activities, it is appropriate to ask ourselves, "Therefore, what?" Are these pioneer celebrations academic, merely increasing our fund of experiences and knowledge? Or will they have a profound impact on how we live our lives?

This question applies to all of us. As President Hinckley reminded us last April, "Whether you are among the posterity of the pioneers or whether you were baptized only yesterday, each is the beneficiary of their great undertaking."¹ All of us enjoy the blessings of their efforts, and all of us have the responsibilities which go with that heritage.

Eternal principles the pioneers applied

It is not enough to study or reenact the accomplishments of our pioneers. We need to identify the great, eternal principles they applied to achieve all

they achieved for our benefit and then apply those principles to the challenges of our day. In that way we honor their pioneering efforts, and we also reaffirm our heritage and strengthen its capacity to bless our own posterity and "those millions of our Heavenly Father's children who have yet to hear and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ."² We are all pioneers in doing so.

Many of our challenges are different from those faced by former pioneers but perhaps just as dangerous and surely as significant to our own salvation and the salvation of those who follow us.³ For example, as for life-threatening obstacles, the wolves that prowled around pioneer settlements were no more dangerous to their children than the drug dealers or pornographers who threaten our children. Similarly, the early pioneers' physical hunger posed no greater threat to their well-being than the spiritual hunger experienced by many in our day. The children of earlier pioneers were required to do incredibly hard physical work to survive their environment. That was no greater challenge than many of our young people now face from the absence of hard work, which results in spiritually corrosive challenges to discipline, responsibility, and self-worth. Jesus taught, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Foremost quality was faith

The foremost quality of our pioneers was *faith*. With faith in God, they did what every pioneer does—they stepped forward into the unknown: a new religion, a new land, a new way of doing things. With faith in their leaders and in one another, they stood fast against formidable opposition. When

their leader said, "This is the right place," they trusted and they stayed. When other leaders said, "Do it this way," they followed in faith.

Unselfishness and sacrifice

Two companion qualities evident in the lives of our pioneers, early and modern, are *unselfishness* and *sacrifice*. Our Utah pioneers excelled at putting "the general welfare and community goals over individual gain and personal ambition."⁴ That same quality is evident in the conversion stories of modern pioneers. Upon receiving a testimony of the truth of the restored gospel, they have unhesitatingly sacrificed all that was required to assure that its blessings will be available to their children and to generations unborn. Some have sold all their property to travel to a temple. Some have lost employment. Many have lost friends. Some have even lost parents and extended family, as new converts have been disowned for their faith. This must be the greatest sacrifice of all. Here we recall the Savior's teaching:

"For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. . . .

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:35, 37-38).

We praise what the pioneers' unselfishness and sacrifice have done for us, but that is not enough. We should also assure that these same qualities are guiding principles for each of us as we have opportunities to sacrifice for our nations, our families, our quorums, our members, and our Church. This is especially important in societies that have exalted personal interest and individual rights to the point where these values

seem to erase the principles of individual responsibility and sacrifice.

Obedience, unity, and cooperation

Other great qualities in our early pioneers were *obedience*, *unity*, and *cooperation*. We have all thrilled at the example of the Saints who responded to President Brigham Young's call to rescue the stranded handcart companies, or to pull up roots in settled communities and apply their talents and lives to colonizing new areas.

Our people have always been characterized by their loyalty and obedience to the direction of their leaders, by their unity, and by their extraordinary capacity to cooperate in a common venture. We see the modern manifestations of these pioneer qualities in the great contributions our brothers and sisters make in a wide variety of private projects and common efforts that require unity and cooperation. Another modern manifestation of Mormon obedience, unity, and cooperation is our unique missionary program, from the preparation and service of young missionaries to the remarkably diverse activities of mature couples throughout the world.

Our recent Worldwide Pioneer Heritage Service Day, where Church members contributed more than two million hours of service to their local communities, provides visible evidence that the pioneer qualities of obedience, unity, and cooperation live on in our day. In this and the other examples given, I hope we are not too satisfied with an annual demonstration but will practice these pioneer principles all the days of our lives, as individuals, as families, as Church organizations, and as citizens.

Legacy of inclusion

In a day when our prophet has challenged us to reach out to welcome and fellowship new members and to re-

awaken the faith and fellowship of those who have strayed, we can gain strength from the example of the pioneers. The pioneer legacy is a legacy of *inclusion*. When the Saints were driven out of Missouri, many were so poor that they lacked teams and wagons to move. Their Church leaders were adamant that none of the poor would be left behind. The response was the same in the exodus from Nauvoo. At a conference of the Church in October 1845, the membership entered into a covenant to take all the Saints with them.⁵ Thereafter, in the initial epic struggle across Iowa, the companies that arrived first at their stopping place on the Missouri River sent rescue wagons back toward Nauvoo to gather those who had been too poor to leave earlier.⁶ The revelation that guided their next exodus on the trip west directed each company to “bear an equal proportion . . . in taking the poor, the widows, the fatherless, and the families of those who have gone into the army” (D&C 136:8). When the wagons and handcarts moved west, their movement was always one of inclusion, and no day’s journey ended until every straggler was accounted for.

When the Saints settled in the valleys of the mountains, they promptly established a Perpetual Emigrating Fund to assist the poor to move from Winter Quarters, and later from the nations of Europe. At least half of those who journeyed to join the Saints could not have come without the help of leaders and members who were determined to include everyone who desired to gather to Zion. We need that same spirit of inclusion to accomplish our prophet’s clarion call for retention and reactivation.

Commitment

Another great pioneer virtue was their *commitment* to one another, to their leaders, and to their faith. We

honor that quality in the words of these favorite hymns:

Firm as the mountains around us,
Stalwart and brave we stand
On the rock our fathers planted
For us in this goodly land—
The rock of honor and virtue,
Of faith in the living God.
They raised his banner triumphant—
Over the desert sod.
And we hear the desert singing:
Carry on, carry on, carry on!
[“Carry On,” *Hymns*, no. 255]

True to the faith that our parents
have cherished,
True to the truth for which martyrs
have perished,
To God’s command, Soul, heart,
and hand,
Faithful and true we will ever stand.
[“True to the Faith,” *Hymns*, no. 254]

What does it mean to be true to the faith? That word true implies commitment, integrity, endurance, and courage. It reminds us of the Book of Mormon’s description of the 2,000 young warriors:

“And they were all . . . exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

“Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:20–21).

In the spirit of that description I say to our returned missionaries—men and women who have made covenants to serve the Lord and who have already served Him in the great work of proclaiming the gospel and perfecting the Saints—are you being true to the faith? Do you have the faith and continuing commitment to demonstrate the principles of the gospel in your own lives, con-

sistently? You have served well, but do you, like the pioneers, have the courage and the consistency to be true to the faith and to endure to the end?

Young men true to the Prophet Joseph

Here I recall a pioneer example of faith, commitment, and courage by some young men just about the age of our missionaries.⁷ A few months before the Prophet Joseph Smith was murdered at Carthage, some of his enemies plotted to kill him. As part of their plan, they sought to enlist others in their conspiracy. Among those they invited to a meeting in Nauvoo were two young men still in their teens, Robert Scott and Dennison L. Harris. Dennison's father, Emer, was the older brother of Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. Being loyal to the Prophet, these young men immediately reported the invitation to Dennison's father, who advised the Prophet Joseph and sought his advice. Joseph asked Emer Harris to request that the young men attend the meeting, pay strict attention to what was said, make no commitments, and report the entire matter to the Prophet.

As events proceeded, there were three meetings. They began by denouncing Joseph as a fallen prophet, proceeded to considering how Joseph could be overthrown, and concluded with specific planning to kill him. All of this the two young men reported to the Prophet Joseph after each meeting.

Before the third meeting, the Prophet foresaw what would happen and told the young men this would be the last meeting. He warned them that the conspirators might kill them when they refused the required oath to participate in the murderous scheme. He said he did not think the conspirators would shed their blood because they were so young, but he called upon their loyalty and courage in these words: "Don't flinch. If

you have to die, die like men, you will be martyrs to the cause, and your crowns can be no greater."⁸ He renewed his original caution that they should not make any promises or enter into any covenants with the conspirators. Then he blessed them and expressed his love for their willingness to risk their lives for him.

As Joseph had foreseen, the third and final meeting required all present to unite in a solemn oath to destroy Joseph Smith. When the two boys refused, explaining that Joseph had never harmed them and they were unwilling to participate in his destruction, the leaders declared that since the boys knew the group's plans, they must agree to join them or they must die on the spot. Knives were drawn.

Some protested killing the boys, especially since their parents knew of their presence, so their failure to return would cast suspicion on some of the conspirators. By the barest margin, the cautious course was chosen, and those who opposed killing prevailed. The boys were threatened with certain death if they ever revealed what had transpired in the meetings or who had participated, and they were then allowed to leave unharmed.

As the boys passed beyond the view of the guards, they were met by the Prophet, who was anxiously watching and praying for their safe return. They reported everything to him. He thanked and praised them, and then, for their safety, counseled them not to speak of this to anyone for 20 years or more.

Pioneer qualities are vital today

The faith, commitment, and courage of these young men is an example to all of us. These pioneer qualities and the others I have mentioned—integrity, inclusion, cooperation, unity, unselfishness, sacrifice, and obedience—are as vital today as when they guided the ac-

tions of our pioneer forebears, early and modern. To honor those pioneers, we must honor and act upon the eternal principles that guided their actions. As President Hinckley reminded us last April, "We honor best those who have gone before when we serve well in the cause of truth."⁹ That cause of truth is the cause of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whose servants they were, and whose servants we should strive to be. I testify of this and pray that we, too, may be "true to the faith that our parents have cherished," in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 87; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 65.
2. *Our Heritage: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1996), 145.

3. See M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 80–84; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 59–61.
4. Carol Cornwall Madsen, *Journey to Zion: Voices from the Mormon Trail* (1997), 6.
5. See William G. Hartley, "'How Shall I Gather?'" *Ensign*, Oct. 1997, 6–7.
6. See William G. Hartley, "The Pioneer Trek: Nauvoo to Winter Quarters," *Ensign*, June 1997, 31–43.
7. Taken from Madge Harris Tuckett and Belle Harris Wilson, *The Martin Harris Story* (1983), 142–69, quoting in part from its original publication in Horace Cummings, "Conspiracy of Nauvoo," *Contributor*, Apr. 1884, 251–60.
8. *The Martin Harris Story*, 147.
9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 91; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 67.

Sister Janette Hales Beckham

Making faith a reality

It would be difficult to imagine a more pure and perfect example of innocence than a newborn baby. We just returned from welcoming a new grandson. As I held little Benjamin, I recalled a question asked of me by the editor of a national magazine. In an interview she inquired, "How do you prepare your young people to live in the real world?" Our visit reminded me that our perception of the real world to some extent is dependent on our experience. She and I could quickly relate to the challenges in the world, but for me preparation for the real world has a dimension of faith that hers did not.

Our discussion caused me to consider with renewed appreciation the experiences that help make faith a reality in a person's life. In order to have faith, or know that we have faith, we need to

have experience with faith. For little Benjamin that experience has begun already as his mother and father join in prayer with his older brother before he is tucked into bed. As an infant, he is a witness of faith in his family. He is gaining experience.

After Primary a few weeks ago our four-year-old grandson, Michael, reported to his parents, "When I pray, my heart feels like a roasted marshmallow." Already Michael is recognizing the feelings associated with faith. How fortunate that he is willing and able to identify and talk about his feelings with his parents.

The prophet Alma described these feelings when he said: "For ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, . . . that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened. . . . O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea, because it is light; and whatsoever is light, is good, because it is discernible" (Alma 32:34–35).

Discerning the promptings of the Spirit

Learning to discern the teachings of the Spirit is an important part of helping faith become a reality. My daughter Karen shared her experience. She said: "When I was just a little girl, I started reading the Book of Mormon for the first time. After many days of reading, I came one night to 1 Nephi 3:7: 'I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.'" Karen continued: "I didn't know this was a famous verse, but as I read that verse, I felt strongly impressed. I was impressed that Heavenly Father would help us keep His commandments, but the deep impression was really more of a feeling. I had seen my parents mark verses in their scriptures with red pencils. So I got up and searched through the house until I found a red pencil, and with a great sense of solemnity and importance, I marked that verse in my own Book of Mormon." Karen continued: "Over the years as I read the scriptures, that experience was repeated time and time again—reading a verse and feeling deeply impressed. In time I came to recognize that feeling as the Holy Ghost. As a missionary I saw others read verses and feel deeply impressed to the extent that they were willing and able to change their lives and accept the gospel."

As we are learning to discern the promptings of the Spirit, there are so many distractions. At one time President Ezra Taft Benson reminded us that "the world shouts louder than the whisperings of the Holy Ghost" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 5; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 5). Each of us has to learn to be sensitive and to listen to the whisper.

Years ago a friend was feeling challenged as she saw the world shouting at her family. She said, "I wish we could

lock our children in the temple until they turn 21." That solution might have kept them innocent, but that is not the plan. Just as Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden, spiritual maturity requires that we have experience in this world. It is experience that helps us know good from evil. It is experience that helps us recognize the promptings of the Spirit.

Learning how the Atonement works

Experience can also help us recognize when *good* feelings are lacking. In the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*, it states: "You cannot do wrong and feel right. It is impossible!" ([1990], 4). A young woman said: "The past few weeks I have come back to the Church. I went to my bishop and repented and I've been trying to live the gospel." She added, "I have learned something: when I do good, I feel good."

Our Heavenly Father knew we would make mistakes as we learn to make choices. He provided a Savior for us. Elder Bruce C. Hafen said that because of "the Atonement of Jesus Christ [we may] learn from our experience without being *condemned* by that experience" ("Eve Heard All These Things and Was Glad," in Dawn Hall Anderson and Susette Fletcher Green, eds., *Women in the Covenant of Grace* [1994], 32; italics added). We need to know how the Atonement works in our lives and how good feelings can be regained and retained when mistakes have been made.

Daily tasks increase our faith

As we gain experience in this demanding "real world," we sometimes fail to see the sacred nature of our seemingly routine daily tasks. Fundamentals of daily living—scripture reading, prayer, family home evening, the conversation at dinner—these provide the experiences that make faith a reality.

Arthur Henry King, in discussing the importance of scripture reading, wrote:

"Some may think that the language of the scriptures is too difficult for children, but . . . [w]e need to remember that the Lord has given children faculties for learning language even greater than those of adults. . . .

"It is good for children to hear their favorite passages of scripture, and their other favorite stories, too, over and over. . . . We should *not* bring up our children to respond to the exciting, the thrilling. . . . They are a titillation of the nerves. To be *moved* is one thing; to be excited or titillated, a very different thing. If we bring up our children always to be wanting something new, . . . they will have to have a stronger [and stronger] stimulus each time until they finally [burst]. But if we inure our children to stability, to repetition, to normal life . . . , then they will live decent lives" (*The Abundance of the Heart* [1986], 222–23; italics added).

The time we spend with children and youth in their growing years provides the experience that is preparation for the real world.

The faith of young people

A young man returning from his mission shared his experience with faith. He acknowledged it as a miracle in his life. He said: "I was the first of six children born to my parents. My mother and father taught me when I was young the principles of the gospel. Faith was taught through the example of both my mother and father. When I was only 10 years old, my father, this great example of trusting the Lord, was killed in an accident. I was young and had many feelings to deal with that were new to me." This young man said he realized that he had two choices available to him: "I could have become bitter towards the Lord and lost all that I now have, or I could trust the Lord. Because of the example of my parents, trust

was the path I chose. Choosing faith has made all of the difference."

Being a witness of the faith of young people has increased my faith. One young mother wrote:

"When I was 13 I knew my life was not worth living. I was living in an abusive home where there never seemed to be lasting happiness. My two best friends told me they didn't want to be friends with me anymore because I thought I was too good for them, which made no sense but left me feeling completely alone.

"As the battles in my house continued to rage, I went to my bedroom. I was so scared. I knelt and called to the one person I still knew I had. I pleaded to my Father in Heaven to somehow take me home. I said, 'Father, I need to be with you. I need to feel your arms around me.' As I sat crying and quietly waiting in that desperate moment for Heavenly Father's arms to reach down, I heard a voice, 'Put your arms around yourself, and I will be with you.' As I followed that prompting, I felt Heavenly Father's love assure me that I could go on, and I would go on and I was not alone."

At a difficult time, this young woman turned to Heavenly Father. Her experience made her faith stronger and more real. The reward of her faith is evident in her temple marriage and family life today (see Alma 32:42–43).

Experiences that build faith

I am so thankful for leaders who encourage us to commit to experiences that help build faith. The auxiliaries of the Church are a resource to families in strengthening the faith of members. The Personal Progress program encourages each young woman to make commitments that will help make her faith a reality. Her choices invite her to make a commitment, carry it out, and report to someone. It is the process of progress. It is very much the same process we go through as we accept callings in the

Church—make a commitment, carry it out, and report to someone. One of the miracles of the Restoration of the gospel and the organization of the Church in these latter days is that the plan allows growth and change to come to the members. We each have available to us the experience that will help us change, to become spiritually mature. Through our own repeated efforts, our faith can become a reality.

Expressions of appreciation

May I, in concluding my service, express my love and appreciation to the many who have counseled and supported me—the First Presidency, priesthood leaders, and the other auxiliary leaders. My counselors, past and present, the Young Women general board, and the Young Women office staff are magnificent women, women of faith. Wherever they serve, their names will be

known for good. I express gratitude to my Heavenly Father for my experience here, in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Sister Janette Hales Beckham, former Young Women general president.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “High on the Mountain Top.”

Elder Duane B. Gerrard of the Seventy will then speak to us, followed by Elders Wayne M. Hancock and J. Kent Jolley, also of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang “High on the Mountain Top.”

Elder Duane B. Gerrard

The plan of salvation compared to flight plans

The Lord has carefully provided a plan of life called the plan of salvation. It comprises all of the laws, ordinances, principles, and doctrines required to complete our mortal journey and progress to a state of exaltation enjoyed by our Father in Heaven. The Lord spoke to Moses and said, “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”¹ Through His divine work—the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement—He makes this plan available to all.

As a recently retired airline pilot, I’ve filed many flight plans in my years of flying—flight plans that led me safely to my destination. Airlines also have laws, procedures, principles, and regulations.

We carefully follow these strict procedures and checklists that are grouped into three specific areas. First, we have normal procedures; these we do regularly and consistently, every flight, to ensure safety. Next, we have abnormal procedures; these are used when something out of the ordinary takes place, like the loss of a hydraulic or electrical system. Abnormal procedures must be done precisely and in proper sequence and order to “restore all systems to normal.” Finally, we have emergency procedures used only in the most dire and critical of circumstances, like a flameout, rapid depressurization, or severe turbulence.

Parents teach us normal procedures

In these procedures I find close parallels to the plan of salvation. First, the

Lord has created a beautiful earth for His children to live on and mortal bodies that are temples for our spirits. Our bodies are truly a joy and a pleasure in our flight through life. The Book of Mormon tells us "men are, that they might have joy."² We must not corrupt nor misuse our wonderful bodies; they are God-given, sacred, and designed by the Lord—a perfect example of the beauty of His creations.

We are raised by mortal parents, whose kind and loving care teach us correct principles or normal procedures that, if followed daily, will surely help us continue life's flight plan. We are taught principles such as love, honesty, kindness, patience, trust, sharing, repentance, obedience, faith, baptism, prayer, and a host of other eternal principles. These are taught in a family setting by diligent and loving parents and reinforced by kind brothers, sisters, and friends. These normal procedures come as basic training in the Lord's plan of salvation.

The Lord tells us to "honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."³ Show your parents love and respect, for they, in partnership with the Lord, are responsible for your mortal bodies and basic training. How grateful I am for kind and loving parents, who taught me these true principles of life.

Use repentance to deal with abnormal occurrences

Next there are abnormal procedures, which I liken to the abnormal happenings in our daily lives, like the disappointment of failing a class in school due to laziness or apathy, carelessness leading to injury or accident, or disobedience leading to serious sin—sin that requires complete repentance followed by forgiveness. These abnormals sometimes are part of our lives and must be overcome. I once asked a retiring chief pilot

how he managed to fly nearly 40 years without an accident or even incident.

He replied, "Good decisions."

"And how do you always make good decisions?" I asked.

He replied, "Experience."

"And how do you gain experience?" I persisted.

"Bad decisions," was his response.

But my pilot friend was wrong; there is no need to make bad decisions. Elder Marion G. Romney once stated, "Now, I tell you that you can make every decision in your life correctly if you can learn to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit."⁴ This, plus frequent reference to the scriptures, allow us to learn much from the experiences of others. If, however, we do make mistakes, the Lord expects us to learn from our bad decisions, and our normal and abnormal procedures require us to confess, repent, and seek forgiveness. And thus, by so doing, even failure can become success. The Lord's plan has given us those who care and comfort us in times of failure and sin: our parents, bishops, quorum leaders, and advisers. I am grateful for a plan that provides these wonderful parents, leaders, and teachers who really care! I'm especially grateful for our Savior, whose Atonement makes repentance and forgiveness possible.

Although our abnormal procedures must occasionally be used, if we are humble and wise and use good judgment, we will always repent and return all systems to normal. In flying, they say a superior pilot is one who uses superior judgment to avoid situations that require superior skill and tremendous effort to overcome. The repentance process should become a frequent normal procedure to teach us to deal with the infrequent abnormal occurrences of life—oh, the difference between *nearly right* and *exactly right*!

Emergency procedures in times of peril

Fortunately, in my flying career I've rarely needed to use emergency proce-

dures, even though I frequently trained and prepared for them. Emergency procedures provide help and direction in the most dire of circumstances. Some of these we all must face as we experience the severe turbulence of life, such as the loss of a loved one, the discovery of a serious disease, estrangement, or financial disaster. Emergency procedures are used in times of utmost peril when one's testimony is tested and tried. We then must rely on our inner strength, a knowledge of the gospel which reminds us of the principles we hold dear, and the comfort that comes when we endure all things and rely on the Savior and allow His Spirit to warm us with His cloak of love. We find solace by searching the scriptures, pondering messages of prophets, and feeling the deep love and devotion of our spouse, family, and friends. With the use of emergency procedures, we carefully but surely maintain our flight plan to our eternal destination.

Continued preparation

Are you familiar with your flight plan of life—the Lord's plan of salvation? Can you effectively use the normal, abnormal, and emergency procedures, or principles the Lord has provided? Do you study, practice, train, and rehearse these divine principles? Are you prepared in every respect to follow this great plan of salvation?

If not, then do as we do in the airlines—enroll yourself in a refresher course, the Lord's recurrent training:

- Become more actively involved in Christ's teachings.

- Always attend sacrament meeting, and keep the Sabbath day holy.

- Pay tithes and offerings more faithfully.

- Be morally clean.

- Pray regularly and with more purity of purpose.

- Hold family home evening.

- Study the scriptures.

- Give more of yourself to others.

- Show more love to family and friends.

- Be an example of goodness, compassion, and charity.

The Prophet Joseph Smith told us, "A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race."⁵ We should all do likewise.

Testimony of the plan of salvation

What a great and wonderful plan is the plan of salvation, which, like the many flight plans I've filed, teaches true principles to allow completion of our journey through life.

I know God lives, and I testify of Jesus Christ; He is God's Only Begotten Son, our Savior and Redeemer, who loves us all. I'm grateful for His marvelous plan of salvation, our flight plan of life. In Jesus' name, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.

2. 2 Nephi 2:25.

3. Exodus 20:12.

4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1961, 60.

5. *History of the Church*, 4:227.

Elder Wayne M. Hancock

Faithful sisters who go about doing good

The wide-bodied airliner began its takeoff roll, returning us to the United

States after a four-year business assignment in Switzerland. As we accelerated past the B Concourse at the Zürich International Airport, I strained to see if the

faithful farewell wishers from our Zürich Second Ward were there. Sure enough, there standing on the upper spectator deck waving to us were Sister Gräub and Sister Kappes. By bus, tram, and train they had made this extraordinary effort to say good-bye to the Hancock family. Pent-up emotions erupted as tears unashamedly poured down my cheeks. One of our four children returning with us inquired of her mother, "Why is Daddy crying?" Connie responded, "Because he loves the people here so much."

These dear Swiss sisters symbolize so many of Heavenly Father's faithful daughters who go about doing good. The lack of a car for transportation, or a husband for love and protection, or a supportive family, or a special understanding friend does not dampen their enthusiasm for the gospel of Jesus Christ or their participation in Church meetings and related activities.

Faithful women from the scriptures

We thrill in the loyalty and love of the recently widowed Ruth for her mother-in-law, Naomi, who earlier had also lost her husband. The Moabitess chose to leave her homeland to accompany and care for Naomi. Down through the generations of time the beautiful words of this faithful and determined daughter, who would with Boaz be a progenitor of Jesse, David, and Jesus Christ, speak to our yearning hearts: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

Unsung heroines in our midst

Legion are the stories that could and need to be told of women valiant in their testimonies of Jesus Christ who are unsung heroines in our midst.

Amongst these noble women are those who, through the tragedy of divorce or untimely death of a husband, are of necessity required to take on the additional challenge of employment to provide for family and self. Though physically and emotionally exhausted upon returning home each day, she resumes her most important role of feeding, teaching, encouraging, correcting, and loving her children so that they are nurtured in mind and spirit to be socially responsible, financially self-sufficient, and committed to serving the Lord. Her challenging burdens are frequently overlooked and not understood by those blessed with two-parent families. Wise are the bishop, priesthood leader, and Relief Society president who ensure that carefully selected home and visiting teachers are given the opportunity to assist her with her children's needs and home maintenance. Their regular messages and visits bring hope and encouragement so often when most needed.

There are those family-devoted women, whether single or married, who in this life have been unable to have children of their own. The maternal instinct causes them to reach out and care for the children of others as if they were their own. What a wonderful gift it is to have such a special aunt whose humble abode and loving personal interest make for a joyous second home.

There are those dear women, young and old, with special sensitivity to the Spirit, who seem to effortlessly respond to the missionaries' message and without family support join the Church. There they find love, respect, and the opportunity to serve, which oftentimes brings relief from contention, abuse, and hopelessness. The coming week can more easily be navigated following a Sabbath day where she was "numbered among the people of the church of Christ" and "remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep [her] in the right way, to keep [her] continually watchful

unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ" (Moroni 6:4).

There are those women of misfortune, laden with despair, sorrow, lack of love at home, or the guilt and consequences from having trodden in forbidden paths. Away from the community of the Saints, where succor can be provided, they await being befriended by one in whom they can confidently place their injured trust and who can restore their self-esteem and tenderly accompany them back to truth and light.

There is the patient woman whose husband is a good man but has not yet shared her need for him to return to or join the Church and bring the blessings of the priesthood into their home and family. She quietly but fervently prays for that good Samaritan in the Church who can uniquely reach out and relate to her husband in a Christlike way to lead him to the Church, where he can feel welcomed, needed, and loved. The baggage of the past with feelings of guilt and unworthiness are dispelled by the warmth of those who with her see the goodness of his soul.

The faith of Sister Rusterholz

As the Swiss movers were packing our household belongings preparatory to our return to America, the doorbell rang. A special-delivery mailman had a package for us. When opened, it revealed a green pillow with an embroidered message of love on it, the handiwork of Sister Alice Rusterholz. Our hearts and feel-

ings swelled as we thought of this wonderful older sister. For four years she had graced our Sunday dinner table with her sweet spirit and lively sense of humor. For many years as a single, unmarried sister and the only member of the Church from her family, she struggled to come to church. Early Sunday morning she would leave her humble second-floor apartment. With great effort due to a crippled leg, she would walk down the outside stairway and on to the Küsnacht train station, beginning her journey of one hour and 15 minutes by train, tram, bus, and a final walk to our meeting-house. What a blessing it had been for us in that beautiful land to pick up Sister Rusterholz every Sunday morning, accompany her to church, and conclude with dinner in our home before returning her to her apartment.

Be sensitive to these sisters' needs

There are many sweet, faithful daughters of our Heavenly Father who bless our lives. May we better understand them and be as sensitive to their needs as was the Savior when He instinctively sensed the touching of the hem of His garment and the faith of a long-diseased woman behind Him. As Jesus said to her, so may our actions affirm to our noble sisters: "Daughter, be of good comfort" (Matthew 9:22; see also verses 20-22).

Of Him and His invitation to love one another as He loves us, I do testify in His name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder J. Kent Jolley

Expressions of appreciation

I would be very remiss if on this occasion I did not express my deep appreciation for the blessings I enjoy because of what others have done for me.

Each day my personal prayers do not seem complete without a heartfelt expression of gratitude to my Father in Heaven for my Savior—the Savior of all mankind, who overcame the world and

gave His life so that we might live and work out our individual salvation.

I am also grateful for Joseph Smith, who never shrank from his calling as the prophet of the Restoration and all that it entailed. John Taylor wrote, "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it" (D&C 135:3).

I have also been blessed by the efforts of many other people. I am grateful for my ancestors, without whose faith and sacrifice I would not be here. I am grateful for my mother, who is my hero. Now in her 88th year, she continues to be an example of industry and of steadfastness in the gospel. During my adolescent years, I grew up in a single-parent home. May the Lord bless and sustain you wonderful single parents who have to carry such a heavy burden alone. Your names will be blessed forever.

I am also grateful for my own sweet companion, Jill, whom I love dearly. She has always been an example of unwavering faith who has stood at my side as an equal companion and a sustaining influence. Our seven children have likewise brought joy and happiness to us by their example and continued family togetherness.

The gospel applies to all people

The gospel of Jesus Christ has universal application. Since the beginning, it was designed to bless the lives of everyone, without exception. Regarding this, the Apostle Peter said, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

President N. Eldon Tanner, who was a member of the First Presidency, taught: "Regardless of country, clime, or condition, the gospel of Jesus Christ applies to every individual just the same. It

is a way of life that each can accept, and if lived, will bring greater joy, success, and happiness than anything else in the world" ("Christ's Worldwide Church," *Ensign*, July 1974, 6).

I am grateful that the gospel applies to all people, no matter where they live or what station in life they come from. I served a mission in South America more than 40 years ago, when the work was slow, even discouraging at times. Now as I return to that great continent for my present assignment, I marvel at how the Lord has blessed it and how He is making the gospel readily available to everyone, regardless of their circumstances. South America is rapidly becoming dotted with stakes and temples.

All can understand the gospel

Related to the gospel's universal application is its simplicity. With the help of the Holy Ghost, any earnest person can easily understand the gospel and receive its great personal blessings. The Savior taught, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

A few years ago Sister Jolley and I concluded an assignment where I presided over a mission in south Texas. Our missionaries there wholeheartedly embraced the "balanced effort" concept of missionary work, which includes finding, teaching, baptizing, and doing everything possible to retain new converts, and spending several hours each week working with less-active members. Our missionaries, like all missionaries throughout the world, were great kingdom builders.

When my wife and I returned to our home ward in Idaho, I was determined to practice what I preached in the mission field. I therefore asked the bishop to assign me as a home teacher to some of our

wonderful families who were not enjoying the blessings of full activity in the Church. He quickly obliged by assigning me to six of these special families.

After several visits to one of these families, I challenged the father, who had been inactive for almost 40 years, to become fully active in the Church and to participate in the temple preparation classes. He responded, "These kinds of things are more than I can understand; they are way over my head." I was troubled by his response and felt bad that he did not think he could embrace the gospel because it was too difficult to understand. But I knew that the truths of the gospel are for everyone and that everyone can understand them through earnest prayer and scripture study. So our next few home teaching visits were spent talking about the simple and beautiful things of the gospel.

With patience and persistence our visits became more enjoyable and more spiritual. We developed a genuine friendship. As time went on, it became apparent that he could and did understand the principles of the gospel. This made his wife very happy. They grew closer in their marriage. They are now attending church regularly, becoming good friends with all members, and preparing to go to the temple. We had similar experiences with other families. The Lord blesses us as well as these wonderful families when we put forth the extra effort to share these simple truths with them.

Our own honest study of the gospel will show us how simple, pure, and universal its precepts are. James wrote,

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

Testimony of the gospel

I am grateful for the gospel's beauty and simplicity, and I bear witness to you that it is true and easy to understand.

I bear witness that the gospel applies universally to all people—the learned and the unlearned, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, no matter where they are found on the earth.

I bear solemn witness to you that the gospel brings peace in a troubled world. As the Savior taught: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

I also bear witness that Jesus Christ is the author and proponent of the gospel. He stands at the head of this Church, which is for everyone; none are excluded from it. President Gordon B. Hinckley stands today as the Lord's prophet to lead us. There is no doubt in my mind about the truthfulness of these things. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elders Duane B. Gerrard, Wayne M. Hancock, and J. Kent Jolley of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

The Savior taught how to nourish others

The Savior taught Peter and His other Apostles and disciples why and how they were to nourish others. You

remember that in the Bible account He fed them before He taught them. He had been crucified and then resurrected. His servants had gone to Galilee. They had fished through the night, catching noth-

ing. When they drew near to shore, in the dawn, they did not at first recognize Him. He called out to them, telling them where to cast their nets, and when they did the nets were filled. They rushed to greet Him on the shore.

They found a fire of coals with fish cooking and bread. I have often wondered, as you may have done, who laid the fire, who caught the fish, and who cooked the meal, but it was the Master who prepared His disciples to be fed more than fish and bread. He let them eat first. And then He taught them of spiritual feeding. And He gave a commandment to them which still stands for each of us.

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs" (John 21:15; see also verses 1-17).

Nourishing new converts

The Saints of God have always been under covenant to nourish each other spiritually, especially those tender in the gospel. We are blessed to live in a time when a great increase in that capacity to nourish new members of the Church must and therefore will be poured out upon the faithful Saints. That power has been given before among the Lord's people. This is the description of how the Lord's people did it once in a time recounted in the Book of Mormon. In a scripture that we've heard today, you remember that "they were numbered . . . that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith" (Moroni 6:4).

All of us have tried at some time to nourish another person's faith. Most of us have felt the concern of others for our

own faith, and with it we have felt their love. More than a few of us have had a child look up to us and say, "Would you like to go to church with me?" or "Would you pray with me?" And we have had our disappointments. Someone we love may not have accepted our attempts to nourish their faith. We know from painful experience that God respects the choice of His children not to be nourished. Yet this is a time to feel renewed optimism and hope that our power to nourish will be increased.

We can do simple things

The Lord through His living prophet has told us that He will preserve the bounteous harvest of new converts entering the waters of baptism across the earth. And the Lord will do it through us. So we can have confidence that by doing simple things, things that even a child can do, we will be granted soon greater power to nourish tender faith.

See them as Heavenly Father sees them

The place to start is with our own hearts. What we want with all our hearts will determine in large degree whether we can claim our right to the companionship of the Holy Ghost, without which there can be no spiritual nourishing. We can begin today to try to see those we are to nourish as our Heavenly Father sees them and so feel some of what He feels for them.

Those new members of the Church are His children. He has known them and they have known Him in the world before this one. His purpose and that of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is to have them return to Him and to give them eternal life if only they will choose it. He has led and sustained His missionaries by the Holy Spirit to find and teach and baptize them. He allowed His Son to pay the price of their sins. Our Father and the Savior see those converts as ten-

der lambs, purchased with a price we cannot fathom.

A mortal parent may appreciate, in some small way, the feelings of a loving Heavenly Father. When our children come to the age when they must leave our direct care, we feel anxiety for their safety and concern that those who are to help them will not fail them. We can feel at least some of the Father's and the Savior's love for the new members of the Church and the trust they place in us to nourish.

Those feelings in our hearts for the new members will go far to qualify us for the help of the Spirit and thus overcome the fears which may deter us from our sacred responsibility. It is wise to fear that our own skills are inadequate to meet the charge we have to nourish the faith of others. Our own abilities, however great, will not be enough. But that realistic view of our limitations creates a humility which can lead to dependence on the Spirit and thus to power.

Have courage despite our weaknesses

Brigham Young told us to have courage despite our weaknesses. He did it in this language that seems so much like him:

"In addressing a congregation, though the speaker be unable to say more than half a dozen sentences, and those awkwardly constructed, if his heart is pure before God, those few broken sentences are of more value than the greatest eloquence without the Spirit of the Lord and of more real worth in the sight of God, angels, and all good men. In praying, though a person's words be few and awkwardly expressed, if the heart is pure before God, that prayer will avail more than the eloquence of a Cicero. What does the Lord, the Father of us all, care about our mode of expression? The simple, honest heart is of more avail with the Lord than all the pomp, pride, splendor, and eloquence

produced by men. When he looks upon a heart full of sincerity, integrity, and child-like simplicity, he sees a principle that will endure forever—"That is the spirit of my own kingdom—the spirit I have given to my children" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 169).

Reach out in kindness

A child can do the things which will give us power to nourish the faith of others. Children could invite a recent convert to come with them to a meeting. Children could smile and greet a new member coming into a chapel or into a class. So can we. And as surely as we do, the Holy Ghost will be our companion. The fear of not knowing what to say and of being rejected will be taken from us. The newcomer will not appear to be a stranger to us. And the Holy Ghost will begin nourishing them even before we have spoken of gospel truths.

It does not require a calling more than being a member to nourish by reaching out in kindness. And even those who have no calling to teach or to preach can nourish with the good word of God if we prepare for it. We can do it every time we speak with a new member and every time we participate in a class discussion. Every word we speak can strengthen or weaken faith. We need help from the Spirit to speak the words which will nourish and which will strengthen.

Invite the Spirit to guide our words

There are two great keys to inviting the Spirit to guide what words we speak as we feed others. They are the daily study of the scriptures and the prayer of faith.

The Holy Ghost will guide what we say if we study and ponder the scriptures every day. The words of the scriptures invite the Holy Spirit. The Lord said it this way: "Seek not to declare my word, but

first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men" (D&C 11:21). With daily study of the scriptures, we can count on this blessing even in casual conversations or in a class when we may be asked by a teacher to respond to a question. We will experience the power the Lord promised: "Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man" (D&C 84:85).

We treasure the word of God not only by reading the words of the scriptures but by studying them. We may be nourished more by pondering a few words, allowing the Holy Ghost to make them treasures to us, than by passing quickly and superficially over whole chapters of scripture.

Just as pondering the scriptures invites the Holy Ghost, so does daily pleading in prayer. If we do not ask in prayer, He will rarely come, and without our petition He is not likely to linger. "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" (D&C 42:14). Heartfelt, constant pleading for the companionship of the Holy Ghost, with the pure intent to nourish our Father's children, will surely bring blessings to us and to those we love and serve.

Teach the simple doctrine of the gospel

The good word of God with which we must nourish is the simple doctrine of the gospel. We need not fear either simplicity or repetition. The Lord himself described how that doctrine goes into the hearts of men and women to nourish them:

"Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine.

"And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given

unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.

"And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

"And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 11:31-35).

Importance of a childlike heart

The Lord went on to describe those who would be nourished by that simple doctrine and so endure, those who would inherit the celestial kingdom, as those who were childlike. It takes a childlike heart to feel the promptings of the Spirit, to surrender to those commands, and to obey. That is what it takes to be nourished by the good word of God.

And that is why we can be so optimistic in our charge to nourish the new members of the Church. However much or little they knew of the doctrine, they have just submitted humbly to the ordinance of baptism and received the right to the companionship of the Holy Ghost. And so the very tenderness of their faith, which leads the Savior to refer to them as lambs, comes at a time when they have proven themselves willing to do what the Savior asks of them.

The Savior will nourish new converts

If the full requirements of their new membership are explained clearly and with love, if the opportunity to serve in the Church is extended wisely and their

performance in that service judged with charity and nurtured with patient encouragement, they will be strengthened by the companionship of the Holy Ghost and then they will be nurtured by power beyond our own. As they endure, even the gates of hell will not prevail against them.

Brigham Young made the promise of how their strength to stand would grow in these words:

"Those who humble themselves before the Lord, and wait upon Him with a perfect heart and willing mind, will receive little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little, 'Now and again,' as brother John Taylor says, until they receive a certain amount. Then they have to nourish and cherish what they receive, and make it their constant companion, encouraging every good thought, doctrine and principle and doing every good work they can perform, until by and bye the Lord is in them a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:286-87).

That is what it means in Moroni when it says, "Relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith" (6:4). It is the Savior who made possible our being purified through His Atonement and our obedience to His commandments. And it is the Savior who will nourish those who go down in faith into the waters of baptism and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. When they always remember Him, and when they continue in child-like obedience, it is He who will assure that they have His Spirit always to be with them.

We will be part of a great work

You and I can and will by small means be part of a great work. We will study and pray and serve to qualify for the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We will then be allowed to see the new members as precious, beloved children

of our Heavenly Father, and we will be led to nourish them with love, with opportunity to serve, and with the good word of God. And then we will see in our own time what the great missionary Ammon described to his missionary companions, just as we are now companions to the missionaries laboring across the world:

"Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted.

"Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day; yea, neither shall they be harrowed up by the whirlwinds; but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them; yea, neither shall they be driven with fierce winds whithersoever the enemy listeth to carry them.

"But behold, they are in the hands of the Lord of the harvest, and they are his; and he will raise them up at the last day" (Alma 26:5-7).

We can by simple obedience help the Lord to take the lambs, His lambs, into His hands and take them in His arms home to their Father and our Father. I know that God will pour out the powers of heaven upon us as we join in preserving that sacred harvest of souls.

I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that He lives. And I know that He leads His missionaries and that He leads us in this work—His work—to bring to pass the eternal life of His Father's children. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Mormon

Youth Chorus, the Farmington family choir, and the Tabernacle Choir, and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for their cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for their coverage of the conference. We are grateful to the owners and operators of

the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who will be our concluding speaker.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Testimony." The benediction will be offered by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy.

This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

I think I will leave the text that I prepared and just talk with you a little bit, and express my deep appreciation to you.

We need these conferences. We need them to remind us of our responsibilities and obligations. We must never forget that spirituality must be the dominant feature of the Church.

Church funds are a sacred trust

A recent magazine article praised us as a well-run financial institution of great wealth. It grossly exaggerated the figures.

The money the Church receives from faithful members is consecrated. It is the Lord's purse. Our Church facilities are money consuming and not money producing. We are not a financial institution. We are the Church of Jesus Christ. The funds for which we are responsible involve a sacred trust to be handled with absolute honesty and integrity, and with great prudence as the dedicated consecrations of the people.

We feel a tremendous responsibility to you who make these contributions. We feel an even greater responsibility to the Lord whose money this is.

Ponder the things you have heard

Now, brothers and sisters, we pray that all of you may return safely to your homes. Please be careful. Drive with great care. Ponder the things you have heard. May your experience be similar to that of the people of King Benjamin, who all cried with one voice, saying, "We believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, . . . that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2).

Let us counsel with the Lord in all our undertakings. Let us be better neighbors. Let us be better employers and employees. Let us be men and women of integrity and honesty in business, in education, in government, in the professions, whatever is our place in life.

I love the people of this Church

I have a confession to make, my brothers and sisters. It is simply this: I love you. I love the people of this

Church. I love all who are faithful, I love all who follow the ways of the Lord. It is a humbling thing to preside over the Church. I can never forget the words of Jesus: he that would be first among you, let him be the "servant of all" (Mark 9:35; D&C 50:26).

Thank you for your prayers, your trust, your confidence. I am deeply grateful for all who have generously assisted in helping us to do our duty.

Counsel from Mormon

In closing, I would like to read a word or two from Mormon—great words:

"But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God. . . .

"For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth

by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God" (Moroni 7:13, 16).

And then these great words, which become the *summum bonum* of it all: "Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you" (Moroni 7:26). I believe those words.

We are proud to be one with you in moving forward this mighty work. We are all in this together. Every man and woman has a part to play. God give us the strength and the will to play it well.

"God be with you till we meet again" (*Hymns*, no. 152), my beloved associates. I have sung those simple words in a thousand places across the world since I began my ministry 39 years ago. I sing them again today with love and affection. God bless you, my dear friends, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Testimony."

Elder Bruce C. Hafen offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Farmington family choir, conducted by Jane Felstead. Linda Margetts was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir—Mormon Youth Chorus combined men. Craig Jessop and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

INDEX

A

- Allred, Elder Richard D. 35**
We have patriarchs today; Receiving a patriarchal blessing; Patriarchal blessings are inspired; A blessing for a physically challenged daughter; Live worthy of the revealed blessings

B

- Ballard, Elder M. Russell 50**
Stand for truth and right; Today's secret combinations; Young people are most susceptible; Priesthood holders must do all they can; Support the efforts of homes and communities; Counsel to young men; Whittling and whistling troop; Simple things we can do; Don't rationalize bad choices; A great army of priesthood holders
- Beckham, Sister Janette Hales 103**
Making faith a reality; Discerning the promptings of the Spirit; Learning how the Atonement works; Daily tasks increase our faith; The faith of young people; Experiences that build faith; Expressions of appreciation

C

- Call, Elder Eran A. 37**
Gratitude for faithful parents; Modern challenges to the home; Suggestions for parents; Counsel from ancient and modern prophets; Our homes should be a sanctuary

E

- Eyring, Elder Henry B. 112**
The Savior taught how to nourish others; Nourishing new converts; We can do simple things; See them as Heavenly Father sees them; Have courage despite our weaknesses; Reach out in kindness; Invite the Spirit to guide our words; Teach the simple doctrine of the gospel; Importance of a childlike heart; The Savior will nourish new converts; We will be part of a great work

F

- Faust, President James E. (priesthood session) 58**
Marvelous time in the Church's history; "Be not afraid, only believe"; Believing requires action; We belong to the greatest cause on earth; We are not alone in our struggles; We can overcome all of our fears; Taking the Church into the future; Confidence in Church leaders; We must actively avoid evil; The most challenged generation in history; Remain faithful to the end; Promise of transcendent blessings

- Faust, President James E. (Sunday morning session) 74**
 The “weightier matters of the law”; The Savior gave us a higher law; Timeless laws of the gospel; Responsibility for moral judgments; Three sources of guidance; Justice cannot be separated from mercy; The Prophet Joseph’s mercy; Childlike faith; Sins of omission; Higher gospel requires us to look inward

G

- General Authorities present 1**
General Priesthood Session 49
Gerrard, Elder Duane B. 106
 The plan of salvation compared to flight plans; Parents teach us normal procedures; Use repentance to deal with abnormal occurrences; Emergency procedures in times of peril; Continued preparation; Testimony of the plan of salvation

H

- Haight, Elder David B. 96**
 Testimony of the prophet’s words; “Come, Come, Ye Saints”; William Clayton’s faith; “All is well”; We have a great heritage; The great moment of my life
- Hales, Elder Robert D. 31**
 Instituting the sacrament; Remembering and knowing the Savior; Creator of worlds without number; His mortal ministry; He gave us a higher law; He is our friend; We can always have His Spirit with us; His atoning sacrifice; The Light and Life of the World; We are not left alone; Come unto Christ and follow Him
- Hancock, Elder Wayne M. 108**
 Faithful sisters who go about doing good; Faithful women from the scriptures; Unsung heroines in our midst; The faith of Sister Rusterholz; Be sensitive to these sisters’ needs
- Hillam, Elder Harold G. 83**
 A letter from 1899; Technological advances of our day; Tools can be used to teach good or evil; Use technological tools wisely; Importance of dedicated teachers; We are a church of teachers; Feed the spirit and nourish the soul
- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session) 3**
 An environment of goodwill; Extensive, favorable press coverage; Thanks to those being released; May the Spirit of the Lord be with us

- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) 68**
 Temples planned or under construction; Small temples will be built; Retain every convert; A letter from a former convert; Young men are a marvelous generation; Be virtuous in thought and deed; Stay away from alcohol and drugs; Become educated and serve missions; Stand up and walk as sons of God; Sisters are not obligated to go on missions; Expression of love and blessing

- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) 90**
 Appreciation for the pioneers; Season of a thousand opportunities; Meeting with the Navajo Nation; Worldwide growth of the Church; This cause will roll on to fill the earth; Teach the gospel to every nation; Extend the great work done in temples; Let us love our neighbors; Keep the Sabbath holy; Observe the Word of Wisdom; Pay tithing; Nurture love in our families; Our future can be glorious

- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session) 117**
 Church funds are a sacred trust; Ponder the things you have heard; I love the people of this Church; Counsel from Mormon

- Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. 86**
 Spiritual hunger in our day; Modern spiritual calamities; Many walk away from the Bread of Life; Light and hope have been restored; Come and follow Jesus; The gospel satisfies spiritual hunger; God is forgiving and merciful; God will never desert us; We will lie down in green pastures; Hear the Savior's invitation

J

- Jolley, Elder J. Kent 110**
 Expressions of appreciation; The gospel applies to all people; All can understand the gospel; Testimony of the gospel

M

- McMullin, Bishop Keith B. 55**
 Responsibilities of priesthood holders; Overcome perils through the gospel; Blessings of the Aaronic Priesthood; Worthiness, not age, qualify for the work; Mighty works of the Aaronic Priesthood; Commitment of Aaronic Priesthood holders; "Behold the man!"

- Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 27**
 Gratitude for a "delay en route"; Becoming more Christlike; Passing through our mortal experiences; We also must not "shrink"; The Savior comprehends all human suffering; Greater empathy and meekness; Becoming completed and finished; Irony, the crust on the bread of adversity; Jesus' attributes are our example; Avoiding discouragement; Being valiant in our testimony of Jesus; Making our blessings count

Maynes, Elder Richard J.	39
Celestial goals and everyday life; Future success built during teenage years; Connecting daily life with lofty goals; Continual daily dedication; You will receive celestial blessings	
Monson, President Thomas S. (Saturday morning session)	20
The birth and childhood of the Savior; Importance of teaching children; Four suggestions; Teach prayer; Inspire faith; Live truth; Honor God; Learning from our children; When sorrow comes to children; A walker for Raymond; Kristin and Erika Bestor; "There are angels among us"	
Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session)	63
Letter received by President Hinckley; The Lord's counsel on home teaching; Making appointments; Be a genuine friend; Home teachers can see living miracles; Bring families to full fellowship; Our home teachers have been angels; The Savior is our Exemplar	
Music, Summary of Conference	118

N

Nelson, Elder Russell M.	16
President Hinckley as an example of "spiritual capacity"; Education and a mission; The power of prayer; Building love at home; Love of learning; Remarkable sense of humor; Perseverance in spite of adversity; Compassion and sympathy; An unprecedented pace; Inspired decisions; Enriched with enthusiasm and enlightened by the Almighty; Prophets speak the will of the Lord	

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	99
"Therefore, what?"; Eternal principles the pioneers applied; Foremost quality was faith; Unselfishness and sacrifice; Obedience, unity, and cooperation; Legacy of inclusion; Commitment; Young men true to the Prophet Joseph; Pioneer qualities are vital today	

P

Packer, President Boyd K.	4
Called to serve; Service given because we care; "Be anxiously engaged in a good cause"; The pattern for official callings; How leaders should issue calls; We do not ask to be released; The Lord honors those who serve Him	
Perry, Elder L. Tom	79
Importance of studying the gospel; In mortality, learn first of God; Development of the seminary program; Inspired service of John M. Whitaker; Establishment of institutes; Testimony from a Russian student; Counsel from President Hinckley; Blessings of seminary and institute; Take advantage of this opportunity	

Pratt, Elder Carl B.	11
Love for Latin America; Unfolding of the Lord's work; Differences in wards' welcoming spirits; Improve our fellowshiping skills; Act as the Savior's disciples	
Priesthood Session, General	49

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	25
Saturday Morning Session	2
Scott, Elder Richard G.	45
Each member can be a missionary; Steps to enduring conversion; Three categories of service; Serving without a formal call; Serving a part-time mission; Serving a full-time mission; Participate in some way; The Lord has asked us to do this work	
Smoot, Sister Mary Ellen	13
"Seek for the things of a better"; Help lost sheep feel the Savior's love; Understand our past and gain strength for the future; Importance of family histories; Faithful pioneers, past and present; Help converts feel that they belong	
Summary of Conference Music	118
Sunday Afternoon Session	95
Sunday Morning Session	74
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	26

W

Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	41
Companionship with the Saints; Companionship of family; Companionship of friends; Pioneer cooperation; Companions in Church service; Companionship of the Holy Ghost; Being a good companion; Shun false companions; "God be with you till we meet again"	
Wirthlin, Elder Richard B.	8
Our day foreseen; Information, not wisdom; Situational ethics; An imperative need: a consistent moral compass; Four absolute truths; The light will shine out of darkness; Expressions of gratitude	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



4 02970 49000 1

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-eighth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 4 and 5, 1998

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-eighth
Annual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
April 4 and 5, 1998

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

© 1998 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
All rights reserved
Used by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
by permission
Printed in the United States of America
English approval: 7/97

Report of the 168th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 168th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 4, 1998, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 4 and 5, 1998. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 4, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goasland, Harold G. Hillam, and Earl C. Tingey

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*¹ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Dallas N. Archibald, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, D. Todd Christofferson, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshiko Kikuchi, Cree-L. Kofford, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Carl B. Pratt, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorín, E Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Eran A. Call, Val R. Christensen, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Duane B. Gerrard, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Lynn G. Robbins, Ned B. Roueché, Dennis E. Simmons,

¹Elder Andrew W. Peterson was excused.

Donald L. Staheli, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Richard E. Turley Sr., Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Lance B. Wickman, Richard B. Wirthlin, and Ray H. Wood

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 168th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 4, 1998, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 168th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elders Ben B. Banks and Andrew W. Peterson. We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School,

and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us this morning.

The music for this session will be by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

They opened by singing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," an expression of testimony in the reality of the Resurrection, which we celebrate at this Easter time. They will now favor us with "Our Savior's Love." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Monte J. Brough of the Presidency of the Seventy. I will then make a few opening remarks, and Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve will then address us.

The chorus sang "Our Savior's Love."

Elder Monte J. Brough offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you most warmly to this general conference, which has become a great world conference of the Church.

These proceedings will be heard and seen across this nation and Canada and in much of the remainder of the world. I think there is nothing to compare with it. I commend and thank all who have to do with the complicated logistics of this great undertaking.

The gospel has been restored

We are met to worship the Lord, to declare His divinity and His living reality. We are met to reaffirm our love for Him and our knowledge of His love for us. No one, regardless of what he or she may say, can diminish that love.

There are some who try. For instance, there are some of other faiths who do not regard us as Christians. That is not important. How we regard ourselves is what is important. We acknowledge without hesitation that there are differences between us. Were this not so, there would have been no need for a restoration of the gospel. President Packer and Elder Ballard recently spoke of this in other settings.

I hope we do not argue over this matter. There is no reason to debate it. We simply, quietly, and without apology testify that God has revealed Himself and His Beloved Son in opening this full and final dispensation of His work.

We must not become disagreeable as we talk of doctrinal differences. There is no place for acrimony. But we can never surrender or compromise that knowledge which has come to us through revelation and the direct bestowal of keys and authority under the hands of those who held them anciently. Let us never forget that this is a restoration of that which was instituted by the Savior of the world. It is not a reforma-

tion of perceived false practice and doctrine that may have developed through the centuries.

We must respect other religions

We can respect other religions and must do so. We must recognize the great good they accomplish. We must teach our children to be tolerant and friendly toward those not of our faith. We can and do work with those of other religions in the defense of those values which have made our civilization great and our society distinctive.

For instance, there recently came to my office a Protestant minister who is a most effective leader in the unending battle against pornography. We are grateful for him. We join with him and his associates. We give financial support to his organization.

We can and do work with those of other religions in various undertakings in the everlasting fight against social evils which threaten the treasured values which are so important to all of us. These people are not of our faith, but they are our friends, neighbors, and co-workers in a variety of causes. We are pleased to lend our strength to their efforts.

But in all of this there is no doctrinal compromise. There need not be and must not be on our part. But there is a degree of fellowship as we labor together.

As we carry forward our distinctive mission, we work under a mandate given us by the risen Lord, who has spoken in this last and final dispensation. This is His unique and wonderful cause. We bear testimony and witness of Him. But we need not do so with arrogance or self-righteousness.

As Peter expressed it, we are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." Why?

That we might “shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

A holier-than-thou attitude is not becoming to us. I am in receipt of a letter from a man in our community who is not a member of the Church. In it he says that his little daughter has been ostracized by her schoolmates who are Latter-day Saints. He sets forth another instance of a child who, it is alleged, had a religious medal ripped from his neck by an LDS child. I hope this is not true. If it is, I apologize to those who have been offended.

Let us rise above all such conduct and teach our children to do likewise. Let us be true disciples of the Christ, observing the Golden Rule, doing unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us strengthen our own faith and that of our children while being gracious to those who are not of our faith. Love and respect will overcome every element of animosity. Our kindness may be the most persuasive argument for that which we believe.

Dedication of buildings in Palmyra

Now, one other matter. A week ago I was in Palmyra, New York. I there dedicated two buildings. One was a restoration of the small log home in which the Joseph Smith Sr. family first lived in that area. It was in this humble home that the 14-year-old Joseph determined to go into the nearby grove to ask of God and experienced an incomparable vision of the Father and the Son.

It was in this home that Moroni, the angel, appeared to the boy Joseph, calling him by name and telling him that God had a work for him to do and that his “name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

How could a farm boy, largely without formal education, have dared to say such a thing? And yet it has all come to pass and will continue to increase as this restored gospel is taught across the world.

While in Palmyra, I also dedicated the E. B. Grandin Building, where the first edition of the Book of Mormon was printed in 1829 and 1830. It was a bold undertaking to print what Mr. Grandin first regarded as a fraud, and to print an edition of 5,000, which was very large for the time. I am pleased to remind you that since that time we have printed more than 88 million copies of this remarkable volume.

I am grateful that we have this old building, purchased by a generous member of the Church and donated to the Church. Its very presence confirms the validity of the book, this remarkable testament of the Son of God.

Who, having read it, can honestly refute its divine origin? Critics may try to explain it away. The harder they try the more plausible becomes the true account of its coming forth as a voice speaking from the dust.

Gratitude for testimony

How grateful I am for the testimony with which God has blessed me of the divine calling of Joseph Smith, of the reality of the First Vision, of the restoration of the priesthood, of the truth of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And so, my beloved brothers and sisters, let us rejoice together now as we celebrate with appreciation the wondrous doctrines and practices which have come as a gift from the Lord in this most glorious time of His work. This is the Easter season, when we remember His glorious Resurrection, of which we bear witness. Let us ever be grateful for these most precious gifts and privileges and act well our part as those who love

the Lord. I invite you to listen to the words which will go forth from this pulpit, to be delivered by those who have

been called as your servants. May we be blessed I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder David B. Haight

My dear brothers and sisters, what a wonderful occasion, what a beautiful day, what a glorious time this is, particularly for me, to have an opportunity to stand here following that stirring declaration and testimony of God's prophet here upon the earth.

Meeting at the Peter Whitmer farmhouse

As President Hinckley held up that copy of the Book of Mormon from the first edition, I thought of an experience we had a few years ago as we attended a mission presidents' seminar. At the closing of the two-day seminar in the Palmyra-Fayette area, we held a dinner in the reconstructed Peter Whitmer farmhouse, that beautiful little building where the Church was organized 168 years ago this weekend. It was such a moving occasion. The only cooking arrangement they had in that little log cabin was the fireplace. We looked at the fireplace, with a pot hanging where they did their cooking. They didn't have any of the conveniences of today, of course. There was a well outside for their water.

Near the end of that very spiritual meeting with those mission presidents, I walked up the stairs and looked at the two little bedrooms. The Peter Whitmer family lived there. But they turned one of those rooms over to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and there he did some of the translating of the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery worked with him in that humble little setting. My heart burned with the wonderful feeling I had just been in that little farmhouse and imagin-

ing what took place and the blessings of heaven that had been poured out upon them.

As we left our meeting that evening and left that little farmhouse, there was a full moon shining down through the trees. I said to Ruby, "I can imagine the night of April 6, 1830, after that small group had assembled, the Church had been organized, and six men agreeable to its organization were present to be in harmony with the laws of the state of New York. I can imagine what was said, what was prophesied about the future of the Church, and the testimonies that would have been borne." Then I said, "I would imagine that on the night of April the 6th, 1830, there was a full moon shining, showing that our Savior was smiling upon that occasion and upon that setting."

Later I expressed that idea to a group where Brother Chamberlain, who then was the director of the Hansen Planetarium in Salt Lake, heard me say it. He was thoughtful enough to get in touch with the naval observatory to find out what might have happened on April the 6th, 1830. They didn't have records back that far, so he was thoughtful enough to contact the Royal Observatory at Greenwich in England for records that might have been available over there. He later sent me some documents indicating what was happening in the horizon that week of April the 6th, 1830, indicating that there was a full or beautifully beaming moon those days before and after April the 6th. The glories of the Lord had been poured out upon the occasion.

I have been blessed all my life

I am honored here this morning, as we listen to President Hinckley recall those tremendous events, to have had the opportunity during my life to have been taught, to have experienced events around the world and in the temple, and to have attended the meetings of the Church, where I have felt the Spirit of the Lord directing this work, which I testify to you to be true. And as the years march on, I'm honored to have the opportunity just to add my testimony to that of our great prophet.

I received a letter a few days ago from a young man, 19 years old, by the name of Kevin Campbell from Juniper, Idaho. I'm not going to try to tell you where that is, but you can imagine. And Brother Kevin wrote to me and said: "It has come to my knowledge that you are becoming quite old in your years, and I wanted to write you before you passed on to the other side. How is life in your old age? I have often wondered about it, so I pose the question to you, 'How is life?' so that I'll know what to expect when I get old like you are."

I would say to Kevin Campbell, bless his heart, life is wonderful. And the only way I can describe it is that I have been blessed all of my life, and I have been blessed with challenges and opportunities and questions and problems that are part of life. But life is wonderful if we live the simple principles that we have been taught and if we live the way that we know we should live. One of those wonderful blessings we have in our old age is the blessing of having more time with our children and their children and their children, to have that opportunity to assemble and to be with them.

Children should learn their heritage

Just the other night we had the opportunity to attend a baptismal service in the ward meetinghouse where Rachel, a

great-granddaughter, was baptized. A few nights before that, Richard, a great-grandson, had been baptized. I had the opportunity to look at them and talk to them and squeeze them and see that sparkle in their eyes and the light of the gospel that seemed to fill their hearts and souls. They were so excited about the idea of being baptized to become official members of the Church. Their families had taught them true gospel principles. I remember when I said, "Richard," as we shook hands, "give me a real missionary handshake." And with that little eight-year-old hand he almost squeezed my fingers off. As he did, I said, "Richard, you'll be a great missionary, just as little Rachel will be a great member of the Church in her right."

On that same occasion we had an opportunity to stand in the circle and to have young Peter Jr. receive the Aaronic Priesthood and to hear his father give him the blessings of the priesthood. And those of us who were older had the chance to sense the meaning of the occasion and to feel of it and to know that all present were part of our family. I would want our family to know, as it continues to grow and expand, about their fathers. I use that term in the plural as Helaman used it—the great Book of Mormon prophet Helaman—as he taught his sons about their fathers, including Nephi and Lehi, and how they followed the word of God and kept the commandments and how they left Jerusalem and went out into the wilderness, as revealed in the Book of Mormon. Helaman taught his children that their fathers had done many works and that those works were good.

So I would hope that our own children, as the generations go on, would know of their heritage, know who they are and know that they had fathers who believed, fathers who were challenged, fathers who had investigated and who had been out in the world declaring the

truth—not just quoting scriptures—but feeling in their hearts and souls that what we do is true.

We've had an opportunity to reacquire our old house up in Oakley, Idaho, and to restore it so that our children will know of their ancestry and know that their fathers and their works were good also. I'm able to hold on to a gold watch that my father was given by the Oakley First Ward when he was the bishop, given to him in 1905, the year before I was born. We have a part, a little of the heritage, a reminder that our parents' works were good and that they helped in the rolling forth of this wonderful work.

Bringing the Church out of obscurity

In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord declared that this is "my preface unto the book of my commandments" (D&C 1:6). The Brethren who met there at Hiram, Ohio, 18 months after the Church was organized, were to compile those revelations and to print them and have available to the people the commandments that the Prophet Joseph had received. As part of that first section, the Lord explained how He had given Joseph Smith the power, inspiration, and direction from heaven to translate the Book of Mormon and to bring the Church "forth out of obscurity and out of darkness" (D&C 1:29–30).

Just reflect in your minds today on what is happening with President Hinckley as he travels the world and goes out meeting with people. When we talk about bringing the Church out of obscurity and out of darkness, just think what he is doing out in the world with the press, the media, with people of all types. Think of how they have an opportunity to see God's prophet and to hear him testify and to explain what has taken place. Many influential newspapers and magazines and other publications have

had many favorable stories about the Church.

Importance of the Ten Commandments

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the world today would have some real understanding of just the simple Ten Commandments, which the Lord cut with His own finger into tablets? Moses came down from Mount Sinai to show the children of Israel, who were riotous, so that they wouldn't say they didn't understand what was said. When Moses brought down the tablets, the people would be able to read the Lord's own statements: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3) and "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Exodus 20:4)—something else to worship—but they should love the Lord, love God. The Lord said that we should not take the name of God in vain, that we should honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy, that "thou shalt not kill," and that "thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:7–8, 13–14). Imagine what that would do in the world today and in the United States and with the political spin doctors. And "thou shalt not steal" or "bear false witness" or covet your neighbor's oxen and farms, his wife, or anything that he has (Exodus 20:15–17).

I know the gospel is true

The gospel of our Lord and Savior has been restored to the earth. God lives. He is our Father. I know. Jesus is the Christ. I have heard His voice because I have felt of that Spirit as He explains to us, "My voice is Spirit; my Spirit is truth" (D&C 88:66). I know that is true. Joseph Smith was the restorer and the one who was found and trained and was obedient and valiant in every way as the instrument of the Restoration. And today we have a living prophet upon the earth who represents us in such a glorious way throughout the world.

Brothers and sisters, live the commandments. Do what is right. Take advantage of this great opportunity in your life to live it well, to be good, to have good works, and to influence other people for good. The gospel is true. I hope that every day of my life I might be able to do some good and to encourage somebody to live a better life and to understand what has been restored to the earth, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Come unto Jesus."

President Hinckley

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Come unto Jesus."

Sister Anne G. Wirthlin, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, will now speak to us.

Sister Anne G. Wirthlin

Teaching children of the Savior brings peace to them

While teaching the Nephite people, the Savior affirmed the words of the prophet Isaiah, who prophesied of Israel in the latter days: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. . . .

" . . . For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord" (3 Nephi 22:7, 10).

The Savior then revealed one of the ways in which His covenant of peace would be preserved for the righteous in the last days: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (3 Nephi 22:13).

These words of the Savior are the theme for Primary and are fulfilled in the stated purpose of Primary: to teach children the gospel of Jesus Christ and help them learn to live it.

As we witness the unfolding events of the last days, we cannot doubt that in this scripture the Lord is speaking directly to us. We are Israel of the latter days. We are they who must teach our children of Him. Peace that endures is

not dependent upon outside forces that are beyond our control. "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23).

The Lord's words spoken centuries ago are words of hope and assurance that give comfort to righteous parents who teach their children of Him. They speak to us at a time when peace in the hearts of children can seem but an elusive dream. But the Savior has assured us that it can be a reality if we teach our children. Primary supports parents in this important responsibility.

Young children understand great truths

While on a leadership training assignment to Brazil, I had the opportunity to visit a Primary nursery class. Approximately eight children were seated around a table with their teacher. I watched in awe as these little ones, two and three years old, sat for a few brief moments focused in rapt attention on a picture the teacher was holding of the Savior with the children. I heard her tell them how He loves children and how He loves each one of them. She taught them that Heavenly Father loves them too. I watched them listen, and I felt that they were un-

derstanding much more than I might have thought possible. They were hearing her words and feeling her love. In the beauty and simplicity of those few moments, those children were being taught the answer to life's most important question, "Who am I?" In their pure, child-like faith, their spirits were receptive to the truths they were being taught. That experience will be repeated for them in their nursery class Sunday after Sunday. These are significant teaching moments in the lives of young children at a time when they are ready to learn.

Recent research on the development of a child's brain has revealed new insights into how and when a child learns. I quote from a recent study: "From birth, a baby's brain cells proliferate wildly, making connections that may shape a lifetime of experience. The first three years are critical" (J. Madeleine Nash, "Fertile Minds," *Time*, 3 Feb. 1997, 49).

Is it surprising that our Father in Heaven fashioned the minds of very young children to be so capable of learning at a time when they need to be taught who they are and what they must do? The years from birth to age 10 are the peak years for acquiring the language that will become the foundation for understanding future knowledge and truth. That foundation is formed by the words they hear and the impressions that come to them from the world around them. It is an ideal time for parents to read to their children from the scriptures. They will begin to learn the language of the scriptures.

Learning the scriptures in Primary

You may have noticed children on their way to Primary with their scriptures in hand. Primary children this year are being taught from the scriptures, and they are learning to use them. Our theme for sharing time is "I Know the Scriptures Are True." One Sunday morning I visited a Primary sharing time, and I noticed the children had their

scriptures open on their laps. The Primary presidency and the teachers were helping them find stories of the prophets in their scriptures. I was asked to share a favorite scripture with the children. When I finished, a little four-year-old girl on the front row held up her scriptures and said, "That scripture is in my scriptures too." Through the guidance of loving parents and dedicated teachers, small children can become familiar with the scriptures and the spirit that accompanies them.

One Primary leader shared how grateful she was for this focus in Primary. She said that she and her husband read the scriptures to their children—ages 2, 3, and 4—every night before they go to bed. I asked her to tell me more. I must admit I questioned that children so young could understand the language of the scriptures. She said that she and her husband had the same doubts when they first began reading with their children. But she said after the first week the language was not an issue. The children love reading together and feeling the Spirit, and it's amazing how much they understand.

Teach children from the scriptures

A very young child's potential for learning and understanding is far greater than we tend to believe. The exciting possibility is that while children are learning new words daily, they can learn the language of the scriptures. In time, through the guidance of parents and teachers, they will grow in their understanding that Heavenly Father is speaking to them through the scriptures, that the scriptures can help them find answers to their problems.

A friend shared an experience she had with her son, Alex, when their family moved to another location. The move was not easy for Alex. It was difficult for him to go to a new school. He was worried about being away from his home and family so much that he didn't want

to go to school. One day his mother read to him the scripture found in 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

She said, "I told Alex how this scripture had helped me many times when I felt afraid." Through her love and by sharing her personal experience with the scripture, she helped Alex overcome his fear, but more important, she made it possible for him to have an experience with the scriptures and to understand how they can be a power in his life.

Ponder the scriptures as families

Nephi said, "For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children" (2 Nephi 4:15).

How can we engage our children in learning from the scriptures so that the testimonies of the prophets will make a difference in their lives? We have been counseled to read the scriptures together as families. When scripture reading and sharing is a tradition in our families, then our children are more likely to make it a habit in their personal lives.

When our children were young, we felt it was important to establish this tradition in our family. We decided to read the Book of Mormon with the goal to complete the book by the end of the school year. Each morning we read a chapter before breakfast, and we reached our goal. While I would not wish to take anything away from the good things that came from that experience for all of us, we reflected in the end that perhaps our focus was more on our goal than on what we were learning in the process. In the early-morning rush hour that ended at the breakfast table, we had little time to share ideas or ponder on the meaning of God's word in our lives. When the Savior taught the Nephites, He said, "Go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which

I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again" (3 Nephi 17:3).

The Savior has given us a pattern to follow as we study the scriptures. We hear the word, we ponder upon its meaning, we ask our Heavenly Father to help us understand, and then our minds and hearts are prepared to receive the promised blessings. Pondering is more than reading words; it is searching for meanings that will help us as we relate to one another and as we make choices in our lives. It is allowing the word to move from our minds to our hearts. The Spirit bears witness to our hearts as we prayerfully seek to know the things of our Heavenly Father. When we have that witness and knowledge, we think and live and relate to each other in more Christlike ways.

Be an example to your children

As parents, our children look to us and our example to guide them. When we consistently live what the scriptures teach, we provide them with an anchor that will guide them in discerning truth in a world of conflicting values. With the scriptures as a reference point, we can help them process their experiences and the consequences of their choices. By so doing, we help them keep the eternal perspective always in focus so they never forget who they are and where they are going.

The Prophet Joseph was prepared for the work he was to do through devoted, wise parents who loved the Lord. They read from the scriptures and taught their children from them. And so when young Joseph was confused and needed direction, it was natural for him to go to the scriptures. He said, "At about the age of twelve years my mind became seriously impressed with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal soul which led

me to search the scriptures believing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God" (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. Dean C. Jessee [1984], 4–5; spelling modernized).

Our prophet's counsel

President Hinckley has counseled parents: "Read to your children. Read the story of the Son of God. Read to them from the New Testament. Read to them from the Book of Mormon. It will take time, and you are very busy, but it will prove to be a great blessing in your lives as well as in their lives. And there will grow in their hearts a great love for the Savior of the world, the only perfect man who walked the earth. He will become to them a very real living being, and His great atoning sacrifice, as they grow to manhood and womanhood, will take on a new and more glorious meaning in their lives" (quoted in *Church News*, 6 Dec. 1997, 2). Brothers and sisters, that glorious promise from our prophet can be ours if we read to our children from the scriptures.

There can be no greater joy than to know that our children love the Lord, no greater peace than that which comes

when we feel of His love and understand the meaning of His atoning sacrifice. That spirit which comes when we share sacred things of the heart will bond us together as families. John expressed it well: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:4).

It is my testimony that this will be our blessing as we follow the counsel of our prophet, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Sister Wirthlin, first counselor in the Primary general presidency.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Bishop Richard C. Edgley, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric. He will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The chorus and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

Mormons are Christian

Some years ago when I was working in a different organization, our personnel director, a devout Catholic, came into my office with his secretary, Darlene. I could readily see that Darlene was not there of her own free will and would rather be elsewhere. The personnel director's greeting words to me were, "Will you please tell Darlene that Mormons are Christian. I have been arguing with her for over half an hour, and I cannot convince her of that fact. She needs to hear it from you."

My first concern was, have I done something in my own life that would cause Darlene to question my faith in and loyalty to the Savior? But then I quickly recognized that her doubts were not directed to me personally.

After inviting them to sit down, I asked Darlene why she thought we were not Christians. Her answer was that her minister had told her so. I asked her if she knew the official name of the Church. She did not. She knew the Church only by the name of Mormon. I explained the name to be The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and then asked if it did

not seem like a rather odd name for a church that supposedly was not Christian. I next asked my Catholic friend if he would explain from our many hours of discussions on airplanes, in hotels, at dinners, and during other private occasions some of the things he had learned about us as they related to Christ, His teachings, and our beliefs. He explained them with perhaps more credibility than I could have done.

Darlene's response was that her minister had told her that we did not believe in the Bible, which we had replaced with the Book of Mormon. I replied by sharing the eighth article of faith: "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God."

I then explained that the Book of Mormon was further scripture complementing the Bible and providing another witness of Christ. It expounds and clarifies many of Christ's most sacred and important teachings. Her response was, "My minister says the Book of Mormon cannot contain the teachings of Christ because there could be no more revelations after the death of the Apostles, thus no more scripture after the Bible." My query to her was, "At a time of such rapid change in a turbulent and troubled world, with so many perplexing problems, wouldn't it make you wonder why a loving Father would cease to communicate with His children, whom He loved enough that He sacrificed His Only Begotten Son for them?" The discussion continued for the next 15 to 20 minutes, with my attempting to explain our literal interpretation of the Atonement, the Resurrection, and other important doctrines of the Savior. I ended with the strongest testimony I could give of a loving Father and a willing Son.

At the conclusion of our discussion her response was the same: "My minister has spoken, and that is the way it is." And that is the way the matter was left,

leaving me both disappointed and somewhat bothered by the misunderstanding.

Seek understanding before judging

It is interesting how the lack of understanding by a few can innocently or purposely misguide many. Judging another's heart and conscience is probably best left to the righteous Judge of us all. Surely the final determination as to who is a true disciple of Christ will be left to the Savior, who said, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep" (John 10:14).

After being introduced to a few basic doctrines of the Church, the Reverend Charles Taylor, a minister friend of mine, called to tell me of his enlightened understanding of the gospel. With some excitement he stated: "When you take the time to study the teachings and the doctrines of the Mormon Church, it becomes clear that Mormons are truly Christians. In fact, I have never met more Christlike people than the Mormons I have recently become acquainted with."

I responded that I would be interested in hearing his further feelings and understanding after he had had a chance to read the Book of Mormon and could witness its testimony and teachings of the Savior. His response: "I am already reading the Book of Mormon, and it is wonderful to read. It has expanded my understanding of Christ and His mission. I feel a wonderful spirit as I read it."

My friend took the time to learn for himself before forming a judgment. He did not try to influence others based on lack of understanding or misconception. This seemed responsible to me—seeking understanding before judging, and certainly before trying to persuade another to one's own misconceptions.

Jesus Christ is central to the Church

To my friend Darlene, may I again point out that Jesus Christ is central to

every doctrine, every ordinance, and every principle of the Church—as its very name suggests. The Book of Mormon testifies of Jesus Christ, giving emphasis and clarification to His teachings. The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi declared to the world: “And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

Nephi further stated, “There is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved” (2 Nephi 25:20).

Are we disciples of the Savior?

Over the years I have pondered this experience with my friend Darlene, bothered by its conclusion. However, I have since concluded that viewpoints based on misunderstandings and fallacious teachings should not trouble me, except as I have a responsibility to attempt to clarify such misconceptions. The real issue is not how others define us but how the Savior defines us. So the question is, how does He personally view each and every one of us?

Therefore, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we need to focus our concern on our own relationship to our Heavenly Father and the Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the last moments of my father's righteous and exemplary life, with all of the strength he could muster, he uttered in a hardly audible voice, “I only hope the Savior will find me worthy to call me His friend.” Oh, to be called a friend of the Savior! As my father yearned, I also wondered: Would Christ count me as one of His sheep? Would He see me striving to exemplify His teachings and live His divine principles? Would He call

me a disciple? Would He call me a friend? This is what really matters.

The Savior gave the criteria for His friendship in the 15th chapter of John, in which He stated, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14). He further gave the acid test when He said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16; see also verses 17–18, 20). This is how we will all be judged—by our fruits, good or bad. In the final judgment, if our fruits so warrant, we will be invited to sit on the right hand of God. There I believe will be His friends.

So, if we, even in our weak and stumbling way, are earnestly striving to live a Christlike life, how others choose to characterize us should be of little consequence. The responsibility for our Christianity is ours. Others may characterize us as they will, but the true and righteous Judge will judge us as we are. Our discipleship is for us to determine, not someone else.

Our everyday living shows our discipleship

When we were baptized we each voluntarily took upon ourselves the name of Christ. The taking of His name upon ourselves results in a *covenant* to follow His teachings. We have a chance to renew our covenants and take inventory of our daily lives every time we partake of the sacrament.

We can all ask ourselves the standard questions: Are we praying daily, personally and as a family? Are we reading the scriptures? Are we holding our family home evenings and paying our tithing? The list can go on. But the real questions are: Are we becoming a disciple? Are we becoming a friend?

Alma queried: “Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?” (Alma 5:14). The bottom line is

the change in our hearts—a change that results in a change in living.

Alma's subsequent questions went beyond the general to the specific. He queried:

- “Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God?”

- “If ye were called to die at this time, . . . have [ye] been sufficiently humble?”

- “Are ye stripped of pride?” (Alma 5:27–28).

Today we might add to these questions:

- Do we love our brothers as ourselves?

- Are we totally honest in our business dealings and other relationships?

- Are we putting our families first—before our own self-interest?

- Have we done any good in the world today?

- Are we following the admonition and the teachings of the prophet?

Yes, the question is, do our outward devotions translate into a Christlike life? It is not enough that we just talk of Christ, preach of Christ, or even prophesy of Christ (see 2 Nephi 25:26). We must live of Christ, for it is by our own personal, everyday living that the Savior will determine whether we are one of His true disciples, a friend.

To the Darlenes of the world, I would hope that our fruits would merit

the term *Christian*. And to us who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I would hope that our deeds, our actions, our hearts, and our countenances exemplify the teachings of the Savior and display our gratitude for His great sacrifice for all of us.

Testimony of the Savior

To those who wonder how Christ fits into our theology and our personal lives, we testify that Christ is the Redeemer of the world. He is our Lord, our Light, and our Savior. He was ordained from on high to descend below all, to suffer above all! He is the focus of all that we teach and all we do. As a Church we are individual Christians, trying to prove our discipleship to the Savior. It is not an institutional matter; it is a personal matter.

It is my testimony that He lived, He died, and He lives. He atoned for our sins. It is my prayer that we will each live our lives and make our devotions in such a way as to be clearly recognizable, by member and nonmember alike, as true disciples of the living Christ. But more important, I pray that we may be so recognized by the true and righteous Judge of us all, even the Lord Jesus Christ. What greater reward can any of us receive than to be acknowledged by Him as a true and faithful servant—a disciple, a friend. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

The plan of happiness

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful to join with you again in a general conference of the Church. I pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I would like to consider with you the importance of mortal life as a time of preparation. As Amulek testified, “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God;

yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.”¹

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a special understanding of the eternal nature of our souls. We know that we had a premortal existence. We accepted our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness and chose to follow our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Principles we adopted

and for which we contended were (1) agency, the ability to choose good or evil; (2) progress, the ability to learn and become like our Heavenly Father; and (3) faith, faith in our Father's plan and in the Atonement of Jesus Christ that enables us to return to the presence of God. Consequently, we were permitted to enter mortal life. Concerning mortal life, the Master said, "We will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."²

We understand that we will live a postmortal life of infinite duration and that we determine the kind of life it will be by our thoughts and actions in mortality. Mortality is very brief but immeasurably important.

We learn from the scriptures that the "course of the Lord is one eternal round"³ and that God knows "all things, being from everlasting to everlasting."⁴ We are also eternal beings. Our presence here on earth is an essential step in our loving Heavenly Father's plan of happiness for His children. "[We] are, that [we] might have joy."⁵ The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "happiness is the object and design of our existence . . . if we pursue the path . . . [of] virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God."⁶

An eternal perspective

Right now, this very moment, is part of our eternal progression toward returning with our families to the presence of our Father in Heaven. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: "We are here [in this life] with a marvelous inheritance, a divine endowment. How different this world would be if every person realized that all of his actions have eternal consequences. How much more satisfying our years may be if . . . we recognize that we form each day the stuff of which eternity is made."⁷

That understanding helps us to make wise decisions in the many choices of our daily lives. Seeing life from an eternal perspective helps us focus our limited mortal energies on the things that matter most. We can avoid wasting our lives laying "up for [ourselves] treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt."⁸ We can lay up treasures in heaven and not trade our eternal spiritual birthright.

This is the day of our mortal probation. We might compare our eternal journey to a race of three laps around the track. We have completed the first lap successfully and have made wonderful progress. We have started on the second lap. Can you imagine a world-class runner stopping along the track at this point to pick flowers or chase a rabbit that crossed his path? Yet this is what we are doing when we occupy our time with worldly pursuits that do not move us closer to the third lap toward eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God.⁹

We are to fully develop ourselves

In both His Old and New World ministries, the Savior commanded, "Be ye therefore perfect."¹⁰ A footnote explains that the Greek word translated as *perfect* means "complete, finished, fully developed."¹¹ Our Heavenly Father wants us to use this mortal probation to "fully develop" ourselves, to make the most of our talents and abilities. If we do so, when final judgment comes we will experience the joy of standing before our Father in Heaven as "complete" and "finished" sons and daughters, polished by obedience and worthy of the inheritance that He has promised to the faithful.

The Savior has set the example for us and commands that "the works which [we] have seen [Him] do that shall [we] also do."¹² I have always been impressed by Moroni's powerful invitation that he offered as a valedictory admonition at the end of his earthly ministry: "Come

unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness.”¹³

We are to serve others

Alma explained to his followers that baptism requires that we serve others, that we “bear one another’s burdens, . . . mourn with those that mourn; . . . comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and . . . stand as witnesses of God at all times.”¹⁴ We cannot work out our salvation alone. We cannot return to the presence of our Father in Heaven without helping our brothers and sisters. Once we understand that we are all literally brothers and sisters in the family of God, we should also feel an obligation for one another’s welfare and show our love through deeds of kindness and concern. Charity, “the pure love of Christ,”¹⁵ must motivate us in our associations with every one of our Heavenly Father’s children.

As we progress and become more like the Savior, we can strengthen every group with whom we associate, including families and friends. The Lord places us in these communities of Saints where we can learn and apply gospel principles to our everyday lives. These groups are at the same time a school, a proving ground, and a laboratory where we both learn and do as we practice living the gospel.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul pleaded for unity in the Church and for members to serve one another, “that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer . . . ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice.”¹⁶ We are only as strong as each member of the body, or church, of Christ. We should do all we can to help every member realize his or her divine potential as “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”¹⁷

Fellowship new converts

In giving our service to others, we need to remember President Hinckley’s counsel to extend the hand of fellowship and to share our love with the hundreds of thousands who join the Church as converts each year. The greatest tool the Lord has to welcome new converts warmly and “keep them in the right way”¹⁸ is the love each of us extends by taking the time to introduce ourselves to new members, learn their names, listen to them, and learn something about them.

Joining a new church and starting a new life is never easy and often frightening.

Each of us needs to be the friend that every new member needs to remain active and faithful in the Church. As friendships are built, new converts “are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”¹⁹ When people are baptized, “their names [are] taken” and added to Church membership records, “that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God.”²⁰

Referring to the miraculous change that occurs in the lives of new members when they are properly nourished by the good word of God, Elder John A. Widtsoe observed that “very common, ordinary people, who accept the gospel from the lips of some humble Mormon missionary become so changed by those enlightening truths of the gospel that they are not the same people any longer.”²¹

Make necessary course corrections

As we progress through mortality, we may make mistakes and get off course. If we should continue in our errors, we get farther and farther from where we ought to be.

We can compare our lives with the flight of a spaceship. When its motor is started up, its trajectory is monitored precisely. Any deviation from its decreed course is corrected immediately. Even a fraction of a degree off course would carry it many miles from its destination if not corrected. The longer the correction is delayed, the greater will be the required adjustment. Can you imagine how far off course we can become without course corrections?

The Lord has provided for us prophets, scriptures, parents, and other wise leaders to teach us the course we should be following. They can help us monitor our progress and correct the direction we are going when necessary, much the same as tracking stations monitor a satellite's progress and keep it on the right path. Our course on earth is so important. It is determined by the decisions we make each day. We cannot separate our thoughts and actions now from their effects on the future.

Each day is precious

We might ask ourselves if we merit the blessings of our Father's plan with the life we are now living. The days of our probation are numbered, but none of us knows the number of those days. Each day of preparation is precious.

I have watched the skilled hands of Navajo women in the American Southwest as they weave intricate patterns in beautiful rugs. They select and prepare each colored thread of yarn very carefully and insert it in precisely the right place. They weave the varied colors artistically into the fabric of the whole to form rugs that eventually conform to the preconceived plan of their creators.

In much the same way, we weave into the fabric of our lives the pattern that we will present as our finished product. Our mortal lives are woven each day as we add our deeds into something intricately beautiful, following the Master

Designer's plan. When we make wrong choices, we must live with a blotch in the fabric of our souls or retrace our steps through repentance and remove errant threads we have woven into our character and replace them with the finer threads that our Maker intended for us to use.

The tapestry of our lives is being patterned now. The Lord referred to our life before mortality as our first estate and promised each of us that "they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever."²²

Avoid procrastination and indecision

Procrastination and indecision can hamper our efforts to prepare for the life after mortality. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said, "Procrastination, as it may be applied to Gospel principles, is the thief of eternal life—which is life in the presence of the Father and the Son."²³ In the Book of Mormon we read Amulek's plea: "I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end. . . . For that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world."²⁴

It has been said that "life is such a precious gift, it should be guarded from needless dilution. . . . 'Each day is not just another day but more like a falling drop of water, a golden moment of life's span adding to an increasingly rich pool of living.'"²⁵

Indecision can immobilize or paralyze us, hindering our preparation in mortality. We can become like the people of Nineveh, whom the Lord described to Jonah as "persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left

hand.”²⁶ The Apostle James observed that “a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”²⁷ An old Swiss saying describes such indecision in these words:

With one foot in,
With one foot out,
You can't be in,
You can't be out—
Not warm, not cold,
Not square, not round,
More poor than poor
And always bound.
For such a man
Will never know
Where to begin
Or where to go.²⁸

We cannot be double minded in our relationships with husband or wife, parents or children. Are we going to savor the enjoyment of our children after they are a little older and we are not so busy? What about the valued friendships that fade because of the thoughtful, lengthy letters we plan to write but never finish and send? Are we faithful in going to our temples regularly? Consider the books we are going to read, the impulses to kindness we are going to act upon, and the good causes we are going to espouse. Are we always packing our bags with the things we value most in life but never leaving on the trip? Does tomorrow never come? Let us resolve to begin to live today—not tomorrow, but today—this hour while we yet have time.

Use our mortal probation wisely

We know that death is a necessary transition. It will come sooner or later to each of us. Our mortal bodies will return to earth, and our spirits will return to the spirit world. By virtue of the Savior's atoning sacrifice, we all will be resurrected. Each of us will stand before the judgment bar of the great Jehovah and

be rewarded according to our deeds in mortality.

If we make every earthly decision with this judgment in mind, we will have used our mortal probation wisely and its days will give us peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

I testify that these doctrines are true. You can know of gospel truth by the confirmation of the Spirit whispering to your soul. The Lord said, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”²⁹

The Savior lives and loves each of us. This I know with all my heart. We are children of a loving Father in Heaven, who has raised up the Prophet Joseph Smith to restore the fulness of the gospel. Our Father in Heaven has also blessed us with a living prophet in our day to guide us back to His loving arms. President Gordon B. Hinckley is that prophet. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Alma 34:32.
2. Abraham 3:25.
3. 1 Nephi 10:19.
4. Moroni 7:22.
5. 2 Nephi 2:25.
6. *History of the Church*, 5:134–35.
7. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 174.
8. Matthew 6:19.
9. See D&C 14:7.
10. Matthew 5:48; see also 3 Nephi 12:48.
11. Matthew 5:48, footnote b.
12. 3 Nephi 27:21.
13. Moroni 10:32.
14. Mosiah 18:8–9.
15. Moroni 7:47.
16. 1 Corinthians 12:25–26; see also verses 12–27.
17. Romans 8:17.
18. Moroni 6:4.
19. Ephesians 2:19.
20. Moroni 6:4.

21. In Conference Report, Apr. 1952, 34; or *Improvement Era*, June 1952, 423.
22. Abraham 3:26.
23. *The Way to Perfection*, 10th ed. (1953), 202.
24. Alma 34:33–34.
25. Thomas J. Parmley, as quoted in R. Scott Lloyd, “Alumnus, 95, Returns to High School,” *Church News*, 12 June 1993, 13.
26. Jonah 4:11.
27. James 1:8.
28. Quoted by Hans B. Ringger, in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 26.
29. John 7:17; see also verses 14–16.

The chorus sang “Jesus, Lover of My Soul.”

President Hinckley

Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric has spoken to us, and he was followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The Mormon Youth Chorus then sang “Jesus, Lover of My Soul.”

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now be our concluding speaker.

President James E. Faust

My dear brothers and sisters and friends: I stand humbly at this pulpit, which for well over a hundred years has been sanctified by the word of God spoken in countless inspired messages which have spiritually filled the souls of those who have listened. Consistent with this legacy, I pray that our hearts may be open to all that is said in this conference.

Blessings that flow from covenants

Today I wish to speak about the blessings that flow from covenants with the Lord. As a foundation, I begin with the covenant the Lord made with the house of Israel: “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”¹

This covenant is universal for those of any race being “baptized into Christ.”² As Paul states, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”³

Covenants are not simply outward rituals; they are real and effective means of change. “Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances.”⁴ We should always honor and keep sacred the saving covenants we make with the Lord. If we do, He has promised, “Thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.”⁵

Many covenants are indispensable to happiness here and hereafter. Among the most important are the marriage covenants made between husband and wife. From these covenants flow the greatest joys of life.

The covenant of baptism, with its attendant ordinance of confirmation, opens the gate for eternal life.

The oath and covenant of the priesthood contains the promise by which worthy elders of the Church shall receive “all that [the] Father hath.”⁶

Temple covenants are the basis for attaining the greatest blessings the Lord has for us.

The law must be written in our hearts

We have the great privilege of partaking of the sacrament, the Lord's Supper. Renewing our baptismal covenants as we partake of the sacrament protects us against all manner of evil. As we worthily partake of the sanctified bread and water in remembrance of the Savior's sacrifice, we witness unto God the Father that we are willing to take upon us the name of His Son and always remember Him and to keep His commandments which He has given us. If we do these things, we will always have His Spirit to be with us.⁷ If we partake of the sacrament regularly and are faithful to these covenants, the law will be in our inward parts and written in our hearts. Let me illustrate this with a story from the *Church News*:

"A group of religion instructors [were] taking a summer course on the life of the Savior and focusing particularly on the parables.

"When the final exam time came, . . . the students arrived at the classroom to find a note that the exam would be given in another building across campus. Moreover, the note said, it must be finished within the two-hour time period that was starting almost at that moment.

"The students hurried across campus. On the way they passed a little girl crying over a flat tire on her new bike. An old man hobbled painfully toward the library with a cane in one hand, spilling books from a stack he was trying to manage with the other. On a bench by the union building sat a shabbily dressed, bearded man [in obvious distress].

"Rushing into the other classroom, the students were met by the professor, who announced they had all flunked the final exam.

"The only true test of whether they understood the Savior's life and teaching, he said, was how they treated people in need.

"Their weeks of study at the feet of a capable professor had taught them a great deal of what Christ had said and done." In their haste to finish the technicalities of the course, however, they had failed to recognize the application represented by the three scenes that had been deliberately staged. They learned the letter but not the spirit. Their neglect of the little girl and the two men showed that the profound message of the course had not entered into their inward parts.⁸

We must at times search our own souls and discover what we really are. Our real character, much as we would wish, cannot be hidden. It shines from within us transparently. Attempts to deceive others only deceive ourselves. We are often like the emperor in the fairy tale who thought he was arrayed in beautiful garments when he was in fact unclothed.

Service from a pure heart

In my lifetime I have seen the faithfulness of Church members increase. Measured by fixed standards, there are greater manifestations of faithfulness than ever before. On any given Sunday, percentagewise more than twice as many people partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper worldwide than when I was growing up.

We are trying to care for the poor and the needy among us through the generosity of faithful Church members who observe the law of the fast and participate in the inspired welfare program. Humanitarian aid of many kinds worth millions of dollars has been sent to many countries to relieve hunger and suffering. This is administered according to need and without regard for race, color, or religious creed.

More of our people enjoy blessings from living the ancient law of tithing. They voluntarily return to the Lord one-tenth of the increase He has given them.

Hundreds of thousands more of our faithful Saints enjoy the privilege of temple worship. We now have 58,000 missionaries serving in the field. I rejoice in this, and I am sure the Lord is pleased. But I wonder if we have become proportionately more Christlike. Does our service come from a pure heart?

Covenants protect us

I speak of the importance of keeping covenants because they protect us in a world that is drifting from time-honored values that bring joy and happiness. In the future this loosening of moral fiber may even increase. The basic decency of society is decreasing. In the future our people, particularly our children and grandchildren, can expect to be bombarded more and more by the evils of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Too many families are being broken up. Good is called evil, and evil is called good.⁹ In our present "easiness of the way,"¹⁰ have we forgotten the elements of sacrifice and consecration that our pioneer forebears demonstrated so well for us? It may be that, as Wordsworth suggested:

The world is too much with us; late
and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste
our powers: . . .

We have given our hearts away, a
sordid boon! . . .

For this, for everything, we are out
of tune.¹¹

Our personal values must not erode

Perhaps in our day and time it is more difficult to maintain moral strength and stand against the winds of evil that blow more fiercely than ever before. It is a sifting process. Today the modern counterparts of Babylon, Sodom, and Gomorrah are alluringly and explicitly displayed on television, on the Internet,

and in movies, books, magazines, and places of entertainment.

In the last general conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley warned us about moving too far toward the mainstream of society in some areas such as Sabbath day observance, family disintegration, and other matters. He said: "We have moved too far toward the mainstream of society in this matter. Now of course there are good families. There are good families everywhere. But there are too many who are in trouble. This is a malady with a cure. The prescription is simple and wonderfully effective. It is love."¹²

In our society many sacred values have been eroded in the name of freedom of expression. The vulgar and the obscene are protected in the name of freedom of speech. The mainstream of society has become more tolerant, even accepting of conduct that Jesus, Moses, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and other prophets have warned against since the beginning of human history.

We should not allow our personal values to erode, even if others think we are peculiar. We have always been regarded as a peculiar people. However, being spiritually correct is much better than being politically correct. Of course, as individuals and as a people we want to be liked and respected. But we cannot be in the mainstream of society if it means abandoning those righteous principles which thundered down from Sinai, later to be refined by the Savior and subsequently taught by modern prophets. We should only fear offending God and His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the head of this Church.

All forms of evil are being masked. I speak of sexual immorality. I speak of wagering for money, which in many places is called gaming rather than gambling. This is typical of how many other evils are masked to make them more acceptable. There is a masking of other conduct which has been condemned

throughout the history of mankind, conduct which is destructive to the family, the basic unit of society. In "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," the First Presidency and Twelve stated: "We . . . solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children."¹³

The breakdown of parental authority erodes the most indispensable institution of society—the family.

"We will serve the Lord"

Paul spoke of those in his day who demonstrated that "the work of the law [was] written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness."¹⁴ For members of this Church to enjoy the blessings of a covenant people, the law of the Lord must be written in their hearts. How can they do this when so many voices tell our children and grandchildren that evil is good and good is evil? We would hope that all fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers would be better examples in keeping the commandments of God. We ask husbands and wives to try a little harder to be loving and kind with each other. If both parents will insulate their family as far as they can from the many influences that prey upon us, their children are more likely to be safeguarded. Daily scripture study, daily prayer, regular family home evening, obedience to priesthood authority in the home and in the Church constitute a great insurance policy against spiritual deterioration.

Joshua spoke unequivocally when he said:

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. . . .

"And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."¹⁵

Follow the true Shepherd

We are free to accept or reject the counsel of the Lord and His prophets. Often those who do not choose to follow the prophets are voices that criticize those who do.

Some of our critics call those who follow their spiritual leaders "mindless sheep." Jesus said:

"And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

"And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."¹⁶

All of this, of course, did not begin with our generation. Since the beginning, the influences and forces of Satan have constantly warred with God. Satan, the great deceiver, said, "I am also a son of God."¹⁷ Satan urged the children of Adam not to believe in the things of God, "and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish."¹⁸ The justification seems to be that everyone does it. It is the "in thing" to do.

Learn to live by covenants

Ordinances and covenants help us to remember who we are and our duty to God. They are the vehicles the Lord has provided to conduct us into eternal life. If we honor them, He will give us added strength.

Elder James E. Talmage affirmed that the true believer "with the love of God in his soul, pursues his life of service and righteousness without stopping to ask by what rule or law each act is prescribed or forbidden."¹⁹

In a world where we and our families are threatened by evil on every side, let us remember President Hinckley's counsel: "If our people could only learn to live by these covenants, everything else would take care of itself."²⁰

Faithful members of the Church who are true to their covenants with the Master do not need every jot and tittle spelled out for them. Christlike conduct flows from the deepest wellsprings of the human heart and soul. It is guided by the Holy Spirit of the Lord, which is promised in gospel ordinances. Our greatest hope should be to enjoy the sanctification which comes from this divine guidance; our greatest fear should be to forfeit these blessings. May we so live that we may be able to say, as did the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart."²¹ I pray that this may be so, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jeremiah 31:33.
2. Galatians 3:27.
3. Galatians 3:29.
4. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 162.
5. D&C 42:61.
6. D&C 84:38.
7. See D&C 20:77, 79.
8. "Viewpoint: Too Hurried to Serve?" *Church News*, 1 Oct. 1988, 16.
9. See Isaiah 5:20.
10. Alma 37:46.
11. William Wordsworth, "The World."
12. In Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 69.
13. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
14. Romans 2:15.
15. Joshua 24:15, 24.
16. John 10:4-5; see also verses 11, 14-15, 27.

17. Moses 5:13.
18. Moses 5:13.
19. In Conference Report, Apr. 1905, 78.
20. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 147.
21. Psalm 139:23.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has been our concluding speaker this morning.

We express gratitude to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

We express our deep appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. They will now sing "How Gentle God's Commands." The benediction will then be offered by Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "How Gentle God's Commands."

Bishop Keith B. McMullin offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 168th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 4, 1998, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Brigham Young University combined choirs, under the direction of Brothers Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session. We surely welcome you to the second general session of the 168th Annual General Conference of the Church.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, and radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Brigham Young University combined choirs, under the direction of Brothers Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

We shall begin this session with the choir singing "All Creatures of Our God and King." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy.

The choir sang "All Creatures of Our God and King."

Elder Angel Abrea offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will then read the report of the Church Audit Committee.

He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1997.

The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in

favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Sheldon F. Child, Quentin L. Cook, and Francisco J. Viñas as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Athos M. Amorín, E Ray Bateman, Val R. Christensen, Ronald T. Halverson, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, D. Lee Tobler, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, and Ray H. Wood as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Authority Seventies:

Henry F. Acebedo, Juan A. Alvaradejo, Modesto M. Amistad Jr., Horacio P. Araya, Gustavo A. Barrios, Craig A. Bullock, Adhemar Damiani, Edgardo E. Fernando, Franz R. Gaag, Daniel L. Johnson, Wilfredo R. López, Jairo Mazzagardi, Jesús Nieves, Adrián Ochoa, Emmanuel O. Opare Sr., and Willy F. Zuzunaga. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed may also manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy to take their places on the stand.

The Church Audit Committee Report for 1997

Ted E. Davis

The Church Audit Committee consists of three members who are independent of all Church officers, employees, departments, and Church-affiliated entities. We report directly to the First Presidency and have access to all records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibilities.

The Church also has an auditing department that is independent of all other Church operations and departments. The Church Auditing Department is separate from the Church Audit Committee. The Church Auditing Department's staff consists of certified public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors. It has established procedures for audits of Church operations in accordance with recognized pro-

fessional auditing standards. This includes monitoring contributions and expenditures of local ecclesiastical units.

The Church Audit Committee has reviewed the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over contributions and expenditures of Church funds and that safeguard assets of the Church. We have also reviewed budgeting, accounting and reporting, and auditing systems for the year ended 31 December 1997.

Expenditures of Church funds for 1997 were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Depart-

ment under the direction of the Appropriations and Budget Committees.

Church-affiliated businesses are managed by professionals who report to independent boards of directors. These businesses maintain their own accounting and reporting systems in compliance with accepted business practices and are audited by the Church Auditing Department and/or independent public accounting firms. Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education are audited by independent public accounting firms.

Based upon our review of financial, budgeting, and other control policies

and procedures, and our review of all audit reports issued in 1997 and responses thereto, the Church Audit Committee is of the opinion that, in all material respects, Church contributions received and expended during the year ended 31 December 1997 have been managed in accordance with revelation and established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee
Ted E. Davis, chairman
Donald D. Salmon
Frank M. McCord

The Church Statistical Report for 1997

F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, for the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the membership growth and status of the Church as of 31 December 1997. These statistics are based on 1997 reports available prior to this conference.

Church units

Stakes	2,424
Districts	649
Missions	318
Wards and branches	24,670

These wards and branches are in 143 nations and 19 territories and possessions.

Church membership

Total membership	10,070,524
Increase in children of record during 1997	75,214
Converts baptized during 1997	317,798

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries 56,531

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Paul H. Dunn, an emeritus General Authority; *Elder Oscar H. Aguayo*, an Area Authority Seventy; *Sister Helen Kearnes Richards*, widow of Elder Franklin D. Richards, former member of the Presidency of the Seventy; *Sister Janet Elaine Weech Sorensen*, wife of Elder Lynn A. Sorensen, a former member of the Seventy; *Sister Carma Neilsen Cutler*, widow of Elder Clinton L. Cutler, a former member of the Seventy; and *Sister Maurine Johnson Turley*, former counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

President Monson

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your attentive attitude toward the reports that have been presented and, of course, the sustaining presented by

Brother Faust, which gives great comfort to the General Authorities so sustained. We welcome the new Brethren. They look right at home in their chairs.

I would make special note today that we're pleased to have in attendance Sister Inis Hunter, the widow of our former

President, Howard W. Hunter. It is very nice to have you here, Sister Hunter.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker, and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, also of the Quorum of the Twelve, will then speak to us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Prepared to make a contribution

Nineteen ninety-seven was a wonderful year in the Church. The sesquicentennial celebration of the arrival of the Mormon pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley attracted attention all over the world. Newspapers, magazines, television, and radio told our story. What a grand opportunity it was for the peoples of the world to learn more about who we are. Now we must determine whether we will just let it stand as a great media event or whether it will be an opportunity to better fulfill our charge to take the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

I am certain the Lord expects us to do the latter. When we were brought forth out of the waters of baptism and were confirmed members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we covenanted with the Lord that we would be part of bringing His gospel message to His children. I pondered this renewed opportunity which is ours and started to examine myself. How prepared am I to make a contribution to the kingdom?

Memorizing the Articles of Faith

As I reviewed my qualifications, my mind turned to the teachings early in my life in Primary when I was between 3 and 12 years of age. The Primary had a profound influence on my life and fortified the teachings of noble parents. Before I could move into the Aaronic Priesthood,

join the Boy Scouts, or enter into senior Sunday School, I had to graduate from Primary. Two requirements were to memorize the names of the current Twelve Apostles and the thirteen Articles of Faith. I had to stand beside my bishop in a sacrament meeting and answer a question directed from him to certify my completion of Primary graduation requirements. I knew the bishop would usually ask prospective Primary graduates to repeat one of the Articles of Faith. The bishop was my father, and you can rest assured he didn't let me off easy! Of course, he asked me to repeat the thirteenth article of faith, the longest, before he presented me with my Primary graduation certificate.

As I've reflected on this experience, I've quizzed myself, How well do I remember those two memorization requirements? I discovered I could still name the Twelve Apostles that existed at that time—Rudger Clawson, Reed Smoot, George Albert Smith, George F. Richards, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Stephen L. Richards, Richard R. Lyman, Melvin J. Ballard, John A. Widtsoe, Joseph F. Merrill, and Charles A. Callis. But after the first five articles of faith, I had trouble remembering their order and their full content. I needed a refresher course! I photocopied the Articles of Faith from the scriptures and taped them to the wall of my bathroom where I could see them each morning as I was brushing my teeth

and shaving. Within a very few days, I again had them firmly in mind. This experience has brought a deep conviction to me that they were given by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith. I reached the conclusion that if I studied the content of each of the Articles of Faith, I could explain and defend every gospel principle I might have the opportunity to expound to someone searching for the restored truth.

What a great blessing it would be if every member of the Church memorized the Articles of Faith and became knowledgeable about the principles contained in each. We would be better prepared to share the gospel with others.

How the Articles of Faith came to be

Let us review for a moment how the Articles of Faith came to be. The Prophet was often asked to explain the teachings and practices of Mormonism. "John Wentworth, editor of the *Chicago Democrat*, asked Joseph Smith to provide him with a sketch of 'the rise, progress, persecution, and faith of the Latter-Day Saints.'" Mr. Wentworth, originally from New Hampshire, desired this information to help in compiling a history of his native state. "Joseph complied with this request and sent Wentworth a multi-page document containing an account of many of the early events in the history of the Restoration, including the First Vision and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The document also contained thirteen statements outlining Latter-day Saint beliefs, which have come to be known as the Articles of Faith." The information sent to Wentworth was not published in the *Chicago Democrat*, but in the Church newspaper *Times and Seasons* published in March of 1842. "In 1851 the Articles of Faith were included in the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price published in the British Mission. After the Pearl of Great Price was revised in 1878 and canonized

in 1880, the Articles of Faith became official doctrine of the Church" (*Church History in the Fulness of Times* [Church Educational System manual, 1993], 256–57).

Review of the content

Perhaps a brief review of the content of each of the thirteen Articles of Faith will help in memorizing them to explain the basic doctrines of the Church.

The first article anchors our belief in God our Eternal Father, in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. How grateful we are for a knowledge of Supreme Beings that rule and govern this world. Our belief does not come from the speculations of men about the existence and nature of God, but from firsthand experience from the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove. His experience clarified for mankind the existence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Thus to the world came the vision that three personages comprise this great presiding council of the universe and have revealed themselves to mankind as three separate beings, physically distinct from each other as demonstrated by the accepted records of their divine dealings with mankind. We know the occasions where they have been in evidence to mankind as three distinct personages.

It is clear that the Father is a personal being possessing a definite form of body, parts, and spiritual passions, that Jesus Christ was with the Father in spirit before coming to dwell in the flesh, and that through Him worlds were made. He lived among men as a man, with all of the physical characteristics of a human being. After His Resurrection He appeared in that same form. The Holy Ghost, also called Spirit or Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of God, Comforter, or the Spirit of the Truth, is not tabernacled in a body of flesh and bones but is a personage of spirit. The Holy Ghost is a wit-

ness of the Father and of the Son, declaring to man their attributes, bearing record of the other personages of the Godhead.

The second and third articles announce our belief in the Atonement of our Lord and Savior, that through Him all mankind will be blessed with immortality. They state that we have the responsibility for accepting Him as our Savior and we will be responsible only for our "own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" (Articles of Faith 1:2).

The fourth and fifth articles refer to our belief in the first principles of the gospel. They are faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance. We also learn that the first ordinances of the gospel are baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. These ordinances are bestowed by men "called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those" who have the authority to administer them (Articles of Faith 1:5).

We believe that from the very beginning the Lord established a plan for His children on earth. He would, in times and seasons, have the priesthood on earth to bless mankind with the authority to perform the sacred ordinances that would prove man's obedience to His will. There were tests to be conducted as we progressed in each step toward achieving God's greatest gift, the gift of life eternal. Fundamental, then, is to have faith in His plan, in His law; to be clean and holy and to repent of our sins; and to partake of the sacred ordinance of baptism required for admission into His celestial kingdom; and after baptism to be given the great gift, that Comforter, to abide with us, to lead and guide and direct us as we progress through mortality—all of these done under the authority given to mankind from God. Each man who officiates can trace that authority directly back to the Lord Himself, who bestowed that right on mankind.

Building on the foundation established in the first five articles of faith,

the sixth article tells us that an organization is necessary and the same organization that existed in the primitive Church has been restored. The restored Church exists on the earth today, with the sacred power received through the restoration of the holy priesthood.

The seventh and ninth articles profess that the heavens are not closed, that God continues to reveal His will to mankind; as He has in the past, He does now in the present, and He will in the future. Spiritual gifts are received by mankind today, just as they were in days past.

The eighth article states our belief in the Bible as the "word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." The Book of Mormon gives to us that second witness of the authenticity of the scriptures as recorded in the Bible. The Lord, in His divine plan for the Restoration of the gospel in the latter days, brought forth the Book of Mormon as that additional witness to the mission of our Lord and Savior. It also provides a religious history that is profoundly important to our Father in Heaven's children.

Article ten tells of our belief "in the literal gathering of Israel," that Zion will be built again and Christ will return and "reign personally upon the earth." It was in June of 1830 that Samuel Smith, the brother of the Prophet, embarked on the first missionary journey to proclaim the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Thus began the gathering of Zion. The word went forth from Mount Zion to the peoples of the earth that the gospel had been restored. Today the work of uniting our Father in Heaven's children continues as we prepare for His ultimate return, for His millennial reign over the earth. We are anxiously and personally engaged in that great literal gathering when we profess His everlasting gospel to our friends, our neighbors, and the other peoples of the earth.

The eleventh and twelfth articles profess our belief in religious liberty, tolerance, and agency. Agency is one of the great gifts of God to His children. It allows all men and women the right to choose for themselves and to earn their own individual salvation. Also declared is our belief in secular governments and "in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law" of the land (Articles of Faith 1:12).

The thirteenth article provides a special insight into how we should conduct our lives and present ourselves before the peoples of the earth. It reads: "We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."

Study the Articles of Faith

The Articles of Faith were not the work of a team of scholars but were au-

thored by a single, inspired man who declared comprehensively and concisely the essential doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They contain direct and simple statements of the principles of our religion, and they constitute strong evidence of the divine inspiration that rested upon the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I encourage each of you to study the Articles of Faith and the doctrines they teach. They are "one of the most important statements of inspiration, history, and doctrine for the Church. . . . Each article is a positive statement [explaining] the differences between Mormonism and the [beliefs of other peoples of the world]" (*Church History in the Fullness of Times*, 257). If you will use them as a guide to direct your studies of the Savior's doctrine, you will find yourselves prepared to declare your witness of the restored, true Church of the Lord. You will be able to declare with conviction, "We believe these things."

I add my testimony to the truthfulness of these special revealed truths, in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

"A teacher come from God"

When Nicodemus came to Jesus early in the Savior's ministry, he spoke for all of us when he said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God."¹

Christ was, of course, much more than a teacher. He was the very Son of God, the Holy One of the eternal gospel plan, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

But Nicodemus was starting about the way you and I started, the way any child or young student or new convert begins—by recognizing and responding to a thrilling teacher who touches the innermost feelings of our heart.

Inspired instruction nourishes members

In recent months President Gordon B. Hinckley has called on us to hold our people close to the Church, especially the newly converted member. In issuing this call President Hinckley has reminded that we all need at least three things to remain firmly in the faith—a friend, a responsibility, and "[nourishing] by the good word of God."²

Inspired instruction in the home and in the Church helps provide this crucial element of nourishing by the good word of God. We are so grateful to all who teach. We love you and appreciate you

more than we can say. We have great confidence in you. To teach effectively and to feel you are succeeding is demanding work indeed. But it is worth it. We can receive "no greater call."³ Surely the opportunity to magnify that call exists everywhere. The need for it is everlasting. Fathers, mothers, siblings, friends, missionaries, home and visiting teachers, priesthood and auxiliary leaders, classroom instructors—each is, in his or her own way, "come from God" for our schooling and our salvation. In this Church it is virtually impossible to find anyone who is *not* a guide of one kind or another to his or her fellow members of the flock. Little wonder that Paul would say in his writings, "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers."⁴

For each of us to "come unto Christ,"⁵ to keep His commandments and follow His example back to the Father is surely the highest and holiest purpose of human existence. To help others do that as well—to teach, persuade, and prayerfully lead them to walk that path of redemption also—surely that must be the second most significant task in our lives. Perhaps that is why President David O. McKay once said, "No greater responsibility can rest upon any man [or woman], than to be a teacher of God's children."⁶ We are, in fact, all somewhat like the man of Ethiopia to whom Philip was sent. Like him, we may know enough to reach out for religion. We may invest ourselves in the scriptures. We may even give up our earthly treasures, but without sufficient instruction we may miss the meaning of all this and the requirements that still lie before us. So we cry with this man of great authority, "How can [we understand], except some [teacher] should guide [us]?"⁷

The Apostle Paul taught:

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

"[But] how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and

how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? . . .

" . . . *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*"⁸

Revitalize superior teaching

Now, at a time when our prophet is calling for more faith through hearing the word of God, we must revitalize and reenthroned superior teaching in the Church—at home, from the pulpit, in our administrative meetings, and surely in the classroom. Inspired teaching must never become a lost art in the Church, and we must make certain our quest for it does not become a lost tradition.

President Spencer W. Kimball once pled: "Stake presidents, bishops, and branch presidents, please take a particular interest in improving the quality of teaching in the Church. . . . I fear," he said, "that all too often many of our members come to church, sit through a class or a meeting, and . . . then return home having been largely [uninspired]. It is especially unfortunate when this happens at a time . . . of stress, temptation, or crisis [in their life]. We all need to be touched and nurtured by the Spirit," he said, "and *effective teaching* is one of the most important ways this can happen. We often do vigorous . . . work," President Kimball concluded, "to get members to come to Church but then do not adequately watch over what they receive when they do come."⁹ On this subject President Hinckley himself has said, "*Effective teaching is the very essence of leadership in the Church.*" May I repeat that: "Effective teaching is the very essence of leadership in the Church. Eternal life," President Hinckley continued, "will come only as men and women are *taught with such effectiveness* that they change and discipline their lives. They cannot be coerced into righteousness or into heaven. They must be led, and that means teaching."¹⁰

Among the last words the Savior said to His disciples and among the first words He says to us today are: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. . . . [Teach] them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you [always], even unto the end of the world."¹¹ To Peter, the apostolic leader of the Church, the resurrected and ascending Christ said, "Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Follow [thou] me."¹²

Teach the gospel by the Spirit

In all of this we must remember that the Lord has never given more emphatic counsel to the Church than that we are to teach the gospel "by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth."

Do we teach the gospel "by the Spirit of truth"? He has inquired. Or do we teach it "some other way? And if it be by some other way," He warns, "it is not of God."¹³ In language echoing other commandments, He has said, "If ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach."¹⁴

No eternal learning can take place without that quickening of the Spirit from heaven. So, parents, teachers, and leaders, we must face our tasks the way Moses faced the promised land. Knowing he could not succeed any other way, Moses said to Jehovah, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."¹⁵

That is what our members really want when they gather in a meeting or come into a classroom anyway. Most people don't come to church looking merely for a few new gospel facts or to see old friends, though all of that is important. They come seeking a spiritual experience. They want peace. They want their faith fortified and their hope renewed. They want, in short, to be nourished by the good word of God, to be strengthened by the powers of heaven. Those of us who are called upon to speak or teach or lead have an obliga-

tion to help provide that, as best we possibly can. We can only do that if we ourselves are striving to know God, if we ourselves are continually seeking the light of His Only Begotten Son. Then, if our hearts are right, if we are as clean as we can be, if we have prayed and wept and prepared and worried until we don't know what more we can do, God can say to us as He did to Alma and the sons of Mosiah: "Lift up thy head and rejoice. . . . I will give unto you success."¹⁶

Nurturing with the powerful word of God

We do have a legitimate worry about the new member, wanting each one to stay with us and enjoy the full blessings of the Church. I am just simple enough to think that if we continue to *teach them*—with the same Christlike spirit, conviction, doctrine, and personal interest the missionaries have shown them—new converts will not only stay with us but, quite literally, could not be kept away. The need for continuing such solid teaching is obvious. In times like ours we *all* need what Mormon called "the virtue of the word of God" because, he said, it "had [a] more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them."¹⁷ When crises come in our lives—and they will—the philosophies of men interlaced with a few scriptures and poems just won't do. Are we really nurturing our youth and our new members in a way that will sustain them when the stresses of life appear? Or are we giving them a kind of theological Twinkie—spiritually empty calories? President John Taylor once called such teaching "fried froth," the kind of thing you could eat all day and yet finish feeling totally unsatisfied.¹⁸ During a severe winter several years ago, President Boyd K. Packer noted that a goodly number of deer had died of starvation while their stomachs were full of hay. In an honest effort to assist, agencies had supplied

the superficial when the substantial was what had been needed. Regrettably they had *fed* the deer, but they had not *nourished* them.

I love what President J. Reuben Clark said of our youth well over a half century ago. The same thing can be said of new members. “[They] are hungry for the things of the spirit,” he said; “they are eager to learn the Gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted. . . .

“ . . . You do not have to sneak up behind [them] and whisper religion in [their] ears; . . . you can bring these truths [out] openly.”¹⁹

Satan is certainly not subtle in his teachings; why should we be? Whether we are instructing our children at home or standing before an audience in church, let us *never* make our faith difficult to detect. Remember, we are to be teachers “come from God.” Never sow seeds of doubt. Avoid self-serving performance and vanity. Prepare lessons well. Give scripturally based sermons. Teach the revealed doctrine. Bear heartfelt testimony. Pray and practice and try to improve. In our administrative meetings let us both “instruct and edify” as the revelations say, that even in these our teaching may ultimately be “from on high.”²⁰ The Church will be the better for it, and so will you, for as Paul said to the Romans, “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?”²¹

Jeremiah's example

A memorable account of the power of such teaching comes from the life of the prophet Jeremiah. This great man felt the way most teachers or speakers or Church officers feel when called—inexperienced, inadequate, frightened. “Ah, Lord,” he cried, “behold, I cannot speak: for I am [but] a child.”

But the Lord reassured him: “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee. . . . Therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them.”²²

So speak unto them he did, but initially not with much success. Things went from bad to worse until finally he was imprisoned and made a laughing-stock among the people. Angry that he had been so mistreated and maligned, Jeremiah vowed, in effect, never to teach another lesson, whether that be to an investigator, Primary child, new convert, or—heaven forbid—the 15-year-olds. “I will not make mention of [the Lord], nor speak any more in his name,” the discouraged prophet said. But then came the turning point of Jeremiah's life. Something had been happening with every testimony he had borne, every scripture he had read, every truth he had taught. Something had been happening that he hadn't counted on. Even as he vowed to close his mouth and walk away from the Lord's work, he found that he could not. Why? Because “his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.”²³

All can be teachers “come from God”

That is what happens in the gospel to both the teacher and the taught. It is what happened to Nephi and Lehi when, the book of Helaman says, “the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words.”²⁴ Surely it must have been that kind of heavenly joy Mary Magdalene experienced when near the Garden Tomb she unexpectedly beheld her beloved resurrected Lord and said to him simply, “Rabboni,”²⁵ which is to say, literally, “Teacher.”

From all of us who have been taught to all of you who teach—we say thank you, from the bottom of our hearts. May we exalt the teaching experience within the home and within the Church and improve our every effort to edify and instruct. In all of our meetings and all of

our messages may we nourish by the good word of God. And may our children and new converts, our neighbors and new friends, say of our honest efforts, "Thou art a teacher come from God." In the sacred name of the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 3:2.
2. Moroni 6:4; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 66; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.
3. *Teaching—No Greater Call* (resource materials for teacher improvement, 1995); see also Spencer W. Kimball, "No Greater Call," Sunday School Conference, 1 Oct. 1967.
4. 1 Corinthians 12:28.
5. D&C 20:59.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 57.
7. See Acts 8:26–31.
8. Romans 10:13–14, 17; italics added.
9. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 524; italics added.
10. "How to Be a Teacher When Your Role as a Leader Requires You to Teach," General Authority Priesthood Board Meeting, 5 Feb. 1969; italics added.
11. Matthew 28:19–20.
12. John 21:15–19.
13. D&C 50:14, 17–18.
14. D&C 42:14.
15. Exodus 33:15.
16. Alma 8:15; 26:27.
17. Alma 31:5.
18. See John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1943), 78.
19. "The Charted Course of the Church in Education" (address given at Brigham Young University Summer School in Aspen Grove, Utah, 8 Aug. 1938), 4, 9.
20. D&C 43:8, 16.
21. Romans 2:21.
22. Jeremiah 1:6, 8, 17.
23. See Jeremiah 20:7–9.
24. Helaman 5:45.
25. John 20:16; see footnote *a* to Greek.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders L. Tom Perry and Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "I Need Thee Every Hour," a favorite hymn of President Spencer W. Kimball.

Elder Richard E. Cook, followed by Elder Dale E. Miller, both of the Seventy, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder Richard E. Cook

Blessings from missionary work

Sister Cook and I were called to Mongolia as missionaries roughly one year before it was formally organized as a mission. We look back on that time as one of the most memorable, satisfying, and blessed periods of our lives. That time is still rewarding us with rich experiences and blessings.

The Lord has said to missionaries, "And if it so be that you should labor all

your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!" (D&C 18:15).

This promise stands like a beacon to every missionary, but as if that weren't enough, there are other blessings from missionary work, and they are many and varied. Some are immediate; others come only with time.

Conversion of a Mongolian family

We experienced one of those “only with time” blessings this past February when we attended the naming and blessing of a little Mongolian girl in our expanded missionary family. Her name is Tungalag. Her mother is Davaajargal. She’s a modern-day pioneer as the first woman to be baptized in Mongolia. Tungalag’s father, Sanchir, is an MBA student at BYU.

I knew Sanchir in Mongolia for some time before he became a member. It was only after one year and many, many discussions with dedicated missionaries that he was baptized. It is nothing short of a miracle that this young father, after only two years in the Church, could have uttered the words of this beautiful blessing which began, “Tungalag, I bless you that you will be a good human being.” I’ll never forget that beginning!

In this blessing he said things that he would not have known or even imagined before his baptism. Witnessing this blessing and realizing the extent to which the gospel has changed this young man and this family truly made this a missionary payday.

Converts’ lives are changed forever

President Hinckley has said: “The most satisfying experience I have is to see what this gospel does for people. It gives them a new outlook on life. It gives them a perspective that they have never felt before. It raises their sights to things noble and divine. Something happens to them that is miraculous to behold. They look to Christ and come alive” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 48).

My experience has been that when our converts “come alive”—and they need nourishment—in the gospel, they soon come alive as students, as parents, in their professions, and as citizens.

Their lives and the lives of their posterity are changed forever.

Christ can change human nature

Shortly after Sister Cook and I arrived in Mongolia, we were asked to accompany two young elders to a city called Muren. At the conclusion of our trip, our return was delayed by bad weather. Each day we went to the airport to see if our plane was going to arrive so we could fly out. We waited with other passengers until we received word whether we would depart that day or would be forced to return to the city for the evening.

Trying to take the same flight out was a group of foreign tourists. They told us they had been by horseback to some of the most remote, little-explored areas of Mongolia.

While we were waiting at the airport, one of these tourists approached one of our elders and said: “I know who you are! What are you doing here? These people don’t need you. They are an unspoiled people with a rich heritage. Why don’t you just go home and leave them alone?”

The elder came to me and was very upset, and we talked about the several responses he could have given. It wasn’t until about two weeks later, however, that I read a statement by President Benson that explained what would have been the perfect response. President Benson said:

“Some may ask why we as a people and church quietly and consistently seek to change individuals while there are such large problems about us. . . . But decaying cities are simply a delayed reflection of decaying individuals. . . . The commandments of God give emphasis to improvement of the individual as the only real way to bring about the real improvement [of] society” (*A Plea for America* [1975], 18).

"The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of the people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. . . . Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 6).

President Kimball once called missionary work the lifeblood of the Church, and indeed it is. It's not only because new converts give the Church vitality and strength, but the missionaries themselves gain a new measure of vitality and strength as they participate in the converts' commitment to Christ. This vitality and strength is a mighty force, an instrument in God's hands to cause the gospel to roll forth and fill the whole earth as Daniel saw in his dream (see D&C 65:2).

Missionary work is our duty

While we have our free agency, missionary work in its various forms is not

an optional program. We talk about the blessings of missionary work, but in reality we should do missionary work because it's our duty. The scriptures and every prophet since Joseph Smith have reminded us it is our duty to go unto all nations to warn our neighbors.

Wilford Woodruff put it clearly when he said: "There never was a set of men since God made the world under a stronger responsibility to warn this generation, to lift up our voices long and loud, day and night as far as we have the opportunity and declare the words of God unto this generation. We are required to do this. This is our calling. [This] is our duty. [This] is our business" (*Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 6 July 1880, 1).

I pray we'll make missionary work our business and not let other less important business get in the way. We receive blessings from keeping all of God's commandments. There are, however, few blessings like missionary blessings! How sweet is the work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Dale E. Miller

God invites all people into His kingdom

The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke of ancient prophets being filled with unspeakable joy when, in vision, they viewed our day. They prophesied, they sang, they praised, and they wrote about this grand culminating clip of time. Surely God is pouring His Spirit in rich abundance upon His earthly kingdom.

We declare to the world that the Lord's kingdom is by no means a closed community. The Lord invites all people to travel this perfecting pathway of divine truth. He promises joy and everlasting happiness as the reward. The entry

fee: a broken heart, a contrite spirit, and a willingness to continue in His footsteps.

Listen to the Lord's voice on the matter:

"Behold, I speak unto all who have good desires, and have thrust in their sickle to reap.

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world. . . .

" . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name" (D&C 11:27-28, 30).

Building God's kingdom is our focus

Brothers and sisters, thrusting in our sickles to help build the Lord's kingdom should be the prime focus of our lives. It seems reasonable to suggest that we each agreed to that in our premortal life. The key decisions pertaining to education, career, marriage, and the very use of our time, talent, and means should prayerfully hinge on how best we serve the Master, building His kingdom and becoming perfected in Him.

Our work in building up Zion takes several forms. In one context, Zion is geographic, having a center while enlarging its boundaries to eventually fill the earth. We enlarge Zion's borders as we share the gospel with others. That is part of our job here.

Another context shows Zion as an organization wherein we work to strengthen its stakes through our callings. Each stake, in turn, pushes deep into the gospel soil, providing a defense and a refuge so followers of Christ might stand with confidence against the snares of the adversary. Stakes create the foundation culture for perfecting God's people on earth.

The scriptures suggest that Zion has a third context, an intensely personal one. It is the perfecting process within us. Those willing to serve are invited to labor in the vineyard of the Lord, steadily transforming themselves to become the pure in heart.

Have we felt a mighty change in our hearts?

The symbiosis between Church and member is strikingly efficient. As we invest our time, talents, and means to build Zion, our hearts are purified, our wisdom increases, celestial habits begin to form, and the Holy Spirit prepares us to receive the presence of the Father and the Son. By thrusting in our sickles,

we reap a double portion—for ourselves and for the kingdom.

Therefore, of great eternal significance are the introspective questions: Can I qualify as being pure in heart? Can I, without reservation, join the voices of King Benjamin's congregation who said, "Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually"? (Mosiah 5:2).

If President Hinckley were to ask for our response at the conclusion of this conference, as did King Benjamin of his people, could we say that we have felt a mighty change in our hearts? Have our dispositions been strengthened sufficiently to abandon that which displeases God, and changed so that we seek to do good continually?

The lives of those early Nephite Saints provide powerful visions of our own potential, as a Church and as individuals. The Lord works with us on both levels.

Bringing Zion into our hearts

As we move toward perfection, it is easy to feel that we fall short. We can take confidence that the Lord knows us intimately; He knows the intent of our hearts. He will surely show us the way as we humble ourselves, are obedient, and work toward continual improvement. Even now, He prepares us in ways that we cannot yet see. The eyes of our understandings will be opened as we keep the commandments and seek to serve Him. We have the potential to eventually become perfected in Christ. This is a divine inheritance.

As a guide, President Kimball pointed to three fundamentals in bringing Zion into our hearts and presence:

"First, we must eliminate the individual tendency to selfishness that snares the soul, shrinks the heart, and darkens the mind. . . .

"Second, we must cooperate completely and work in harmony one with the other. There must be unanimity in our decisions and unity in our actions. . . .

"Third, we must lay on the altar and sacrifice whatever is required by the Lord. We begin by offering a 'broken heart and a contrite spirit.' We follow this by giving our best effort in our assigned fields of labor and callings. We learn our duty and execute it fully. Finally we consecrate our time, talents and means as called upon by our file leaders and as prompted by the whisperings of the Spirit" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 123-24; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 81).

The home is the great laboratory

The home serves as the great laboratory for practicing and teaching selflessness. And I can think of no better prescription than to continually keep before our eyes the counsel given in the document "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Just two sentences of this profound counsel create a perfecting pathway within our homes.

First, "Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live."

And second, "Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when

founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

That gives rise to an almost infinite list of family council and home evening topics.

This kingdom alone leads to eternal life

Brothers and sisters, this kingdom is like no other organization on earth. To borrow a business term, it has a vastly superior competitive edge; it alone will lead us to eternal life. It alone is founded on solid rock, the rock of revelation. It alone has the fully restored gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the personal level, it instills a purging discipline within us. It pushes us out of our circles of comfort into growth. It fosters development of great spiritual gifts and enlightenment, which we will take with us in the next life. It provides the baptism of fire. It personally empowers us in ways that can come only from God.

Gratefully and joyfully, I witness that this is the great kingdom of God on earth as prophesied throughout the ages. It is the only true pathway leading us in our journey back to a loving Heavenly Father, having been redeemed through the Atonement of His Only Begotten. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elders Richard E. Cook and Dale E. Miller of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson, also of the Quorum of the Twelve, who will be the concluding speaker at this session.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

The First Vision

One of the most extraordinary events in the history of mankind occurred on a spring day in 1820 when Joseph Smith Jr. went into a grove of trees near his home to ask God for direction, light, and truth. As he knelt in humble, sincere prayer, according to his own account of the event:

"I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

"... When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"¹

At that moment, the world became a different place. The heavens, long silent, were once again opened, and revealed light and truth poured forth that eventually resulted in the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints upon the earth.

Revelation through the Prophet Joseph

These were incredible times, as the spirit of revelation moved powerfully upon the Prophet Joseph Smith. Often others were present with him when revelations were received, and they bore witness of the Spirit and the outward manifestations that were present on these occasions. Typically they spoke of a whiteness or a brightness that surrounded Joseph. For example, Philo Dibble wrote that as the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants was given, Joseph "seemed to be dressed in an element of glorious white, and his face shone as if it were transparent."² And Brigham Young testified that "those who were acquainted with [Joseph] knew

when the Spirit of revelation was upon him, for his countenance wore an expression peculiar to himself while under that influence. He preached by the Spirit of revelation, and taught in his council by it, and those who were acquainted with him could discover it at once, for at such times there was a peculiar clearness and transparency in his face."³

Some who shared in this marvelous revelatory experience were impressed with how smoothly these revelations from the Lord flowed and how, except for minor corrections such as spelling or punctuation, they required no editing. Said Parley P. Pratt: "Each sentence was uttered slowly and very distinctly, and with a pause between each, sufficiently long for it to be recorded, by an ordinary writer, in long hand. . . . There was never any hesitation, reviewing, or reading back, in order to keep the run of the subject; neither did any of these communications undergo revisions, interlinings, or corrections. As he dictated them so they stood, so far as I have witnessed; and I was present to witness the dictation of several communications of several pages each."⁴

Interestingly, it was those who knew Joseph best who were most astonished at this process. They understood more than anyone else the limitations of his formal education and natural ability. Consequently, they had the clearest view of the miraculous way God spoke through His living prophet.

Joseph's wife Emma bore a testimony similar to Parley P. Pratt's in that she continued to be amazed at the process through which revelations came. Years after the Prophet's death she said: "I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, [Joseph] would dictate to me hour after hour, and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he

could at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him.”⁵

The marvelous miracle of revelation

My dear brothers and sisters, do we appreciate the marvelous miracle of revelation? Through revelation we have received the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, which contain the words of God to us, His children. Oh, how marvelous are the revelations we have received from the Lord! I have often said either Joseph Smith was the Lord’s instrument by which the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness was accomplished, or he was not. There is no possible compromise of this doctrine. I raise my voice to the whole world in testimony that I know without reservation or question that Joseph Smith opened this dispensation through divine revelation and began the Restoration to the earth of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Doctrine and Covenants section 76

Among the most marvelous of revelations ever given to man is the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, often referred to simply as “The Vision.” This vision may have been one of the Prophet Joseph’s most powerful and significant spiritual experiences. As he and Sidney Rigdon prayed to understand the resurrection of the just and the unjust, this glorious vision—or actually a series of six visions—burst upon them. Joseph and Sidney literally conversed with the Lord for about an hour and a half as the Savior showed them what Joseph later described as “eternity sketch’d in a vision from God, / Of what was, and now is, and yet is to be.”⁶ As it commenced, the two men viewed the glory of the Son of God on the right hand of the Father and were moved to exclaim:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father.”⁷

In sequence, Joseph and Sidney next saw Lucifer in the premortal world as he fell from the presence of God because of his rebellion. They then saw the sons of perdition and what will become of them in the eternal worlds. Next, they viewed visions of the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial kingdoms, and they learned the requirements for attaining each of these kingdoms and the differences in glory of each respectively. They learned that those who qualify for celestial glory “shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.”⁸

What a wondrous experience for the Prophet Joseph and Sidney. For more than an hour, the Lord showed them our premortal life, earth life, and life after death. As a result of that revelation, mankind’s understanding of Heavenly Father’s plan for our eternal happiness and peace was expanded and enhanced to a remarkable degree. Of course, it should be noted that Joseph was instructed not to record everything that he saw in vision. The Saints at the time were not prepared to receive all of the new information that he was given. But as we look at the Prophet’s later teachings, we see what appear to be bits and pieces of this great revelation being taught—here a little and there a little—as the Saints grew in their spiritual understanding.

Increasing our spiritual knowledge

That is why education—particularly spiritual education—is constantly stressed by the Lord. We cannot be saved in ignorance,⁹ but the Lord can reveal light and truth to us only as we are prepared to receive it. And so it is incumbent upon

each of us to do everything we can to increase our spiritual knowledge and understanding by studying the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. When we read and study the revelations, the Spirit can confirm in our hearts the truth of what we are learning; in this way, the voice of the Lord speaks to each one of us.¹⁰ As we ponder the teachings of the gospel and apply them in daily living, we become better prepared to receive additional light and truth. Today, I hope we are prepared and eager to understand what President Gordon B. Hinckley is teaching us, for he, along with the other Apostles, will teach us how to cope and how to live in these troubled times.

As promised in the scriptures: "Ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath . . . prepared for you. . . . Ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours."¹¹

Gratitude for revelation

How grateful I am for revelation that has enhanced my understanding of Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and their gospel. That knowledge has been a blessing in my life and in the lives of my family. Several years ago we sat together in the Kirtland Temple and tried to imagine what it would have been like for the Prophet Joseph and Oliver Cowdery to see in revealed truth "the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son,"¹² or to see "the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit" and hear Him say, "Your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice."¹³

Can you imagine, brothers and sisters, how Joseph and Oliver must have felt as Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared to them and committed keys, dispensa-

tions, and sealing powers—not unlike what occurred on the Mount of Transfiguration about 2,000 years before.

Revelation to President Joseph F. Smith

I do not believe that anyone seeking light and knowledge can read from the revelation given to President Joseph F. Smith in October of 1918 and not feel the spirit and power of revealed truth. The 138th section of the Doctrine and Covenants is filled with the doctrine about the eternal nature of man and the purpose of the great work of this Church. President Smith said:

"The eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great.

"And there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality; . . .

"All these had departed the mortal life, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

"I beheld that they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand. . . .

"While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, . . .

"And there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance. . . .

"And the saints rejoiced in their redemption, and bowed the knee and acknowledged the Son of God as their Redeemer and Deliverer from death and the chains of hell.

"Their countenances shone, and the radiance from the presence of the Lord

rested upon them, and they sang praises unto his holy name. . . .

"Thus was the gospel preached to those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets.

"These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands,

"And all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know. . . .

"And so it was made known among the dead, both small and great, the unrighteous as well as the faithful, that redemption had been wrought through the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross."¹⁴

President Smith saw the work of prophets both ancient and modern "foreshadowing the great work to be done in the temples of the Lord in the dispensation of the fulness of times, for the redemption of the dead, and the sealing of the children to their parents, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse and utterly wasted at his coming."¹⁵

He "beheld that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead.

"The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

"And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation."¹⁶

Embrace and study revealed truths

What great, eternal light and knowledge comes to us from the marvelous

revelations from God to His faithful prophets. How grateful we should be for the understanding that has come to us as a result of *all* of the revelations that have been given to us in this last, great dispensation. Wherever I go in the world there are faithful members of the Church who know as I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true because it has been revealed to us by the power of the Spirit. Anyone who sincerely wants to know can also have these truths confirmed to them by the same power of the Spirit.

My brothers and sisters, we need to embrace, study, and appreciate the revealed truths that are ours. We need to declare the gospel generously and kindly to all of our Father's children, that every soul might walk in the light and the truth of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless each one of us with increased knowledge and testimony, and may we be open and receptive to the spirit of revelation as it has moved upon our prophets in the past, and as it will yet move upon the prophets in the future, is my humble prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
2. "Early Scenes in Church History," in *Four Faith Promoting Classics* (1968), 81.
3. In *Journal of Discourses*, 9:89.
4. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt (1985), 48.
5. "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *Saints' Herald*, 1 Oct. 1879, 290.
6. *Times and Seasons*, 1 Feb. 1843, 82.
7. D&C 76:22–23.
8. D&C 76:62.
9. See D&C 131:6.
10. See D&C 18:34, 36.
11. D&C 78:17–18.
12. D&C 137:3.
13. D&C 110:2, 5.
14. D&C 138:11–12, 14–15, 18–19, 23–24, 32–35.
15. D&C 138:48.
16. D&C 138:57–59.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Gratitude for family love

Family love is wonderful. Nothing is as specific as the love of a baby for its mother. Nothing is as predictable as the love of children for their parents or the love of parents for their children.

Recently I was tenderly hugging one of our precious little five-year-old granddaughters and said to her, "I love you, sweetheart."

She responded rather blandly, "I know."

I asked, "How do you know that I love you?"

"Because! You're my grandfather!"

That was reason enough for her. Indeed, we do love our grandchildren. We also love our grandparents. I cherish the memories of life with three of my four grandparents. I never met my Grandfather Nelson.¹ He died when my father was only 16 years old. At the time of Grandfather's passing, he was superintendent of public instruction for the state of Utah. He owned a handsome pocket watch, which my father later gave to me. Now that watch is a tangible link between us.

I think of my Grandfather Nelson with deep feelings of gratitude. I received much of my early education in schools he helped to develop. And I cherish my membership in this Church, to which both of his parents were converted in Denmark about a century and a half ago. In fact, all eight of my great-grandparents were converts to the Church in Europe. Of the others, one joined the Church in Sweden, two in England, and three in Norway. How grateful I am to these pioneer predecessors! My debt to them is reflected in these biblical verses: "One soweth, and another reapeth" that "both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."²

Priesthood keys restored by Elijah

Today we are reaping a harvest of family love from seeds sown years ago. Preparations to strengthen family ties came in 1823, when the angel Moroni first appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Moroni announced the coming of Elijah, who would cause the hearts of children to be turned to their fathers.³

Elijah's return to earth occurred at the first temple built in this dispensation, where he and other heavenly messengers, under direction of the Lord,⁴ entrusted special keys of priesthood authority to the restored Church:

- Moses committed the keys of the gathering of Israel;⁵

- Elias committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham;⁶ and

- Elijah came to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the children to the fathers.⁷

With that, natural affection between generations began to be enriched. This restoration was accompanied by what is sometimes called the Spirit of Elijah—a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family.⁸ Hence, people throughout the world, regardless of religious affiliation, are gathering records of deceased relatives at an ever-increasing rate.⁹

Elijah came not only to stimulate research for ancestors. He also enabled families to be eternally linked beyond the bounds of mortality. Indeed, the opportunity for families to be sealed forever is the real reason for our research. The Lord declared through the Prophet Joseph Smith: "These are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, . . . they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect."¹⁰

Background of family history work

Among the first in this dispensation to sow seeds of interest in family history were the brothers Orson and Parley P. Pratt, members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Their efforts resulted in a Pratt family genealogy and the performance of temple ordinances for about 3,000 of their ancestors.¹¹

Yet there were many Church members who did not fully understand the responsibility for their own kindred. President Wilford Woodruff was so concerned that he made the issue a matter of fervent prayer. Then, at April 1894 general conference,¹² he presented a revelation to the membership of the Church. From it I quote: "We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents, and run this chain through as far as you can get it. . . . This is the will of the Lord to his people."¹³

Later that year, the First Presidency and the Twelve established the Genealogical Society of Utah.¹⁴ From modest beginnings in an upstairs room of the Church historian's office,¹⁵ its collection and facilities have grown. Today the Family History Library™ occupies a modern five-story building with access to 280,000 books, 700,000 microfiches, and more than 2 million rolls of microfilm, making it the largest library of its kind in the world.

In 1964 the department began to establish branch libraries. Today more than 3,000 Family History Centers™¹⁶ dot the globe.

Technology supports this work

Technology used to support this important work has changed greatly over the years. In 1927 a card file was instituted to index all endowments performed.¹⁷ The index was maintained

through 1969, when new endowments were recorded in the first major computer system, identified by the acronym GIANT.¹⁸ It was used for more than two decades.¹⁹

The Society's extensive microfilming has permitted the gathering of records at their sources, with copies made available later at the Family History Library and Family History Centers. Microfilming has been done in 110 countries, accumulating more than 2 billion exposures with approximately 13 billion names. Microfilming has enabled the Family History Library to expand its collections dramatically and provide resources for an explosive growth of genealogical research worldwide. These microfilms comprise the core of information contained in our present automated systems.

By the 1980s, the personal computer had revolutionized the management of information. The Family History Department employed this technology in developing Personal Ancestral File® to help members organize data regarding their ancestors. In 1990, FamilySearch® was announced. At October conference that year, Elder Richard G. Scott described components of FamilySearch: Ancestral File™, Family History Library Catalog™, International Genealogical Index®, and more.²⁰ His message stimulated Sister Nelson and me to use these tools to organize information that we and our relatives had gathered over many years.

Meanwhile, objectives of decentralization and simplification led to record extraction programs, in which thousands of Church members have participated.²¹ Extraction projects have now produced records for more than 300 million individuals.²²

Many people have joined with members of the Church in efforts to index the burgeoning bank of genealogical information. An example is the 1881 British census. For this project, more than 8,000 volunteers from family history societies

throughout the British Isles have transcribed 30 million names. Gratefully, we announce that fruits of this labor are now on fiche and will soon be available on compact disc from the Church's distribution centers.

We are also pleased to announce that data from the 1880 census of the United States will soon be released on compact disc. Meanwhile, volunteers are working on other projects, such as arrival records for immigrants to the USA through Ellis Island.

May I express our deep appreciation to all valiant volunteers—past, present, and future—for their diligent work on these and other projects.

"The time of harvest is come"

In describing these achievements, I realize that for some who are less involved in this work, I may have intensified feelings of guilt. I apologize for that. I know that fear and unfamiliarity may stand in your way. For others, even the mention of a computer may be an additional intimidator. Some secretly hope that they can slip through their remaining days on earth without ever having to touch a computer. To those with access to computers, I say: "Reach out! Have hope! Try! I have exciting news for you!"

"The time of harvest is come."²³ A new era of family history work has arrived. As President Gordon B. Hinckley recently noted, "The Lord has inspired skilled men and women in developing new technologies which we can use to our great advantage in moving forward this sacred work."²⁴ Previously, efforts have focused on gathering names and dates and organizing that information. Now, computer products are available that can actually guide you to find your kindred.

New computer products guide members

May I introduce you to the new Family History SourceGuide™. This compact

disc is now available at the Church's distribution centers.²⁵ It can lead you to genealogical records in countries, states, and provinces around the world and shows how you can use these records to identify your ancestors. It includes other aids, such as maps, letter-writing guides, translations of words for several non-English-speaking countries, definitions, and terms often found in genealogical records. Family History SourceGuide puts at your fingertips much of the collected knowledge and experience of hundreds of genealogical experts. It can all be yours—at the touch of a button. Use it and rejoice!

A new Vital Records Index™ will make available on compact disc the results of extraction programs prepared from many civil and ecclesiastical records. Some overlap will exist between this resource and records in the International Genealogical Index, but most of the names in the Vital Records Index have not yet had temple ordinance work performed. The entire index will include approximately 25 million records. During the next few months, it will be released in segments by geographic area, such as the British Isles (5 million records) and North America (4.5 million records). This file represents years of work of many extraction workers.

I am excited about these and other developments. Tasks that once seemed beyond reach are now within our grasp. "With God nothing shall be impossible."²⁶ A new harvesttime has come. The way is opening by which we can obey His will²⁷ and provide welding links²⁸ between all dispensations and generations.

To get started, you do *not* need equipment. Begin with a pedigree chart and a family group record.²⁹ List the names of those you know. Add information learned from living relatives. This simple start at home will prepare you to receive additional help. And when you are baptized for a deceased ancestor,

you will sense a feeling of validation of this divine work that will bring great joy.

We are to be saviors on Mount Zion

As we ponder the importance of our ancestral responsibilities, we also need to be reminded of the Lord's vast ministry. I quote from President Joseph F. Smith: "Jesus had not finished his work when his body was slain, neither did he finish it after his resurrection from the dead; although he had accomplished the purpose for which he then came to the earth, he had not fulfilled all his work. And when will he? Not until he has redeemed and saved every son and daughter of our father Adam that have been or ever will be born upon this earth to the end of time. . . . That is his mission. We will not finish our work until we have saved ourselves, and then not until we shall have saved all depending upon us; for we are to become saviors upon Mount Zion, as well as Christ. We are called to this mission. The dead are not perfect without us, neither are we without them."³⁰

To this end, the will of the Lord has been impressed upon President Hinckley to build more temples.³¹ The Latter-day Saints are to be an endowed people, and they are to be sealed to their posterity and progenitors.

My grandfather's watch reminds me that our grandparents watch—and wait—for us to identify them, be linked to them, and provide temple ordinances for them. May God bless us all with success in this sacred service, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Andrew C. Nelson.
2. John 4:37, 36.
3. See D&C 2:1–3.
4. See D&C 110:2–10.
5. See D&C 110:11.
6. See D&C 110:12.
7. See D&C 110:13–16.

8. The Spirit of Elijah can be a powerful force for good in the conversion, retention, and activation of individuals.
9. Genealogy is now among the fastest growing applications for noncommercial use of computers in the home. The popularity of a recent television series titled *Ancestors* was unprecedented. It was subscribed to by 340 of 353 PBS television stations—the highest response rate in their history. In connection with that effort, a book was prepared titled *Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide to Family History and Genealogy*. More than 35,000 copies of it were sold in less than a year. Some experts have estimated that 20 percent of Internet use pertains to genealogy.
10. D&C 128:15; see also Matthew 5:48. There and in other New Testament scriptures, *perfect* was translated from the Greek *teleios*, meaning "brought to its end, finished; completed."
11. See Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (1985), 183. In 1853, while serving a mission in Washington, D.C., Orson Pratt responded to a newspaper advertisement requesting information concerning the descendants of William Pratt of Massachusetts. From this contact, Elder Pratt obtained the connecting links between him and his earliest New England forebear. Twenty years later, Elder Pratt reported that his ancestry had been traced back 11 generations and that families of the Pratt brothers had been baptized for about 3,000 of their ancestors (see *Journal of Discourses*, 16:300).
12. President Woodruff discussed the revelation with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on 5 April 1894. See *Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, 5 April 1894, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
13. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 157; or *Millennial Star*, 28 May 1894, 339.

14. They approved the articles of incorporation and instructed Elder Franklin D. Richards to begin organizing the Society. He was also appointed to become its first president. See James B. Allen, Jessie L. Embry, and Kahlile B. Mehr, *Hearts Turned to the Fathers: A History of the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1894-1994* (1995), 45.
15. The collection was begun with about 300 books. See *Hearts Turned to the Fathers*, 47.
16. See *Hearts Turned to the Fathers*, 280. The name was changed in 1987 in connection with the renaming of the Genealogical Department to the Family History Department. See *Hearts Turned to the Fathers*, 278.
17. Called Temple Index Bureau (TIB) card index. It was employed also to help minimize duplication of ordinances. See *Hearts Turned to the Fathers*, 96-103.
18. Genealogical Information and Name Tabulation.
19. It also served to help minimize duplication of sacred ordinances. See *Hearts Turned to the Fathers*, 304-9. The department began processing names through TempleReady™ in May 1991.
20. In Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 6-7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 5-7.
21. More than 50,000 members have sown seeds of labor in the Family Record Extraction Program (FREX). See *Hearts Turned to the Fathers*, 314-17.
22. As of 24 February 1998, 329,434,125 entries have been extracted.
23. D&C 101:64.
24. Unpublished statement, 29 Sept. 1997; used by permission.
25. The initial version has been prepared for use with Windows 95™.
26. Luke 1:37.
27. See D&C 128:15.
28. See D&C 128:18.
29. The helpful pamphlet *Where Do I Start?* (32916) is available from the ward family history consultant. All products discussed and computer support are available at Family History Centers.
30. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 442.
31. Including smaller temples more readily available to many members.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders M. Russell Ballard and Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

Speaking of watches, we call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We wish to express appreciation to the BYU combined choirs for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon. You're simply beautiful, members of the choir.

The choir will now sing in closing "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee." Following the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

The benediction was offered by Elder L. Lionel Kendrick.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 168th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 4, 1998. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a choir of returned missionaries from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake Institutes, under the direction of Brother Douglas Brenchley, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren, we welcome you to this great priesthood meeting. These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and thousands of locations in many countries throughout the world. I have no doubt that this is the largest assembly of holders of the priesthood that has ever been convened.

We announce that during this afternoon's session several brethren were sustained as members of the First Quorum of Seventy and others as members of the Second Quorum. In addition, brethren were sustained as Area Authority Seven-

ties. We welcome them to the ranks of our Brethren.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a choir of returned missionaries—don't they look good?—from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake Institutes, under the direction of Brother Douglas Brenchley, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

We will begin this service with the choir singing "Redeemer of Israel," following which Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Gary J. Coleman offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

I think that choir would have been able to sing that song, "Redeemer of Israel," in at least a score of languages. What a marvelous and wonderful thing is this missionary program.

The choir will now favor us with "Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd," following which Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve will speak to us.

The choir sang "Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Learning to work by raising pigs

Brethren, during my Aaronic Priesthood years I was a swineherd! Way back then, by means of a 4-H Club project involving purebred Duroc pigs, I became familiar with work! As proof that what

follows is not merely swollen memory, may I, with Elder Nelson's help, display very briefly this blanket of nearly 100 ribbons won by my prize pigs at various fairs over several years.

Up near Elder Nelson's hand is a pink ribbon, won 60 years ago. It was the

very first ribbon I ever won. I think the judge had a tender eye, and the pig wasn't really so choice, but he knew I needed encouragement and hence the fourth prize. The purple ribbons were for champions that were exhibited later on!

Thank you, Elder Nelson.

Brethren, I learned the hard way about the need to watch shifting pork prices at the local meat-packing plant. Careful records of profits and losses were kept with the help of my bookkeeper father. As in all things, my parents, so supportive, even ended up doing some of the perspiring themselves, including a special mother born 95 years ago today. She showed me how to work, and she loved me enough to correct me.

In order to obtain low-cost pig feed, I regularly bought dozens and dozens of three-day-old loaves of bread at a bakery for a mere penny a loaf. Additionally, if present at the right time at a local dairy, I could get about 70 gallons of skim milk *free*! Now I pay \$2.50 a gallon—an amusing irony. By saving in these ways, I could buy the needed grain for the pigs with the little hard cash that I had.

There were many times when a pregnant sow would give birth to her litter after midnight. The resultant weariness of attending to all that, and more, was real. Yet through it all, there was a sense of some accomplishment, including contributing to our family menus. Most young men my age did similar work. Back then, brethren, we were all poor together, and we didn't know it. Work was a given. Today, for some, receiving is a given.

However, there were real social downsides to raising pigs. Already shy, I remember vividly the principal of the junior high school coming into my class once and saying aloud in front of everybody: "Neal, your mother just called. Your pigs are out!" I felt like crawling under my desk but instead ran home to help round up the pigs.

Gratitude for parents who taught work

My father was loving but exacting. He noted that while I worked hard, my work was often not carefully done. I was a stranger to excellence. One summer day I determined to please Dad by putting in a number of needed fence posts, firmly implanted and fully aligned. I worked hard all that day and then expectantly scanned the lane down which my father would walk home. When he arrived, I watched anxiously as he carefully inspected the fence posts, even checking them with a level bar before pronouncing them to be fully satisfactory. Then came his praise. My sweat of the brow had earned Dad's commendation, which, in turn, melted my heart.

Please forgive this brief autobiographical note, which I have used to express my deep appreciation for learning to work at an early age. Even so, brethren, I certainly did not always put my shoulder to the wheel with "a heart full of song" (*Hymns*, no. 252), but I did learn about shoulders and wheels, which helped later in life when the wheels grew larger. Some of today's otherwise good young men mistakenly think that putting their shoulders to the wheel is the same thing as putting their hands on a steering wheel!

The gospel of work

Our Heavenly Father has described His vast plan for His children by saying, "Behold, this is my *work* and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39; *italics added*). Consider the significance of the Lord's use of the word *work*. What He is doing so lovingly and redemptively is, nevertheless, *work*—even for Him! We, likewise, speak of "working out our salvation," of the "law of the harvest," and of the "sweat of the brow" (see Moses 5:1; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 4:1). These are not idle phrases. Instead, they underscore the importance

of work. In fact, brethren, work is always a spiritual necessity even if, for some, work is not an economic necessity.

Thus I speak to you as good young men, including seven fine grandsons listening tonight, among them two missionaries and three recently ordained deacons. I remind you that the gospel of work is part of "the fulness of the gospel." Though joyful, missionary work is work. Though joyful, temple work is work. Alas, a few of our underwhelmed youth work all right, but mostly at trying to please themselves.

Balance of work should be orchestrated

Unfortunately, a few of our other-wise good youth are unstretched, having almost a free pass. Perks are provided, including cars complete with fuel and insurance—all paid for by parents who sometimes listen in vain for a few courteous and appreciative words.

Young men, your individual mix of work will vary, understandably, by season and circumstance as between the hours spent on *homework* and *family work* and *Church work*, *part-time work*, and *work on service projects*. Each form of work can stretch your talents. Nevertheless, watch for the warning lights. For instance, if you are engaged in *part-time work*, are all your wages spent on yourself? Is tithing paid? Is some saved for a mission? President Spencer W. Kimball gave us this crisp counsel: "If the [young man] is permitted to spend his all on himself, that spirit of selfishness may continue with him to his grave" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* [1982], 560).

Homework from school is surely a necessity, but does mental work squeeze out spiritual work entirely? Your grade-point average is very important, but what is your GPA for Christian service?

Doing *Church work* can develop vital reflexes, and the need for this form of work will never cease. But are you merely going through the motions?

Family work is vital too, but does it really go beyond merely keeping your own rooms clean and picking up your own clothes?

Whatever the mix of work, the hardest work you and I will ever do is to put off our selfishness. It is heavy lifting!

A balance of work needs to be orchestrated, because some forms of work tend to dominate other forms, like fathers working late at the office too often. Our preferred chores need little encouragement, just as in Elder Spencer Condie's paraphrase of Strauss's warning to orchestra conductors: "Never give an encouraging nod to the brass section, or you'll never hear the strings again!"

Fathers, work with your sons

Be careful, fathers, when you inordinately desire things to be better for your children than they were for you. Do not, however unintentionally, make things worse by removing the requirement for reasonable work as part of their experience, thereby insulating your children from the very things that helped make you what you are!

Granted, some tactical situations have changed! For most young men, there are no cows to be milked, pigs to be fed, et cetera. Yes, some of today's work may seem artificial and contrived. Nevertheless, young men, be patient with your parents as they try to help provide reasonable and meaningful work. In that connection, how blessed we would be if more sons could work alongside their fathers, if only occasionally. Fathers and sons, if such teaming up is not already happening at all, please, in the next three months, select just one stretching chore to do together.

Known for the work ethic

Young men, I do not know what your individual gifts are, but you have them! Please employ these gifts and

stretch your talents—along with taking out garbage cans, mowing lawns, raking leaves, or shoveling snow for widows, widowers, or a sick neighbor.

Knowing how to work will give you an edge in life, and experience with excellence—a special edge!

Let us all be quick and generous to praise our youth for the work they accomplish, especially when they do it well!

The rising generation will determine if Latter-day Saints will continue to be known for the work ethic. Long ago, President Brigham Young advised: “I want to see our Elders so full of integrity that [their work] will be preferred. . . . If we live our religion and are worthy [of] the name . . . Latter-day Saints, we are just the men that all such business can be entrusted to with perfect safety; if it can not [be] it will prove that we do not live our religion” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 232–33).

No perspiration-free shortcuts

When the time comes, young men, make your career choices. Know that whether one is a neurosurgeon, forest ranger, mechanic, farmer, or teacher is a matter of preference, not of principle. While those career choices are clearly very important, these do not mark your real career path. Instead, brethren, you are sojourning sons of God who have been invited to take the path that leads home. There, morticians will find theirs is not the only occupation to become obsolete. But the capacity to work and work wisely will never become obsolete. And neither will the ability to learn. Meanwhile, my young brethren, I have not seen any perspiration-free shortcuts to the celestial kingdom; there is no easy escalator to take us there.

Special spirits sent to do special chores

Now, whether holders of the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood, at

no time has it been more important for you to know *who* you are than in today's world. For a long, long time, each of you has been part of a great and ongoing drama. You were actually with God in the beginning (see D&C 93:29). You were at the grand, premortal council when, as His spirit sons, you shouted for joy over the prospect of this mortal experience in furtherance of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation.

Further drama lies ahead for the faithful, including one day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ, and when all will acknowledge that God is God, and that He is perfect in His justice and mercy (see Mosiah 27:31; 16:1; Alma 12:15). Those who love the Lord will inherit His celestial kingdom, where eye hath not seen nor ear heard such things as the Lord hath prepared for them (see 1 Corinthians 2:9). Jesus has already worked to prepare such a glorious place for us.

My brethren, old and young, *sweeping* is the only way to describe your spiritual history and your possible future! There will always be plenty of work to do, especially for those who know how to do the Lord's work! I gladly endorse what President Hinckley has declared, namely that “we have the finest generation of young people ever in the history of this Church” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 714; see also Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 69).

I believe in your future possibilities. You are special spirits sent to do special chores. It is toward those chores that I have tried to give you a friendly nudge tonight!

I love you! May God bless you and keep you on that path that will take you home is my prayer in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

President Hinckley

We have heard from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve

Apostles. Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy will now ad-

dress us, and he will be followed by Elder James M. Paramore of the Seventy.

Elder Earl C. Tingey

Tonight I speak to all young men of the Aaronic Priesthood preparing to serve missions, all full-time missionaries, and all fathers and grandfathers who motivate and prepare young men to serve.

Sacrifices of early missionaries

Several months ago I visited Far West, Missouri. At one time it was the home and place of refuge for three to four thousand members of the Church. Today the homes are gone and only fields of grass remain. In July 1838 the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that the Twelve were to depart Far West on April 26, 1839, to commence missionary work in Great Britain.¹

In the *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, we read: "When that revelation was given, all was peace and quietude, comparatively, in that land. But when the time came for the twelve apostles to fulfill that revelation, the Saints had all been driven out. . . .

"President Young asked the twelve who were with him—'What shall we do with regard to the fulfilment of this revelation?'"² Some of the Brethren said that the Lord would accept the intent of the Twelve and that the Lord would not require their lives to fulfill the revelation.

Wilford Woodruff continues: "The Spirit of the Lord rested upon the twelve, and they said—'The Lord God has spoken, and we will fulfill that revelation and commandment'; and that was the feeling of President Young and of those who were with him."

The Twelve, in obedience to the revelation, departed for their missions. Wilford Woodruff was so sick he could hardly stand on his feet. Heber C. Kim-

ball wrote that Brigham Young was so sick that he was unable to walk a distance of 30 rods without assistance. He left his wife and children lying sick in bed. When he left home, Brigham Young was wearing a long quilt over his shoulders because he had no coat.³

On August 28, 1852, five years after the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young convened a special conference where approximately 100 men were called to serve missions to the far corners of the earth. The charge given the missionaries by George A. Smith of the Twelve was as follows: "The missions we will call for during this conference, are generally, not to be very long ones; probably from 3 to 7 years will be as long as any man will be absent from his family."⁴

Being a full-time missionary is a great blessing

Today, our missionaries do not serve or depart for their missions under such extreme circumstances. They go with relative comfort and ease, appropriately dressed, adequately fed, and they travel by jet airplane.

Currently over 58,000 full-time missionaries serve in 136 nations and territories. By July there will be 331 missions. The excitement and thrill of being a full-time missionary is one of the greatest blessings a young man of the Aaronic Priesthood can aspire to.

Most missionaries receive special training in one of the 15 missionary training centers throughout the world. The largest, in Provo, currently has approximately 3,000 missionaries in residence. I thought you might be interested in sev-

eral statistics shared with me during a recent visit to the MTC. In one month the missionaries consume over 5,000 pounds of dry cereal. That is over two and one-half tons. Of that amount, 2,200 pounds is Lucky Charms. Lucky Charms is a popular breakfast dry cereal. Maybe one of the best preparations for being a missionary is to eat Lucky Charms. For you parents who try to focus your young men's eating habits on what you may consider is more nutritious food, you might be aware that in one month missionaries consumed only 16 pounds of All-Bran.

Ways to prepare for your mission

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, may I suggest six ways you can prepare for your mission:

First, secure your individual testimony of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Know for yourself that you hold the priesthood and that Jesus Christ is your Savior.

Second, study and ponder the Book of Mormon to the point where you can declare that it was received by Joseph Smith from the angel Moroni and that the Prophet Joseph translated the book from the golden plates.

Third, be clean and pure. To those who have slipped, repentance is available if you will approach your bishop and seek his help and counsel.

Fourth, pay your tithes and offerings so that you can bear witness of this great principle of the gospel. Save money so that you can serve a mission. A mission is not free, and all missionaries should expect to financially contribute toward the cost of their missions.

Fifth, learn how to work. Be willing to get up early in the morning, work hard all day, and retire on time. As you prepare for your mission, learn how to work.

And sixth, serve as a home teacher in your ward to know the joy of service.

Suggestions for full-time missionaries

For all full-time missionaries, I have several suggestions:

First, open your mouth. The Lord tells us, "And thou must open thy mouth at all times, declaring my gospel with the sound of rejoicing."⁵

Speak to everyone: shopkeepers, passengers riding buses, people on streets, and everyone you meet.

Second, work hard. Missionary work results in many rejections. It is easy to be discouraged. "And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts."⁶

Third, be obedient, faithful, and true. Missionaries serve in companionships for protection. A missionary best protects his companion when he is loyal to the Lord and helps his companion. By keeping the missionary rules, you gain the freedom of having the Spirit assist you.

Fourth, teach and testify. "And ye shall go forth in the power of my Spirit, preaching my gospel, two by two, in my name, lifting up your voices as with the sound of a trumpet, declaring my word like unto angels of God."⁷

And fifth, when you complete your mission, maintain the spirit, appearance, and trust of a missionary. Brigham Young once said to the returned missionary: "Come home with your heads up. Keep yourselves clean, from the crowns of your heads to the soles of your feet; be pure in heart."⁸

To fathers and grandfathers

To the fathers and grandfathers of Aaronic Priesthood young men:

Motivate and encourage your sons and grandsons to serve missions.

Provide a righteous home and an atmosphere of peace and stability where young men can be reared and prepared to serve.

Set a personal example by keeping the commandments. Pay tithes and offerings, attend sacrament meetings, read the scriptures, and have family home evenings so that your sons will be prepared for their missions.

As couple missionaries, you and your wife should prepare to serve when that time comes. We need many, many more couple missionaries.

Testimony of joys and blessings

The joys and blessings of serving a full-time mission are so personally sacred, they are hard to express adequately. Thirty-five years after I served my first mission, I received a letter from a family whom I had taught but did not baptize. The letter shared that their family of four little children, whom I once knew, now consisted of four temple marriages, three full-time missionaries, three bishops, a Relief Society president, and a dozen grandchildren maturing and developing in the gospel. You can well imagine the thrill and joy I received knowing that I had helped to find them and to teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, may I testify of the blessings of missionary service. Last year, my father passed away at age 88. As a young man, he was called on a mission during the Depression, when few were able to serve. It was hard and difficult. He always said that his decision to

serve a mission was the best decision he ever made. When he died, he left 10 children, 9 living; 56 grandchildren; and 116 great-grandchildren.

Of his posterity, 32 served full-time missions and 15 spouses who married into the family had served missions, resulting in 47 full-time missionaries—or almost 100 years of full-time missionary work. All of this resulted, in part, because one man served a mission. I shall be forever grateful that my father served a mission and that I was motivated and taught to follow his example.

I bear witness of this great privilege we all have in the Church—to be missionaries. Inherent in our responsibility of holding the priesthood is being a missionary. I pray that we will all fulfill that obligation we have to the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See D&C 118.
2. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham (1946), 309.
3. See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (1888), 275–76; Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves from My Journal*, 2nd ed. (1882), 69.
4. “Minutes of Conference,” *Deseret News*, 18 Sept. 1852, 1.
5. D&C 28:16.
6. D&C 29:7.
7. D&C 42:6.
8. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 328.

Elder James M. Paramore

The brotherhood of the priesthood

To the priesthood of the Church here on this earth, I salute you. It is an honor to be in your presence tonight. The priesthood that is here and across the whole earth is a wondrous thing. A few months ago, I was in the main lobby

of the Church Administration Building waiting for an elevator when three men came in and asked the receptionist at the front desk, “Is this where the brothers are?” The receptionist smiled, and I thought, “Isn’t that a great salutation.”

Wherever I go, we are brothers. It is instant, and it is reassuring. I return to

my home after each assignment thanking God for this brotherhood and the love and the good works that I see. You are unbelievable, my friends.

"The heart and a willing mind"

Men of the priesthood, I remember a story about a schoolteacher who asked a returning class what their fathers had taught them about self-reliance during a summer vacation. After several accounts were told, she asked Johnny what his dad had done. And Johnny replied, "My dad taught me how to swim; he took me out in the middle of Utah Lake, threw me overboard, and told me to swim back to shore." "Wow," the teacher said, "that took a lot of courage." And Johnny replied, "It wasn't bad at all after I got out of the gunnysack." Well, my young friends, life will be a challenge, but our Father in Heaven has given us the means to get through it safely. Let's talk about that for a few minutes.

The Lord wants you to have the greatest of all experiences as you make your journey on this earth. This can be a magnificent journey filled with literally thousands of tremendous experiences and spiritual confirmations if you will find your way through the many choices that will be yours along the way. The road given by our Father in Heaven is clearly marked, but the patterns and ways of the world can deceive you. But remember, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). You are the means by which truth and goodness and eternal life will be made known to the whole world. We are all part of it. As the Lord said to Joseph Smith in 1831, we will all need "the heart and a willing mind" (D&C 64:34).

Young men, life is eternal. The Lord Jesus Christ and His servants give hope and witness to the world that the journey we take is from our Father's presence to earth and then home again to our Father in Heaven to live eternally. We all bear

this good news to the world. It is a supernatural message of everlasting life and everlasting relationships—even eternal marriages and families. Nothing transcends its meaning, its value, its promise. With this knowledge and love, we can help transform hopes and dreams and help others to find eternal truths and the inward peace and security that they bring.

For instance, consider my friend Bob and his watch care over an elder who smoked. Nearly every morning, Bob would see a fellow member of his quorum and pray with him to help him overcome smoking and then give him a pack of Lifesavers or package of gum to help him during the day. Later, Bob would see him and his wife with hands linked across the temple altar, sealed for eternity. What was it that changed and helped to bring this all about? The gospel and "the heart and a willing mind."

Trust in God and His Son

Youth, may I leave with you a few thoughts that will help you create that kind of a "heart and a willing mind." *First*, we testify to this world that *there is a God and He has sent His Beloved Son* to establish the importance of this journey to earth and back. He has provided the plan for successfully making that journey. We just need to "trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). The philosophies of men will ever be there, but they do not carry the promise of eternal life or even peace on this earth. Put your whole trust in the Lord. His scriptures and His prophets testify of Him and show the way.

Live within the Lord's boundaries

Second, God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, has *established boundaries*. These are the *commandments* that He gives to us to help us make the journey safely. When, with "the heart and a willing

mind,” we are obedient to these commandments, we go through a change process that alters the way we think, the way we feel, the way we dress, the way we live, what we eat and drink, and the way we serve others. As Alma the Younger said, “They become new creatures” (Mosiah 27:26). These boundaries protect us. They are essential to a safe journey.

When I was five years old, my mother helped me to learn about boundaries when she said to me nearly every day, “Jimmy, don’t go near the quicksand,” which was just a few hundred feet away from our house. Well, guess what Jimmy and his young friends would do? We would go there. As we walked closer to the quicksand, one of my friends walked onto this rather wet, darker looking sand. It looked almost like the rest of the sand. At first his feet wouldn’t move, and we all laughed. And then they sank a little deeper into the quicksand, and he panicked. He couldn’t get out of the quicksand, and he started screaming. The rest of us ran as fast as we could go to a cowboy’s house, screaming at the top of our voices. He immediately grabbed a rope and ran with us back to the boy, who was now up to his waist in the quicksand. He quickly lassoed the boy, and we held the rope while he put out a log and climbed onto it to pull the boy out of the quicksand.

We learn that when we cross over the Lord’s boundaries, we are often caught in a quicksand of sorts. The ways of the world are often like that quicksand, and they can be so destructive. They seek to divert us from the Lord’s boundaries—His commandments. These worldly ways—drugs, drinking, smoking, living together without marriage, some of the music, and on and on—

- Seem very enticing,
- Appear to be the normal way of life,
- Seem to be accepted by everyone,

and

• Are extolled in television, on the movies, over the Internet, in videos, et cetera.

These things lead us outside the boundaries the Lord has set. When followed, they bring despair and devastating health, financial, and other problems.

The boundaries of the Lord are set forth in your *For the Strength of Youth* booklets and are clear and a great blessing to everyone who follows them. We go forth as missionaries and as members to help people find and value the commandments or boundaries of the Lord. If it is done with “the heart and a willing mind,” or in other words anxiously, happily, and enthusiastically, like President Hinckley as he goes forth across the earth, it will make us different, appreciative, and thankful for each opportunity that we take.

Begin with the end in mind

Third, young and, yes, old alike, *begin with the end in mind*. Where do you want to be at 19 years of age or at retirement? On a mission? Make that decision even this very night. I promise you that it will change your life and others’ as God directs you on your mission. All He requires is “the heart and a willing mind.” You can do so much good that it will astound you as you are changed and as you see others changed.

God will honor those who honor Him

In a testimony meeting in Bari, Italy, you can imagine my surprise when a young man stood up and said, “If it hadn’t been for the missionaries, I wouldn’t be here today.” He then went on to tell how his mother and grandparents had been found in Paris, France, by Elders Ben Walton and James Paramore 30 years earlier. After many meetings, the family was baptized. Now this son was on a mission. I later learned that over the years more than 170 people had been baptized

by that family. I had been privileged to serve a mission, and those two and a half years were crucial to my testimony. I cannot thank God enough.

I testify that God lives, that His Son is the Redeemer of this earth, and that this gospel will bless all mankind everywhere. May we all:

- *Trust in God and His Son.*
- *Live within the boundaries they have given.*
- *Begin with the end in mind with "the heart and a willing mind."*

Remember the Lord said, "For them that honour me I will honour" (1 Samuel 2:30). May this be our journey, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elders Earl C. Tingey and James M. Paramore of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then speak to us. He will be followed by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

President James E. Faust

Brethren, I am pleased to be here with you tonight. Few responsibilities weigh heavier than speaking to this great assembly of priesthood holders because the priesthood is the mightiest force on the earth. As B. H. Roberts reminds us: "The priesthood is a solemn thing. To hold power delegated to one by Almighty God—to have authority to speak and act in his name, and have it of the same binding force as if the Deity himself spoke or acted, is both an honor and a responsibility."¹ To me, you young men look like Helaman's stripling warriors, "exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity." Like them, we hope you are men who are "true at all times in whatsoever thing [you are] entrusted."²

Consistency between beliefs and actions

Tonight I plead for greater consistency between our beliefs and actions. I take as my text the thirteenth article of faith. "We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say

that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."³

Brethren, does the Spirit of Christ that we have taken upon ourselves spill over into our behavior in the workforce? Brigham Young said: "We want the Saints to increase in goodness, until our mechanics, for instance, are so honest and reliable that this Railroad Company will say, 'Give us a "Mormon" Elder for an engineer, then none need have the least fear to ride, for if he knows there is danger he will take every measure necessary to preserve the lives of those entrusted to his care.' I want to see our Elders so full of integrity that they will be preferred by this Company for their engine builders, watchmen, engineers, clerks, and business managers. If we live our religion and are worthy [of] the name of Latter-day Saints, we are just the men that all such business can be entrusted to with perfect safety; if it can

not it will prove that we do not live our religion.”⁴ What President Young urged of the priesthood holders in his day is just as important in our day. The Spirit of Christ should permeate all we do, whether at work, at school, or at home.

One-time decisions to do right

President Spencer W. Kimball taught us to make one-time decisions to do right. He made important decisions early in his life so that he did not have to perpetually remake those decisions. He said, “We can push some things away from us once and have done with them . . . without having to brood and redecide a hundred times what it is we will do and what we will not do.”⁵

During World War II, I observed some very special young men from faithful Latter-day Saint homes lower their standards little by little and lose some of their spirituality. In some places overseas the water was not safe to drink, and the purifying chemicals made the water taste worse. Some started to drink coffee to disguise the taste. From time to time the army gave us cigarettes and a ration of liquor. Some did not take their rations at all. Others took them to trade for goods and money even though they did not smoke or drink. A few took them to experiment and became slaves for the rest of their lives. The habits they acquired during the war robbed them of their spiritual potential and many blessings of the Lord.

The integrity of Father Abraham

Holders of the priesthood of God should be men of impeccable character. I have always admired the integrity of Father Abraham when he returned from Egypt to Palestine. He came with his nephew Lot. Soon there was strife between the herdsmen of Abraham’s cattle and the herdsmen of Lot’s cattle.

“And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.”⁶ Abraham offered Lot his choice of property, either on his left hand or on his right. Lot chose the more productive land to the east, and so Abraham took the land to the west.

In course of time, Lot and all of his household were captured in battle and taken to Dan, over a hundred miles to the north. When Abraham heard of his fate, he armed 318 of his servants and went in pursuit. He not only rescued Lot and his family but also restored to them their property in Sodom.

The king of Sodom returned from exile and, in gratitude, offered Abraham the spoils of the victory. But these Abraham declined, saying, “I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and . . . I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.”⁷

In these episodes, Abraham demonstrated his fairness, integrity, and faith. And the Lord rewarded him with both spiritual and earthly blessings so that ultimately he prospered far more than Lot.

Our honor should make us honest

Honesty is a very important part of character. We have all seen men who think they are not accountable to the laws of men or of God. They seem to feel that the rules of human conduct do not apply to them. A popular philosophy is “What can I get away with?” As someone once said, “The difference between a moral man and a man of honor is that the latter regrets a discreditable act even when it has worked.”⁸

Honesty begins when we are young. When I was 11 years old, I looked forward eagerly to my magical 12th birthday when I could become a deacon and a Scout. My mother helped me learn the

Articles of Faith, the Scout Law and Motto, and other requirements so that I would have a good start when that special birthday arrived.

Since I had no sisters, my brothers and I were given some of the inside chores as well as outside ones, such as milking and taking care of the animals. One day Mother left me to wash the dishes and clean the kitchen while she attended to a sick neighbor. I agreed to do these duties but put off doing the dishes. Time ran out and they didn't get done. In fact, they didn't even get started. When Mother came home and saw the kitchen, she put on her apron and went to the sink. She spoke only three words, which stung worse than the sting of a dozen hornets. They were the first three words of the Scout Oath: "On my honor." That day I resolved that I would never give my mother cause to repeat those words to me again.

Our honor should make us honest in all we do. Some youths fail to honor debts to their parents. "May I borrow five dollars for the show?" That contains an implied promise to repay the debt, but the promise is made so casually that it is forgotten as it is spoken.

Be careful to avoid misuse of credit

We must be careful of the misuse of credit. The use of credit cards in many places has increased consumer debt to staggering proportions. I am reminded of the story of "an elderly farmer [who] wrote to a mail order house as follows: 'Please send me one of the gasoline engines you show on page 787, and if it's any good, I'll send you a check.'

"In time he received the following reply: 'Please send check. If it's any good, we'll send the engine.'"⁹

Contemporary society rushes headlong to accumulate the material goods of this world. This leads many to think they can alter the law of the harvest, reaping rewards without paying the price of hon-

est toil and effort. Wishing to prosper immediately, they speculate in high-risk financial schemes that promote instant wealth. This all too frequently results in economic reverses, sometimes even financial ruin. In Proverbs we read, "A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent."¹⁰

We believe in being chaste

As members of the Church and particularly as holders of the priesthood, we believe in being chaste. There is no different or double standard for moral cleanliness for men and women in the Church. In fact, I believe holders of the priesthood have a greater responsibility to maintain standards of chastity before marriage and fidelity after marriage. The Lord has said, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."¹¹ This means being pure in thought as well as in deed. The Prophet Joseph Smith stated, "If we would come before God, we must keep ourselves pure, as He is pure."¹² If husband and wife will remain pure and chaste, completely devoted to each other during the storms and sunshine of life, their love for one another will deepen into something of supernal fulfillment. An early Latter-day Saint Apostle, Parley P. Pratt, said, "From this union of affection, springs all the other relationships, social joys and affections diffused through every branch of human existence."¹³

Missionaries should be exemplary

As the Prophet Joseph wrote in the thirteenth article of faith, "We believe in being . . . benevolent . . . and in doing good [works]." Since the beginning of the Church, full-time missionaries have done good works. We are grateful for the 58,000-plus missionaries who are currently serving. The First Presidency have the opportunity to meet with many

ambassadors, prime ministers, rulers, and prominent public and political figures from all over the world. Frequently they say, "We have met your missionaries. We have seen them in many places." Sometimes these prominent people visit the Missionary Training Center in Provo and see the thousands of missionaries there. These officials always seem to be greatly impressed. The missionaries appear well groomed and dignified. Sometimes they say, "We would like our children to be associated with your young people at one of your schools."

Being a missionary is a continuing responsibility. Returned missionaries need to be exemplary in living the principles which they taught to others in the mission field. President Spencer W. Kimball said: "Please, you returned missionaries . . . , please do not abandon in appearance or principle or habit the great experiences of the mission field when you were like Alma and the sons of Mosiah, as the very angels of God to the people you met and taught and baptized. We do not expect you to wear a tie, white shirt, and a dark blue suit every day now that you are back in school. But surely it is not too much to ask that your good grooming be maintained, that your personal habits reflect cleanliness and dignity and pride in the principles of the gospel you taught. We ask you for the good of the kingdom and all those who have done and yet do take pride in you."¹⁴

The example of Elder Clinton Cutler

The admonition of Paul includes the hope to be able to endure all things. Elder Clinton Cutler exemplified how hope, perseverance, and steadfastness call forth the blessings of heaven. He literally became an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Clint and Carma Cutler were high school sweethearts. They began married life by attending college on a basketball scholarship. But they soon became pressed financially, so Clint went to work

for the telephone company. His first job was washing, greasing, and maintaining the company trucks. That led to work in the central office as a cable repairman. For three and a half years, Clint worked full-time and went to college full-time. He graduated in December 1960 with honors. By that time he had four children.

A series of transfers and promotions followed. In 1963, while serving in Riverdale, Utah, Clint was called to be a bishop. Three years later they moved to Midvale, Utah, where Clint was called to be the second counselor in the stake presidency.

After another three years, Clint was transferred to Denver, where he was called as president of the Littleton Colorado Stake. Other moves followed, one taking them to Boise, Idaho, where he was called to be the president of the Boise Idaho West Stake. Another transfer brought them back to Salt Lake City, where Clint was called as a regional representative. His final promotion, in 1984, was as assistant vice president and director of marketing operations. His company seemed to transfer him where the Lord needed him.

On his retirement they returned to Utah, and soon Clint received the call to serve as president of the Washington Seattle Mission. In April 1990 his final call to service came to serve as a General Authority in the Second Quorum of the Seventy. His call to serve ended with his death on April 9, 1994, following a heroic struggle with cancer.

I do not wish to imply that presiding callings or career promotions are the measure of faithfulness and worthiness. They are not and never have been. We have all been richly blessed by the humble, faithful teachers who have taught us the gospel by precept and example. But Elder Cutler's example shows that faith, hope, and perseverance help our Father in Heaven to strengthen us and enhance our abilities and opportunities, however ordinary they may be.

Seek after loveliness

Members of the Church are to seek after loveliness. We do not seek a veneer painted on by a worldly brush but the pure, innate beauty that God has planted in our souls. We should seek after those things that endow higher thoughts and finer impulses. Man, as President John Taylor once said, "is destined, if he improves his opportunities, to higher and greater blessings and glory than are associated with this earth in its present state: . . . he may stand pure, virtuous, intelligent, and honourable, as a son of God, and seek for, and be guided and governed by his Father's counsels."¹⁵ Indeed we may say with President Brigham Young that we hope "to be gentle and kind, modest and truthful, to be full of faith and integrity, . . . [for] goodness sheds a halo of loveliness around every person who possesses it, making their countenances beam with light, and their society desirable because of its excellency."¹⁶

We can endure all things

In the history of this Church, we have "endured many things." As we look forward to the future, we "hope to be able to endure all things." I am confident that we will do so, even though no one knows fully what may lie ahead. How will we endure all things? The answer is amazingly simple: We shall do so by faith, by unity, and by following the prophets of God. It has been so in the past; it will be so in the future.

In His infinite wisdom, since the beginning of the earth, God has led His

people through prophets. Only one person, however, can exercise all of the keys of authority at one time. In our day, that prophet is President Gordon B. Hinckley. As we see the wondrous worldwide programs of the Church, who can doubt President Hinckley's prophetic leadership? We all pray that God will continue to bear him up and magnify him in every way. Sustaining fully President Hinckley and those associated with him as prophets, seers, and revelators will help us to endure all things. That we may do so I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (1911), 1:195.
2. Alma 53:20.
3. Articles of Faith 1:13.
4. *Discourses of Brigham Young* (1954), 232-33.
5. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 164.
6. Genesis 13:8.
7. Genesis 14:23.
8. H. L. Mencken, in Evan Esar, ed., *The Dictionary of Humorous Quotations*, (1949), 141.
9. Jacob M. Braude, *Braude's Treasury of Wit and Humor* (1964), 45.
10. Proverbs 28:20.
11. D&C 38:42.
12. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 227.
13. *Writings of Parley Parker Pratt*, ed. Parker Pratt Robison (1952), 54; italics added.
14. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 593.
15. *The Government of God* (1852), 29-30.
16. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 280.

President Thomas S. Monson

The USS *Indianapolis* in harm's way

On July 16, 1945, the USS *Indianapolis* departed the Mare Island Naval Shipyard in California on a secret cargo

mission to Tinian Island in the Marianas. The cargo included highly sophisticated equipment which could well bring an end to the Second World War, with all its suffering, remorse, and death. The

ship delivered its cargo on July 26 and was heading, unescorted, toward Leyte in the Philippines.

Because they were traveling through hostile waters in the Philippine Sea, the captain had discretionary orders to follow a zigzag course of travel to prevent detection by and attack from the enemy. He failed to do so. Just before midnight on Sunday, July 29, 1945, as the *Indianapolis* continued toward Leyte Gulf, the heavy cruiser was discovered by an enemy submarine. Easily avoiding detection while submerging to periscope depth, the submarine fired a fanwise salvo of six torpedoes from 1,500 yards. As the torpedoes struck the target, explosions of ammunition and aviation fuel ripped away the cruiser's bow and destroyed its power center. Without power, the radio officer was unable to send a distress signal. The order to abandon ship, when it came, had to be passed by word of mouth because all communications were down. Just 12 minutes after being hit, the stern rose up a hundred feet straight into the air, and the ship plunged into the depths of the sea.

Of the nearly 1,200-man crew, approximately 400 were killed instantly or went down with the ship. About 800 survived the sinking and went into the water.

Four days later, on August 2, 1945, the pilot of a Lockheed Ventura, flying on patrol, noticed an unusual oil slick on the water's surface and followed it for 15 miles. Then the plane's occupants spotted those men who had managed to survive since the *Indianapolis* had gone down.

A major rescue effort began. Ships hurried to the area, and planes were dispatched to drop food, water, and survival gear to the men. Of the approximately 800 who had gone into the water, only 316 remained alive. The rest had been claimed by the perilous, shark-infested sea.

Two weeks later World War II was over. The sinking of the *Indianapolis*, called "the final great naval tragedy of World War II," is now legend.

Are there lessons for our lives in the horrific experience of those men aboard the *Indianapolis*? They were in harm's way. Danger lurked; the enemy stalked. The vessel sailed on, disregarding the command to zigzag, and thus it became an easy target. Catastrophe was the result.

Tell the truth

On the day the *Indianapolis* sailed toward Leyte, I enlisted in the United States Navy. At the Naval Training Station near San Diego, California, I endured the extreme discipline of boot camp and the intense training for combat.

At last our first liberty came, and we were advised that all those who could swim could now take the navy bus to San Diego, while those sailors who could not were to remain for swimming training. How pleased I was that I could swim and had done so for many years. Then came an unexpected order. We who answered that we could swim were marched away—not to the waiting bus, but rather to the base swimming pool. We assembled at the pool's deep end, were told to undress, and then were commanded to jump in one at a time and swim the length of the pool. Most accomplished the feat with little effort and anticipated eagerly the bus ride to San Diego. But there were men who had been untruthful, who had answered they could swim when in reality they could not. For them, the petty officers waited until they were about to go under the water for the second or third time before proffering a bamboo pole to tow them to safety. The lesson learned? *Tell the truth*. It could ultimately save your life if you were in harm's way.

A road map to safety

Our journey through mortality will at times place us in harm's way. Is there a road map to safety? Are there those to whom we can look for help?

May I offer to you tonight six road signs which, when observed and followed, will guide you to safety. They are:

1. **Choose good friends.**
2. **Seek parental guidance.**
3. **Study the gospel.**
4. **Obey the commandments.**
5. **Serve with love.**
6. **Pray with purpose.**

There is a battle of significant consequence taking place in the lives of young men today. In simple terms, it is the struggle between doing right or doing wrong.

At an earlier time, Moroni offered the advice:

"For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

"But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil."¹

May I share a thought or two concerning each of the six road signs previously mentioned to keep you from harm's way.

Choose good friends

1. Choose good friends. Friends help to determine your future. You will tend to be like them and to be found where they choose to go. Remember, the path we follow in this life leads to the path we follow in the next.

In a survey made in selected wards and stakes of the Church, we learned a most significant fact: Those persons whose friends married in the temple usually married in the temple, while those persons whose friends did not marry in the temple usually did not marry in the

temple. This same fact pertained also to full-time missionary service. The influence of one's friends appeared to be a highly dominant factor—even equal to parental urging, classroom instruction, or proximity to a temple.

The friends you choose will either help or hinder your success.

Seek parental guidance

2. Seek parental guidance. Your mother, your father, your family all love you and pray for your eternal happiness. Fathers, be an example to your sons. Show them the way to go. Walk with them in righteousness and faith.

Be slow to judge. From a graduate school textbook I read of an account which substantiates the wisdom of this advice. In a large factory with multiple machines, the employees had to work as a team to be successful. On a particular machine the crew was handicapped by one worker frequently arriving late. The foreman reprimanded the tardy person and told him, "If you come to work late again, you're fired!"

The very next day the recalcitrant was again late. The class was asked, "What would you do if you were the foreman?"

About half the class said, "I would keep my word and fire the person." The balance took pity and answered, "I'd give him another chance." The instructor then gave us the correct answer: "I would ask him *why* he was late. His tardiness could well be fully legitimate."

Study the gospel

3. Study the gospel. Jesus invites:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."²

In this dispensation, the Lord declared, "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith."³

Develop a yearning to know the Lord, to understand His commandments and to follow Him. Then shadows of despair are dispelled by rays of hope, sorrow yields to joy, and the feeling of being lost in the crowd of life vanishes with the certain knowledge that our Heavenly Father is mindful of each of us.

Obey the commandments

4. Obey the commandments. Make up your mind to serve God. Learn His word and follow it.

A young holder of the Aaronic Priesthood, active in Scouting, summed up the truth of choosing, when at a board of review for his rank advancement to Star Scout, he answered the question of what Scouting was doing for him by saying, "It keeps me doing things I should and keeps me from doing things I shouldn't." He passed.

Another reminder is the adage, "You can't be right by doing wrong, and you can't be wrong by doing right." In the words of a well-known hymn:

Choose the right when a choice is
placed before you.
In the right the Holy Spirit guides;
And its light is forever shining o'er
you,
When in the right your heart con-
fides.⁴

President George Albert Smith, the eighth President of the Church, counseled, "Stay on the Lord's side of the line."⁵

Serve with love

5. Serve with love. From *The Spoken Word* comes this counsel: "We owe it to ourselves to discover our talents and to find opportunities to share them. And we

owe it to our family, friends, and neighbors to use our abilities in helpful ways. Even when we feel discouraged, lonely, or sometimes useless, we need to remember that God has given each of us great potential. We all have a place in life and in the lives of those we love."⁶

Jesus was the epitome of service. It was said of Him that He "went about doing good."⁷ Do we, my brethren, do likewise? Our opportunities are many, but some are perishable and fleeting. Brethren, what supernal joy you feel when someone recalls counsel you gave, an example you lived, a truth you taught, the influence you had in prompting another to do good.

Leaders of youth, remember the Apostle Paul's counsel to Timothy: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."⁸ Bishops, place worthy, righteous men as leaders of the Aaronic Priesthood, and the same requirement should be expected concerning Scoutmasters.

No man is called to work with youth until his membership certificate is in the hands of the bishop. In addition, no man is called to work in Scouting until he is fully registered with the governing board of Scouting and his record merits consideration for a call. This procedure has been expounded many times, yet wolves continue to enter with the intent to destroy the flock. President Hinckley asked that I stress tonight this instruction.

Pray with purpose

6. Pray with purpose. With God, all things are possible. Men of the Aaronic Priesthood, men of the Melchizedek Priesthood, remember the prayer of the Prophet Joseph, offered in that grove called sacred. Look around you and see the result of that answered prayer. Prayer is the provider of spiritual strength. Prayer is the passport to peace.

Unlike the cruiser *Indianapolis*, should we find ourselves in harm's way, our power line is unbroken and undamaged—even to God, our Heavenly Father. He will help us if we will but give Him in our lives an opportunity to do so.

I recall an experience of a few years ago. A group of friends were trail riding on strong Morgan horses when we came to a clearing which opened on a lush grass meadow with a small, clear stream meandering through it. No mule deer could wish for a better home. However, there was a danger lurking. The wily deer can detect the slightest movement in the surrounding bush; he can hear the crack of a twig and discern the scent of man. He is vulnerable from but one direction—overhead. In a mature tree, hunters had erected a platform high above the enticing spot. Though in many places this is illegal, the hunter takes his prey as it comes to eat and to drink. No twig would break, no movement disturb, no scent reveal the hunter's whereabouts. Why? The magnificent buck deer, with its highly developed senses to warn of impending danger, does not have the capacity to look directly upward and thus detect the enemy. The deer finds himself in harm's way. Man is not so restricted. His greatest safety is found in his ability and his desire to look upward—to “look to God and live.”⁹

Wrote the poet:

But chief of all thy wondrous works
Supreme of all thy plan,
Thou hast put an upward reach
Into the heart of man.¹⁰

We will sail safely the seas of life

Brethren, are we prepared for the voyage of life? The sea of life can at times become turbulent. Crashing waves of emotional conflict may break all around us. Chart your course, be cautious, and follow the safety measures outlined.

1. Choose good friends.
2. Seek parental guidance.
3. Study the gospel.
4. Obey the commandments.
5. Serve with love.
6. Pray with purpose.

In so doing, we will sail safely the seas of life and arrive at home port—even the celestial kingdom of God. Then, as mariners of mortality, may we hear the plaudit, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”¹¹

For this blessing I fervently pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moroni 7:16–17.
2. Matthew 11:28–29.
3. D&C 88:118.
4. “Choose the Right,” *Hymns*, no. 239.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1945, 118.
6. “Finding a Niche,” 15 Feb. 1998 broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word*.
7. Acts 10:38.
8. 1 Timothy 4:12.
9. Alma 37:47.
10. Harry Kemp, “God the Architect,” in Caroline Miles Hill, ed., *The World's Great Religious Poetry* (1954), 211.
11. Matthew 25:21.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to Presidents James E. Faust and Thomas S. Monson.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

We remind you also that daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous.

We express our gratitude to this returned missionary choir for the inspiring

music this evening. Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "Beautiful Savior."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Seventy.

Now, my brethren, it becomes my privilege to speak to you.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Live worthy of the girl you will marry

A week ago President Faust and the Young Women general presidency spoke to the young women of the Church in this Tabernacle.

As I looked at that gathering of beautiful young women, the question moved through my mind, "Are we rearing a generation of young men worthy of them?"

Those girls are so fresh and vibrant. They are beautiful. They are bright. They are able. They are faithful. They are virtuous. They are true. They are simply wonderful and delightful young women.

And so tonight, in this great priesthood meeting, I wish to speak to you young men, their counterpart. The title of my talk: "Living Worthy of the Girl You Will Someday Marry."

The girl you marry will take a terrible chance on you. She will give her all to the young man she marries. He will largely determine the remainder of her life. She will even surrender her name to his name.

As Adam declared in the Garden of Eden:

"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. . . .

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:23-24).

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as young men holding the priesthood of God, you have a tremendous obligation toward the girl you marry. Perhaps you are not thinking much of that now. But the time

isn't far away when you will think of it, and now is the time to prepare for that most important day of your lives when you take unto yourself a wife and companion equal with you before the Lord.

Be absolutely loyal

That obligation begins with absolute loyalty. As the old Church of England ceremony says, you will marry her "for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse." She will be yours and yours alone, regardless of the circumstances of your lives. You will be hers and hers alone. There can be eyes for none other. There must be absolute loyalty, undeviating loyalty one to another. Hopefully you will marry her forever, in the house of the Lord, under the authority of the everlasting priesthood. Through all the days of your lives, you must be as true one to another as the polar star.

Be a young man of virtue

The girl you marry can expect you to come to the marriage altar absolutely clean. She can expect you to be a young man of virtue in thought and word and deed.

I plead with you boys tonight to keep yourselves free from the stains of the world. You must not indulge in sleazy talk at school. You must not tell sultry jokes. You must not fool around with the Internet to find pornographic material. You must not dial a long-distance telephone number to listen to filth. You

must not rent videos with pornography of any kind. This salacious stuff simply is not for you. Stay away from pornography as you would avoid a serious disease. It is as destructive. It can become habitual, and those who indulge in it get so they cannot leave it alone. It is addictive.

It is a five-billion-dollar business for those who produce it. They make it as titillating and attractive as they know how. It seduces and destroys its victims. It is everywhere. It is all about us. I plead with you young men not to get involved in its use. You simply cannot afford to.

The girl you marry is worthy of a husband whose life has not been tainted by this ugly and corrosive material.

Live the Word of Wisdom

Look upon the Word of Wisdom as more than a commonplace thing. I regard it as the most remarkable document on health of which I know. It came to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1833, when relatively little was known of dietary matters. Now the greater the scientific research, the more certain becomes the proof of Word of Wisdom principles. The evidence against tobacco is now overwhelming, yet we see a tremendous increase in its use by young men and women. The evidence against liquor is just as great.

To me it is an ironic thing that service stations offer beer sales. An individual can get as drunk on beer and be as dangerous on the road as he can on any other alcoholic substance. It is simply a matter of how much he drinks. How absolutely inconsistent it is for a service station, where you get gas so you can drive, to also sell beer that can cause you to drive "under the influence" and become a terrible menace on the highway.

Stay away from it. It will do you no good. It could do you irreparable harm. Suppose you drink and drive and cause the death of someone. You will never

get over it as long as you live. It will haunt you night and day. The one simple thing to do is simply to not touch it.

Likewise, stay away from illegal drugs. They can absolutely destroy you. They will take away your powers of reason. They will enslave you in a vicious and terrible way. They will destroy your mind and your body. They will build within you such cravings that you will do anything to satisfy them.

Would any girl in her right mind ever wish to marry a young man who has a drug habit, who is the slave of alcohol, who is addicted to pornography?

Avoid profanity

Avoid profanity. It is all around you in school. Young people seem to pride themselves on using filthy and obscene language as well as indulging in profanity, taking the name of our Lord in vain. It becomes a vicious habit which, if indulged in while you are young, will find expression throughout your life. Who would wish to be married to a man whose speech is laden with filth and profanity?

Learn now to control your temper

There is another serious thing to which many young men become addicted. This is anger. With the least provocation they explode into tantrums of uncontrolled rage. It is pitiful to see someone so weak. But even worse, they are prone to lose all sense of reason and do things which bring later regret.

We hear much these days of the phenomenon called road rage. Drivers become provoked over some small irritation. They fly into a rage, even resulting in murder. A life of regret follows.

As the writer of Proverbs has said, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

If you have a temper, now is the time to learn to control it. The more you do so while you are young, the more easily it will happen. Let no member of this Church ever lose control of himself in such an unnecessary and vicious manner. Let him bring to his marriage words of peace and composure.

I constantly deal with those cases of members of the Church who have been married in the temple and who later divorce and then apply for a cancellation of their temple sealing. When first married, they are full of great expectations, with a wonderful spirit of happiness. But the flower of love fades in an atmosphere of criticism and carping, of mean words and uncontrolled anger. Love flies out the window as contention enters. I repeat, my brethren, if any of you young men have trouble controlling your temper, I plead with you to begin the work of making that correction now. Otherwise you will bring only tears and sorrow into the homes which you will someday establish. Jacob, in the Book of Mormon, condemns his people for their wickedness in marriage. Says he: "Behold, ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites, our brethren. Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds" (Jacob 2:35).

Work for an education

Work for an education. Get all the training that you can. The world will largely pay you what it thinks you are worth. Paul did not mince words when he wrote to Timothy, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his

own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8).

It is your primary obligation to provide for your family.

Your wife will be fortunate indeed if she does not have to go out and compete in the marketplace. She will be twice blessed if she is able to remain at home while you become the breadwinner of the family.

Education is the key to economic opportunity. The Lord has laid a mandate upon us as a people to acquire learning "by study, and also by faith" (D&C 109:14). It is likely that you will be a better provider if your mind and hands are trained to do something worthwhile in the society of which you will become a part.

Be modest in your wants

Be modest in your wants. You do not need a big home with a big mortgage as you begin your lives together. You can and should avoid overwhelming debt. There is nothing that will cause greater tensions in marriage than grinding debt, which will make of you a slave to your creditors. You may have to borrow money to begin ownership of a home. But do not let it be so costly that it will preoccupy your thoughts day and night.

When I was married, my wise father said to me, "Get a modest home and pay off the mortgage so that if economic storms should come, your wife and children will have a roof over their heads."

The girl who marries you will not wish to be married to a tightwad. Neither will she wish to be married to a spendthrift. She is entitled to know all about family finances. She will be your partner. Unless there is full and complete understanding between you and your wife on these matters, there likely will come misunderstandings and suspicions that will cause trouble that can lead to greater problems.

Go on a mission and be married in the temple

She will wish to be married to someone who loves her, who trusts her, who walks beside her, who is her very best friend and companion. She will wish to be married to someone who encourages her in her Church activity and in community activities which will help her to develop her talents and make a greater contribution to society. She will want to be married to someone who has a sense of service to others, who is disposed to contribute to the Church and to other good causes. She will wish to be married to someone who loves the Lord and seeks to do His will. It is well, therefore, that each of you young men plan to go on a mission, to give unselfishly to your Father in Heaven a tithe of your life, to go forth with a spirit of total unselfishness to preach the gospel of peace to the world wherever you may be sent. If you are a good missionary, you will return home with the desire to continue to serve the Lord, to keep His commandments, and to do His will. Such behavior will add immeasurably to the happiness of your marriage.

As I have said, you will wish to be married in one place and one place only. That is the house of the Lord. You cannot give to your companion a greater gift than that of marriage in God's holy house, under the protective wing of the sealing covenant of eternal marriage. There is no adequate substitute for it. There should be no other way for you.

Prepare to become a righteous father

Choose carefully and wisely. The girl you marry will be yours forever. You will love her and she will love you through thick and thin, through sunshine and storm. She will become the mother of your children. What greater thing in all

this world can there be than to become the father of a precious child, a son or daughter of God, our Father in Heaven, for whom we are given the rights and responsibilities of mortal stewardship.

How precious a thing is a baby. How wonderful a thing is a child. What a marvelous thing is a family. Live worthy of becoming a father of whom your wife and children will be proud.

The Lord has ordained that we should marry, that we shall live together in love and peace and harmony, that we shall have children and rear them in His holy ways.

And so, my dear young men, you may not think seriously about it now. But the time will come when you will fall in love. It will occupy all of your thoughts and be the stuff of which your dreams are made. Make yourself worthy of the loveliest girl in all the world. Keep yourself worthy through all the days of your life. Be good and true and kind one to another. There is so much of bitterness in the world. There is so much of pain and sorrow that come of angry words. There is so much of tears that follow disloyalty. But there can be so much of happiness if there is an effort to please and an overwhelming desire to make comfortable and happy one's companion.

When all is said and done, this is what the gospel is about. The family is a creation of God. It is the basic creation. The way to strengthen the nation is to strengthen the homes of the people.

I am satisfied that if we would look for the virtues in one another and not the vices, there would be much more of happiness in the homes of our people. There would be far less of divorce, much less of infidelity, much less of anger and rancor and quarreling. There would be more of forgiveness, more of love, more of peace, more of happiness. This is as the Lord would have it.

Now is the time to prepare for the future

Young men, now is the time to prepare for the future. And in that future for most of you is a beautiful young woman whose greatest desire is to bond with you in a relationship that is eternal and everlasting.

You will know no greater happiness than that found in your home. You will have no more serious obligation than that which you face in your home. The truest mark of your success in life will be the quality of your marriage.

God bless you, my dear young men. I could wish for you nothing more won-

derful than the love, the absolute total love of a companion of whom you are proud and worthy in every respect. This choice will be the most important of all the choices you make in your life. I pray that heaven may smile upon you in the choice you make, that you may be guided, that you may live without regret, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder Neil L. Andersen offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 168th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 5, 1998. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 168th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to all who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together. We are pleased to have Sister Inis Hunter, the widow of President Howard W. Hunter, with us.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ, opened these services by singing "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise."

The choir will now sing "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee," following which Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Gene R. Cook offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

"You can't run away from trouble"

I commence my message this morning with a question: Have you ever taken a vacation with your entire family? If not, you are in for some surprises when you do. My wife and I a few years ago joined our children, their companions, and the grandchildren at Disneyland in southern California. Beyond the entrance to the famous theme park, the group rushed to what was then the newest feature—Star Tours. You enter a simulated rocket, take your seat, and fasten your seat belt. All of a sudden the entire vehicle begins to vibrate violently. I think the mechanical voice which comes over the loudspeaker calls it "heavy turbulence." (I have never returned to this featured ride. I get all the real turbulence I can handle just flying from place to place fulfilling my responsibilities.)

After recuperating for a few minutes, we journeyed to the feature with the longest line. It is called Splash Mountain. The crowd filed round and round in a serpentine pattern. The music, which was piped through the loudspeakers to the waiting throng, contained the words of the song:

Zip-a-dee-doo-dah, Zip-a-dee-ay,
My, oh my, what a wonderful day!
Plenty of sunshine, headin' my way,
Zip-a-dee-doo-dah, zip-a-dee-ay!¹

By now we were ready to board the boat which would carry us in a vertical dive that evoked screams from the passengers in the boat ahead as it roared down the waterfall and glided to a stop in the water below. Just before taking the plunge, however, I noticed on one wall a small sign declaring a profound truth: "You can't run away from trouble; there's no place that far!"

These few words have remained with me. They pertain not only to the

theme of Splash Mountain but also to our sojourn in mortality.

We learn as we bear our afflictions

Life is a school of experience, a time of probation. We learn as we bear our afflictions and live through our heartaches.

As we ponder the events that can befall all of us—even sickness, accident, death, and a host of other challenges—we can say with Job of old: "Man is born unto trouble."² Job was a "perfect and upright" man who "feared God, and eschewed evil."³ Pious in his conduct, prosperous in his fortune, Job was to face a test which could have destroyed anyone. Shorn of his possessions, scorned by his friends, afflicted by his suffering, shattered by the loss of his family, he was urged to "curse God, and die."⁴ He resisted this temptation and declared from the depths of his noble soul:

"Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high."⁵

"I know that my redeemer liveth."⁶
Job kept the faith.

It may safely be assumed that no person has ever lived entirely free of suffering and tribulation, nor has there ever been a period in human history that did not have its full share of turmoil, ruin, and misery.

"Is there no balm in Gilead?"

When the pathway of life takes a cruel turn, there is the temptation to ask the question "Why me?" Self-incrimination is a common practice, even when we may have had no control over our difficulty. At times there appears to be no light at the tunnel's end, no dawn to break the night's darkness. We feel surrounded by the pain of broken hearts, the disappointment of shattered dreams, and the despair of vanished hopes. We join in uttering the biblical plea, "Is there

no balm in Gilead . . . ?”⁷ We feel abandoned, heartbroken, alone.

To all who so despair, may I offer the assurance found in the psalm, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”⁸

Whenever we are inclined to feel burdened down with the blows of life, let us remember that others have passed the same way, have endured, and then have overcome.

There seems to be an unending supply of trouble for one and all. Our problem is that we often expect instantaneous solutions, forgetting that frequently the heavenly virtue of patience is required.

Do any of the following challenges sound familiar to you?

- Handicapped children
- The passing of a loved one
- Employment downsizing
- Obsolescence of one’s skills
- A wayward son or daughter
- Mental and emotional illness
- Accidents
- Divorce
- Abuse
- Excessive debt

The list is endless. In the world of today there is at times a tendency to feel detached—even isolated—from the Giver of every good gift. We worry that we walk alone. You ask, “How can we cope?” What brings to us ultimate comfort is the gospel.

God will not fail us

From the bed of pain, from the pillow wet with tears, we are lifted heavenward by that divine assurance and precious promise, “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”⁹

Such comfort is priceless as we journey along the pathway of mortality, with its many forks and turnings. Rarely is the assurance communicated by a flashing sign or a loud voice. Rather, the language

of the Spirit is gentle, quiet, uplifting to the heart, and soothing to the soul.

The example of Elijah

Lest we question the Lord concerning our troubles, let us remember that the wisdom of God may appear as foolishness to men; but the greatest single lesson we can learn in mortality is that when God speaks and a man obeys, that man will always be right.

The experience of Elijah the Tishbite is illustrative of this truth. In the midst of a terrible famine, a drought, and the despair of hunger, suffering, and perhaps even death, “the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, . . . and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.”¹⁰

Elijah didn’t question the Lord. “He arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

“And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

“And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

“And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

“For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.”¹¹

She did not question the improbable promise. “She went and did according to

the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."¹²

The Savior's life inspires patience and courage

Let us now fast-forward the pages of history to that special night when shepherds were abiding with their flocks and heard the holy pronouncement:

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."¹³

With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment—a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. The long-foretold promise was fulfilled; the Christ child was born.

The sacred record reveals that the boy Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."¹⁴ At a later time, a quiet entry records that He "went about doing good."¹⁵

Out of Nazareth and down through the generations of time come His excellent example, His welcome words, His divine deeds. They inspire patience to endure affliction, strength to bear grief, courage to face death, and confidence to meet life. In this world of chaos, of trial, of uncertainty, never has our need for such divine guidance been more desperate.

All paths pass somewhere through Gethsemane

Lessons from Nazareth, Capernaum, Jerusalem, and Galilee transcend the barriers of distance, the passage of time, the limits of understanding as they bring to troubled hearts a light and a way.

Ahead lay Gethsemane's garden and Golgotha's hill.

The biblical account reveals:

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

"And he took with him Peter, [James, and John] and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

"Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

"And he went a little further, . . . and prayed, saying,"¹⁶

"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."¹⁷

What suffering, what sacrifice, what anguish did He endure to atone for the sins of the world!

For our benefit, the poet wrote:

In golden youth when seems the earth
A summer-land of singing mirth,
When souls are glad and hearts are
light,
And not a shadow lurks in sight,
We do not know it, but there lies
Somewhere veiled 'neath evening
skies
A garden which we all must see—
The garden of Gethsemane. . . .

Down shadowy lanes, across strange
streams
Bridged over by our broken dreams;
Behind the misty caps of years,
Beyond the great salt fount of tears,
The garden lies. Strive, as you may,
You cannot miss it in your way;
All paths that have been, or shall be
Pass somewhere through Gethse-
mane.¹⁸

The mortal mission of the Savior of the world drew rapidly to its close. Ahead lay Calvary's cross, the acts of depravity committed by those who thirsted for the blood of the Son of God. His divine response is a simple but profoundly significant prayer: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."¹⁹

The conclusion came: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus,"²⁰ the Great Redeemer died. He was buried in a tomb. He rose on the morning of the third day. He was seen by His disciples. Words that linger from that epochal event course through the annals of time and bring to our souls even today the comfort, the assurance, the balm, the certainty, "He is not here: . . . he is risen."²¹ Resurrection became a reality for all.

Surviving personal tragedy with faith

Last week I received a faith-filled letter from Laurence M. Hilton. May I share with you the account of surviving personal tragedy with faith, nothing wavering.

In 1892, Thomas and Sarah Hilton, Laurence's grandparents, went to Samoa, where Thomas was set apart as mission president after their arrival. They brought with them a baby daughter; two sons were born to them while they served there. Tragically, all three died in Samoa, and in 1895 the Hiltons returned from their mission childless.

David O. McKay was a friend of the family and was deeply touched by their loss. In 1921, as part of a world tour of visits to the members of the Church in many nations, Elder McKay stopped in Samoa, accompanied by Elder Hugh J. Cannon. Before leaving on his tour, he had promised the now-widowed Sister Hilton that he would personally visit the graves of her three children. I share with you the letter David O. McKay wrote to her from Samoa:

"Dear Sister Hilton:

"Just as the descending rays of the late afternoon sun touched the tops of the tall coconut trees, Wednesday, May 18th, 1921, a party of five stood with bowed heads in front of the little Fagali'i Cemetery. . . . We were there, as you will remember, in response to a promise I made you before I left home.

"The graves and headstones are in a good state of preservation. . . . I reproduce here a copy I made as I stood . . . outside the stone wall surrounding the spot.

Janette Hilton

Bn: Sept. 10, 1891

Died: June 4, 1892

"Rest, darling Jennie"

George Emmett Hilton

Bn: Oct. 12, 1894

Died: Oct. 19, 1894

"Peaceful be thy slumber"

Thomas Harold Hilton

Bn: Sept. 21, 1892

Died: March 17, 1894

"Rest on the hillside, rest"

"As I looked at those three little graves, I tried to imagine the scenes through which you passed during your young motherhood here in old Samoa. As I did so, the little headstones became monuments not only to the little babes sleeping beneath them, but also to a mother's faith and devotion to the eternal principles of truth and life. Your three little ones, Sister Hilton, in silence most eloquent and effective, have continued to carry on your noble missionary work begun nearly 30 years ago, and they will continue as long as there are gentle hands to care for their last earthly resting place.

By loving hands their dying eyes
were closed;

By loving hands their little limbs
composed;

By foreign hands their humble graves
adorned;
By strangers honored, and by strangers
mourned.

"Tofa Soifua,
"David O. McKay"

The peace which passes understanding

This touching account conveys to the grieving heart "the peace . . . which passeth all understanding."²² Our Heavenly Father lives. Jesus Christ the Lord is our Savior and Redeemer. He guided the Prophet Joseph. He guides His prophet today, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. Of a truth I bear this personal witness.

That we may shoulder our sorrows, bear our burdens, and face our fears—as did our Savior—is my prayer. I know that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah," Ray Gilbert, © 1945 Walt Disney Music Company.
2. Job 5:7.
3. Job 1:1.
4. Job 2:9.
5. Job 16:19.

6. Job 19:25.
7. Jeremiah 8:22.
8. Psalm 30:5.
9. Joshua 1:5.
10. 1 Kings 17:8–9.
11. 1 Kings 17:10–14.
12. 1 Kings 17:15–16.
13. Luke 2:10–11.
14. Luke 2:52.
15. Acts 10:38.
16. Matthew 26:36–39.
17. Luke 22:42–44.
18. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, "Gethsemane."
19. Luke 23:34.
20. Luke 23:46.
21. Matthew 28:6.
22. Philippians 4:7.

The choir sang "For I Am Called by Thy Name."

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "For I Am Called by Thy Name."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

"Have you been saved?"

What do we say when someone asks us, "Have you been saved?" This question, so common in the conversation of some Christians, can be puzzling to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because it is not our usual way of speaking. We tend to speak of *saved* or *salvation* as a future event rather than something that has already been realized.

Good Christian people sometimes attach different meanings to some key gospel terms like *saved* or *salvation*. If we answer according to what our questioner probably means in asking if we have been "saved," our answer must be "yes." If we answer according to the various meanings we attach to the terms *saved* or *salvation*, our answer will be either "yes" or "yes, but with conditions."

I.

Saved according to the meaning of good Christians

As I understand what is meant by the good Christians who speak in these terms, we are "saved" when we sincerely declare or confess that we have accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. This meaning relies on words the Apostle Paul taught the Christians of his day:

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

To Latter-day Saints, the words *saved* and *salvation* in this teaching signify a present covenant relationship with Jesus Christ in which we are assured salvation from the consequences of sin if we are obedient. Every sincere Latter-day Saint is "saved" according to this meaning. We have been converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we have experienced repentance and baptism, and we are renewing our covenants of baptism by partaking of the sacrament.

II.

Six meanings of salvation

As Latter-day Saints use the words *saved* and *salvation*, there are at least six different meanings. According to some of these, our salvation is assured—we are already saved. In others, salvation must be spoken of as a future event (e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:5) or as conditioned upon a future event (e.g., Mark 13:13). But in all of these meanings, or kinds of salvation, salvation is in and through Jesus Christ.

Saved from the permanence of death

First, all mortals have been saved from the permanence of death through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Saved from sin conditionally

As to salvation from sin and the consequences of sin, our answer to the question of whether or not we have been saved is "yes, but with conditions." Our third article of faith declares our belief:

"We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."

Many Bible verses declare that Jesus came to take away the sins of the world (e.g., John 1:29; Matthew 26:28). The New Testament frequently refers to the grace of God and to salvation by grace (e.g., John 1:17; Acts 15:11; Ephesians 2:8). But it also has many specific commandments on personal behavior and many references to the importance of works (e.g., Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-17). In addition, the Savior taught that we must endure to the end in order to be saved (see Matthew 10:22; Mark 13:13).

Relying upon the totality of Bible teachings and upon clarifications received through modern revelation, we testify that being cleansed from sin through Christ's Atonement is conditioned upon the individual sinner's faith, which must be manifested by obedience to the Lord's command to repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost (see Acts 2:37-38). "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," Jesus taught, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5; see also Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37-38). Believers who have had this required rebirth at the hands of those having authority have already been saved

from sin *conditionally*, but they will not be saved *finally* until they have completed their mortal probation with the required continuing repentance, faithfulness, service, and enduring to the end.

Some Christians accuse Latter-day Saints who give this answer of denying the grace of God through claiming they can earn their own salvation. We answer this accusation with the words of two Book of Mormon prophets. Nephi taught, "For we labor diligently . . . to persuade our children . . . to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). And what is "all we can do"? It surely includes repentance (see Alma 24:11) and baptism, keeping the commandments, and enduring to the end. Moroni pleaded, "Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:32).

We are not saved *in* our sins, as by being unconditionally saved through confessing Christ and then, inevitably, committing sins in our remaining lives (see Alma 11:36–37). We are saved *from* our sins (see Helaman 5:10) by a weekly renewal of our repentance and cleansing through the grace of God and His blessed plan of salvation (see 3 Nephi 9:20–22).

We have been born again

The question of whether a person has been saved is sometimes phrased in terms of whether that person has been "born again." Being "born again" is a familiar reference in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. As noted earlier, Jesus taught that except a man was "born again" (John 3:3) of water and of the Spirit, he could not enter into the kingdom of God (see John 3:5). The Book of

Mormon has many teachings about the necessity of being "born again" or "born of God" (Mosiah 27:25; see verses 24–26; Alma 36:24, 26; Moses 6:59). As we understand these scriptures, our answer to whether we have been born again is clearly "yes." We were born again when we entered into a covenant relationship with our Savior by being born of water and of the Spirit and by taking upon us the name of Jesus Christ. We can renew that rebirth each Sabbath when we partake of the sacrament.

Latter-day Saints affirm that those who have been born again in this way are spiritually begotten sons and daughters of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 5:7; 15:9–13; 27:25). Nevertheless, in order to realize the intended blessings of this born-again status, we must still keep our covenants and endure to the end. In the meantime, through the grace of God, we have been born again as new creatures with new spiritual parentage and the prospects of a glorious inheritance.

Saved from ignorance

A fourth meaning of being saved is to be saved from the darkness of ignorance of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the purpose of life, and of the destiny of men and women. The gospel made known to us by the teachings of Jesus Christ has given us this salvation. "I am the light of the world," Jesus taught; "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12; see also John 12:46).

Saved from the second death

For Latter-day Saints, being saved can also mean being saved or delivered from the second death (meaning the final spiritual death) by assurance of a kingdom of glory in the world to come (see 1 Corinthians 15:40–42). Just as the Resurrection is universal, we affirm that

every person who ever lived upon the face of the earth—except for a very few—is assured of salvation in this sense. As we read in modern revelation:

“And this is the gospel, the glad tidings . . .

“That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

“*That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him;*

“Who glorifies the Father, and *saves all the works of his hands*, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him” (D&C 76:40–43; italics added).

The prophet Brigham Young taught that doctrine when he declared that “every person who does not sin away the day of grace, and become an angel to the Devil, will be brought forth to inherit a kingdom of glory” (*Discourses of Brigham Young* [1954], 382). This meaning of *saved* ennoble the whole human race through the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In this sense of the word, all should answer: “Yes, I have been saved. Glory to God for the gospel and gift and grace of His Son!”

Salvation also means exaltation

Finally, in another usage familiar and unique to Latter-day Saints, the words *saved* and *salvation* are also used to denote exaltation or eternal life (see Abraham 2:11). This is sometimes referred to as the “fulness of salvation” (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 1:242). This salvation requires more than repentance and baptism by appropriate priesthood authority. It also requires the making of sacred covenants, including eternal marriage, in the temples of God and faithfulness to those covenants by enduring to the end. If we use the word *salvation*

to mean “exaltation,” it is premature for any of us to say that we have been “saved” in mortality. That glorious status can only follow the final judgment of Him who is the Great Judge of the living and the dead.

I have suggested that the short answer to the question of whether a faithful member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been saved or born again must be a fervent “yes.” Our covenant relationship with our Savior puts us in that “saved” or “born again” condition meant by those who ask this question. Some modern prophets have also used “salvation” or “saved” in that same present sense. President Brigham Young declared:

“It is present salvation and the present influence of the Holy Ghost that we need every day to keep us on saving ground. . . .

“I want present salvation. . . . Life is for us, and it is for us to receive it today, and not wait for the Millennium. Let us take a course to be saved today” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 15–16). President David O. McKay spoke of the revealed gospel of Jesus Christ in that same present sense of “salvation *here—here and now*” (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 6).

III.

Why do we send missionaries to other Christians?

I will conclude by discussing another important question members and leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are asked by others: “Why do you send missionaries to preach to other Christians?” Sometimes this is asked with curiosity and sometimes with resentment.

My most memorable experience with that question occurred some years ago in what we then called the Eastern Bloc. After many years of Communist hostility to

religion, these countries were suddenly and miraculously given a measure of religious freedom. When that door opened, many Christian faiths sent missionaries. As part of our preparation to do so, the First Presidency sent members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to meet with government and church leaders in these countries. Our assignment was to introduce ourselves and to explain what our missionaries would be doing.

Elder Russell M. Nelson and I called on the leader of the Orthodox Church in one of these countries. Here was a man who had helped keep the light of Christianity burning through the dark decades of Communist repression. I noted in my journal that he was a warm and gracious man who impressed me as a servant of the Lord. I mention this so that you will not think there was any spirit of arrogance or contention in our conversation of nearly an hour. Our visit was pleasant and cordial, filled with the goodwill that should always characterize conversations between men and women who love the Lord and seek to serve Him, each according to his or her own understanding.

Our host told us about the activities of his church during the period of Communist repression. He described the various difficulties his church and its work were experiencing as they emerged from that period and sought to regain their former position in the life of the country and the hearts of the people. We introduced ourselves and our fundamental beliefs. We explained that we would soon be sending missionaries into his country and told him how they would perform their labors.

He asked, "Will your missionaries preach only to unbelievers, or will they also try to preach to believers?" We replied that our message was for everyone, believers as well as unbelievers. We gave two reasons for this answer—one a matter of principle and the other a matter of practicality. We told him that we preached to believers as well as unbeliev-

ers because our message, the restored gospel, makes an important addition to the knowledge, happiness, and peace of all mankind. As a matter of practicality, we preach to believers as well as unbelievers because we cannot tell the difference. I remember asking this distinguished leader, "When you stand before a congregation and look into the faces of the people, can you tell the difference between those who are real believers and those who are not?" He smiled wryly, and I sensed an admission that he had understood the point.

We offer the fulness of the gospel

Through missionaries and members, the message of the restored gospel is going to all the world. To non-Christians, we witness of Christ and share the truths and ordinances of His restored gospel. To Christians we do the same. Even if a Christian has been "saved" in the familiar single sense discussed earlier, we teach that there remains more to be learned and more to be experienced. As President Hinckley recently said: "[We are] not argumentative. We do not debate. We, in effect, simply say to others, 'Bring all the good that you have and let us see if we can add to it'" ("The BYU Experience," BYU devotional address, 4 Nov. 1997).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints offers all of the children of God the opportunity to learn the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored in these latter days. We offer everyone the privilege of receiving all of the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.

We invite all to hear this message, and we invite all who receive the confirming witness of the Spirit to heed it. These things are true, I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

President Hinckley

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, following which the choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

Elder W. Eugene Hansen

The Lord loves little children

As we read the scriptures, the love of the Lord for children is apparent. And understandably so: "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3).

In the New Testament, the Savior made clear the seriousness of anyone causing harm or offending "these little ones." As recorded in Matthew, "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

One of the most touching scenes recorded in the Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ, occurred when the resurrected Lord appeared to the Nephite people who inhabited the Western Hemisphere at the time of the Savior. During that appearance, He ministered so tenderly to the little children.

We read how, as He stood in the midst of the multitude, He called upon the people to bring forth their little children, and He knelt among them and prayed to the Father for them. The words that He spoke were so sacred that they could not be written. He wept, and He took the children one by one and blessed them.

As the multitude looked heavenward, they saw the heavens open—angels appeared and descended. The children were encircled by fire, and angels ministered to them.

Elder W. Eugene Hansen of the Presidency of the Seventy will now speak to us, following which the choir and congregation will sing "I Stand All Amazed."

"The Family: A Proclamation to the World"

As we acknowledge the love the Lord has for little children, it is not surprising that those who represent the Lord on the earth today have spoken out plainly and forcefully as to the responsibility parents have for their children.

I refer to the document issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles titled "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." From that document we read:

"Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Listen to the counsel of the prophets

These are sobering words, particularly in light of the adversary's continuing assault on traditional values and the impact it is having upon the family. It becomes obvious that much needs to be done to reverse trends that continue to place the family at risk.

In desperation, society turns to the secular. Social programs are spawned. Government agencies are enlisted to provide public funding and programs in an attempt to change the destructive trends. While some spotty successes are observed, general trends remain alarming. I submit that if real and lasting change is to occur, it will come only as we return to our spiritual moorings. We need to be listening to the counsel of the prophets.

Again the proclamation on the family, modern-day revelation: "The family is ordained of God. . . . Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed."

Blessings of being raised in a good home

As we ponder these inspired words of modern revelation, I acknowledge the blessing of being raised in a good home, a home where parents were more concerned about the children God gave them than acquiring worldly fame or possessions.

I was next oldest in a family of eight children. We lived on a small farm in

northern Utah. Money was scarce, and thus I was blessed with the necessity of learning to work at a young age. In fact, our limited income required all of the children to be frugal and to contribute to the financial success of the family as soon as they were old enough. On the subject of loafing, my father had a favorite saying: "There's nothing so boring as loafing, because you can't stop and rest."

Although times have changed, the principles remain the same. Today's parents need to give each of their children opportunities to contribute to the well-being of the family. In such a family, children are happier and there is a spirit of love and unity in the home.

I learned on that little farm that money and material possessions are not the keys to happiness and success. Of course, there must be sufficient to supply basic needs, but money in and of itself seldom, if ever, results in happiness.

Our farm also provided the opportunity for learning humility. It seems that if we had a good crop and prices were high, an early frost or a hailstorm would manage to trim the income down to where we would barely get by.

I heard my father remark on more than one occasion, "I don't mind being educated in the school of hard knocks—it's the refresher courses I keep getting that are the trial."

Even with the constant financial challenge, we still had a good life. There was love in the home. Home was the place where we wanted to be. And it was good for us to have had the experience of forgoing some of our wants that others in the family would be able to have their needs fulfilled.

Our living room furniture would never have made the cover of *House Beautiful*, but we did have two very significant items: we had a piano and we had a bookcase. How significant those two somewhat simple possessions were in the development of productive talents

and interests so important in our early years.

The influence of good music and good books carried well over into the next generation. Even television has not replaced the piano and the bookcase in the lives of our families.

Good examples of parents

We were also blessed with a mother and a father who worked as equal partners in that critically important responsibility of raising a family. I learned much as I watched them teach their children in the most effective way—by example.

My father taught me:

- Duty and charity as I saw him leave his own work on many occasions to go to the aid of ward members.

- Faith as I listened to him pray and observed him give priesthood blessings to family members and others.

- Love as I watched him tenderly care for his parents in their older years.

- Standards as he used experience and current events to teach me concerning the path that he expected me to follow.

- Dependability as he bought me an alarm clock and then assigned me five cows to milk night and morning during my high school years.

He taught integrity as I can truthfully say I never saw him do a dishonest thing.

My mother also taught many things. She taught:

- Thrift as she practiced the spirit of that pioneer adage, "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without."

- Sacrifice as I saw her many times go without that her children might have.

- Chastity as early on she made clear her expectations that her children be morally clean.

- Love as I saw and felt a mother's love in our home.

- Kindness as I can genuinely say I never saw her do an unkind thing.

I thank the Lord for loving parents who taught values both spiritual and moral and who wisely made it clear that there were certain nonnegotiables—among them, attendance at Church meetings, payment of tithing, reading of scriptures, and respect for parents and Church leaders. And most significant, they taught by what they did, not just by what they said.

Parents must assume their responsibility

So crucial in strengthening families is the realization that strong family relationships don't just happen. It takes time. It takes commitment, it takes prayer, and it takes work. Parents must realize their responsibility and willingly assume it. The joy and happiness that will result is indescribable.

Our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has counseled: "Keep nurturing and loving your children. . . . Among all the assets you possess nothing is so precious as your children" (quoted in *Church News*, 3 Feb. 1996, 2).

I leave you my witness that the proclamation on the family, which I referred to earlier, is modern-day revelation provided to us by the Lord through His latter-day prophets.

God lives; Jesus is the Christ; this is His Church, led by a living prophet, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang "I Stand All Amazed."

President Hinckley

Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, Young Women general president, will now speak to us, and she will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Sister Margaret D. Nadauld

The Savior can help and heal us

As this Easter season approaches, and always, we rejoice in the most meaningful invitation ever extended to mankind. It is the invitation to come unto Christ. And we're all invited. The scriptures are replete with that glorious invitation, which is beautifully summarized in the hymn:

Come unto Jesus from ev'ry nation,
From ev'ry land and isle of the sea.
Unto the high and lowly in station,
Ever he calls, "Come to me."
["Come unto Jesus," *Hymns*, no. 117]

The Savior extends His generous invitation simply because He loves us and He knows we need Him. He can help us and heal us. He understands us because of His own experiences. The scriptures report: "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind . . . , that he may know . . . how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:11-12). We want to come unto Christ because it is only in Him and through Him that we can return to the Father.

Bringing a brother home to love

A simple thing happened many years ago that I have always remembered because it caused me to think about the Savior's mission. Although it was just a childish incident, it has some meaning. It happened when our twins were only about five years old. They were just learning to ride their bicycles. As I glanced out the window, I saw them speeding down the street on their bikes going very fast! Perhaps they were going a little too fast for their level of ability, because all of a sudden Adam had a terrible crash! He was tangled up in the wreck, and all I could see was a twist of handlebars and tires and arms and legs.

His little twin brother, Aaron, saw the whole thing happen, and immediately he skidded to a stop and jumped off his bike. He threw it down and ran to the aid of his brother, whom he loved very much. These little twins truly were of one heart. If one hurt, so did the other. If one got tickled, they both laughed. If one started a sentence, the other could complete it. What one felt, the other did also. So it was painful for Aaron to see Adam crash! Adam was a mess. He had skinned knees, he was bleeding from a head wound, his pride was damaged, and he was crying. In a fairly gentle five-year-old way, Aaron helped his brother get untangled from the crash, he checked out the wounds, and then he did the dearest thing. He picked his brother up and carried him home. Or tried to. This wasn't very easy because they were the same size, but he tried. And as he struggled and lifted and half-dragged, half-carried his brother along, they finally reached the front porch. By this time, Adam, the injured one, was no longer crying, but Aaron, the rescuer, was. When asked, "Why are you crying, Aaron?" he said simply, "Because Adam hurts." And so he had brought him home to help, home to someone who knew what to do, to someone who could cleanse the wounds, bind them up, and make them better—home to love.

"By love serve one another"

Just as one twin helped his brother in need, so might we all be lifted, helped, even carried at times by our beloved Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He feels what we feel; He knows our hearts. It was His mission to wipe away our tears, cleanse our wounds, and bless us with His healing power. He can carry us home to our Heavenly Father with the strength of His matchless love.

Surely it pleases the Lord when we, His children, reach out to one another to give help along the way and to bring another closer to Christ. He taught, "[When] ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). He wants us to "mourn with those that mourn; . . . comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9), and "by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).

The words of Susan Evans McCloud say it well:

Savior, may I learn to love thee,
Walk the path that thou hast shown,
Pause to help and lift another,
Finding strength beyond my own. . . .

I would be my brother's keeper;
I would learn the healer's art.
To the wounded and the weary
I would show a gentle heart. . . .

Savior, may I love my brother
As I know thou lovest me,
Find in thee my strength, my beacon,
For thy servant I would be.
["Lord, I Would Follow Thee,"
Hymns, no. 220]

Helping young women grow spiritually

Dear brothers and sisters, these lines express the humble desires of my heart as I joyfully embark on an errand from Heavenly Father to walk with the young women of His Church. I pray constantly that in the Lord will be found strength, a beacon for this willing servant.

It is the mission of Young Women, and it is our greatest desire, to help young women grow spiritually and to assist their families in preparing them to come unto Christ. Many, many of them are well on their way. For example, when we asked some young women what they liked about sacrament meeting, one said, "The sacrament, because it reminds me

of Jesus and all He did for me." Another said, "I never come away with an empty heart, and I love taking the sacrament." When asked how often they prayed, many said, "Morning and night." They pray before a test. They pray in the face of temptation. They read the scriptures. Along with their own personal preparation, these beautiful young women are found blessing lives of others.

The willing service of young women

May I share a letter from a grateful recipient of their loving service. He writes:

"The young women [of my ward] very literally saved my life. I was a young bishop, just 29, the father of four beautiful little girls, including a small baby, when Heavenly Father called my wife home to Him. As I met with each of our little girls and asked them what this change would mean to them, the concerns of six-year-old Emily, the oldest of the four, were many, including, 'Who is going to comb and curl my hair for church and put ribbons and clips in it?' That was a good question to me as well. Who? I was consumed with the idea that life would be as 'normal' as possible for all of us—which meant that I would have to learn a whole new way of life. I was their father, and I was going to be *the* only parent. I realized that I was not equipped with the motherly skills that I needed. I called upon the young women of the ward to train me to be able to satisfy at least the needs of hair care. They came to my home, numerous times, to begin my training. They even showed me how to care for my six-month-old Natalie as far as washing her hair without so much trauma. By the time I 'graduated,' I could whip up a mean (but simple) hairdo. Much more than the skill, those young women gave me confidence as a father of daughters—that I could love them, care for them, be there for

them, no matter how the rest of my life continued."

Thank you, Brother Michael Marston, for your tender letter.

Gratitude and testimony

I pray that parents of precious young women all over the world will be ever thankful for the stewardship they have to guide their daughters with love. May leaders of these young women understand the everlasting importance of their assignment. And may each young woman understand how blessed she is to be a daughter of Heavenly Father, who loves her very much and wants her to be successful!

In closing today, may I express my gratitude. First of all, gratitude for the home of my youth, which was filled with the kind of love Christ taught about; gratitude for the privilege of walking by the side of my dear husband, Stephen, where I have been blessed and prepared and sustained; and gratitude for precious children, whose lives of constant, tender support inspire us, give us great joy, and often show us the way.

I bear testimony that as we accept the invitation to come unto Christ, we will find that He can heal all wounds. He can lift our burdens and carry them for us, and we can feel "encircled about eternally in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

"If ye are not one ye are not mine"

The Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, said of those who would be part of His Church: "Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). And at the creation of man and woman, unity for them in marriage was not given as hope; it was a command! "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Our Heavenly Father wants our hearts to be knit together. That union in love is not simply an ideal. It is a necessity.

The requirement that we be one is not for this life alone. It is to be without end. The first marriage was performed by God in the garden when Adam and Eve were immortal. He placed in men and women from the beginning a desire to be joined together as man and wife forever to dwell in families in a perfect, righteous union. He placed in His children a desire to live at peace with all those around them.

But with the Fall it became clear that living in unity would not be easy. Tragedy struck early. Cain slew Abel, his brother. The children of Adam and Eve had become subject to the temptations of Satan. With skill, hatred, and cunning, Satan pursues his goal. It is the opposite of the purpose of our Heavenly Father and the Savior. They would give us perfect union and eternal happiness. Satan, their enemy and ours, has known the plan of salvation from before the Creation. He knows that only in eternal life can those sacred, joyful associations of families endure. Satan would tear us from loved ones and make us miserable. And it is he who plants the seeds of discord in human hearts in the hope that we might be divided and separate.

All of us have felt something of both union and separation. Sometimes in families and perhaps in other settings we have glimpsed life when one person put the interests of another above his or her own, in love and with sacrifice. And all

of us know something of the sadness and loneliness of being separate and alone. We don't need to be told which we should choose. We know. But we need hope that we can experience unity in this life and qualify to have it forever in the world to come. And we need to know how that great blessing will come so that we can know what we must do.

The Savior makes unity possible

The Savior of the world spoke of that unity and how we will have our natures changed to make it possible. He taught it clearly in the prayer He gave in His last meeting with His Apostles before His death. That supernally beautiful prayer is recorded in the book of John. He was about to face the terrible sacrifice for all of us that would make eternal life possible. He was about to leave the Apostles whom He had ordained, whom He loved, and with whom He would leave the keys to lead His Church. And so He prayed to His Father, the perfect Son to the perfect Parent. We see in His words the way families will be made one, as will all the children of our Heavenly Father who follow the Savior and His servants:

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

"And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:18-21).

In those few words He made clear how the gospel of Jesus Christ can allow hearts to be made one. Those who would believe the truth He taught could accept

the ordinances and the covenants offered by His authorized servants. Then, through obedience to those ordinances and covenants, their natures would be changed. The Savior's Atonement in that way makes it possible for us to be sanctified. We can then live in unity, as we must to have peace in this life and to dwell with the Father and His Son in eternity.

The ministry of the apostles and prophets in that day, as it is today, was to bring the children of Adam and Eve to a unity of the faith in Jesus Christ. The ultimate purpose of what they taught, and of what we teach, is to unite families: husbands, wives, children, grandchildren, ancestors, and finally all of the family of Adam and Eve who will choose it.

The Spirit leads to union with others

You remember the Savior prayed, "For their sakes"—speaking of the Apostles—"I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). The Holy Ghost is a sanctifier. We can have it as our companion because the Lord restored the Melchizedek Priesthood through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The keys of that priesthood are on the earth today. By its power we can make covenants which allow us to have the Holy Ghost constantly.

Where people have that Spirit with them, we may expect harmony. The Spirit puts the testimony of truth in our hearts, which unifies those who share that testimony. The Spirit of God never generates contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29). It never generates the feelings of distinctions between people which lead to strife (see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 131). It leads to personal peace and a feeling of union with others. It unifies souls. A unified family, a unified Church, and a world at peace depend on unified souls.

Keeping the promises made in the sacrament prayer

Even a child can understand what to do to have the Holy Ghost as a companion. The sacrament prayer tells us. We hear it every week as we attend our sacrament meetings. In those sacred moments we renew the covenants we made at baptism. And the Lord reminds us of the promise we received as we were confirmed members of the Church—the promise that we might receive the Holy Ghost. Here are the words of the sacrament prayer: “They are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them” (D&C 20:77).

We can have His Spirit by keeping that covenant. First, we promise to take His name upon us. That means we must see ourselves as His. We will put Him first in our lives. We will want what He wants rather than what we want or what the world teaches us to want. As long as we love the things of the world first, there will be no peace in us. Holding an ideal for a family or a nation of comfort through material goods will, at last, divide them (see Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 97). The ideal of doing for each other what the Lord would have us do, which follows naturally from taking His name upon us, can take us to a spiritual level which is a touch of heaven on earth.

Second, we promise always to remember Him. We do that every time we pray in His name. Especially when we ask for His forgiveness, as we must do often, we remember Him. At that moment we remember His sacrifice that makes repentance and forgiveness possible. When we plead, we remember Him as our advocate with the Father. When the feelings of forgiveness and peace come, we remember His patience and

His endless love. That remembering fills our hearts with love.

We also keep our promise to remember Him when as families we pray together and when we read the scriptures. At family prayer around a breakfast table, one child may pray for another to be blessed that things will go well that day in a test or in some performance. When the blessings come, the child blessed will remember the love of the morning and the kindness of the Advocate in whose name the prayer was offered. Hearts will be bound in love.

We keep our covenant to remember Him every time we gather our families to read the scriptures. They testify of the Lord Jesus Christ, for that is the message and always has been of prophets. Even if children do not remember the words, they will remember the true Author, who is Jesus Christ.

ObeY all of the commandments

Third, we promise as we take the sacrament to keep His commandments, all of them. President J. Reuben Clark Jr., as he pled—as he did many times—for unity in a general conference talk, warned us against being selective in what we will obey. He put it this way: “The Lord has given us nothing that is useless or unnecessary. He has filled the Scriptures with the things which we should do in order that we may gain salvation.”

President Clark went on: “When we partake of the Sacrament we covenant to obey and keep his commandments. There are no exceptions. There are no distinctions, no differences” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1955, 10–11). President Clark taught that just as we repent of all sin, not just a single sin, we pledge to keep all the commandments. Hard as that sounds, it is uncomplicated. We simply submit to the authority of the Savior and promise to be obedient to whatever He commands (see Mosiah 3:19). It is our surrender to the authority

of Jesus Christ which will allow us to be bound as families, as a Church, and as the children of our Heavenly Father.

The Lord conveys that authority through His prophet to humble servants. That faith turns our call as a home teacher or a visiting teacher into an errand from the Lord. We go for Him, at His command. An ordinary man and a teenage junior companion go into homes expecting that the powers of heaven will help them assure that families are united and that there is no hardness, lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking. That faith—that the Lord calls servants—will help us ignore their limitations when they reprove us, as they will. We will see their good intent more clearly than their human limitations. We will be less likely to feel offense and more likely to feel gratitude to the Master who called them.

Charity is essential to unity

There are some commandments which, when broken, destroy unity. Some have to do with what we say and some with how we react to what others say. We must speak no ill of anyone. We must see the good in each other and speak well of each other whenever we can (see David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 4–11).

At the same time, we must stand against those who speak contemptuously of sacred things, because the certain effect of that offense is to offend the Spirit and so create contention and confusion. President Spencer W. Kimball showed the way to stand without being contentious as he lay on a hospital gurney and asked an attendant who, in a moment of frustration, took the name of the Lord in vain: “‘Please! Please! That is my Lord whose names you revile.’ There was a deathly silence, then a subdued voice whispered: ‘I am sorry’” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 198). An inspired, loving rebuke can be an invitation to unity. Fail-

ure to give it when moved upon by the Holy Ghost will lead to discord.

If we are to have unity, there are commandments we must keep concerning how we feel. We must forgive and bear no malice toward those who offend us. The Savior set the example from the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). We do not know the hearts of those who offend us. Nor do we know all the sources of our own anger and hurt. The Apostle Paul was telling us how to love in a world of imperfect people, including ourselves, when he said, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:4–5). And then he gave solemn warning against reacting to the fault of others and forgetting our own when he wrote, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as . . . I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Stay clean and beware of pride

The sacrament prayer can remind us every week of how the gift of unity will come through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we keep our covenants to take His name upon us, to remember Him always, and to keep all His commandments, we will receive the companionship of His Spirit. That will soften our hearts and unite us. But there are two warnings which must come with that promise.

First, the Holy Ghost remains with us only if we stay clean and free from the love of the things of the world. A choice to be unclean will repel the Holy Ghost. The Spirit dwells only with those who choose the Lord over the world. “Be ye clean” (3 Nephi 20:41; D&C 38:42) and love God with all your “heart, . . . might, mind, and strength” (D&C 59:5) are not

suggestions but commandments. And they are necessary to the companionship of the Spirit, without which we cannot be one.

The other warning is to beware of pride. A unity which comes to a family or to a people softened by the Spirit will bring great power. With that power will come recognition from the world. Whether that recognition brings praise or envy, it could lead us to pride. That would offend the Spirit. There is a protection against pride, that sure source of disunity. It is to see the bounties which God pours upon us not only as a mark of His favor but an opportunity to join with those around us in greater service. A man and his wife learn to be one by using their similarities to understand each other and their differences to complement each other in serving one another and those around them. In the same way, we can unite with those who do not accept our doctrine but share our desire to bless the children of our Heavenly Father.

We can become peacemakers, worthy to be called blessed and the children of God (see Matthew 5:9).

God our Father lives. His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, is the head of this Church, and He offers to all who will accept it the standard of peace. I so testify, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

President Hinckley

Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, general president of the Young Women, spoke to us, and she was followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve. The choir then sang that beautiful number "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Sweet Is the Work." The benediction will be offered by Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at two o'clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Travels to visit members worldwide

Now, my dear friends, I pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is three years now since you sustained me as President of the Church. May I say a few words of a personal nature? From the bottom of my heart I thank you for your love and support, for your prayers and faith. I am no longer a young man filled with energy and vitality. I am an old man trying to catch up with Brother Haight! I'm given to meditation and prayer. I would enjoy sitting in a rocker, swallowing prescriptions, listening to soft music, and contemplating the things of the universe. But such activity offers no challenge and makes no contribution.

I wish to be up and doing. I wish to face each day with resolution and purpose. I wish to use every waking hour to give encouragement, to bless those whose burdens are heavy, to build faith and strength of testimony. Through the great kindness of a generous friend, I have been permitted to travel over the earth during these three years, visiting among our people in scores of nations. They have gathered by the thousands and tens of thousands. In one place there were more than 200 buses which brought them to the stadium.

I have been among the affluent but more so among the poor—the poor of the earth and the poor of the Church.

Some of their eyes are of a slightly different tilt than mine and their skin of a different color, but all of this disappears and becomes meaningless when I am among them. They all become our Father's sons and daughters, children with a divine birthright. We speak various languages, but we all understand the common tongue of brotherhood.

It is wearisome to travel far to reach them. But it is difficult to leave them after being with them. Everyplace we go is only for a brief visit, a meeting scheduled to fit with other meetings. I wish we could stay longer. At the conclusion of the meeting we spontaneously sing "God Be with You Till We Meet Again" (*Hymns*, no. 152). Handkerchiefs come out to dry tears and then are waved in affectionate farewell. Most recently we held 11 large meetings in different cities in Mexico in just seven days.

It is the presence of wonderful people which stimulates the adrenaline. It is the look of love in their eyes which gives me energy.

Testimony is the strength of the Church

I could spend all day in my office, doing so year after year, dealing with mountains of problems, many of them of small consequence. I do spend a good deal of time there. But I feel a greater mission, a higher responsibility to be out among the people. These thousands, hundreds of thousands, even millions now, all have one thing in common. They have an individual and personal testimony that this is the work of the Almighty, our Heavenly Father; that Jesus, the Lord, who died on the cross of Calvary and was resurrected, lives, a distinct and real and individual personality; that this is their work, restored in this last, wonderful dispensation of time; that the ancient priesthood has been restored with all of its keys and powers; that the Book of Mormon has spoken from the

dust in testimony of the Redeemer of the world.

This thing which we call testimony is the great strength of the Church. It is the wellspring of faith and activity. It is difficult to explain. It is difficult to quantify. It is an elusive and mysterious thing, and yet it is as real and powerful as any force on the earth. The Lord described it when He spoke to Nicodemus and said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). This thing which we call testimony is difficult to define, but its fruits are plainly evident. It is the Holy Spirit testifying through us.

Personal testimony is the factor which turns people around in their living as they come into this Church. This is the element which motivates the membership to forsake all in the service of the Lord. This is the quiet, encouraging voice which sustains without pause those who walk in faith down to the last days of their lives.

It is a mysterious and wonderful thing, a gift from God to man. It overrides wealth or poverty when one is called to serve. This testimony which is carried in the hearts of our people motivates to an impelling duty. It is found in young and old. It is found in the seminary student, in the missionary, in the bishop and the stake president, in the mission president, in the Relief Society sister, in every General Authority. It is heard from those who hold no office other than membership. It is of the very essence of this work. It is what is moving the work of the Lord forward across the world. It impels to action. It demands that we do what we are asked to do. It brings with it the assurance that life is purposeful, that some things are of far greater importance than others, that we are on an eternal journey, that we are answerable unto God.

Emily Dickinson captured an element of it when she wrote:

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.
["Chartless"]

It is this element, weak and somewhat feeble at first, which moves every investigator in the direction of conversion. It pushes every convert toward security in the faith. This is the thing which caused our forebears to leave England and the lands of Europe, to cross the seas with harrowing experiences, to walk what seemed endlessly beside plodding oxen or frail handcarts in the direction of these mountains of the West. They struggled, they worked, they died by the thousands on that fateful journey. That spirit of testimony has come down to us, who are the inheritors of their precious faith.

Testimony cannot be refuted

Wherever the Church is organized its power is felt. We stand on our feet and say that we know. We say it until it almost appears to be monotonous. We say it because we do not know what else to say. The simple fact is that we *do* know that God lives, that Jesus *is* the Christ, and that this is their cause and their kingdom. The words are simple; the expression comes from the heart. It is at work wherever the Church is organized, wherever there are missionaries teaching the gospel, wherever there are members sharing their faith.

It is something that cannot be refuted. Opponents may quote scripture and argue doctrine endlessly. They can be clever and persuasive. But when one says, "I know," there can be no further

argument. There may not be acceptance, but who can refute or deny the quiet voice of the inner soul speaking with personal conviction?

Power to change people

Let me tell you a story that I heard recently in Mexico. In Torreón I was driven about in the fine automobile that belonged to the man of whom I speak. His name is David Castañeda.

Thirty years ago he, his wife, Tomasa, and their children lived on a dry little run-down ranch near Torreón. They owned 30 chickens, 2 pigs, and 1 thin horse. The chickens provided a few eggs to sustain them and the means whereby to earn an occasional peso. They walked in poverty. Then the missionaries called on them. Sister Castañeda said, "The elders took the blinders from our eyes and brought light into our lives. We knew nothing of Jesus Christ. We knew nothing of God until they came."

She had two years of schooling, her husband none. The elders taught them, and they were eventually baptized. They moved into the little town of Bermejillo. They were fortuitously led into the junk business, buying wrecked automobiles. This led to association with insurance companies and others. They gradually built a prosperous business in which the father and his five sons worked. With simple faith they paid their tithing. They put their trust in the Lord. They lived the gospel. They served wherever called to do so. Four of their sons and three of their daughters filled missions. The youngest son is presently serving in Oaxaca. They have now built a very substantial business and have been prospered therein. They have been taunted by their critics. Their answer is a testimony of the power of the Lord in their lives.

Some 200 of their family and friends have joined the Church due to their influence. Over 30 sons and daughters of family and friends have served missions.

They donated the land on which a chapel now stands.

The children, now grown to maturity, and the parents take turns going to Mexico City each month, there to work in the temple. They stand as a living testimony of the great power of this work of the Lord to lift and change people. They are typical of thousands upon thousands throughout the world who experience the miracle of Mormonism as a testimony of the divinity of the work comes into their lives.

This witness, this testimony, can be the most precious of all the gifts of God. It is a heavenly bestowal when there is the right effort. It is the opportunity, it is the responsibility of every man and woman in this Church to obtain within himself or herself a conviction of the truth of this great latter-day work and of those who stand at its head, even the living God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"

Jesus pointed the way for the acquisition of such a testimony when He said:

"My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16-17).

We grow in faith and knowledge as we serve, as we study, as we pray.

When Jesus fed the 5,000, they recognized and wondered at the miracle He had performed. Some came back again. To these He taught the doctrine of His divinity, of Himself as the Bread of Life. He accused them of not being interested in the doctrine but rather only in the satisfaction of the hunger of their bodies. Some, on hearing Him and His doctrine, said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6:60). Who can believe what this man is teaching?

"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

"Then said Jesus unto the twelve [I think with some feeling of discouragement], Will ye also go away?

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:66-69).

This is the great question, and the answer thereto, which we must all face. If not to Thee, then "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

It is this conviction, this quiet inward certainty of the reality of the living God, of the divinity of His Beloved Son, of the Restoration of their work in this time, and of the glorious manifestations which have followed which become for each of us the foundation of our faith. This becomes our testimony.

"It all happened"

As I mentioned earlier in this conference, I've recently been in Palmyra, New York. Of the events which occurred in that area, one is led to say: "They either happened or they did not. There can be no gray area, no middle ground."

And then the voice of faith whispers: "It all happened. It happened just as he said it happened."

Nearby is the Hill Cumorah. From there came the ancient record from which was translated the Book of Mormon. One must accept or reject its divine origin. Weighing of the evidence must lead every man and woman who has read with faith to say, "It is true."

And so it is with other elements of this miraculous thing which we call the Restoration of the ancient gospel, the ancient priesthood, and the ancient Church.

A declaration of truth

This testimony is now, as it has always been, a declaration, a straightforward assertion of truth as we know it. Simple and powerful is the statement of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon concerning the Lord, who stands at the head of this work:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:22-24).

It is in this spirit that I add my own witness. Our Eternal Father lives. He

stands as the great God of the universe, ruling in majesty and power. And yet He is my Father, to whom I may go in prayer with the assurance that He will hear, listen, and answer.

Jesus is the Christ, His immortal Son, who under His Father's direction was the Creator of the earth. He was the great Jehovah of the Old Testament, who condescended to come into the world as the Messiah, who gave His life on Calvary's cross in His wondrous Atonement because He loved us. The work in which we are engaged is their work, and we are their servants, who are answerable to them, of which I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Sweet Is the Work."

Elder Spencer J. Condie offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 168th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 5, 1998. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 168th Annual General Conference of

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop and accompanied by Clay Christiansen, will provide the music for this session.

The choir will begin this service by singing "God Speed the Right." The invocation will be offered by Elder F. Enzio Busche of the Seventy.

The choir sang "God Speed the Right."

Elder F. Enzio Busche offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "O Divine Redeemer." President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the

Twelve Apostles, will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "O Divine Redeemer."

President Boyd K. Packer

The great work of the Relief Society

It is my purpose to give unqualified endorsement to the Relief Society—to encourage all women to join in and attend, and priesthood leaders, at every level of administration, to act so that Relief Society will flourish.

The Relief Society was organized and named by prophets and apostles who acted under divine inspiration. It has an illustrious history. Always, it has dispensed encouragement and sustenance to those in need.

The tender hand of the sister gives a gentle touch of healing and encouragement which the hand of a man, however well intentioned, can never quite duplicate.

Relief Society inspires women and teaches them how to adorn their lives with those things which women need—things that are "lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy."¹ The First Presidency has urged women to attend "because in the work of the Relief Society are intellectual, cultural, and spiritual values found in no other organization and sufficient for all general needs of its members."²

Relief Society guides mothers in nurturing their daughters and in cultivating in husbands and sons and brothers courtesy and courage and, indeed, all virtues essential to worthy manhood. It is quite as much in the interest of the men and boys that Relief Society prospers as in the interest of women and girls.

A circle of sisters in Czechoslovakia

Some years ago Sister Packer and I were in Czechoslovakia, then behind the Iron Curtain. It was not easy to obtain visas, and we used great care so as not to jeopardize the safety and well-being of our members, who for generations had struggled to keep their faith alive under conditions of unspeakable oppression.

The most memorable meeting was held in an upper room. The blinds were drawn. Even at night, those attending came at different times, one from one direction and one from another, so as to not call attention to themselves.

There were in attendance 12 sisters. We sang the hymns of Zion from songbooks—words without music—printed more than 50 years before. The Spiritual Living lesson was reverently given from the pages of a handmade manual. The few pages of Church literature we could get to them were typed at night, 12 carbon copies at a time, so as to share a few precious pages as widely as possible among the members.

I told those sisters that they belonged to the largest and by all measure the greatest women's organization on earth. I quoted the Prophet Joseph Smith when he and the Brethren organized the Relief Society:

"I now turn the key in . . . behalf [of all women]."

This society is organized "according to your natures. . . . You are now placed in a situation in which you can act according to those sympathies [within you]. . . .

"If you live up to [these] privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates. . . .

"If this Society listen[s] to the counsel of the Almighty, through the heads of the Church, they shall have power to command queens in their midst."³

The Spirit was there. The lovely sister who had conducted with gentility and reverence wept openly.

I told them that upon our return I was assigned to speak at a Relief Society conference; could I deliver a message from them? Several of them made notes; each expression, every one, was in the spirit of giving—not of asking for anything. I shall never forget what one sister wrote: "A small circle of sisters send their own hearts and thoughts to all the sisters and beg the Lord to help us go forward."

Those words, *circle of sisters*, inspired me. I could see them standing in a circle that reached beyond that room and circled the world. I caught the same vision the apostles and prophets before us have had. The Relief Society is more than a circle now; it is more like a fabric of lace spread across the continents.

Under the direction of the priesthood

The Relief Society works under the direction of the Melchizedek Priesthood, for "all other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood."⁴ It was organized "after the pattern of the priesthood."⁵

You sisters may be surprised to learn that the needs of men are seldom, if ever, discussed in priesthood quorums. Certainly they are not preoccupied with them. They discuss the gospel and the *priesthood* and the family!

If you follow that pattern, you will not be preoccupied with the so-called needs of women. As you give first priority to your family and serve your organization, every need shall be fulfilled, every neglect will be erased, every abuse will be corrected, now or in the eternities.

Stay with the course of the Relief Society

There are many community causes worthy of your support. There are others which are flawed, for they erode those values essential to a happy family. Do not allow yourselves to be organized under another banner which cannot, in truth, fulfill your needs. Do not drift from the course established by the general presidency of the Relief Society. Their stated purpose is to help bring women and families to Christ.

As mission president, I attended a mission Relief Society conference. Our mission Relief Society president, a relatively recent convert, announced something of a course correction. Some local societies had strayed, and she invited them to conform more closely to the direction set by the general presidency of the Relief Society.

One sister in the congregation stood and defiantly told her that they were not willing to follow her counsel, saying they were an exception. A bit flustered, she turned to me for help. I didn't know what to do. I was not interested in facing a fierce woman. So I motioned for her to proceed. Then came the revelation!

This lovely Relief Society president, small and somewhat handicapped physically, said with gentle firmness: "Dear sister, we'd like not to take care of the exception first. We will take care of the rule first, and then we will see to the exceptions." The course correction was accepted.

Her advice is good for Relief Society and priesthood and for families. When you state a rule and include the exception in the same sentence, the exception is accepted first.

The future of the Church rests equally upon the women

The Brethren know they *belong* to a quorum of the priesthood. Too many sisters, however, think that Relief Society

is merely a class to attend. The same sense of *belonging* to the Relief Society rather than just attending a class must be fostered in the heart of every woman. Sisters, you must graduate from *thinking* that you only *attend* Relief Society to *feeling* that you *belong* to it!

However much priesthood power and authority the men may possess—however much wisdom and experience they may accumulate—the safety of the family, the integrity of the doctrine, the ordinances, the covenants, indeed the future of the Church rest equally upon the women. The defenses of the home and family are greatly reinforced when the wife and mother and daughters belong to Relief Society.

No man receives the fulness of the priesthood without a woman at his side. For no man, the Prophet said, can obtain the fulness of the priesthood outside the temple of the Lord.⁶ And she is there beside him in that sacred place. She shares in all that he receives. The man and the woman individually receive the ordinances encompassed in the endowment. But the man cannot ascend to the highest ordinances—the sealing ordinances—without her at his side. No man achieves the supernal exalting status of worthy fatherhood except as a gift from his wife.

Distinct male and female natures

In the home and in the Church, sisters should be esteemed for their very nature. Be careful lest you unknowingly foster influences and activities which tend to erase the masculine and feminine differences nature has established. A man, a father, can do much of what is usually assumed to be a woman's work. In turn, a wife and a mother can do much—and in time of need, most things—usually considered the responsibility of the man, without jeopardizing their distinct roles. Even so, leaders, and especially parents, should recognize that there is a distinct masculine nature and a distinct

feminine nature essential to the foundation of the home and the family. Whatever disturbs or weakens or tends to erase that difference erodes the family and reduces the probability of happiness for all concerned.

There is a difference in the way the priesthood functions in the home as compared to the way it functions in the Church. In the Church our service is by call. In the home our service is by choice. A calling in the Church generally is temporary, for there comes a release. Our place in the home and family, which is based on choice, is forever and beyond.

In the Church there is a distinct line of authority. We serve where called by those who preside over us.

In the home it is a partnership with husband and wife equally yoked together, sharing in decisions, always working together. While the husband, the father, has responsibility to provide worthy and inspired leadership, his wife is neither behind him nor ahead of him but at his side.

Church activities support the home

The leaders of Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary are all members of the ward and stake councils, and they have a unity which comes from their membership in Relief Society. To the degree that leaders ignore the contribution and influence of these sisters, in councils and in the home, the work of the priesthood itself is limited and weakened.

Neither the brethren, acting as a quorum of the priesthood, nor these sisters who sit in councils must ever lose—not for a minute can they lose—a perspective of the place of the home.

To serve the needs of an increasing number of dysfunctional families, the Church provides influences and activities to compensate for what is missing in those homes.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders, and especially parents, must use wisdom

born of inspiration to make very certain that those activities, for both leaders and members, are not overdemanding of time and money. If they are, it leaves too little of both and makes it difficult for attentive parents to influence their own children. Be very careful to sustain and support rather than supplant the home.

At those times when parents feel smothered and just cannot do it all, they must make wise and inspired judgments as to how much out-of-home activity of all kinds is best for their own family. It is on this subject that the priesthood leaders, in council assembled, must pay careful attention to the expressions of the sisters, the mothers.

The Relief Society provides security

Strong Relief Societies carry a powerful immunizing and healing influence for the mothers and the daughters, for the single parent, for the single sisters, for the aging, for the infirm.

You sisters who are called to serve in the Primary or the Young Women may miss the Relief Society class, but you do not really miss Relief Society; you belong to it. Many brethren serve the Aaronic Priesthood and miss their own quorum meetings. Do not feel denied; never complain about this unselfish service.

We watched our children and now watch our grandchildren leave for work or school in places far from the family. They take a little child or two and virtually nothing material with which to establish a home.

How consoling it is to know that no matter where they go, a Church family awaits them. From the day they arrive, he will belong to a quorum of the priesthood and she will belong to Relief Society. There she will find a grandmother—someone to call in the place of her own mother when her cooking isn't turn-

ing out right or to ask how to know if a restless child is really ill. She will find the steady, wise hand of surrogate grandmothers. They will give a word of comfort when the painful disease of homesickness hangs on too long. The young family will find security—the husband in the quorums, the sister in Relief Society. Both have as their consummate purpose to secure the family eternally.

As sisters in Zion

These lines are sung in the Relief Society:

As sisters in Zion, we'll all work together;
The blessings of God on our labors we'll seek.
We'll build up his kingdom with earnest endeavor;
We'll comfort the weary and strengthen the weak.

The errand of angels is given to women;
And this is a gift that, as sisters, we claim:
To do whatsoever is gentle and human,
To cheer and to bless in humanity's name.

How vast is our purpose, how broad is our mission,
If we but fulfill it in spirit and deed.
Oh, naught but the Spirit's divinest tuition
Can give us the wisdom to truly succeed.⁷

I conclude where I began—it is my purpose to endorse the Relief Society, to bear witness that Jesus is the Christ and that it was through inspiration that it was organized, and I invoke a blessing upon the sisters who attend it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:13.
2. Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark Jr., and David O. McKay, in *A Centenary of Relief Society* (1942), 7.
3. *History of the Church*, 4:607, 605.
4. D&C 107:5.
5. Sarah M. Kimball, "Auto-Biography," *Woman's Exponent*, 1 Sept. 1883, 51.
6. See D&C 131:1-3.
7. "As Sisters in Zion," *Hymns*, no. 309.

President Faust

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Robert D. Hales, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Ronald E. Poelman of the Seventy.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Enduring to the end

We are told in the scriptures that it is essential to endure to the end:

"Wherefore, if ye shall be obedient to the commandments, and endure to the end, ye shall be saved at the last day. And thus it is" (1 Nephi 22:31).

"Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days" (D&C 24:8).

"Behold, we count them happy which endure" (James 5:11).

The Savior is our example

Examples of faithfully enduring to the end are taught by prophets of all ages as they demonstrate courage while enduring trials and tribulations to carry forth the will of God. Our greatest example comes from the life of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. When suffering upon the cross at Calvary, Jesus felt the loneliness of agency when He pled to His Father in Heaven, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). The Savior of the world was left alone by His Father to experience, of His own free will and choice, an act of agency which allowed Him to complete His mission of the Atonement.

Jesus knew who He was—the Son of God. He knew His purpose—to carry out the will of the Father through the

Atonement. His vision was eternal—"to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

The Lord could have called on legions of angels to take Him down from the cross, but He faithfully endured to the end and completed the very purpose for which He had been sent to earth, thus granting eternal blessings to all who will ever experience mortality.

It is touching to me that when the Father introduced His Son to prophets in dispensations since, He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Peter 1:17), or "Behold my Beloved Son, . . . in whom I have glorified my name" (3 Nephi 11:7).

Endurance of the Prophet Joseph Smith

In our dispensation, the Prophet Joseph Smith endured all manner of opposition and hardship to bring to pass the desire of our Heavenly Father—the Restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph was harassed and hunted by angry mobs. He patiently endured poverty, humiliating charges, and unkind acts. His people were forcibly driven from town to town, from state to state. He was tarred and feathered. He was falsely charged and jailed.

Imprisoned at Liberty, Missouri, and experiencing deep, emotional temporal feelings that his own hardships and the tests and trials of the Saints would never

cease, Joseph prayed: "O God, where art thou? . . . Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart shall be softened toward them, and . . . be moved with compassion toward them?" (D&C 121:1, 3).

Joseph was told, "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment" (D&C 121:7).

Joseph knew that if he were to stop going forward with this great work, his earthly trials would probably ease. But he could not stop because he knew who he was, he knew for what purpose he was placed on the earth, and he had the desire to do God's will.

The pioneers who left their homes in Nauvoo, Illinois, and elsewhere; traversed the great plains; and settled in the Salt Lake Valley knew who they were. They were members of the Lord's Church newly restored to the earth. They knew their purpose or goal—to not only find Zion but to establish it. Because they knew that, they were willing to endure all manner of hardships to bring it about.

A young woman's strength in adversity

During the past year, I have been touched by those who understand this doctrine. They have faithfully endured opposition, trials, and tribulation in their lives and, in doing so, were not only personally strengthened by their experience, but they also strengthened those around them by their example.

One young woman wrote about the lessons she has learned in her struggle to recover from an automobile accident in which she received severe head injuries.

"I didn't know how strong I was until the spring of 1996. The incidents of one afternoon completely changed my expectations of how my education would proceed. One minute I was on a path to my future, much like every other high school student. The next minute life was

no longer ordinary for me. I was on my way to strengthening myself in ways I would never have guessed. . . . I was on a road to relearning instead of learning. . . . I relearned how to eat; swallowing the food in my mouth was a hard task that I had to relearn. I went from the bed to a wheelchair to standing and walking in over a five-month period. . . . I have learned many great truths from my diverse trials this past year. Prayers are really answered. Fasting is a power in my family. Love has kept me alive. . . . I have learned what I can tolerate. . . . Throughout all of this I have learned that I am a lot stronger than I thought. I have learned that if you need help, it is OK to ask for it; we all have our limits, strengths, and weaknesses. . . . All knowledge . . . is 'spendable currency' for me. Like a baby bird broken from its shell, I am learning to fly again" (letter from Elizabeth Merkley).

Often we do not know what we can endure until after a trial of our faith. We are also taught by the Lord that we will never be tested beyond that which we can endure (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Finishing the race

In 1968 a marathon runner by the name of John Stephen Akhwari represented Tanzania in an international competition. "A little over an hour after [the winner] had crossed the finish line, John Stephen Akhwari . . . approached the stadium, the last man to complete the journey. [Though suffering from fatigue, leg cramps, dehydration, and disorientation,] a voice called from within to go on, and so he went on. Afterwards, it was written, 'Today we have seen a young African runner who symbolizes the finest in human spirit, a performance that gives meaning to the word *courage*.' For some, the only reward is a personal one. [There are no medals, only] the knowledge that they finished what they set out to do." When asked why he would complete a

race he could never win, Akhwari replied, "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to *start* the race; my country sent me to *finish* the race." (*The Last African Runner*, Olympiad Series, written, directed, and produced by Bud Greenspan, Cappy Productions [videocassette, 1976]).

He knew who he was—an athlete representing the country of Tanzania. He knew his purpose—to finish the race. He knew that he had to endure to the finish so that he could honorably return home to Tanzania. Our mission in life is much the same. We were not sent by Father in Heaven just to be born. We were sent to endure and return to Him with honor.

Teaching endurance to the next generation

Dwelling in the world is part of our mortal test. The challenge is to live in the world yet not partake of the world's temptations, which will lead us away from our spiritual goals. When one of us gives up and succumbs to the wiles of the adversary, we may lose *more* than our own soul. Our surrender could cause the loss of souls who respect us in this generation. Our capitulation to temptation could affect children and families for generations to come.

The Church is not built in one generation. The sound growth of the Church takes hold over three and four generations of faithful Saints. Passing the fortitude of faith to endure to the end from one generation to the next generation is a divine gift of unmeasured blessings to our progeny. Also, we cannot endure to the end alone. It is important that we help by lifting and strengthening one another.

Learning to endure

We are taught in the scriptures that there must be opposition in all things (see 2 Nephi 2:11). It is not a question of *if* we are ready for the tests; it is a matter of *when*. We must prepare to be ready for

tests that will present themselves without warning.

The basic requirements for enduring to the end include knowing who we are—children of God with a desire to return to His presence after mortality; understanding the purpose of life—to endure to the end and obtain eternal life; and living obediently with a desire and a determination to endure all things, having eternal vision. Eternal vision allows us to overcome opposition in our temporal state and ultimately achieve the promised rewards and blessings of eternal life.

If we are patient in our afflictions, endure them well, and wait upon the Lord to learn the lessons of mortality, the Lord will be with us to strengthen us unto the end of our days. "He that shall [faithfully] endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Mark 13:13) and return with honor to our Heavenly Father.

We learn to endure to the end by learning to finish our current responsibilities, and we simply continue doing it all of our lives. We cannot expect to learn endurance in our later years if we have developed the habit of quitting when things get difficult now.

Enduring as a missionary

Enduring to the end applies to all God's commandments. The Lord has called young men to be missionaries. Missionaries are not sent just to have friends and families bid them good-bye. They are called to serve an honorable mission and return home with honor. To do that, they know who they are—missionaries of the Lord's Church. They know their objective—to find and teach those who are ready to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ and to help establish His Church. They develop patience in overcoming trials and tribulations, which surely will come. They are humble enough to learn new skills and have a determination to endure to the end. No matter what a missionary sacrifices to go on a

mission, he must be obedient on his mission to receive the blessings that are rightfully his.

Some may say, "How can I be a missionary and endure to the end? I am naturally shy. I get nervous and tongue-tied talking to strangers." Or "I have difficulty learning and the discussions will be difficult for me." The Lord doesn't promise to remove our handicaps when we become missionaries; but by making the extra effort it will take, we develop more ability to cope with individual shortcomings, and that coping ability will be needed throughout our lives in our relationships with others, in our employment, and in our families. Everyone has something they must learn to master. Some are just more obvious than others.

When we serve as missionaries and the focus is off ourselves and on doing the Lord's work and helping others, an opportunity for great growth and maturity occurs. When a young elder leaves the comfort of family and friends and masters the skills of functioning in the real world, he becomes a man and develops more faith in the Lord to guide him.

A missionary faces many challenges that he has not dealt with previously. Giving the best he knows when he arrives will not fulfill the calling. Enduring requires doing better than your best of today by developing additional gifts as granted from the Lord. It takes faith to listen to the Lord and to mission leaders and learn how to accomplish whatever missionaries are called to do. Of course it is difficult. That's what makes it such a gift and why it has such great rewards. We must recognize who we are and achieve our ultimate purpose. We must then resolve to overcome all obstacles with great determination to endure to the end.

We need great faith and courage

When we take an assignment, we have to think, "I will learn how to accomplish this task by all honorable means, by

doing it the Lord's way. I will study, ask questions, search, and pray. I have the potential to keep learning. I am not finished until the assignment is completed." This is enduring to the end—seeing things through to completion.

There is more to endurance than just surviving and waiting for the end to overtake us. To endure to the end takes great faith. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus "fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

It takes great faith and courage to pray to our Heavenly Father, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." The faith to believe in the Lord and endure brings great strength. Some may say if we have enough faith, we can sometimes change the circumstances that are causing our trials and tribulations. Is our faith to change circumstances, or is it to endure them? Faithful prayers may be offered to change or moderate events in our life, but we must always remember that when concluding each prayer, there is an understanding: "Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42). Faith in the Lord includes trust in the Lord. The faith to endure well is faith based upon accepting the Lord's will and the lessons learned in the events that transpire.

We will be blessed

As we put our faith in the Lord and keep our focus on the eternities, we will be blessed to be able to accept whatever trial we are given, for life on earth, as we know it, is only temporary, and, if we endure it well, the Lord has promised us: "And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7).

As individuals, we do not know when the end of mortality will come. We need to develop the ability to endure and com-

plete our responsibilities of today, however difficult the days ahead may be.

May we be able to say as Paul said to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept [my] faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

"Behold, we count them happy which endure" (James 5:11).

There is nothing that we are enduring that Jesus does not understand, and He waits for us to go to our Heavenly Father in prayer. I testify that if we will be obedient and if we are diligent, our

prayers will be answered, our problems will diminish, our fears will dissipate, light will come upon us, the darkness of despair will be dispersed, and we will be close to the Lord and feel of His love and of the comfort of the Holy Ghost. It is my prayer that we can find the faith, courage, and strength to endure to the end so that we may feel the joy of faithfully returning to the arms of our Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Ronald E. Poelman

Learning to pay tithing as a boy

America was deep in the economic depression of the 1930s. I was one of several small children in our family, and our father had been unemployed for many months. There was no government assistance for the unemployed, and the Church welfare program was not yet in operation. Our needs were many. Some might have said we were destitute. Though I was only a child, I felt the anxiety and concern of my parents.

Each morning we knelt together as a family, and each one in turn led our prayer. One memorable morning it was Mother's turn. She described some of our immediate needs, and then she thanked our Heavenly Father for the privilege of living the law of tithing. I immediately experienced a feeling of comfort and assurance. Living the law of the tithe was a privilege and would bring blessings. I did not doubt it because my mother knew it. Those feelings have remained and intensified throughout my life.

The first time I paid tithing, the amount was five cents. With my father, I went to the office of the bishop, who solemnly accepted my five pennies and wrote out the receipt. Then he stood and, coming from behind his desk, sat

next to me. With his hand on my shoulder, he gave me the small but significant slip of paper and said, "Ronald, you have made a good beginning, and if you continue as you have begun, you can be a perfect tithe payer." The idea of being perfect at anything seemed well beyond my ability. I was trying hard just to be a good boy. But with those words, the bishop inspired me to strive for perfection in that one basic aspect of the gospel. The blessings, both temporal and spiritual, have been abundant.

During the intervening years, my testimony of tithe paying as a privilege has been reconfirmed frequently. Obedience to that law, among others, has enabled me to be ordained to the holy priesthood, to be endowed in the house of the Lord, to serve a full-time mission, and to be sealed to family members for time and eternity. In addition, I have been privileged to return to the temple repeatedly to serve others and to be instructed regarding things of eternal importance.

The Savior's emphasis on tithing

The sacred significance of the law of tithing was confirmed by the Savior Himself following His Resurrection and during His ministry to the people in what is now known as the Americas.

The Book of Mormon records that the Savior taught the Nephites from the scriptures they had, but spoke of other scriptures that they did not have, commanding them to write the words which the Father had given to Malachi, including these words:

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say: Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. . . .

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (3 Nephi 24:8, 10).

The Savior further emphasized the importance of this commandment to us when He said to the Nephites, "These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations" (3 Nephi 26:2).

You and I are now among those generations given the privilege to know and to live the law of the tithe. The blessings that flow from obedience to that law are both temporal and spiritual, as many among us can testify.

The sacredness of tithing

In these latter days, the Lord has said, "Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people" (D&C 64:23).

May tithing be regarded as a sacrifice? Yes, particularly if we understand the meaning of the two Latin words from which the English word *sacrifice* is derived. These two words, *sacer* and *facere*, taken together mean "to make sacred." That which we return to the Lord as tithing is indeed made sacred, and the obedient are edified.

Much earlier, the Lord emphasized the sacredness of tithing to Moses in

these words, recorded in the book of Leviticus: "And all the tithe of the land . . . is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord" (Leviticus 27:30).

The gift of a baby bed

As a young married couple, my wife and I were expecting the birth of our first child. I was studying law at the university and working nights in a gasoline station. We had very little money. We had furnished our small basement apartment with some used furniture and many wooden boxes.

As the time of the birth approached, we had assembled everything we would need, except we had no bed for the baby and no money to buy one.

It was our practice at that time to pay our tithing each month on fast Sunday. As that day approached, we discussed the possibility of postponing the paying of our tithing so that we could make an initial payment on a baby bed. In the spirit of the fast, and after praying, we decided to pay the tithing and trust our Heavenly Father.

A few days later, I was walking in the business district of the city and unexpectedly met my former mission president, who asked if I was in school or working at a job. I replied that I was doing both.

Was I married? "Yes!"

Did we have children? "No, but our first child will be born in just a few weeks."

"Do you have a bed for the baby?" he asked. "No," I replied reluctantly, startled by the direct question.

"Well," he said, "I am now in the furniture business, and it would please me to have a baby bed delivered to your apartment as a gift."

A great feeling of relief, gratitude, and testimony came over me.

The gift filled a temporal need but is still a poignant reminder of the spiritual experience that accompanied it, con-

firming again that the law of tithing is a commandment with a promise.

Blessings from the windows of heaven

The really serious challenges in life require not so much temporal resources but the gifts of the Spirit. Among such challenges might be the sickness, suffering, or death of a loved one; a rebellious and disobedient family member; false accusations; and other severe disappointments. During such trials we need increased faith, inspiration, comfort, courage, patience, and the ability to forgive. These blessings can be poured out of the windows of heaven.

There comes to mind those good and faithful people who believed the teachings of Alma the Elder and came into the fold of God. The Book of Mormon records that they were obedient and righteous (see Mosiah 18). Notwithstanding their goodness, they suffered great afflictions at the hands of their enemies. When they poured out their hearts to God, He answered them with words of comfort, assuring them that He would visit them in their afflictions (see Mosiah 24:14).

Then we read, "The Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord" (Mosiah 24:15).

May we also be so strengthened and submissive.

Even though we live the law of the tithe, we surely will experience the trials and tribulations of mortality. However, if we are right with the Lord, then, as we face adversity, we can be assured that we will be blessed with faith, strength, wisdom, and help from others—with all that is necessary not only to overcome but to

learn and to grow from these experiences.

Testimonies of tithing

Our prophet-leader, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said: "I can testify concerning the law of tithing and its blessings because I've experienced them. And every man and woman in this Church who is an honest tithe payer, is honest with the Lord, can testify of the divinity of that principle" (*Ensign*, July 1996, 73).

As one of those Church members, I add my own testimony. The blessings from living the principle of the tithe can bring peace of mind, increased faith, inspiration, and a desire to live more completely all of the commandments of our Heavenly Father.

Finally, and most important, I testify that I know that God lives, is our Father, and loves us. Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and our Savior and Redeemer. Today we are led by a living prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Robert D. Hales, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Ronald E. Poelman of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy will then speak to us, followed by Elders Donald L. Staheli and Richard E. Turley Sr., also of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

Elder Lynn G. Robbins

Satan stirs up anger in families

"I have a family here on earth. *They are so good to me.*" This is the hope of every child, expressed in the words of one of our hymns ("Families Can Be Together Forever," *Hymns*, no. 300; italics added).

We learn in the proclamation on the family that "the family is central to the Creator's plan" and that "husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other" and a "sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

The family is also Satan's primary target. He is waging war on the family. One of his schemes is the subtle and cunning way he has of sneaking behind enemy lines and entering our very homes and lives.

He damages and often destroys families within the walls of their own homes. His strategy is to stir up *anger* between family members. Satan is "the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with *anger*, one with another" (3 Nephi 11:29; italics added). The verb *stir* sounds like a recipe for disaster: Put tempers on medium heat, stir in a few choice words, and bring to a boil; continue stirring until thick; cool off; let feelings chill for several days; serve cold; lots of leftovers.

We can choose not to become angry

A cunning part of his strategy is to dissociate anger from agency, making us believe that we are victims of an emotion that we cannot control. We hear, "I lost my temper." Losing one's temper is an interesting choice of words that has become a widely used idiom. To "lose something" implies "not meaning to," "accidental," "involuntary," "not responsible"—careless perhaps but "not responsible."

"He made me mad." This is another phrase we hear, also implying lack of control or agency. This is a myth that must be debunked. No one makes us mad. Others don't make us angry. There is no force involved. Becoming angry is a conscious choice, a decision; therefore, we can make the choice not to become angry. *We choose!*

To those who say, "But I can't help myself," author William Wilbanks responds, "Nonsense."

"Aggression, . . . suppressing the anger, talking about it, screaming and yelling," are all learned strategies in dealing with anger. "*We choose* the one that has proved effective for us in the past. Ever notice how seldom we lose control when frustrated by our boss, but how often we do when annoyed by friends or family?" ("The New Obscenity," *Reader's Digest*, Dec. 1988, 24; italics added).

In his sophomore year Wilbanks tried out for the high school basketball team and made it. On the first day of practice his coach had him play one-on-one while the team observed. When he missed an easy shot, he became angry and stomped and whined. The coach walked over to him and said, "You pull a stunt like that again and you'll never play for my team." For the next three years he never lost control again. Years later, as he reflected back on this incident, he realized that the coach had taught him a life-changing principle that day: anger can be controlled (see "The New Obscenity," 24).

The Lord's teachings

In the Joseph Smith Translation of Ephesians 4:26, Paul asks the question, "Can ye be angry, and not sin?" The Lord is very clear on this issue:

"He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil,

who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:29-30).

This doctrine or command from the Lord presupposes agency and is an appeal to the conscious mind to make a decision. The Lord expects us to make the choice *not* to become angry.

Nor can becoming angry be justified. In Matthew 5, verse 22, the Lord says, "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother *without a cause* shall be in danger of the judgment" (italics added). How interesting that the phrase "without a cause" is not found in the inspired Joseph Smith Translation (see Matthew 5:24), nor in the 3 Nephi 12:22 version. When the Lord eliminates the phrase "without a cause," He leaves us without an excuse. "But this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:30). We can "do away" with anger, for He has so taught and commanded us.

Anger is yielding to Satan's influence

Anger is a yielding to Satan's influence by surrendering our self-control. It is the thought-sin that leads to hostile feelings or behavior. It is the detonator of road rage on the freeway, flare-ups in the sports arena, and domestic violence in homes.

Unchecked, anger can quickly trigger an explosion of cruel words and other forms of emotional abuse that can scar a tender heart. It is "that which cometh out of the mouth," the Savior said; "this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:11).

David O. McKay said, "Let husband and wife never speak in loud tones to

each other, 'Unless the house is on fire'" (*Stepping Stones to an Abundant Life*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay [1971], 294).

Physical abuse is anger gone berserk and is never justified and always unrighteous.

Anger is an uncivil attempt to make another feel guilty or a cruel way of trying to correct them. It is often mislabeled as discipline but is almost always counterproductive. Therefore the scriptural warnings: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them," and "Fathers provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Colossians 3:19, 21).

"I will never become angry again"

Choice and accountability are inseparable principles. Because anger is a choice, there is a strong warning in the proclamation "that individuals . . . who abuse spouse or offspring . . . will one day stand accountable before God."

Understanding the connection between agency and anger is the first step in eliminating anger from our lives. We can choose not to become angry. And we can make that choice today, right now: "I will never become angry again." Ponder this resolution.

The 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants is one of our best sources to learn correct leadership principles. Perhaps the most important application of section 121 is to spouses and parents. We are to lead our families by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness, kindness, and meekness, and by love unfeigned (see D&C 121:41-42).

May each child's dream of having a family here on earth, that is good to them come true. This is my prayer and my testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Donald L. Staheli

My brothers and sisters, I am humbled and grateful for the calling which brings me before you today. I am blessed with a wonderful wife and family. I am buoyed up by the strength of the Brethren with whom it is now my blessing to serve. But most important, I cherish my testimony and my relationship with my Savior. I bear personal witness that He lives and He leads His Church through our beloved prophet and president, Gordon B. Hinckley.

The things that matter most in life

As I have made my transition this past year from the corporate world of business to that of trying to be a faithful full-time servant of our Father in Heaven and an especial witness of Jesus Christ, it has been a very tender experience for me. It has made me more sensitive to the responsibility, the blessings, and the opportunities that the gospel affords each of us if we will be obedient to its principles.

President Boyd K. Packer has stated on a number of occasions that "we all have the right to inspiration and direction by the Spirit of the Holy Ghost." And then he adds, "We all live far below our privileges." As I have pondered the implications of his statement, it becomes clear that many of us are missing some spiritual opportunities and blessings by letting "the things that should matter most in life be at the mercy of the things that matter least."

If any one of us were asked what is most important in life, most of us would quickly respond, "Our families and the opportunities the gospel affords us to be celestial families—together forever." Yet the pressures of everyday living frequently and subtly move us away from that pursuit which we so proudly proclaim. And in the process the priorities that should really matter most to us become captive to those things that, while

seemingly important at the moment, have little or no relevance to our long-term goal. And in many cases, the temptations and pressures to pursue the less-important matters lead us down the wrong paths of life.

President Spencer W. Kimball warned us, "The cares of the world are so many and so entangling, even very good people are diverted from following the truth because they care too much for the things of the world."¹

The value of obedience

While I have had my share of lessons on obedience during my life, one of the most memorable was taught to me as a young boy by my dog and my mother. When I was about eight years of age, my father brought home a puppy which I promptly named Spot. We became the greatest of pals as I tried to teach him a few tricks and obedience to my commands. He learned well, except he could not conquer an overwhelming desire to chase and bark at cars as they came down the dusty street by our home in our small southern Utah town. As hard as I tried, I could not break Spot of his bad habit. One day, a neighbor came speeding by in his large truck. He knew Spot and he knew Spot's bad habit. This time, just as Spot approached the truck in his usual aggressive manner, this man swerved toward Spot, running over him with the rear wheel of his truck.

With tears streaming down my face, I cradled Spot in my arms and ran to the house, calling to my mother and brother for help. As we washed the blood from his head, it soon became apparent that Spot's disobedient act had dealt him a fatal blow. As the burial of Spot was completed and the tears dried, my mother then taught me one of the great lessons of life as she explained the principle of obedience and its application in my life.

She made clear that seemingly small acts of disobedience can result in longer-term consequences of unhappiness, regrets, and even fatal results.

As we grow in the gospel, we learn the value of obedience to principles which will consistently align us with the teachings of our Savior and prophets. As we are obedient to their teachings, we then begin to understand what the Savior meant when He said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."²

Where will my life lead me?

Since we each have periodic challenges of obedience, we can take heart in President Hinckley's encouragement "that the Lord will not give us commandments beyond our power to observe. He will not ask us to do things for which we lack . . . capacity."³

All of us, but especially you young people, would do well to remember the prophet's counsel as you are tempted by the peer pressures of your everyday world. As we mature into young adults and beyond, setting priorities and managing pressures between work, Church, and family is a balancing act that requires continual reevaluation.

Periodically one might well ask, "If I continue to travel the road I am currently following, where will it lead me and what will happen to my family?" Are we establishing the foundation for an eternal family, or are we focusing more on the pride of personal accomplishments and a collection of temporal trophies that are taking precedence over the things that should really matter most?

Daily obedience leads to eternal happiness

Regardless of our age and stage in life, daily obedience to gospel principles is the only sure way to eternal happiness. President Ezra Taft Benson put it most

poignantly when he said, "When obedience ceases to be an irritant and becomes our quest, in that moment God will endow us with power."

The Book of Mormon is a continual saga of the various people whose obedience ebbed and flowed with the times. The result of their disobedience is clear. The wake-up calls they received are just as applicable to each of us today.

The scriptures make it clear the Lord recognizes that many of us tend to stray from His counsel when all is going well with us, yet when trouble comes we seek after Him and His blessings. He has also warned us about the consequences of our straying: "And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer."⁴

Whether we are being chastened or challenged as we are being tossed to and fro on the seas of life, obedience to the teachings of our Savior and prophets will qualify us for King Benjamin's great promise to those that keep God's commandments: "For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness."⁵

To the Savior's call, "Come, follow me,"⁶ or to His admonition, "If ye love me, keep my commandments,"⁷ our response should be clear and unequivocal. As we are obedient to His call, it is my testimony that we will enjoy His love and His peace in our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 77.
2. Matthew 16:25.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 109; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 83.
4. D&C 105:6.
5. Mosiah 2:41.
6. Luke 18:22.
7. John 14:15.

Elder Richard E. Turley Sr.

Teaching a young man about the Church

About 10 years ago my wife and I spent most of one Sunday hosting a young graduate student from Harvard University. This young man had come to Salt Lake City to see if the Church was "for real." His parents, who lived in New England, had told him they had taken the missionary lessons and were planning to be baptized. He asked them to hold off until he came to Salt Lake City. During his tour of Temple Square and other Church facilities, he said that he wanted to speak with someone who also had a scientific and technical background. My name was suggested, and I subsequently received a telephone call.

At the time, our schedule was tight, and the only day we had to visit with this young man was on Sunday. We told him that if he wanted to see what Mormon life was like, we would be happy to have him spend the day with us. We had an interesting and enjoyable time with the young man. We took him to two sacrament meetings that day, one where one of our sons and his wife were speaking and the other where we were the speakers. As we entered the building for our speaking assignment, we were met by the bishop, who quickly took us to his office for a prayer meeting. All of us, including our young friend, knelt around the bishop's desk, and the bishop offered a humble, unrehearsed prayer.

From the bishop's office we entered the chapel. We introduced the young man to a young couple and he sat with them during the meeting. My wife and I spoke about the Book of Mormon, which was ideal, especially for the young man, because he had been challenged to read the Book of Mormon.

After the meeting, we took him to our home, where my wife served him one of her delicious dinners. The balance of

our time was spent in sharing with him our testimonies of the Book of Mormon, of Jesus Christ, and of the Restoration of His Church. The next day the young man returned to Boston.

We later had the opportunity to speak to his parents. He had reported to them that indeed the Mormon Church is "for real." He also mentioned to them that through his study of the Book of Mormon he was able to remove the doubts he had about Jesus Christ.

We can know truth through the Holy Ghost

It is our understanding that the young man claimed to be an agnostic, meaning that he would have thought it to be impossible to know about the nature or existence of God except through direct experience. Fortunately, his visit to Salt Lake City gave him firsthand experience and the opportunity to observe a day in the life of a family belonging to the Church. He could not, however, have come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Christ only through his observations.

As he concluded his reading of the Book of Mormon, he would have found the most important key to knowing whether or not the Book of Mormon is true, whether or not Jesus is the Christ, and, in fact, he would have discovered the ultimate key to knowing the truth of all things. Moroni in his concluding chapter stated, "By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5).

I have come to realize over the years that it is only through the power of the Holy Ghost that we can bridge the gap between uncertainty and certainty. This explains why Jesus said what He did to Peter at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus had asked His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew 16:15).

And Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

To this, Jesus responded, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

In other words, the Father revealed to Peter as He can now reveal to us, through the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus of Nazareth, His most beloved and obedient Son, indeed was and is the long-awaited Messiah who had been foretold by all of His prophets since the world began.

Prophets help us avoid deception

As I have reflected upon this young man from Boston, I have also thought of the many other young people who are searching but do not yet know how to find the answer to many of life's questions. Young people are not living in a vacuum and, like all of us, are subjected to what the Apostle Paul called "every wind of doctrine." Let me read from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, where he explained why the Lord has given us apostles, prophets, and other inspired leaders and teachers: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and [be no more] carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14; see also verses 11–13).

How grateful I am for ancient and modern prophets who help us to be aware of those who "lie in wait to deceive."

Purpose of our life on earth

The prophet Isaiah saw our day in vision when the Lord would "proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isaiah 29:14).

This marvelous Restoration has provided that which we need to recognize

misguided philosophies and lifestyles which, although politically and socially acceptable, are not pleasing to our Heavenly Father. If an agnostic, by following Moroni's challenge, could come to believe, others can also come to understand why we have the earth in the first place. In the restored record of Moses, the Lord answers our question as to the purpose of this earth:

"Moses called upon God, saying: Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them?"

"... God said unto Moses: For mine own purpose have I made these things. ...

"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:30–31, 39).

Philosophies abound which belittle man's position on this earth. In the account of Moses, even he thought after seeing the creations of God that man is nothing, but God made it clear to him that man is everything.

Another example and source for our consideration is the family proclamation which the Brethren issued in 1995 and which very clearly delineates God's purposes and expectations for mankind.

While the nations of the earth spend billions every year trying to discover more about the origins and purpose of the earth and its galaxy, the answer is right here. The earth was created for mankind to help us gain "immortality and eternal life." The details of the Creation are undoubtedly interesting, but much higher on the list of priorities is the need to learn more about our Creator and to accept His invitation to follow Him so that we too may achieve our full potential.

The Spirit will help us in our quest to bridge the gap between uncertainty and certainty. Jesus Christ is our light (see 3 Nephi 18:24). Let us follow this radiant light and invite others to do likewise, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elders Lynn G. Robbins, Donald L. Staheli, and Richard E. Turley Sr. of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Cultural and national heritages

During the preparation of this message, I have prayed earnestly to be led to communicate as clearly and effectively as I am able. It is vital that there be understanding through the Spirit so that I cannot be misunderstood by anyone I seek to help.

Increasingly the world is being divided into groups of individuals who seek earnestly to preserve their ethnic, cultural, or national heritages. These efforts are generally motivated by sincere appreciation for what forebears have done, often under the most extenuating circumstances. Appreciation for ethnic, cultural, or national heritage can be very wholesome and beneficial, but it can also perpetuate patterns of life that should be set aside by a devoted Latter-day Saint.

Because of the sensitive nature of what I want to say, and to not be misunderstood, please consider that you and I are alone in a quiet place. Imagine that we have deep bonds of friendship and a relationship of trust that permits open communication. Let us assume that you have asked me how to benefit most from your membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I know you to be a person of faith and conviction. I also know you intensely value your unique cultural heritage. There are threads of that heritage woven into the very fiber of your being. You have obtained great benefit from it and you desire to be a root sunk deeply into the soil of that heritage so that your children and grandchildren will benefit as well. Yet I see how

some elements of that pattern of life can conflict with the teachings of Jesus Christ and could bring disappointment or difficulty. As a friend, I want to help you see this potential without offending you or in any way lessening those precious portions of your heritage that should be preserved and built upon.

Church membership is highest priority

When you embraced the teachings of Jesus Christ and His plan of happiness, you were baptized and confirmed a member of His kingdom here on earth. You took upon yourself His name. You made a commitment to be obedient to His teachings and to make whatever changes in your life were required by those teachings. For the fulness of joy, you need to receive the ordinances of the temple. That pattern will provide you the greatest happiness here on earth and throughout the eternities. For almost everyone, joining the Church requires a fundamental change in lifestyle. Where the Word of Wisdom has been broken, that must be rectified. Where there is violation of the law of chastity, that must be repented of. No one who truly understands the significance of Church membership has any hesitancy in making these adjustments to receive the blessings of worthy fellowship in His kingdom. Also there are other things, perhaps less clearly evident, that also need to be set aside in order to enjoy the fullest measure of happiness from membership in His kingdom.

President Hunter explained it this way: "I would like to say something to you that I consider to be very important. Throughout your life, you will be faced with many choices. How well you select among the alternatives will determine your success and happiness in life. Some of the decisions you will make will be absolutely critical and can affect the entire course of your life. Please measure those alternatives against the teachings of Jesus Christ. To be able to do that you must know and understand His teachings. As you exercise faith and live worthy of inspiration, you will be directed in the important choices you make."

President Hunter continued: "I suggest that you place the highest priority on your membership in the Church of Jesus Christ. Measure whatever anyone else asks you to do, whether it be from your family, loved ones, your cultural heritage, or traditions you have inherited—measure everything against the teachings of the Savior. Where you find a variance from those teachings, set that matter aside and do not pursue it. It will not bring you happiness" (*Prepare Yourself* [pamphlet, 1996], 1–2).

Why give the Lord's teachings first priority? They are your perfect handbook to happiness. The Savior is your Redeemer. His sacrifice entitles Him to judge you and to ultimately give you the greatest blessings for obedience to His commandments. He is the perfect example. Although He has limitless power as a God, yet is He humble, submissive to the Father. There is no pride or desire for personal recognition.

When traditions conflict with God's plan

Your Heavenly Father assigned you to be born into a specific lineage from which you received your inheritance of race, culture, and traditions. That lineage can provide a rich heritage and great reasons to rejoice. Yet you have the responsibility to determine if there is any part of

that heritage that must be discarded because it works against the Lord's plan of happiness.

You may ask how can one determine when a tradition is in conflict with the teachings of the Lord and should be abandoned? That is not easily done. I have found how difficult it is as I work to overcome some of my own incorrect traditions. Yet recognizing the need to do it is a major step toward success. Customs and traditions become an inherent part of us. They are not easy to evaluate objectively. Carefully study the scriptures and counsel of the prophets to understand how the Lord wants you to live. Then evaluate each part of your life and make any adjustments needed. Seek help from another you respect who has been able to set aside some deeply held convictions or traditions that are not in harmony with the Lord's plan. When in doubt, ask yourself, "Is this what the Savior would want me to do?"

Changing a profoundly embedded pattern of life can be very difficult. Former friends can ridicule, criticize, and even persecute. Persistent faith in the Savior and obedience will see you through such hardships to greater blessings. The scriptures illustrate how conviction and faith can overcome traditions in conflict with God's plan, bringing blessings to individuals, and even generations of people. Abraham's unwavering determination to be loyal to truth and to reject false tradition blessed him greatly. His loyalty will crown with rich rewards all of the obedient of the house of Israel. Another dramatic example of discarding long-established traditions is the change of warlike Lamanites into humble followers of Christ willing to die before violating covenants made as members of His kingdom.

I encourage you who have already made correct cultural choices to help others to do likewise. Teach them to recognize the long-term blessings of peace and happiness that come from a decision

to place Father in Heaven, His plan, and His Son at the center of their priorities. Follow Ammon's example. He patiently taught King Lamoni to recognize and to abandon incorrect traditions. Many were blessed by his decision to discard them. Ammon taught truth so clearly that Lamoni was touched by the Spirit and desired to give up all of his false traditions (see Alma 18:24–41; 19:35–36).

Is yours a culture where the husband exerts a domineering, authoritarian role, making all of the important decisions for the family? That pattern needs to be tempered so that both husband and wife act as equal partners, making decisions in unity for themselves and their family. No family can long endure under fear or force; that leads to contention and rebellion. Love is the foundation of a happy family.

These are other traditions that should be set aside—any aspect of heritage:

- That would violate the Word of Wisdom.
- That is based on forcing others to comply by the power of station often determined by heredity.
- That encourages the establishment of caste systems.
- That breeds conflict with other cultures.

Do what is right

There is serious danger in placing cultural heritage in priority above membership in the Church of Jesus Christ. That zeal to defend one's own culture may lead to excesses that are known to be wrong but justified because it's "them" against "us." Gangs, with all of their potential for destruction, are fostered in a culture of group identity over principles of right and wrong. It is a violation of God's commandments for one culture to persecute another, whatever the reason.

Should you choose, even unknowingly, to follow tradition which is in con-

flict with the teachings of the Lord, you choose to violate the sacred covenants made at baptism. That decision is much more serious when temple covenants have been made. Such action would move you from the plan of happiness, peace, and eternal joy defined by your Creator to something of far less worth and infinitely less capacity to bless your life. When the Lord's kingdom and His teachings are paramount above all else and you are united in love of the Savior and our Father in Heaven, then the beautiful nuances, the uniqueness of your cultural heritage can flower and produce a rich harvest of blessings.

You do what is right. Don't worry so much about what everyone else is doing. Certainly don't justify departure from what you know is right because of others' wrong choices.

The gospel can unite Father's children

Satan would destroy families. Our Father in Heaven's plan is centered in loving family relationships here and into eternity. The devil would undermine authority and order, whereas authority righteously exercised is the backbone of Father in Heaven's work in the family, the Church, and every aspect of His kingdom. Satan would segregate Father's children into groups with strongly held individual interests. He would encourage a tenacious preservation of those interests regardless of the consequences to others. Father's plan is expressed in His Son's words: "Behold, . . . I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). Satan promotes the concept that life is to be filled with constant personal entertainment even if that pursuit interferes with another's well-being. Father in Heaven gives us the plan of happiness, which engenders the abandonment of selfish interests and provides happiness through service to others. The example and teachings of Jesus can unite Father's children, regardless of culture

or origin, under the single banner of membership in His kingdom. Brigham Young taught:

"A perfect oneness will save a people, because intelligent beings [can only] become perfectly one . . . by acting upon principles that pertain to eternal life. Wicked men may be partially united in evil; but, . . . the very principle upon which they are partially united will itself breed contention . . . to destroy the temporary compact. Only . . . truth and righteousness can secure . . . an eternal continuation of perfect union; for only truth and those who are sanctified by it can dwell in celestial glory" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 282).

Removing barriers to happiness

If in an awkward attempt to express a truth I have stirred feelings of offense, I apologize. Please overlook my inadequacy and try to understand the truth of what is being said. In quiet moments of reflection, weigh what our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son have identified as the key priorities of life. Review your own life to make sure that in all respects it is in harmony with them. That is all I am trying to say. As I travel through my own country and to other parts of the world, I see the marvelous benefits derived from the distinct cultures that exist. Yet those benefits are sometimes overshadowed by the negative influences that result from those traditions that conflict with the teachings of the Master.

I testify that you will remove barriers to happiness and find greater peace as you make your first allegiance your membership in the Church of Jesus Christ, and His teachings the foundation of your life. Where family or national traditions or customs conflict with the teachings of God, set them aside. Where traditions and customs are in harmony with His teachings, they should be cherished and followed to preserve your culture and

heritage. There is one heritage that you need never change. It is that heritage that comes from your being a daughter or son of Father in Heaven. For happiness, control your life by that heritage. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus; the Brigham Young University combined choirs; the choir of returned missionaries from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake Institutes; and the Tabernacle Choir, and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, the Church Health Unit nurses, and the ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for their coverage of the conference. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved prophet and President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who will be our concluding speaker.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings." The benediction will be offered by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Expressions of appreciation

I have looked down from my seat and seen on the front row in the Tabernacle a group of Otavalo Indians from the highlands of Ecuador, and I want to express my appreciation to these wonderful people, these faithful Latter-day Saints who have come so very, very far to participate with us in this conference. Thank you very much, brothers and sisters.

In case you do not know where Otavalo is, you go to Quito, then you drive up across the equator and come to villages in the highlands of the great mountains of Ecuador, and there are these peaceful and wonderful people.

As we conclude this great gathering, which has reached across the nation and bridged the seas, I express in humility and with thanksgiving my deep appreciation for all who have participated, including those who have listened. The music has been wonderful. The prayers have been inspirational. The talks have been prepared and delivered under the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We have rejoiced together with grateful hearts. Now it becomes our duty and responsibility, as we return to our homes, to translate into our daily lives the truths which we have heard spoken.

Small temples to be built

Now, in conclusion I wish to make an announcement. As I have previously indicated, in recent months we have traveled far out among the membership of the Church. I have been with many who have very little of this world's goods. But they have in their hearts a great burning faith concerning this latter-day work. They love the Church. They love the gospel. They love the Lord and want to do His will. They are paying their tithing, modest as it is. They make tremendous sacrifices to visit the temples. They travel

for days at a time in cheap buses and on old boats. They save their money and do without to make it all possible.

They need nearby temples—small, beautiful, serviceable temples.

Accordingly, I take this opportunity to announce to the entire Church a program to construct some 30 smaller temples immediately. They will be in Europe, in Asia, in Australia and Fiji, in Mexico and Central and South America and Africa, as well as in the United States and Canada. They will have all the necessary facilities to provide the ordinances of the Lord's house.

This will be a tremendous undertaking. Nothing even approaching it has ever been tried before. These will be in addition to the 17 buildings now going forward in England; Spain; Ecuador; Bolivia; the Dominican Republic; Brazil; Colombia; Billings, Montana; Houston, Texas; Boston, Massachusetts; White Plains, New York; and Albuquerque, New Mexico; and the smaller temples in Anchorage, Alaska; Monticello, Utah; and Colonia Juárez, Mexico. This will make a total of 47 new temples in addition to the 51 now in operation. I think we had better add 2 more to make it an even 100 by the end of this century, being 2,000 years "since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh" (D&C 20:1). In this program we are moving on a scale the like of which we have never seen before.

I will not give you the specific cities at this time. Stake presidents will be advised as property is secured. I am confident the membership of the Church will do a lot of speculating as to whether one of these will be in their city.

If temple ordinances are an essential part of the restored gospel, and I testify that they are, then we must provide the means by which they can be accomplished. All of our vast family history en-

deavor is directed to temple work. There is no other purpose for it. The temple ordinances become the crowning blessings the Church has to offer.

I can only add that when these 30 or 32 are built, there will be more yet to come.

Be generous in the payment of tithes

May God bless the faithful Latter-day Saints. May you be prospered as you live the commandments. May all be honest, and even generous, in the payment of tithes and offerings, and may the windows of heaven be opened and blessings be showered down upon us as a people as we walk with boldness and in faith before the Lord to accomplish His eternal work.

I was deeply touched by Brother Ronald Poelman's talk on tithing. He and I lived in the same ward when we were boys. We had the same bishop. We paid a little tithing as boys, and the Lord, I can testify, has blessed us through the years that have passed. I can see in my

mind's eye his dear mother kneeling with her family and pleading with the Lord, and thanking Him for the great privilege that was theirs to impart of their meager substance in obedience to His commandment.

May there be peace and harmony and love in our homes and in our families. May the testimony of the living, hallowed truth of this great work be reflected in our lives. May we all rejoice together in praising Him from whom all blessings flow, our glorious leader and our great Redeemer.

This is my humble prayer, my beloved brethren and sisters, as we come to the close of this great and significant and historic conference. God help us to be Latter-day Saints in the finest expression of that word is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings."

Elder John K. Carmack offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Brigham Young University combined choirs, conducted by Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, music was provided by a choir of returned missionaries from the Ephraim, Logan, Ogden, Orem, and Salt Lake Institutes. Douglas Brenchley conducted the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Richard Elliott and Clay Christiansen were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

B

- Ballard, Elder M. Russell** 39
 The First Vision; Revelation through the Prophet Joseph; The marvelous miracle of revelation; Doctrine and Covenants section 76; Increasing our spiritual knowledge; Gratitude for revelation; Revelation to President Joseph F. Smith; Embrace and study revealed truths

C

- Church Audit Committee Report for 1997** 25
Church Statistical Report for 1997 26
Cook, Elder Richard E. 34
 Blessings from missionary work; Conversion of a Mongolian family; Converts' lives are changed forever; Christ can change human nature; Missionary work is our duty

E

- Edgley, Bishop Richard C.** 11
 Mormons are Christian; Seek understanding before judging; Jesus Christ is central to the Church; Are we disciples of the Savior?; Our everyday living shows our discipleship; Testimony of the Savior
Eyring, Elder Henry B. 85
 "If ye are not one ye are not mine"; The Savior makes unity possible; The Spirit leads to union with others; Keeping the promises made in the sacrament prayer; Obey all of the commandments; Charity is essential to unity; Stay clean and beware of pride

F

- Faust, President James E. (Saturday morning session)** 19
 Blessings that flow from covenants; The law must be written in our hearts; Service from a pure heart; Covenants protect us; Our personal values must not erode; "We will serve the Lord"; Follow the true Shepherd; Learn to live by covenants
Faust, President James E. (priesthood session) 57
 Consistency between beliefs and actions; One-time decisions to do right; The integrity of Father Abraham; Our honor should make us honest; Be careful to avoid misuse of credit; We believe in being chaste; Missionaries should be exemplary; The example of Elder Clinton Cutler; Seek after loveliness; We can endure all things

G

General Authorities Present	1
General Priesthood Session	48

H

Haight, Elder David B.	5
Meeting at the Peter Whitmer farmhouse; I have been blessed all my life; Children should learn their heritage; Bringing the Church out of obscurity; Importance of the Ten Commandments; I know the gospel is true	
Hales, Elder Robert D.	98
Enduring to the end; The Savior is our example; Endurance of the Prophet Joseph Smith; A young woman's strength in adversity; Finishing the race; Teaching endurance to the next generation; Learning to endure; Enduring as a missionary; We need great faith and courage; We will be blessed	
Hansen, Elder W. Eugene	80
The Lord loves little children; "The Family: A Proclamation to the World"; Listen to the counsel of the prophets; Blessings of being raised in a good home; Good examples of parents; Parents must assume their responsibility	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session)	3
The gospel has been restored; We must respect other religions; Dedication of buildings in Palmyra; Gratitude for testimony	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session)	66
Live worthy of the girl you will marry; Be absolutely loyal; Be a young man of virtue; Live the Word of Wisdom; Avoid profanity; Learn now to control your temper; Work for an education; Be modest in your wants; Go on a mission and be married in the temple; Prepare to become a righteous father; Now is the time to prepare for the future	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session)	89
Travels to visit members worldwide; Testimony is the strength of the Church; Testimony cannot be refuted; Power to change people; "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"; "It all happened"; A declaration of truth	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session)	115
Expressions of appreciation; Small temples to be built; Be generous in the payment of tithes	

Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. 30

"A teacher come from God"; Inspired instruction nourishes members; Revitalize superior teaching; Teach the gospel by the Spirit; Nurturing with the powerful word of God; Jeremiah's example; All can be teachers "come from God"

M**Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 48**

Learning to work by raising pigs; Gratitude for parents who taught work; The gospel of work; Balance of work should be orchestrated; Fathers, work with your sons; Known for the work ethic; No perspiration-free shortcuts; Special spirits sent to do special chores

Miller, Elder Dale E. 36

God invites all people into His kingdom; Building God's kingdom is our focus; Have we felt a mighty change in our hearts?; Bringing Zion into our hearts; The home is the great laboratory; This kingdom alone leads to eternal life

Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 61

The USS *Indianapolis* in harm's way; Tell the truth; A road map to safety; Choose good friends; Seek parental guidance; Study the gospel; Obey the commandments; Serve with love; Pray with purpose; We will sail safely the seas of life

Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session) 71

"You can't run away from trouble"; We learn as we bear our afflictions; "Is there no balm in Gilead?"; God will not fail us; The example of Elijah; The Savior's life inspires patience and courage; All paths pass somewhere through Gethsemane; Surviving personal tragedy with faith; The peace which passes understanding

Music, Summary of Conference 116**N****Nadauld, Sister Margaret D. 83**

The Savior can help and heal us; Bringing a brother home to love; "By love serve one another"; Helping young women grow spiritually; The willing service of young women; Gratitude and testimony

Nelson, Elder Russell M. 43

Gratitude for family love; Priesthood keys restored by Elijah; Background of family history work; Technology supports this work; "The time of harvest is come"; New computer products guide members; We are to be saviors on Mount Zion

O

- Oaks, Elder Dallin H.** 75
 “Have you been saved?”; Saved according to the meaning of good Christians; Six meanings of salvation; Saved from the permanence of death; Saved from sin conditionally; We have been born again; Saved from ignorance; Saved from the second death; Salvation also means exaltation; Why do we send missionaries to other Christians?; We offer the fullness of the gospel

P

- Packer, President Boyd K.** 94
 The great work of the Relief Society; A circle of sisters in Czechoslovakia; Under the direction of the priesthood; Stay with the course of the Relief Society; The future of the Church rests equally upon the women; Distinct male and female natures; Church activities support the home; The Relief Society provides security; As sisters in Zion
- Paramore, Elder James M.** 54
 The brotherhood of the priesthood; “The heart and a willing mind”; Trust in God and His Son; Live within the Lord’s boundaries; Begin with the end in mind; God will honor those who honor Him
- Perry, Elder L. Tom** 27
 Prepared to make a contribution; Memorizing the Articles of Faith; How the Articles of Faith came to be; Review of the content; Study the Articles of Faith
- Poelman, Elder Ronald E.** 102
 Learning to pay tithing as a boy; The Savior’s emphasis on tithing; The sacredness of tithing; The gift of a baby bed; Blessings from the windows of heaven; Testimonies of tithing

- Priesthood Session, General** 48

R

- Robbins, Elder Lynn G.** 105
 Satan stirs up anger in families; We can choose not to become angry; The Lord’s teachings; Anger is yielding to Satan’s influence; “I will never become angry again”

S

- Saturday Morning Session** 2
- Saturday Afternoon Session** 23

Scott, Elder Richard G.	111
Cultural and national heritages; Church membership is highest priority; When traditions conflict with God's plan; Do what is right; The gospel can unite Father's children; Removing barriers to happiness	
Staheli, Elder Donald L.	107
The things that matter most in life; The value of obedience; Where will my life lead me?; Daily obedience leads to eternal happiness	
Summary of Conference Music	116
Sunday Afternoon Session	93
Sunday Morning Session	70
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	24

T

Tingey, Elder Earl C.	52
Sacrifices of early missionaries; Being a full-time missionary is a great blessing; Ways to prepare for your mission; Suggestions for full-time mis- sionaries; To fathers and grandfathers; Testimony of joys and blessings	
Turley, Elder Richard E., Sr.	109
Teaching a young man about the Church; We can know truth through the Holy Ghost; Prophets help us avoid deception; Purpose of our life on earth	

W

Wirthlin, Sister Anne G.	8
Teaching children of the Savior brings peace to them; Young children understand great truths; Learning the scriptures in Primary; Teach chil- dren from the scriptures; Ponder the scriptures as families; Be an exam- ple to your children; Our prophet's counsel	
Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	14
The plan of happiness; An eternal perspective; We are to fully develop ourselves; We are to serve others; Fellowship new converts; Make neces- sary course corrections; Each day is precious; Avoid procrastination and indecision; Use our mortal probation wisely	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



4 02980 4800

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-eighth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 3 and 4, 1998

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-eighth
Semiannual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
October 3 and 4, 1998

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

© 1998 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America
English approval: 7/97

Report of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1998, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 3 and 4, 1998. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 3, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Harold G. Hillam, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, and David E. Sorensen

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Dallas N. Archibald, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goasling, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, W. Eugene Hansen, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L. Kofford, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Carl B. Pratt, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorim, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Eran A. Call, Val R. Christensen, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Duane B. Gerrard, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Lynn G. Robbins, Ned B. Roueché, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Richard E. Turley Sr., Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten,

Lance B. Wickman, Richard B. Wirthlin, and Ray H. Wood

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1998, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "I Need Thee Every Hour." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder Andrew W. Peterson, who will be in attendance at later sessions.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the overflow locations in the nearby Assembly Hall and the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Tabernacle.

We extend a warm and special welcome this morning to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The chorus opened this session by singing "I Need Thee Every Hour" and will now favor us with "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Glenn L. Pace offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

I will say a few words, and then we will be pleased to hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Welcome to conference

My brothers and sisters, we welcome you most warmly. We welcome you to this great conference. There are some 6,000 of us here in the Tabernacle and millions more in other halls across the world. We are all one great family. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. In fulfillment of the words of Peter, we are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that [we] should shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

For the most part, we are a happy people. We are mindful of and continue to pray for those who are experiencing hardship due to natural or man-caused calamity. But even those among our number who are bowed down with sorrow and pain go forward in faith with the certain assurance that God lives and is watching over His children.

The Tabernacle this morning is filled. Once it was considered very large and commodious. Now, with the growth of the Church, it will not accommodate our people. I was in the Astrodome in Houston, Texas, only two weeks ago for a regional conference. We had somewhere in the neighborhood of 20,000 people in attendance—three times as many as we can get into this building.

Construction of new assembly building

I am deeply grateful that we are moving forward with construction of a wonderful new facility adjoining Temple Square on the block to the north of us. It is an immense structure. I am grateful that we have followed the promptings to build it. I believe that the Lord would have us do so and that He has revealed His will in this undertaking.

Workmen are working on the placement of the huge king beam, which marks the beginning of the roof structure. Things are moving forward according to schedule. Six hundred people are at work on the project now, and this number will grow.

The building will seat some 21,000, plus 1,000 in the theater which will be a part of it. Through the generations that lie ahead, it will ring with the voices of the prophets. It will be primarily a house of worship. But it will also be a place of art. There will be concerts and other public offerings that will be uplifting and wholesome and spiritual. Barring some unforeseen circumstances, the building will be ready for the general conference of April in the year 2000. It will be a gift to the Master, whose birth we will commemorate at that season.

Church members are one great family

As we contemplate these things, we think of our brothers and sisters in distant lands. We have met hundreds of thousands of you, have looked into your faces, have felt of your spirits. You are so very precious to this work. The Lord has gathered you "one of a city, and two of a family," as prophesied by Jeremiah. He is teaching you with pastors after His own heart. (See Jeremiah 3:14-15.) We pray for you, we visit you, we respect and admire you, we love you. We are all part of a great family—10 million strong—worshiping with one heart and one voice at the feet of our Master, the Son of God.

Wherever you are, no matter how distant, you have the opportunity of participating in this conference. You will receive it by satellite in very many places. You will receive it by videotape in some places that cannot be reached by satellite. And for a few in faraway places, you will have it as the written word in our Church magazines.

No matter where we are, no matter our circumstances, we all can be faithful Latter-day Saints. We can pray and worship the Lord in the privacy of our own closet. We can sing anthems of praise to the Almighty even when we are alone. We can study the scriptures. We can live the gospel. We can pay our tithes and offerings though the amount be ever so small. We can walk in faith. We can strive to live lives patterned after the life of our Master.

Now, brothers and sisters, I invite all of you to listen to those whom you have sustained as General Authorities and general officers of the Church, as with prayer and faith and in humility, testimony is borne to you. May we all be inspired together. May our hearts be lifted in praise to our Redeemer, I humbly pray in His holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Extraordinary temple-building effort

At our last general conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley made the historic announcement that 30 or more smaller temples will be constructed throughout the world. The first of those smaller temples was dedicated this summer in Monticello, Utah. As you know, President Hinckley's stated goal is to have at least 100 temples in operation by the end of this century. Knowing the President as I do, I am sure that goal will be met, if not exceeded!

President Hinckley has referred to this extraordinary temple-building effort as "a tremendous undertaking. Nothing even approaching it has ever been tried before."¹ Ever since this stunning announcement, I have thought what great confidence the Lord and His prophet have in you and me. How much responsibility now rests upon all of us to prepare ourselves and others to be worthy of the blessings of these holy temples.

The Brethren have long been aware that many of our members live in areas of the world quite distant from the closest temple. Their hearts are true, they have great faith concerning the mission of the Church, and they love the Lord and want to do His will. What a blessing these beautiful temples will be to these dedicated Saints.

Again quoting President Hinckley: "If temple ordinances are an essential part of the restored gospel, and I testify that they are, then we must provide the means by which they can be accomplished. . . . The temple ordinances become the crowning blessings the Church has to offer."²

An urgency in the work

There is an urgency in this work that motivates us to extend the blessings of the temple to as many of our Heavenly Father's children as possible. I was impressed with an experience of President Wilford Woodruff when he told of a visitation he received from the Prophet Joseph Smith some time after the Prophet was martyred. According to President Woodruff's account: "[Joseph Smith] came to me and spoke to me. He said he could not stop to talk with me because he was in a hurry. The next man I met was Father Smith; he could not talk with me because he was in a hurry. I met half a dozen brethren who had held high positions on earth, and none of them could stop to talk with me because they were in a hurry. I was much astonished. By and by I saw the Prophet again and I got the privilege of asking him a question.

"'Now,' said I, 'I want to know why you are in a hurry. I have been in a hurry

all my life; but I expected my hurry would be over when I got into the kingdom of heaven, if I ever did.'

"Joseph said: 'I will tell you, Brother Woodruff. Every dispensation that has had the priesthood on the earth and has gone into the celestial kingdom has had a certain amount of work to do to prepare to go to the earth with the Savior when he goes to reign on the earth. Each dispensation has had ample time to do this work. We have not. We are the last dispensation, and so much work has to be done, and we need to be in a hurry . . . to accomplish it.'

"Of course, that was satisfactory," President Woodruff concluded, "but it was new doctrine to me."³

Other latter-day prophets have been similarly motivated to move us along more quickly in accomplishing the significant work of this last great dispensation. President David O. McKay encouraged every member to be a missionary.⁴ President Spencer W. Kimball urged us to "lengthen our stride."⁵ President Howard W. Hunter affirmed, "We are at a time in the history of the world and the growth of the Church when we must think more of holy things and act more like the Savior would expect his disciples to act."⁶

And now President Gordon B. Hinckley is asking us to carry on, to do better, to do more. He said: "We have work to do, you and I, so very much of it. Let us roll up our sleeves and get at it, with a new commitment, putting our trust in the Lord. . . . We can do it, if we will be prayerful and faithful."⁷

Are we keeping pace?

Clearly the power of the Lord is moving on the leaders of the Church, nudging them with the same urgency that seemed to be motivating Joseph Smith in Wilford Woodruff's vision. President Hinckley is doing all that he can do to accelerate the work. He is trav-

eling the world to an unprecedented degree to strengthen and edify the Saints and to urge them upward and onward. He has made himself available to the world media in order to share the message of the Restoration with the widest possible audience. And he is overseeing the most extensive era of temple building in history in an attempt to speed up our ability to accomplish the overwhelming amount of work we have been assigned to complete in this dispensation of time.

Our President is dynamically out in front, showing the way. The question we must all ask ourselves is, "Are we keeping pace with him?" Each one of us must be prepared to answer that question. I can assure you that it is a subject of considerable discussion among the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I hope the same is true of every council in every ward and stake in the Church. This is not the time to relax or to coast in our callings. Every council of the Church should be working together on ways to be more effective in preparing our members to be worthy to enjoy all the blessings of the Church and especially the blessings of the temple.

We must work harder and smarter

We are rapidly approaching a time when the number of operating temples throughout the world will be double what it was just four short years ago. Now is a good time to ask, *stake presidents* and *bishops*, what are your stake and ward councils doing to fill these temples with worthy members and sufficient dedicated workers? Are your priesthood quorums functioning at peak efficiency? Are the home and visiting teachers involved in serving those families to whom they are assigned? Are your auxiliaries actively building faith and testimonies? Are the activities in your stake and ward aimed at strengthening the family and every member? Are

you carefully coordinating the proselytizing efforts with the stake and full-time missionaries, helping them find, teach, and baptize many more people? Are your councils concerning themselves with helping every new convert and less-active member become fully fellowshiped and completely anchored to the doctrines of the Church?

Brothers and sisters, there is much to be done by us to complete the work assigned by the Lord to this dispensation. We must focus our work, and we must work smarter if we are to accomplish our role in preparing all Church members to receive their temple blessings. Church leaders, both men and women, can and must extend the length of their reach and broaden the power of their influence. We must be wise to protect and teach our own families first and then take full advantage of the inspired Church council system to achieve greater success in the work Heavenly Father has given us to do, within the time frame He has given us to do it.

Use ward council to nurture converts

Take, for example, the critical role of the ward council in fellowshiping every convert and activating those who are less active. As each member now knows, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are greatly concerned over the well-being of every new and less-active member of the Church. No ward or branch council should allow a new convert to feel insecure in his newly embraced Church membership. And yet there are still too many of them who do not feel warmly welcomed.

Recently a new member wrote to me: "Sometimes I . . . feel like it was a mistake for me to be baptized. I know this Church is true, and I have a strong testimony, but I still question. . . . When I was investigating, everyone from my ward was always there for me and always wanted to talk to me and always wanted

to help me out. . . . Since I was baptized it's like they don't even notice when I go to church or when I don't. I hardly hear from anybody. . . . I just can't understand why the people in my ward have just forgotten me. I feel so lonely and confused. . . . I can't talk to my bishop because . . . we aren't close at all. He didn't even remember me when I went back to church. Please help me if you can."

Brothers and sisters, while wonderful progress has been made, the time has come when we must marshal every resource to fellowship every convert and bless the lives of many more of our Heavenly Father's children. This can best be accomplished when ward council members see that each organization does its part to make sure new members have friends, have an assignment, and are nourished by the good word of God. Every soul is very precious to our Heavenly Father. We must never forget that through the Atonement, the Lord Jesus Christ paid a great price for the redemption of each one of us. His suffering must not be in vain because we fail to nurture and teach those who are striving to be active in the Church.

Use councils to bless individual lives

You sisters can help build personal testimony in the lives of every woman, young woman, and child in the ward. How grateful we are for your strength. Sisters, talk together in your councils about how to love, support, and teach each other the beautiful blessings and promises of the gospel. How wonderful it would be if every woman in the world understood her true destiny as expressed in the Young Women theme. You know the words: "We are daughters of our Heavenly Father who loves us, and we love him. We will 'stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places . . . ' as we strive to live the Young Women Values, which are—Faith, Divine Nature, Individual Worth,

Knowledge, Choice and Accountability, Good Works, and Integrity.”⁸ Learning of and acting upon these values will save and bless both young and older women.

You members of the bishopric and Young Men presidency, get close to each young man and help him to be worthy to be ordained at the assigned age to the appropriate priesthood. This is a significant part of your work and the work of all the members of the ward council. No boy should start out as a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood and fail to be ordained an elder and invited to serve a full-time mission.

Melchizedek Priesthood quorums are responsible for the spiritual and temporal welfare of *all* men and their *families*. Much of the work among the families of the ward that is currently being done by members of the bishopric could appropriately be performed by the men of the Melchizedek Priesthood if properly discussed and coordinated in council meetings.

Stake presidents and bishops, if your councils are not focused and functioning at this increased level of spiritual power and direction, then please do all you can to ensure that they understand how to combine all of the resources to spiritually prepare your people.

Examine commitment to the gospel

Similarly, we as individuals and families need to counsel together to carefully examine ourselves and our personal and family commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This examination is particularly essential to those of us who have made covenants of consecration and sacrifice in the house of the Lord. We need to ask ourselves: Are we setting an example of Christian virtue and gospel faithfulness in our lives and in our homes? Are we reaching out to *our* inactive and nonmember friends, family members, and neighbors with loving

concern? Are we boldly sharing our testimonies?

I know the power of inspired men and women who unitedly strive to strengthen families and individual members of the Church. Please fully utilize your combined ability to bless the lives of every person—man or woman, teenager or child, member or nonmember—who lives within the ward boundaries. Brothers and sisters, let us unite as never before to do our part, individually and collectively, to prepare our people to receive the blessings that can be given only in the house of the Lord.

Focus on things that matter most

This is our day, brothers and sisters. It is a time that has been foreseen by holy prophets since the world began. It is the dispensation of the fulness of times, when the final scenes of this world's history will be played out. Our latter-day prophets, from Joseph Smith to Gordon B. Hinckley, have warned us of the solemn, sobering obligation that is ours to prepare for “the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”⁹ That day is steadily moving toward us, and there is still much to be done. We must be prepared to keep pace with our leaders, stride for their every lengthened stride. Perhaps as never before we need to focus our efforts on those things that matter most and avoid spending time on those things of small concern and of little consequence.

Said the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. . . .

“Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand. . . . Let us, . . . as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy tem-

ple . . . a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance.”¹⁰

I pray that we may join together, brothers and sisters, to do our part to prepare every family, adult, youth, and child to ultimately be worthy to receive every temple blessing that the gospel provides. I bear my witness that the Lord Jesus Christ lives; it is through Him that the eternal ordinances of the temple come to the faithful members of the Church. May the Lord bless us with the desire, the wisdom, and the commitment to enthusiastically move this great work forward in our families and in the Church, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 88.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115–16; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 88.
3. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff* (1946), 288–89.
4. See Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122.
5. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (1982), 174.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 118; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 87.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 117; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 88.
8. *Young Women Leadership Handbook* (1995), 4.
9. Malachi 4:5.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22, 24.

The chorus sang “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, and the choir has sung “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Bishop H. David Burton, the Presiding Bishop of the Church. He will be followed by the choir and congregation singing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Bishop H. David Burton

A season of opportunity

In a recent sacrament meeting, a lovely young lady suggested that a good talk should begin with a little tasteful humor or an outrageous falsehood. My ability to convey humor is virtually nonexistent, but I can say with deep sincerity that I feel perfectly comfortable and free of fear as I stand at this podium.

As our recent sesquicentennial celebration concluded, our beloved prophet refocused our attention when he said: “The time has now come to turn about and face the future. This is a season of a thousand opportunities. It is ours to grasp and move forward. What a wonderful time it is for each of us to do his or her small part in moving the work of

the Lord on to its magnificent destiny” (Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 90–91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 67).

All of us face challenges in our daily lives. Yet in challenges lie some of our greatest opportunities. As we recognize and act on our opportunities, progress, happiness, and spiritual growth follow. We need to be involved in moving the Lord’s work forward. Though the opportunities available to us are endless, may I suggest just a few.

A season to reverence the Sabbath day

Over and over again we have been reminded from this pulpit to fully observe the Sabbath day. If we are not

keeping the Sabbath day holy, today is a wonderful time to commit to seize that opportunity, to receive the promised blessings that come from Sabbath day observance.

Many have come to feel that the terms "Sabbath day" and "play day" are synonymous. A friend who manages several small retail outlets in predominantly LDS communities tells me he can precisely tell when Sunday worship services conclude because customer counts increase dramatically. Recreation in its various forms has become "king of the Sabbath day."

When Sister Burton and I were first married, we lived in the southeast part of the Salt Lake Valley. On occasion, as we purchased groceries from a small neighborhood store, we observed President and Sister Joseph Fielding Smith in the same store making their purchases. After several such observations, I finally mustered the courage to inquire of President Smith why it was he traveled all the way from downtown, past a dozen grocery stores, to shop at this particular store. Looking over the tops of his glasses he emphatically said, "Son! [He had my immediate attention.] Sister Smith and I patronize establishments that keep the Sabbath day holy."

The need to reverence the Sabbath day is not new counsel. We are only being told today what prior generations have been told by the prophets of their day and reconfirmed countless times by the prophets of our day. Latter-day scripture contains the following admonition:

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High" (D&C 59:9-10).

Now, I know it's hard, particularly for our young people, to choose to observe the Sabbath day when athletic teams on which they so much want to participate regularly schedule games on Sunday. I too know it seems trivial to many who are in need of just a few items on the Sabbath to quickly stop at a convenience store to make a Sunday purchase. But I also know that remembering to keep the Sabbath day holy is one of the most important commandments we can observe in preparing us to be the recipients of the whisperings of the Spirit.

This is the season of opportunity for families to stand tall and be counted among the faithful who obey the fourth great commandment:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:8-10).

A season of temple service

A few years ago, President Hinckley responded to an observation concerning the number of temple dedications or rededications in which he had participated during his tenure as a General Authority. He indicated that it was his desire to continue to be involved in dedicating temples at least until we have 100 operating temples. As I heard this statement, I couldn't help doing a little simple math and realized that the sum of the number representing current operating temples and the number representing the temple projects then in design or construction was far less than 100. Because the Presiding Bishopric has the responsibility to oversee the construction of temples as they are announced, I remember very vividly saying to the prophet, "President, I pray the Lord will bless you with great longevity."

Little did I know that perhaps even at that time our prophet was being

prompted from the heavens to consider ways to provide more opportunities for worthy Latter-day Saint families to participate in the blessings associated with temple worship. I wept and rejoiced as you did last April in general conference when we heard President Hinckley say:

"In recent months we have traveled far out among the membership of the Church. I have been with many who have very little of this world's goods. But they have in their hearts a great burning faith concerning this latter-day work. They love the Church. . . . They love the Lord and want to do His will. They are paying their tithing, modest as it is. They make tremendous sacrifices to visit the temples. They travel for days at a time in cheap buses and on old boats. They save their money and do without to make it all possible.

"They need nearby temples. . . .

"Accordingly, I take this opportunity to announce to the entire Church a program to construct some 30 smaller temples immediately. . . .

"These will be in addition to the 17 buildings now going forward. . . . This will make a total of 47 new temples in addition to the 51 now in operation. I think we had better add 2 more to make it an even 100 by the end of this century" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 87-88).

Early in this dispensation our forefathers were blessed with the opportunity of sacrificing mightily to build temples. They offered generously of their meager financial means as well as the fruits of their physical labor. As temples were completed in Kirtland and later in Nauvoo, the sacrifice of the Saints was great. They were blessed as they responded. After the migration of the Saints to the tops of the mountains, temples began to appear in a number of locations in the West. Each temple project represented great sacrifice. Divinely promised blessings awaited those who availed them-

selves of the opportunity to participate in building temples.

The season of opportunity that awaits us today in temple service is different from that of the past. We are not expected to pound nails, carve stone, mill lumber, pour concrete, or physically participate in the construction of temples. We are, however, extended a marvelous opportunity to faithfully pay our tithes so temple construction and the work of the Lord may go forward. We are also challenged to be worthy to offer ourselves in the service of providing sacred saving ordinances for those who have preceded us. Very simply stated, the great opportunity of Latter-day Saint families is to see that the lights of our temples burn early and late in the day. Perhaps we could create the need for them to burn all night as they do presently on weekends in several temples.

A season to reach out

A few years ago a major communications company used in its advertising the phrase "Reach out and touch someone." President Hinckley has reminded us repeatedly of the many opportunities to reach out and touch someone. In speaking of those who have recently joined with us, he described a need to reach out and touch them with love and fellowship; to those who are estranged, a touch of encouragement, unconditional love, and a full measure of forgiveness if required; to our neighbors, associates, and friends who are not of our faith, the blessing of being touched by the Holy Spirit because of our words and deeds.

In a recent training meeting for stake and ward councils held as a part of a stake conference I attended, well-prepared presentations centered on the opportunities to be "inclusive" rather than "exclusive" in reaching out and touching new and less-active individuals, as well as those not members of our Church.

Sister Laura Chipman, a stake Young Women president, suggested five *I*'s to help us to be inclusive in our outreach. They are: (1) *Introspection*—Are we inadvertently communicating an exclusionary attitude? (2) *Identify*—Do we know the recently baptized, the less active, or nonmembers who reside in our neighborhoods and communities? (3) *Individualize*—Do we seek to know the interests, talents, and skills of those we wish to fellowship? (4) *Invite*—Do we include neighbors and friends in appropriate activities? (5) *Involve*—Are there ways we can utilize the skills, talents, and abilities of those we wish to include?

Blessings of reaching out

I recently attended the funeral for one of my boyhood friends. This brother was genetically challenged from birth. He could understand concepts quite well but could not read or write. His speech was limited to a very few identifiable words, along with a jargon all of his own. Some in our group could recognize a few words he spoke. However, we could usually tell from the tone of his words whether he was expressing his concerns or his great capacity to love. Much of Lynn's early life was spent in a special school away from home. He spent his summers and many holidays at home with his family. For the past 17 years, Lynn, who outlived all of his family, lived in a care center where his many needs could best be met.

Upon Lynn's death, one of his special friends arranged a funeral to be held in the meetinghouse we attended as boys. Present at the funeral were his dear friends, the staff from the care center, a few ward members who remembered him from many years ago, and about a dozen boyhood friends and their families. Several brethren who had stayed close to Lynn during his long, often lonesome stay at the care center offered tender remarks.

All of our memories were refreshed during the course of the service. One friend recalled that on one occasion our Sunday School teacher invited us to bear our testimonies in class. As he sequentially called upon us, he passed over Lynn, perhaps feeling he could not respond with understanding. With all the righteous indignation Lynn could muster, he let the teacher know he expected his opportunity to express himself. Though we didn't understand much of what he said, we felt his love and the depth of a great spirit tragically locked in a body that could not fully function. The spirit in that class was very strong!

As the staff and the special friends from the care center expressed their unconditional love, it was very evident that Lynn, in his humble way, had reached out and touched their lives. During the course of the funeral, it was apparent that at least three of our boyhood friends and their families had reached out to minister to Lynn in ways that included regular visits, long automobile rides, invitations to dinners on special occasions, and birthday parties.

When the stories and recollections were complete, we all realized that our physically challenged, loving angel of a friend had given us and the wonderful compassionate families who reached out so often in love, far more of real value than he had ever received.

Yes, today is indeed a season of many opportunities. It is a season to reach out to touch the life of someone, a season to commit to keeping the Sabbath day holy, and a season to help keep the lights of our temples burning brightly, to name just a very few. I testify of a living Father in Heaven and of His Son, our Savior and our Redeemer, both who love us unconditionally and are anxious for us to seize the many opportunities They have provided. I acknowledge and express my love to our dear prophet, who, with great devotion, carries our banner with cour-

age and majesty. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang
 "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Sister Virginia U. Jensen

Love and reverence for prophets

One evening when I was 11 years old, I heard a commotion outside my window. I looked out the window, and in the street were newsboys carrying stacks of newspapers in their arms announcing the news that President George Albert Smith, the eighth President of the Church, had died. President Smith had been the only prophet I had known in my short time on earth. It was during his administration that I first felt the stirrings of a testimony, and even then I knew how important God's prophets are. I had been taught in Primary and in my home by loving parents that President Smith was our earthly link to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, that They could talk to me through him. What an empowering concept for a young girl! The Spirit had confirmed in my 11-year-old mind that this was true. When I learned of his death, I felt a tremendous loss.

However, just five days after President Smith's death, President David O. McKay stood in this tabernacle and spoke to those assembled. He had just been unanimously sustained as the prophet, seer, and revelator by the Saints. As he brushed back the tears, he said: "No one can preside over this Church without first being in tune with the head of the Church, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is our head. This is his Church. . . . With his guidance, with his inspiration, we cannot fail."¹

President Hinckley

We will now be pleased to hear from Sister Virginia U. Jensen, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. She will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

I quickly came to love and revere President McKay just as I had loved and revered President Smith. In fact, I remember seeing him stand at this pulpit, with his white hair gleaming, and thinking he looked just like an angel.

"Come, listen to a prophet's voice"

Prophets ancient and modern were and are giants of the Lord, chosen and ordained before they came to this earth. Our prophets are men whom the Lord has raised up specifically to preside over the Church for the particular time in which they have served. The Lord is working through the leaders of His Church today, just as He has always done in the past.

President Wilford Woodruff said, "If we had before us every revelation which God ever gave to man . . . and they were piled up here a hundred feet high, the Church and kingdom of God could not grow, in this or any other age of the world, without the living oracles of God."²

Brothers and sisters, listen to the instructions and promise found in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Wherefore, . . . thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith."³

The Lord's will to Abraham was not sufficient for the people of Moses' time. The will of the Lord to Moses was not sufficient for the people of Isaiah's time. Different dispensations required different instructions. That is true today. The dispensation in which we now live is a dispensation into which the knowledge of all other dispensations of the gospel has merged. What a blessing it is for us to live in this time when the fulness of the gospel is ours to bless our lives.

I would like to extend to all within the sound of my voice today an invitation previously written in a hymn: "Come, listen to a prophet's voice, and hear the word of God."⁴ Every member of the Church of any age or circumstance will be touched and blessed by the inspired counsel of prophets of the Lord!

A photographer's experience

The story is told of an event that happened in New York when President David O. McKay returned from a trip to Europe:

"Arrangements had been made for pictures to be taken, but the regular photographer was unable to go, so in desperation the United Press picked their crime photographer—a man accustomed to the toughest type of work in New York. He went to the airport, stayed there two hours, and returned later from [the] dark room with a tremendous sheaf of pictures. He was supposed to take only two. His boss immediately chided him, 'What in the world are you wasting time and all those photographic supplies for?'

"The photographer replied very curtly, saying he would gladly pay for the extra materials, and they could even dock him for the extra time he took. . . . Several hours later the vice-president called him to his office, wanting to learn what happened. The crime photographer said, 'When I was a little boy, my mother used to read to me out of the Old Testa-

ment, and all my life I have wondered what a prophet of God must really look like. Well, today I found one.'"⁵

Blessings of having living prophets

Do we fully appreciate what a wondrous blessing it is to each one of us that we have found our prophet? The ways in which our lives have been enriched by listening to our prophet's voice are numerous. We have a clearer picture of who we are and what we mean to our Father in Heaven. We have received commandments and counsel to guide us, reminders to keep us on the straight and narrow, and encouraging words to spur us on when we become disheartened or discouraged. If we listen to the voices of the world, we will be misled. But if we listen to the voice of the Lord through His living prophet and follow his counsel, we will never go astray.

In a recent newspaper article President Hinckley was praised as "clearly a man for the season. . . . He's a hand shaker, a praiser, a man who knows what to say and how to say it, often with a sense of humor."⁶ Brothers and sisters, those are just the things the general public sees. We as members of the Church see so much more. Through the whisperings of the Holy Spirit, we know that the true head of this Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, does communicate with us through President Hinckley. It was my blessing and privilege to feel that Spirit when I was called into President Hinckley's office to receive my call to the general Relief Society presidency one and a half years ago. Before I knew the purpose of my being there, I shook his hand and received a powerful personal witness that I was in the presence of a prophet of God. That witness made me feel exceedingly humble and reverent. If I was kind of quiet that day, President Hinckley, that is the reason.

We are so blessed to have a living prophet who makes connections that have never been made before. Joseph Smith made this prophecy in the dedication of the Kirtland Temple: "That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."⁷ President Hinckley has been prepared for our day, for a media-savvy world.

Outside the windows of our lives are many voices announcing the death of honesty, the death of integrity, the death of goodness and righteousness, even announcing the death of the traditional family. How blessed we are as Latter-day Saints to know that God can speak to us through our living prophet today and give us guidance and instruction and encouragement so that we may continue, just as the Lord's true Church continues, steadfast and confident on the path that leads us back to Him.

The prophet will never lead us astray

There aren't many guarantees in this life. There isn't a car made with a warranty that covers everything. No bank on earth can absolutely guarantee that your money is completely safe. Even the *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval has a disclaimer written right on it! Nothing man-made or man-controlled can ever be truly guaranteed! But here's the miracle. The Lord has given some marvelous guarantees without any disclaimers. And this is one of them: He will choose the prophet, and He will never let that man lead us astray. Imagine for a moment the impact of that promise. There is at least one place we can turn for pure, unpoluted guidance.

As sisters in Relief Society, it is our work, under the direction of the priesthood, to assist in bringing women and their families back to Heavenly Father to live with Him again, as we all did before we came to this earth. The voice of

a living prophet bearing God's message is clear and sure and safe and direct.

Lessons taught in the proclamation on the family

God's message was never more clear and sure or safe and direct than when President Gordon B. Hinckley read, as part of his message at the general Relief Society meeting held September 23, 1995, the proclamation on the family.⁸ Look at the lessons God taught a floundering world through this proclamation:

Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God.

We are created in His image.

Our gender was determined before we came to earth and is part of our eternal identity.

We lived with Him before we came to earth.

God commanded us to bear children but warned that the powers of procreation were to be employed only within the sacred bonds of marriage.

God tells us through His prophet that we have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other as husband and wife and to rear our children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs.

The family is ordained of God.

Parents have specific duties and responsibilities. Fathers preside, provide, and protect, and mothers nurture.

In addition, the proclamation contains this very important warning—that those who abuse spouse or offspring or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will stand accountable before God.

Further is this warning—that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets. Brothers and sisters, we are in the midst of that reality at this very moment. It is the duty of all of us to protect and strengthen the family.

Heed the words of the living prophet

I invite you again to “come, listen to a prophet’s voice.” The Prophet Joseph Smith established Relief Society as a result of a revelation from God, so that “knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time henceforth.” Joseph Smith promised, “You will receive instructions through the order of the Priesthood which God has established, through the medium of those appointed to lead, guide and direct the affairs of the Church in this last dispensation.”

In Relief Society we are taught ways to protect and strengthen the family.

President Hinckley has said: “The best lies ahead. . . . If you will stay on the straight and narrow, the best lies ahead. It is a wonderful time to be alive. It’s a great time to be a member of this Church when you can hold your head up without embarrassment and with some pride in this great latter-day work.”¹⁰

“Come, listen to a prophet’s voice,” that you may know the will of God, that you may have His light to direct your

path. It is my prayer that you may also have a personal witness, as I have, that our living prophet today, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has soul-saving instructions for you and yours—instructions that, if followed, will lead us all back to our heavenly home, safe and unspotted from the world. I say these things in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 157.
2. “The Keys of the Kingdom,” *Millennial Star*, 2 Sept. 1889, 548.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–5.
4. *Hymns*, no. 21.
5. Arch L. Madsen, quoted in “Memories of a Prophet,” *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1970, 72.
6. Cala Byram, “President Hinckley, 87, Charms World As He Leads Church,” *Deseret News*, 23 May 1998, p. A1.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 109:73.
8. See *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
9. *History of the Church*, 4:607.
10. “Messages of Inspiration from President Hinckley,” *Church News*, 2 Sept. 1995, 2.

Elder Robert D. Hales

The healing process of the soul

Since we assembled in general conference last April, as many of you know, I experienced my third heart attack, which necessitated bypass surgery. Because of skilled doctors; a caring and well-trained medical staff; my wife, Mary, who is my patient, loving, and constant caregiver; and the prayers offered by so many in my behalf, I have been blessed with renewed health and strength. Thank you for your concern and for your prayers.

My message today is how to aid the healing process of the soul. It is a message to lead you and me to the Great Healer, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a plan to read the scriptures, pray,

ponder, repent if necessary, and be healed with the peace and joy of His Spirit. May I share my ponderings as I went through the healing process.

Pondering is important for healing

While I was lying in my hospital bed and for several weeks at home, my physical activity was severely restricted by intense pain which disabled my weakened body, but I learned the joy of freeing my mind to ponder the meaning of life and the eternities. Since my calendar was wiped clean of meetings, tasks, and appointments, for a number of weeks I was able to turn my attention away from matters of administration to matters of

the eternities. The Lord has told us, "Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds" (D&C 43:34). I discovered that if I dwelled only upon my pain, it inhibited the healing process. I found that pondering was a very important element in the healing process for both soul and body. Pain brings you to a humility that allows you to ponder. It is an experience I am grateful to have endured.

I pondered deeply the purpose of pain and studied in my mind what I could learn from my experience and began to comprehend pain a little better. I learned that the physical pain and the healing of the body after major surgery are remarkably similar to the spiritual pain and the healing of the soul in the process of repentance. "Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the soul, and for the life of the soul" (D&C 101:37).

Exercise faith, study, and pray

I have come to understand how useless it is to dwell on the *whys*, *what ifs*, and *if onlys* for which there likely will be given no answers in mortality. To receive the Lord's comfort, we must exercise faith. The questions *Why me? Why our family? Why now?* are usually unanswerable questions. These questions detract from our spirituality and can destroy our faith. We need to spend our time and energy building our faith by turning to the Lord and asking for strength to overcome the pains and trials of this world and to endure to the end for greater understanding.

In Proverbs we are told to "ponder the path of life" (Proverbs 5:6). As we ponder the path of life, we can set our path to righteousness and feel the Spirit direct us. "Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3).

If you and I are to feast upon the words of Christ, we must study the scrip-

tures and absorb His words through pondering them and making them a part of every thought and action.

Just as studying the words of Christ is an element of pondering, so too are diligent, faithful prayer and listening to the Spirit. In a revelation given through Joseph Smith, the Lord has told us:

"I say unto you, my friends, I leave these sayings with you to ponder in your hearts, with this commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall call upon me while I am near—

"Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 88:62–63).

Pondering brings gratitude and peace

Pondering takes our thoughts from the trivial things of this world and brings us closer to the gentle, guiding hand of our Maker as we heed the "still small voice" of the Holy Ghost (see 1 Kings 19:12; 1 Nephi 17:45; D&C 85:6). In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord spoke to David Whitmer: "Your mind has been on the things of the earth more than on the things of . . . your Maker, . . . and you have not given heed unto my Spirit" (D&C 30:2).

Pondering the things of the Lord—His word, His teachings, His commandments, His life, His love, the gifts He has given us, His Atonement for us—brings about a tremendous feeling of gratitude for our Savior and for the life and blessings He has given us.

Recent months have brought some tender experiences with families going through all the pain inherent in the peaceful passing of a family member. As the one passing away prepares to depart mortality, the family members experience a peace and willingness to let go of their loved one. The family members feel the pain of separation but are comforted by the peace that comes from

priesthood blessings, family prayers, and the knowledge of the Resurrection that assures them they will be reunited with their loved one in the not-too-distant future. Their faith and putting their trust in the Lord help them put the *whys* and *ifs* behind them and feel the comfort of the Spirit of the Lord.

Repentance brings spiritual healing

Our Savior knows the heart of each of us. He knows the pains of our hearts. If we seek the truth, develop faith in Him, and, if necessary, sincerely repent, we will receive a spiritual change of heart which only comes from our Savior. Our hearts will become new again.

Repentance includes recognizing that we have done wrong and need to repent, confessing our sins to the proper priesthood authority, restoring whatever can be restored, and resolving to obey the Lord. Repentance brings about spiritual healing of the soul. In an address to his people, King Benjamin said:

"Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever" (Mosiah 2:38).

The Savior's pain

As I endured physical pain, I thought also of the deeper pain and anguish of the soul. I thought of the pain experienced by our Savior, Jesus Christ—not only the acute and excruciating physical pain as He was lifted upon the cross, but also the chronic, agonizing, anguishing pain caused by the disobedience of mankind.

King Benjamin prophesied about the Savior:

"And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people" (Mosiah 3:7).

The greater and more intense suffering of the Lord was not physical—not the trial or the mocking, not the beating or being spat upon. It was not even being betrayed by a beloved associate or rejected by those whom He loved. Nor was it the physical act of crucifixion. Although all of these things happened and each action was very painful, the Savior's greatest pain during the Atonement was endured to help the transgressor to be healed:

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

"But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:16–18).

Alma the Younger's pain and joy

It is interesting to note that, other than in the book of Job and a few other places, there are very few scriptural references to physical or mortal pain. The pain most frequently spoken of in the scriptures is the pain and anguish of the Lord and His prophets for the disobedient souls.

Alma the Younger provides a vivid example in the account of his conversion. Alma had been rebellious, even so much that he and the sons of Mosiah went about "seeking to destroy the church of God" (Alma 36:6). Imagine the pain and heartache of Alma's parents and, more importantly, of Heavenly Father and Jesus, who finally sent an angel to tell him,

"If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God" (Alma 36:9). It was painful enough that Alma should choose disobedience, but he was also causing others to rebel against the word of God.

Alma described his feelings when he saw and heard the angel. He said that as he remembered his rebellion and all of his sins and iniquities, he "was tormented with the pains of hell" (Alma 36:13). Alma's pain went beyond physical pain. He "was racked with eternal torment" (Alma 36:12) because of his disobedience and rebellion against God.

After recognizing the seriousness of his sins and then turning to God, he said: "There could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. . . . On the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy" (Alma 36:21).

His joy came because of his contrite repentance. From that time forth, Alma and all those who were with him, including the sons of Mosiah, went about trying "to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church, confessing all their sins" (Mosiah 27:35) and bringing souls unto Christ.

Only by repentance and asking for forgiveness of the Lord was Alma able to put his pain behind him and receive of the joy and light of the gospel. The Lord taught the Nephites that knowledge of the truth, diligent faith, and true repentance bring about a change of heart. Alma experienced a mighty change of heart.

Understanding the pains of mortality

In this mortal life, each of us is going to experience pain in one form or another. Pain may come from an accident or from a painful medical condition. We may feel deep pain from the mourning that appropriately comes with the loss of a loved one or the loss of affection from

one we hold dear. Pain may come from feeling lonely or depressed. It often comes as a result of our disobedience to the commandments of God, but it also comes to those who are doing all they can to keep their lives in line with the example of the Savior.

The scriptures teach that "there is . . . opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). Just as times of joy and happiness come to each of us, so also comes pain to every mortal. How can we understand those moments in our life when we experience physical or emotional pain?

Elder Spencer W. Kimball said: "We knew before we were born that we were coming to the earth for bodies and experience and that we would have joys and sorrows, ease and pain, comforts and hardships, health and sickness, successes and disappointments, and we knew also that . . . we would die. We accepted all these eventualities with a glad heart, eager to accept both the favorable and unfavorable. . . . We were willing to come and take life as it came" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 106).

Elder Orson F. Whitney wrote: "No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God . . . and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire" (quoted in *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 98).

The Lord is the ultimate caregiver

When we are experiencing pain, the caregiver is a very important part of the recovery process. Attentive doctors,

nurses, therapists, a loving spouse, parents, children, and friends comfort us when we are ill and speed our recovery process. There are times when, no matter how independent we may be, we must entrust others with our care. We must surrender ourselves to them. Our caregivers are those who assist in the healing process.

The Lord is the ultimate caregiver. We must surrender ourselves to the Lord. In doing so, we give up whatever is causing our pain and turn everything over to Him. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55:22). "And then may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son" (Alma 33:23). Through faith and trust in the Lord and obedience to His counsel, we make ourselves eligible to be partakers of the Atonement of Jesus Christ so that one day we may return to live with Him.

As we put our faith and trust in the Lord, we must battle our pain day by day and sometimes hour by hour, even moment by moment; but in the end, we understand that marvelous counsel given to the Prophet Joseph Smith as he struggled with his pain of feeling forgotten and isolated in Liberty Jail:

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes" (D&C 121:7-8).

Draw near to the Savior

My dear brothers and sisters, when pain, tests, and trials come in life, draw near to the Savior. "Wait upon the Lord, . . . look for him" (Isaiah 8:17; 2 Nephi 18:17). "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall

run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). Healing comes in the Lord's time and the Lord's way; be patient.

Our Savior waits for us to come to Him through our scripture study, pondering, and prayer to our Heavenly Father. Great blessings and lessons come from overcoming adversity. As we are strengthened and healed, we can then lift and strengthen others with our faith. May we be instruments in the Lord's hands in blessing the lives of those in pain.

I give you my testimony that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ and that He waits for us to come to Him to give us counsel and compassionate caring. May the Lord's blessings be upon each of us as we deal with the trials of life for us personally and for our loved ones, I so pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Beautiful Savior" and "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

President Hinckley

Sister Virginia U. Jensen, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve. The choir then sang those beautiful hymns "Beautiful Savior" and "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

We express our appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session, and following his remarks the chorus will sing "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Stephen A. West of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

One leper returns to give thanks

In a land far away, and at a time long ago, Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem.

"He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

"And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

"And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

"And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

"And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."¹

"In every thing give thanks"

From the 30th Psalm, David pledges, "O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever."²

The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, proclaimed, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."³ And to the Thessalonians, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God."⁴

My brothers and sisters, do we give thanks to God "for his unspeakable gift" and His rich blessings so abundantly bestowed upon us?

Do we pause and ponder Ammon's words? "Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people . . . over all the earth. Now this is my joy, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever."⁵

Robert W. Woodruff, a prominent business leader of a former time, toured the United States giving a lecture which he entitled "A Capsule Course in Human Relations." In his message, he said that the two most important words in the English language are these: "Thank you."

Gracias, danke, merci—whatever language is spoken, "thank you" frequently expressed will cheer your spirit, broaden your friendships, and lift your lives to a higher pathway as you journey toward perfection. There is a simplicity—even a sincerity—when "thank you" is spoken.

A boy expresses gratitude for a bicycle

The beauty and eloquence of an expression of gratitude is reflected in a newspaper story of some years ago:

The District of Columbia police auctioned off about 100 unclaimed bicycles Friday. "One dollar," said an 11-year-old boy as the bidding opened on the first bike. The bidding, however, went much higher. "One dollar," the boy repeated

hopefully each time another bike came up.

The auctioneer, who had been auctioning stolen or lost bikes for 43 years, noticed that the boy's hopes seemed to soar higher whenever a racer-type bicycle was put up.

Then there was just one racer left. The bidding went to eight dollars. "Sold to that boy over there for nine dollars!" said the auctioneer. He took eight dollars from his own pocket and asked the boy for his dollar. The youngster turned it over in pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters—took his bike, and started to leave. But he went only a few feet. Carefully parking his new possession, he went back, gratefully threw his arms around the auctioneer's neck, and cried.

When was the last time we felt gratitude as deeply as did this boy? The deeds others perform in our behalf might not be as poignant, but certainly there are kind acts that warrant our expressions of gratitude.

"Count your many blessings"

The song frequently sung in the Sunday School of our youth placed the spirit of thanksgiving into the depths of our souls:

When upon life's billows you are
tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking
all is lost,
Count your many blessings; name
them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the
Lord has done.⁶

Astronaut Gordon Cooper, while orbiting the earth over 30 years ago, offered this sweet and simple prayer of thanks: "Father, thank You, especially for letting me fly this flight. Thank You for the privilege of being able to be in this position; to be up in this wondrous place,

seeing all these many startling, wonderful things that You have created."⁷

We are thankful for blessings we cannot measure, for gifts we cannot appraise, "for books, music, art, and for the great inventions which make these blessings available; . . . for the laughter of little children; . . . for the . . . means for relieving human suffering . . . and increasing . . . the enjoyment of life; . . . for everything good and uplifting."⁸

The prophet Alma urged, "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day."⁹

I would like to mention three instances where I believe a sincere "thank you" could lift a heavy heart, inspire a good deed, and bring heaven's blessings closer to the challenges of our day.

Express thanks to parents

First, may I ask that we express thanks to our parents for life, for caring, for sacrificing, for laboring to provide a knowledge of our Heavenly Father's plan for happiness.

From Sinai the words thunder to our conscience, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."¹⁰

I know of no sweeter expression toward a parent than that spoken by our Savior upon the cross:

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

"Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."¹¹

Express thanks to teachers

Next, have we thought on occasion of a certain teacher at school or at church who seemed to quicken our desire to learn, who instilled in us a commitment to live with honor?

The story is told of a group of men who were talking about people who had influenced their lives and for whom they were grateful. One man thought of a high school teacher who had introduced him to Tennyson. He decided to write and thank her. In time, written in a feeble scrawl, came the teacher's reply:

"My dear Willie:

"I can't tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my 80s, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely and like the last leaf lingering behind. You will be interested to know that I taught school for 50 years, and yours is the first note of appreciation I have ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered me as nothing has for years."

We owe an eternal debt of gratitude to all of those, past and present, who have given so much of themselves, that we might have so much ourselves.

Express thanks to peers

Third, I mention an expression of "thank you" to one's peers. The teenage years can be difficult for the teens themselves as well as for their parents. These are trying times in the life of a boy or a girl. Each boy wants to make the football team; each girl wants to be the beauty queen. "Many are called, but few are chosen"¹² could have an application here.

A miracle at Murray High School

Let me share with you a modern-day miracle which occurred a year or so ago at Murray High School near Salt Lake

City, where every person was a winner, and not a loser was to be found.

A newspaper article highlighted the event. It was entitled "Tears, Cheers and True Spirit: Students Elect 2 Disabled Girls to Murray Royalty." The article began:

"Ted and Ruth Eyre did what any parents would do.

"When their daughter, Shellie, became a finalist for Murray High School homecoming queen, they counseled her to be a good sport in case she didn't win. They explained only one girl among the 10 . . . would be selected queen. . . .

"As student body officers crowned the school's homecoming [royalty] in the school gym Thursday night, Shellie Eyre experienced, instead, inclusion. The 17-year-old senior, born with Down syndrome, was selected by fellow students as homecoming queen. . . .

" . . . As Ted Eyre escorted his daughter onto the gym floor as the candidates were introduced, the gym erupted into deafening cheers and applause. They were greeted with a standing ovation."

Similar standing ovations were extended to Shellie's attendants, one of whom, April Perschon, has physical and mental disabilities resulting from a brain hemorrhage suffered when she was just 10 years old.

When the ovations had ceased, the school vice principal Gloria Merrill said, "Tonight . . . the students voted on inner beauty." . . .

"Obviously moved, parents, school administrators and students wept openly." Said one student, "I'm so happy. I cried when they came out. I think Murray High is so awesome to do this."¹³

I extend a heartfelt "thank you" to one and all who made this night one ever to be remembered. To paraphrase the Scottish poet James Barrie, "God gave us memories, that we might have June roses in the December of our lives."¹⁴

Compassionate response to girls' deaths

In August of this year, there occurred a tragedy in Salt Lake County. It was reported in the local and national press. Five beautiful little girls—so young, so vibrant, so loving—hiding away, as children often do in their games of hide-and-seek, entered the trunk of a parent's car. The trunk lid was pulled shut, they were unable to escape, and all perished from heat exhaustion.

The entire community was so kind, so thoughtful, so caring in the passing of Alisha, Ashley, McKell, Audrey, and Jaesha. Flowers, food, calls, visits, and prayers were shared.

On the Sunday after the devastating event occurred, long lines of automobiles filled with grieving occupants drove ever so slowly past the Smith home, the scene of the accident. Sister Monson and I wished to be among those who expressed condolences in this way. As we drove by, we felt we were on holy ground. We literally crept along at a snail's pace along the street. It was as though we could visualize a traffic sign reading, "Please drive slowly; children at play." Tears filled our eyes and compassion flowed from our hearts.

At the funeral, as well as the evening prior, thousands passed by the caskets and expressed support for the grieving parents and grandparents. In two of the three families, the deceased children were all the children they had.

Frequently death comes as an intruder. It is an enemy that suddenly appears in the midst of life's feast, putting out its lights and gaiety. It visits the aged as they walk on faltering feet. Its summons is heard by those who have scarcely reached midway in life's journey, and often it hushes the laughter of little children.

Counsel at the funeral

At the funeral services for the five little angels, I counseled: "There is one

phrase which should be erased from your thinking and from the words you speak aloud. It is the phrase 'If only.' It is counterproductive and is not conducive to the spirit of healing and of peace. Rather, recall the words of Proverbs: 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.'¹⁵"

Before the closing of the caskets, I noted that each child held a favorite toy, a soft gift to cuddle. I reflected on the words of the poet Eugene Field:

The little toy dog is covered with dust,
But sturdy and staunch he stands;
And the little toy soldier is red with rust,
And his musket moulds in his hands.
Time was when the little toy dog was new,
And the soldier was passing fair,
And that was the time when our
Little Boy Blue
Kissed them and put them there.

"Now, don't you go till I come," he said,
"And don't you make any noise!"
So toddling off to his trundle-bed
He dreamt of the pretty toys.
And as he was dreaming, an angel song
Awakened our Little Boy Blue,—
Oh, the years are many, the years are long,
But the little toy friends are true!

Ay, faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand,
Each in the same old place,
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,
The smile of a little face.
And they wonder, as waiting these long years through,
In the dust of that little chair,
What has become of our Little Boy Blue
Since he kissed them and put them there.¹⁶

One source of true peace

The little toy dog and the soldier fair may wonder, but God in His infinite mercy has not left grieving loved ones to wonder. He has provided truth. He will inspire an upward reach, and His outstretched arms will embrace you. Jesus promises to one and all who grieve, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."¹⁷

There is only one source of true peace. I am certain that the Lord, who notes the fall of a sparrow, looks with compassion upon those who have been called upon to part—even temporarily—from their precious children. The gifts of healing and of peace are desperately needed, and Jesus, through His Atonement, has provided them for one and all.

Words of comfort about children who die

The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke inspired words of revelation and comfort: "All children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven."¹⁸

"The mother [and father] who laid down [their] little child[ren], being deprived of the privilege, the joy, and the satisfaction of bringing [them] up to manhood or womanhood in this world, would, after the resurrection, have all the joy, satisfaction and pleasure, and even more than it would have been possible to have had in mortality, in seeing [their] child[ren] grow to the full measure of the stature of [their] spirit[s]."¹⁹ This is as the balm of Gilead to those who grieve, to those who have loved and lost precious children.

"Joy cometh in the morning"

The Psalmist provided this assurance: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."²⁰

Said the Lord:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."²¹

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also."²²

I express my profound thanks to a loving Heavenly Father, who gives to you, to me, and to all who sincerely seek, the knowledge that death is not the end, that His Son—even our Savior, Jesus Christ—died that we might live. Temples of the Lord dot the lands of many countries. Sacred covenants are made. Celestial glory awaits the obedient. Families can be together—forever.

The Master invites one and all:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."²³

That all may do so is my humble prayer of thanks, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 17:11–19.
2. Psalm 30:12.
3. 2 Corinthians 9:15.
4. 1 Thessalonians 5:18.
5. Alma 26:37.
6. "Count Your Blessings," *Hymns*, no. 241.
7. *Congressional Record*, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, 109, pt. 7:9156.
8. "Three Centuries of Thanksgiving," *Etude Music Magazine*, Nov. 1945, 614.
9. Alma 37:37.
10. Exodus 20:12.
11. John 19:26–27.
12. Matthew 22:14.
13. Marjorie Cortez, *Deseret News*, 26 Sept. 1997, pp. A1, A7.

14. In Laurence J. Peter, comp., *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time* (1977), 335.
15. Proverbs 3:5-6.
16. "Little Boy Blue," in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 50.
17. John 14:18.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 137:10.
19. Quoted in Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 453.

20. Psalm 30:5.
21. John 14:27.
22. John 14:2-3.
23. Matthew 11:28-29.

The chorus sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder Stephen A. West offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1998, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music was provided by a Young Women choir from the Murray, Utah, area, under the direction of Sister Vickie Belnap, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We are especially grateful this afternoon for the presence of Elder Andrew W. Peterson at this session.

The music for this session will be by a Young Women choir from the Murray, Utah, area, under the direction of Sister Vickie Belnap, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will now sing "I Stand All Amazed." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I Stand All Amazed."

Elder Kenneth Johnson offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "I'll Serve the Lord While I Am Young." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "I'll Serve the Lord While I Am Young."

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor may manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elders Jack H. Goaslind, W. Eugene Hansen, James M. Paramore, and Ronald E. Poelman and designate them as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest. Thank you.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elders Monte J. Brough,

W. Eugene Hansen, and Jack H. Goaslind as Presidents of the Quorums of the Seventy; Elders Jack H. Goaslind, Robert K. Dellenbach, and F. Melvin Hammond as the Young Men general presidency; and Elder Glenn L. Pace as first counselor and Elder Neil L. Andersen as second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation to all for their services, please make it known.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, and David E. Sorensen as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Neil L. Andersen as first counselor and Elder John H. Groberg as second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, and Elders Robert K. Dellenbach, F. Melvin Hammond, and John M. Madson as the Young Men general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may similarly manifest it.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and your prayers.

President Faust

We will now hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

President Boyd K. Packer

Parents in Zion

In 1831 the Lord gave a revelation to parents in Zion.¹ It is about parents that I wish to speak.

I have served in the Quorum of the Twelve for 28 years, and 9 years as an Assistant to the Twelve. Put together, that makes 37 years—exactly half my life.

But I have another calling which I have held even longer. I am a parent—a father and a grandfather. It took years to earn the *grandfather* title—another 20 years the title of *great-grandfather*. These titles—*father, grandfather, mother, grandmother*—carry responsibility and an authority which comes in part from experience. Experience is a compelling teacher.

Balancing family and Church

My calling in the priesthood defines my position in the Church; the title *grandfather*, my position in the family. I want to talk about both of them together.

Parenthood stands among the most important activities to which Latter-day Saints may devote themselves. Many members face conflicts as they struggle to balance their responsibility as parents together with faithful activity in the Church.

There are things vital to the well-being of a family which can be found only by going to church. There is the priesthood, which empowers a man to lead and bless his wife and children, and covenants which bind them together forever.

The Church was commanded to “meet together often”² and told, “When ye are assembled together ye shall instruct and edify each other.”³ Alma the Elder and Alma the Younger gave the same instruction to their people.⁴

We are commanded to “turn the heart[s] of the fathers to the children, and the heart[s] of the children to their fathers.”⁵

The Lord addressed Joseph Smith Jr. by name and said, “You have not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked.”⁶ He had failed to teach his children. That is the only time the word *rebuke* is used in correcting him.

His counselor Frederick G. Williams was under the same condemnation: “You have not taught your children light and truth.”⁷ Sidney Rigdon was told the same thing, as was Bishop Newel K. Whitney,⁸ and the Lord added, “What I say unto one I say unto all.”⁹

Church’s inspired guidance for families

We have watched the standards of morality sink ever lower until now they are in a free-fall. At the same time we have seen an outpouring of inspired guidance for parents and for families.

The whole of the curriculum and all of the activities of the Church have been restructured and correlated with the home:

- Ward teaching became home teaching.
- Family home evening was reestablished.
- Genealogy was renamed family history and set to collect records of all the families.
- And then the historic proclamation on the family was issued by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

• The family became, and remains, a prevailing theme in meetings, conferences, and councils.

• All as a prelude to an unprecedented era of building temples wherein the authority to seal families together forever is exercised.

Can you see the spirit of inspiration resting upon the servants of the Lord and upon parents? Can we understand the challenge and the assault now leveled at the family?

Use care in scheduling activities

In providing out-of-home activities for the family, we must use care; otherwise, we could be like a father determined to provide everything for his family. He devotes every energy to that end and succeeds; only then does he discover that what they needed most—to be together as a family—has been neglected. And he reaps sorrow in place of contentment.

How easy it is, in our desire to provide schedules of programs and activities, to overlook the responsibilities of the parent and the essential need for families to have time together.

We must be careful lest programs and activities of the Church become too heavy for some families to carry. The principles of the gospel, where understood and applied, strengthen and protect both individuals and families. Devotion to the family and devotion to the Church are not different and separate things.

Keep family and Church in perspective

I recently saw a woman respond when it was said of another, "Since she had the new baby, she isn't doing anything in the Church." You could almost see a baby in her arms as she protested with emotion: "She *is* doing something in the Church. She gave that baby life. She nurtures and teaches it. She is doing the most important thing that she can do in the Church."

How would you respond to this question: "Because of their handicapped child, she is confined to the home and he works two jobs to meet the extra

expenses. They seldom attend—can we count them as active in the Church?"

And have you ever heard a woman say, "My husband is a very good father, but he's never been a bishop or a stake president or done anything important in the Church." In response to that, a father vigorously said, "What is more important in the Church than being a good father?"

Faithful attendance at church, together with careful attention to the needs of the family, is a near-perfect combination. In church we are taught the great plan of happiness.¹⁰ At home we apply what we have learned. Every call, every service in the Church brings experience and valuable insights which carry over into family life.

Would our perspective be more clear if we could, for a moment, look upon parenthood as a calling in the Church? Actually, it is so much more than that; but if we could look at it that way for a moment, we could reach a better balance in the way we schedule families.

Do not burden families unnecessarily

I do not want anyone to use what I say to excuse them in turning down an inspired call from the Lord. I *do* want to encourage leaders to carefully consider the home lest they issue calls or schedule activities which place an unnecessary burden on parents and families.

Recently I read a letter from a young couple whose callings in the Church frequently require them to hire a sitter for their small children in order for them to attend their meetings. It has become very difficult for both of them to be home with their children at the same time. Can you see something out of balance there?

Every time you schedule a youngster, you schedule a family—particularly the mother.

Consider the mother who, in addition to her own Church calling and that

of her husband, must get her children ready and run from one activity to another. Some mothers become discouraged—even depressed. I receive letters using the word *guilt* because they cannot do it all.

Attending church is, or should be, a respite from the pressures of everyday life. It should bring peace and contentment. If it brings pressure and discouragement, then something is out of balance.

And the Church is not the only responsibility parents have. Other agencies have a very legitimate reason to call upon the resources of the family—schools, employers, community—all need to be balanced in.

Recently a mother told me her family had moved from a rural, scattered ward where, of necessity, activities were consolidated into one weekday night. It was wonderful. They had time for their family. I can see them sitting around the table together.

They moved west into a larger ward where members were closer to the chapel. She said, "Now our family is scheduled Tuesday night, Wednesday night, Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday night. It is very hard on our family."

Remember, when you schedule a youngster, you schedule a family—particularly the mother.

Most families try very hard; but some, when burdened with problems of health and finance, simply become exhausted trying to keep up, and eventually they withdraw into inactivity. They do not see that they are moving from the one best source of light and truth, of help with their family, into the shadows where danger and heartbreak await.

I must touch upon what must surely be the most difficult problem to solve. Some youngsters receive very little teaching and support at home. There is no question but that we must provide for them. But if we provide a constant sched-

ule of out-of-home activities sufficient to compensate for the loss in those homes, it may make it difficult for attentive parents to have time to be with and teach their own children. Only prayer and inspiration can lead us to find this difficult balance.

Importance of learning at home

We often hear, "We must provide frequent and exciting activities lest our youth will go to less wholesome places." Some of them will. But I have the conviction that if we teach parents to be responsible and allow them sufficient time, over the long course their children will be at home.

There, at home, they can learn what cannot be effectively taught in either Church or school. At home they can learn to work and to take responsibility. They learn what to do when they have children of their own.

For example, in the Church children are taught the principle of tithing, but it is at home that the principle is applied. At home even young children can be shown how to figure a tithe and how it is paid.

One time President and Sister Harold B. Lee were in our home. Sister Lee put a handful of pennies on a table before our young son. She had him slide the shiny ones to one side and said, "These are your tithing; these belong to the Lord. The others are yours to keep." He thoughtfully looked from one pile to the other and then said, "Don't you have any more dirty ones?" That was when the real teaching moment began!

Use the ward council to establish balance

The ward council is the perfect place to establish the balance between home and Church. Here the brethren of the priesthood, themselves fathers, and sisters of the auxiliaries, themselves mothers, can, with inspired insight, coordinate

the work of the organizations, each of which serves different members of the family.

Members of the council can compare what each organization is providing for each member and how much time and money are required. They can unite rather than divide families and provide watch care over single parents, the childless, the unmarried, the elderly, the handicapped—and provide much more than just activities for the children and young people.

The ward council has resources often overlooked. For instance, grandparents, while not filling callings, can help young families who are finding their way along the same path they once walked.

The Lord warned parents, "Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, . . . that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents."¹¹

The ward council is ideal for our present need. Here the home and the family can be anchored in place, and the Church can support rather than supplant the parents. Fathers and mothers will understand both their obligation to teach their children and the blessings provided by the Church.

Most important things learned at home

As the world grows ever more threatening, the powers of heaven draw ever closer to families and parents.

I have studied much in the scriptures and have taught from them. I have read much from what the prophets and apostles have spoken. They have had a profound influence upon me as a man and as a father.

But most of what I know about how our Father in Heaven really feels about us, His children, I have learned from the way I feel about my wife and my children and their children. This I have learned at home. I have learned it from my parents and from my wife's parents, from my beloved wife and from my children, and I can therefore testify of a loving Heavenly Father and of a redeeming Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 20:75.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 43:8.
4. See Mosiah 18:25; Alma 6:6.
5. Malachi 4:6; see also 3 Nephi 25:5–6; Doctrine and Covenants 2:2–3.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:47.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:41–42.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:44, 50.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 93:49.
10. See Alma 12:32.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Significant dates and events in our lives

We often mark significant dates on our calendars, such as holidays and birthdays. Dates that come around every year help us measure progress in our lives. One annual event, New Year's Day, is a time of reflection and resolution.

Our baptism date, which commemorates our spiritual rebirth, is an annual occasion worthy of special note. We pause to recognize the date of our temple sealing as a special anniversary because that ordinance binds us together forever with our most cherished loved ones. Worthiness interviews, especially

annual temple recommend interviews, give us another opportunity to review our progress in fulfilling the glorious stewardship our Father in Heaven has given each of us. Certainly we must watch over and care for our own souls. On these occasions we renew covenants, affirm commitments, and establish eternal goals.

A few significant events occur only once in a lifetime. For example, in less than 15 months—454 days, to be precise—we will experience a New Year's Day when all four numerals in the calendar year will change at the same time. Public opinion polls indicate that this singular calendar change "is looming increasingly large in the public consciousness." Surveys show that people are anticipating the moment with "a very positive outlook." One forecaster said that the millennial calendar change "will be a profound milestone in people's lives, an opportunity to stop and start anew."¹

The Savior's birth and mortal ministry

The birth of the Savior into mortality is an event of immeasurable significance that occurred almost 2,000 years ago. In much of the world, calendar years are numbered forward and backward from the time of His birth. He taught the gospel of repentance and organized His Church, atoned for the sins of all mankind, and was crucified. He was resurrected, opening the way for all to overcome death and have our sins forgiven if we repent. His teachings established standards of human behavior that will endure eternally.

The Savior's Second Coming

Perhaps in an effort to escape the challenges of our times, a few voices proclaim that the Second Coming of the Savior is imminent. Perhaps, but the Lord could not have been more plain

when He said of His triumphal return to the earth, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."² He taught this truth on the Mount of Olives and repeated it in modern revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith with the words, "The hour and the day no man knoweth."³

Yes, the time will come when "Christ will reign personally upon the earth."⁴ Certainly we are closer to that time now than in 1831 when the Lord admonished the elders of the Church to "labor . . . in my vineyard for the last time—for the last time call upon the inhabitants of the earth. . . . For the great Millennium, of which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants, shall come."⁵

We do not know the precise time of the Second Coming of the Savior, but we do know that we are living in the latter days and are closer to the Second Coming than when the Savior lived His mortal life in the meridian of time. We should resolve to begin a new era of personal obedience to prepare for His return. Mortality is fleeting. We all have much to accomplish in preparation to meet Him.

As Latter-day Saints, "we believe all things, we hope all things. . . . If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."⁶ What do we believe that will motivate us to move forward? What do we hope for? What are the virtuous, lovely, or praiseworthy things we should seek after? I believe we should strive to develop within ourselves the traits of the character of the Savior.

Faith, hope, and charity

The words of the Apostle Paul come to mind: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."⁷ These divine attributes should become fixed in our hearts and minds to guide us in all of our ac-

tions. We read in Moroni: "Cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all. . . . Whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him."⁸ Charity can be the outward expression of faith and hope. If sought and obtained, these three foundation elements of celestial character will abide with us in this life and beyond the veil into the next life. Remember that the "same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that [you] go out of this life . . . will have power to possess your body in [the] eternal world."⁹ We should not wait a single day to intensify our personal efforts to strengthen these virtuous, lovely, and praiseworthy attributes.

When we keep the Lord's commandments, faith, hope, and charity abide with us. These virtues "distil upon [our] soul as the dews from heaven,"¹⁰ and we prepare ourselves to stand with confidence before our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, "without blemish and without spot."¹¹

As I read and ponder the scriptures, I see that developing faith, hope, and charity within ourselves is a step-by-step process. Faith begets hope, and together they foster charity. We read in Moroni, "Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity."¹² These three virtues may be sequential initially, but once obtained, they become interdependent. Each one is incomplete without the others. They support and reinforce each other. Moroni explained, "And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope."¹³

These are the virtuous, lovely, praiseworthy characteristics we seek. We all are familiar with Paul's teaching that "charity never faileth."¹⁴ Certainly we need unfailing spiritual strength in our lives. Moroni recorded the revelation

"that faith, hope and charity bringeth [us] unto [the Lord]—the fountain of all righteousness."¹⁵

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the restored Church of the Lord on the earth today, guides us to the Savior and helps us develop, nurture, and strengthen these divine attributes. In fact, He revealed the qualifications required to labor in His service in these words: "No one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity."¹⁶

Mormon taught that "charity is the pure love of Christ" and exhorted us to "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that [we] may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ."¹⁷ Note that charity is given only to those who seek it, only to those who earnestly pray for it, only to those who are disciples of Christ. Before we can be filled with this pure love, we must start at the beginning with the first principle of the gospel. We must have "first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁸

Faith

"Now *faith* is the substance of things *hoped* for, the evidence of things not seen."¹⁹ "Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if [we] have faith [we] hope for things which are not seen, which are true."²⁰ Latter-day Saints can rejoice in the strength of our faith because we have the fulness of the gospel. If we study, ponder, and pray, our faith in the unseen but true things of God will grow. Even if we start with only "a particle of faith, . . . even if [we] can no more than desire to believe,"²¹ with nurturing attention a tiny seed of faith can grow into a vibrant, strong, fruitful tree of testimony.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ motivates us to repent. Through repentance, made possible by the Lord's Atonement, we can feel the calming peace of forgive-

ness for our sins, weaknesses, and mistakes. With faith in a spiritual rebirth, we are baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We strive to keep the commandments of God with faith that obedience will help us become like Him. By virtue of the Resurrection of our Savior, we have faith that death is not the end of life. We have faith that we once again will know the pleasant company and warm embrace of loved ones who have departed from mortality.

Hope

Mormon asked the Saints of his day, "And what is it that ye shall hope for?" He gave them this answer: "Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise."²² In Ether we learn that "whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, [and] maketh an anchor to the souls of men."²³

Even when the winds of adversity blow, our Father keeps us anchored to our hope. The Lord has promised, "I will not leave you comfortless,"²⁴ and He will "consecrate [our] afflictions for [our] gain."²⁵ Even when our trials seem overwhelming, we can draw strength and hope from the sure promise of the Lord: "Be not afraid nor dismayed . . . ; for the battle is not yours, but God's."²⁶

Charity

Once faith grows into a firm, abiding testimony, giving us hope in our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness; once we see through the eye of faith that we are children of a loving Father, who has given us the gift of His Son to redeem us, we experience a mighty change in our

hearts.²⁷ We feel "to sing the song of redeeming love,"²⁸ and our hearts overflow with charity. Knowing that the love of God "is the most desirable [of] all things . . . and the most joyous to the soul,"²⁹ we want to share our joy with others. We want to serve them and bless them.

Family

"The Family: A Proclamation to the World" states clearly the sacredness of the family and that a "husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children."³⁰ Children should be taught at an early age of the sacredness of temples, and that their ultimate goal should be to go to the temple to enjoy the blessings that our Heavenly Father has in store for them. Even the tapestry of this sacred goal is given to children that will, in due time, realize this is the greatest blessing that could come to them in this life.

Temples

The ideals of faith, hope, and charity are most evident in the holy temples. There we learn the purpose of life, strengthen our commitment as disciples of Christ by entering into sacred covenants with Him, and seal our families together for eternity across generations. Receiving our own endowment in a temple and returning frequently to perform sacred ordinances for our kindred dead increases our faith, strengthens our hope, and deepens our charity. We receive our own endowment with faith and hope that we will understand the Lord's plan for His children, will recognize the divine potential within each of us as children of our Heavenly Father, and will be faithful to the end in keeping the covenants we make.

Performing temple ordinances for the dead is a manifestation of charity, offering essential blessings to those who

have preceded us, blessings that were not available to them during their mortal lives. We have the privilege of doing for them what they are unable to do for themselves.

When President Gordon B. Hinckley announced an unprecedented number of new temples last April, he declared that "temple ordinances become the crowning blessings the Church has to offer."³¹ He is extending these crowning blessings to more Latter-day Saints than ever before. In the house of the Lord, faithful Church members can be endowed "with power from on high,"³² power that will enable us to resist temptation, honor covenants, obey the Lord's commandments, and bear fervent, fearless testimony of the gospel to family, friends, and neighbors.

This past July we were privileged to participate with President Hinckley in the dedication of the Monticello Utah Temple, the first of the new generation of temples that the Lord has directed our prophet to have built closer to the Saints. What a great spiritual experience that was to be among faithful Saints who never expected that a temple would be built in their town. These are people of great faith; some of them are descendants of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers, who struggled, labored, and sacrificed through many years of toil to establish Zion on the high plateaus of southeastern Utah.³³

Brothers and sisters, great things are happening in the Church! We are moving forward as never before. President Hinckley's leadership is challenging us to rise to the occasion. We will attain new levels of spirituality and place our lives in closer harmony with Jesus the Christ based on how fully faith, hope, and charity become integral components of our lives. We surely will have challenges and trials, but with more assurance than ever we will have greater peace and joy, for He promised us His peace.³⁴

Testimony

I testify to you as a special witness that Jesus is the Christ and that through His prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the Savior presides over His Church. May we cultivate, in preparation of His returning to this earth, His divine attributes is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Outlook*, NFO Research, Inc., summer 1998.
2. Matthew 24:36.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 49:7.
4. Articles of Faith 1:10.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 43:28, 30.
6. Articles of Faith 1:13.
7. 1 Corinthians 13:13.
8. Moroni 7:46-47.
9. Alma 34:34.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
11. 1 Peter 1:19.
12. Moroni 10:20.
13. Moroni 10:21.
14. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
15. Ether 12:28.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.
17. Moroni 7:47-48.
18. Articles of Faith 1:4.
19. Hebrews 11:1; italics added.
20. Alma 32:21.
21. Alma 32:27; see also verses 28-43.
22. Moroni 7:41.
23. Ether 12:4.
24. John 14:18.
25. 2 Nephi 2:2.
26. 2 Chronicles 20:15.
27. See Alma 5:14.
28. Alma 5:26.
29. 1 Nephi 11:22-23.
30. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
31. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 116; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 88.
32. Doctrine and Covenants 95:8.
33. See *Church News*, 1 Aug. 1998, 4.
34. See John 14:27.

President Faust

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Our next speaker will be Elder E. Ray Bateman, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference. He will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "Now Let Us Rejoice."

Elder E. Ray Bateman

Pearls from the sand

Abraham found great favor from the Lord because of his obedience to whatsoever the Lord commanded him. Abraham took Isaac, his son, at the Lord's direction, to offer him up unto the Lord as a sacrifice. Because of this great love and obedience to the commandments, the Lord stayed Abraham's hand from offering Isaac and blessed Abraham and said, "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Genesis 22:17). The blessing of Abraham is still upon his seed, and the covenant that was made is theirs to have as Abraham's seed come unto Christ. The Apostle Paul taught, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). It is our responsibility as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to gather Abraham's seed and bring them unto Christ.

They should be easy to find, for they are as numerous as the sands of the seashore. That really means they are all around us. Are we looking? Are we asking? Are our good friends or the people we work with who are nonmembers the seed of Abraham? Are we opening our mouths to see if we can find out? The Savior counseled, "Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts" (D&C 29:7). In keeping with this counsel of the Savior, do we talk about the Church? Are we listening

to the prompting of the Spirit? The seed of Abraham hear His voice and will not harden their hearts. Do we invite them to come unto Christ? Are we allowing them to hear His voice?

It is written:

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

"Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matthew 13:45-46).

You and I know the gospel of Jesus Christ is the pearl of great price. Each of those little grains of sand are Abraham's children. They need to be cultured to become pearls. They need the right friend, a responsibility to help them grow in service, and nourishment with charity to retain them to truly become pearls of great worth in our Father's kingdom.

Be friendly and share the gospel

President Hinckley said: "Be friendly. You have to make a friend before you make a convert. Conversion follows friendship. The opportunity to teach follows friendship" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 375). Do we invite our friends to come to church with us? Do we go with the missionaries as they teach the discussions to our friends? Do we invite them to be taught in our homes? Do we visit them between the discussions? Are we doing what the Savior would have us do? Do we even open our mouths?

The Lord said:

"With some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but

they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them.

"And it shall come to pass, if they are not more faithful unto me, it shall be taken away, even that which they have" (D&C 60:2-3).

A conversion story

I would like to tell you about the St. Charles Ward and how they friendshipped and nourished Brother Jim Hueston. Jim belonged to another church, but he found it was hard to obtain transportation to attend meetings. No one picked him up. I had the good fortune to meet Jim. A Book of Mormon was given; a commitment was made to read and pray. Our members provided transportation for Jim to come to the St. Charles Ward. The missionaries taught the discussions, and Jim read and prayed.

At Jim's baptism, he asked me, his bishop, "What do you want me to do?" I took Jim to my office and talked about the Church, teaching him about the priesthood and what the Lord would have him do as a member of the Church. He received the Aaronic Priesthood and was assigned to serve as a home teacher. The elders quorum president assigned a strong, faithful, diligent home teaching companion. Brother Hueston, as the newest member of the St. Charles Ward, made sure that his home teaching was completed. Not only for that first month but for the past 20 years he has completed his home teaching every month. He has served in many different callings, and serving as a stake missionary was one of his favorites.

Ward members wrapped their arms around Brother Hueston and made sure that he was a fellow citizen "with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). Jim learned to drive and bought himself a car so that he could do his home teaching and any other call-

ings he received. We are not sure if we kept him or he kept us "in the right way" (Moroni 6:4). We know that what President Hinckley is asking us to do now was accomplished then with Brother Hueston.

I talked with Brother Hueston this summer. He told me how he and his home teaching companion were helping a less-active member come back into activity. He said, "She is looking forward to taking the temple preparation class and going to the temple."

Renew commitment to missionary work

Brothers and sisters, let us renew our commitment to seek the Spirit to help us find those who are Abraham's seed. Then let us open our mouths, friendship them, invite them to come unto Christ, and be there to support, nourish, and retain them. And wherever possible, let us be there when they go to the temple. Our Father in Heaven wants all of Abraham's seed to return to Him. Let us join in this great balanced effort for conversion, retention, and activation, to assist the Father and Son to turn those grains of sand into pearls in our Father's kingdom.

The Savior said:

"I give unto you a commandment, that every . . . elder, priest, teacher, and also member, go to with his might, with the labor of his hands, to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded.

"And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness" (D&C 38:40-41).

I know that He lives and guides His Church through His prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."

President Faust

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Elder Athos M. Amorím of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder

Val R. Christensen of the Seventy. Elders Amorím and Christensen were sustained as members of the Seventy at April conference.

Elder Athos M. Amorím

Dear brothers, sisters, and friends, I am sure you can realize what my feelings are as for the first time I come to this pulpit, where sacred words have been spoken by the servants of the Lord.

My heart is filled with gratitude to my Heavenly Father for the many blessings in my life; to the Lord Jesus Christ for His love and Atonement for me; to my dear wife, children, and grandchildren for the love and support I have always received from them.

Obedience and service

On an outside wall of the Brazilian Army Academy, cadets can read the words "You will command. So learn to obey!" Early in life I learned that obedience is a great virtue, essential to our progress. I am not talking about blind obedience but the obedience that allows us to reach a higher and more spiritual level in life, using our agency to do the will of the Lord. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:21). President Hinckley restated in 1982 that "all blessings are [predicated] upon . . . obedience to [the] law" (*What of the Mormons?* [pamphlet, 1982], 6). The greatest example of obedience was given by the Lord Jesus Christ when He said, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Something else I learned in the army is that soldiers in my country do not use the verb *to work* when they talk about their assignments. Rather, they use the

verb *to serve*, helping them to always remember the commitment to serve our people and our country. In Church service this definition is enlarged to include a meaning closer to the teachings of the Lord—that is, to serve His children wherever they may live.

Today almost 60,000 missionaries serve in many countries, most of them in environments very different from their own. In the São Paulo Temple, as well as in other temples, many brothers and sisters are willing to make any sacrifice to serve in the house of the Lord.

An example of service

Many times the most beautiful examples of obedience and service are given by ordinary people who live close to us. Sister Ana Rita de Jesus, an elderly widow, lived in Anápolis, Brazil. She could not read or write. The missionaries would go to her home every week to read the scriptures to her. She was loving and kind. Every Sunday she would ask the missionaries to help her fill out a tithing slip. Sometimes her tithing and offerings were not more than a few cents, but she knew the law and wanted to obey it. After paying her tithing, she would walk into the room where the sacrament meeting was held in the rented house used as a chapel and would place a flower on the pulpit. In doing so, she served her brothers and sisters, bringing beauty to the place where we worshiped the Lord.

That sister, in a very simple way, taught us obedience and service through

her faith. She knew that obeying the commandments is the best preparation to serve. President Monson advised us in the last April general conference to "obey the commandments" and "serve with love" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 63; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 47). Sister Ana Rita did so throughout her life.

Desire to obey and serve God

When I was called to serve as a General Authority, I had an interview with President Faust. He noticed that I was concerned because I felt inadequate for such a call. In his tender way, President Faust told me, "Athos, be yourself. Be yourself." That night I lay awake in bed, thinking of my new responsibilities and

of President Faust's words. And I prayed. I asked myself, *Who am I?* And the answer came as clear and bright as the dawn of that brand-new day. I am, like each one of you, a child of God who wants to obey the Lord and serve wherever He sends me and thus be a better child of our Heavenly Father and a faithful member of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

I know that Jesus Christ lives and that He is the head of this Church. I know He is our Savior and Redeemer. I know that Joseph Smith was the Prophet of the Restoration and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet called by the Lord to preside over the Church today. Of this I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Val R. Christensen

When a member of the Church is called to challenging responsibilities, it is only natural to reflect upon the events and people who brought him to this point in his life. The call to serve in the Seventy offers a chance to express appreciation to friends, family—especially my wife, Ruth Ann—and to the missionaries in the Arizona Phoenix Mission. I love all of you. I look forward also to serving the wonderful people of the Philippines.

Overcoming discouragement

Some years ago I was invited to participate in a fireside in which I outlined ways for people to overcome discouragement. At the beginning of the presentation, I invited those who were in attendance to write on a card a major challenge they were facing, one they would feel comfortable in having me share anonymously with other members of the group. When the problems came

forward, I was overcome by the significant issues faced by members who looked in control of their lives. Here are some they listed:

1. My farm is not making any money.
2. My son has a terminal illness.
3. Friction with a teenage child.
4. My oldest son is nearly blind.

5. Learning to accept the death of my son.

6. My husband sees the flaws but doesn't see the lovely things as much.

Many of us face significant challenges. Even the great prophet Enoch expressed sadness when he viewed the wickedness of the world: "And as Enoch saw this, he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted; but the Lord said unto Enoch: Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look" (Moses 7:44).

There are at least three steps to take when striving to overcome discouragement:

1. You can work on changing your attitude toward the problem. Even though you can't change the circumstances in which you work or live, you can always change your attitude.

2. You can receive help from those who are close to you—your family, friends, and ward members, those who love you the most.

3. You can develop a more powerful and complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Change your attitude

By looking at a problem in a different way, it may be possible to reduce discouragement. I have been impressed with the pioneer story told about Zina Young. After experiencing the death of parents, crop failure, and sickness, she was encouraged with a spiritual experience that changed her attitude. While attempting to seek divine help, she heard her mother's voice: "Zina, any sailor can steer on a smooth sea, when rocks appear, sail around them." A prayer came quickly: "O Father in heaven, help me to be a good sailor, that my heart shall not break on the rocks of grief" ("Mother," *Young Woman's Journal*, Jan. 1911, 45). It is often difficult to change circumstances, but a positive attitude can help lift discouragement.

Accept help from others

The next important point is to be willing to ask for help from those around you. Sometimes help comes from unexpected sources. A few years ago I stood in line in Chicago waiting to put my baggage on a plane. Behind me was an older man. After a few minutes he said to me, "Where are you going?" I said that I was heading for Salt Lake City. He said, "I'm going there too. Are you a Mormon?" I responded by saying I was. He said that he had been a Latter-day Saint all his life and had prepared himself finally to

go to the temple. While waiting for the plane, he opened his suitcase to show me all the missionary pictures that he had collected through the years. After some minutes, we were on our way and had a wonderful talk as we flew toward Utah. Upon arrival, we left the plane quickly. I made sure he knew where he was going and said good-bye.

Some weeks later I received this card in the mail: "Dear Brother Christensen, I lost your address and then found it. So I'm writing you a card. When I met you in Chicago, it was a prayer answered. I never travel anywhere. I wanted to be with someone. I have thought of you many times. I really enjoyed myself in Salt Lake City at the temple. Hope to see you someday. Thanks many times for the help you were to me." I wasn't planning to be useful that day, but I'm grateful for this brother who sought for extra help and I was nearby to assist.

Develop trust in the Lord

I've talked about changing attitudes and receiving help from others. Now, let me mention the need to put more trust and faith in the Lord. I once talked to a woman who received help with her discouragement. While waiting for a temple session to begin, she picked up a Book of Mormon to read a verse. Her eyes fixed upon Alma 34:3:

"And as ye have desired of my beloved brother that he should make known unto you what ye should do, because of your afflictions; and he hath spoken somewhat unto you to prepare your minds; yea, and he hath exhorted you unto faith and to patience."

The scripture in Alma was an answer to her prayer. The message was simple: the problem she faced was going to take a long time to solve. If we place a little more patience in the process and a greater amount of faith in the Lord, our challenges will find their way toward successful conclusions.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read this: "If thou art sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful" (D&C 136:29).

I pray all of us may appreciate the challenges we have and try to improve our attitudes, even though our problems remain the same. Ask help from friends and family. I also testify that Jesus Christ lives and that He will help us through our discouragements if we will humbly

ask for His love. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "Sweet Is the Work," following which Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

The choir sang "Sweet Is the Work."

Elder Henry B. Eyring

A voice of warning

Because the Lord is kind, He calls servants to warn people of danger. That call to warn is made harder and more important by the fact that the warnings of most worth are about dangers that people don't yet think are real. Think of Jonah. He fled at first from the call from the Lord to warn the people of Nineveh who were blinded to the danger by sin. He knew that wicked people through the ages have rejected prophets and sometimes killed them. Yet when Jonah went forward with faith, the Lord blessed him with safety and success. (See Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-10.)

We can also learn from our experiences as parents and as children. Those of us who have been parents have felt the anxiety of sensing danger our children cannot yet see. Few prayers are so fervent as those of a parent asking to know how to touch a child to move away from danger. Most of us have felt the blessing of hearing and heeding the warning voice of a parent.

Mother's warning

I can still remember my mother speaking softly to me one Saturday after-

noon when, as a little boy, I asked her for permission to do something I thought was perfectly reasonable and which she knew was dangerous. I still am amazed at the power she was granted—I believe from the Lord—to turn me around with so few words. As I remember them, they were, "Oh, I suppose you *could* do that. But the *choice* is yours." The only warning was in the emphasis she put on the words *could* and *choice*. Yet that was enough for me.

Her power to warn with so few words sprang from three things I knew about her. First, I knew she loved me. Second, I knew she had already done what she wanted me to do and been blessed by it. And third, she had conveyed to me her sure testimony that the choice I had to make was so important that the Lord would tell me what to do if I asked Him. Love, example, and testimony: those were keys that day, and they have been whenever I have been blessed to hear and then heed the warning of a servant of the Lord.

Responsibility to warn our neighbors

Our ability to touch others with our warning voice matters to all who are covenant disciples of Jesus Christ. Here

is the charge given to each of the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: "Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor" (D&C 88:81).

That command and warning of danger was given to those called as missionaries at the start of the Restoration. But the duty to warn our neighbor falls on all of us who have accepted the covenant of baptism. We are to talk with nonmember friends and relatives about the gospel. Our purpose is to invite them to be taught by the full-time missionaries who are called and set apart to teach. When a person has chosen to accept our invitation to be taught, a "referral" of great promise has been created, one far more likely to enter the waters of baptism and then to remain faithful.

Sweet moments of missionary work

As a member of the Church, you can expect that the full-time or the stake missionaries will ask for the opportunity to visit with you in your home. They will help you make a list of people with whom you could share the gospel. They may suggest you think of relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances. They may ask you to set a date by which you will try to have the person or family prepared to be taught, perhaps even ready to invite the missionaries. I've had that experience. Because we in our family accepted that invitation from the missionaries, I was blessed to perform the baptism of a widow in her 80s, taught by sister missionaries.

When I placed my hands on her head to confirm her a member of the Church, I felt impressed to say that her choice to be baptized would bless generations of her family, after and before her. She's dead now, but in a few weeks I will be in the temple with her son as he is sealed to her.

You may have had such experiences with people you have invited to be taught, and so you know that few moments in life are sweeter. The Lord's words are true for the missionaries and for all of us: "And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:16).

The need to warn others is real

The missionaries will help and encourage us, but whether such moments at the baptismal font and in the temple come more often will depend largely on how we see our charge and what we choose to do about it. The Lord would not use the word *warn* if there were no danger. Yet not many people we know sense it. They have learned to ignore the increasing evidence that society is unraveling and that their lives and family lack the peace they once thought was possible. That willingness to ignore the signs of danger can make it easy for you to think, *Why should I speak to anyone about the gospel who seems content? What danger is there to them or to me if I do or say nothing?*

Well, the danger may be hard to see, but it is real, both for them and for us. For instance, at some moment in the world to come, everyone you will ever meet will know what you know now. They will know that the only way to live forever in association with our families and in the presence of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, was to choose to enter into the gate by baptism at the hands of those with authority from God. They will know that the only way families can be together forever is to accept and keep sacred covenants offered in the temples of God on this earth. And they will know that you knew. And they will remember whether you offered them what someone had offered you.

Do not procrastinate warning others

It's easy to say, "The time isn't right." But there is danger in procrastination. Years ago I worked for a man in California. He hired me; he was kind to me; he seemed to regard me highly. I may have been the only Latter-day Saint he ever knew well. I don't know all the reasons I found to wait for a better moment to talk with him about the gospel. I just remember my feeling of sorrow when I learned, after he had retired and I lived far away, that he and his wife had been killed in a late-night drive to their home in Carmel, California. He loved his wife. He loved his children. He had loved his parents. He loved his grandchildren, and he will love their children and will want to be with them forever.

Now, I don't know how the crowds will be handled in the world to come. But I suppose that I will meet him, that he will look into my eyes, and that I will see in them the question, "Hal, you knew. Why didn't you tell me?"

When I think of him, and when I think of that widow I baptized and her family who will now be sealed to her and to each other, I want to do better. I want to increase my power to invite people to be taught. With that desire and with faith that God will help us, we will do better. It isn't hard to see how.

Love comes first

Love always comes first. A single act of kindness will seldom be enough. The Lord described the love we must feel, and that those we invite must recognize in us, with words like these: "Charity suffereth long," and it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7).

I've seen what "suffereth long" and "endureth all things" mean. A family moved into a house near us. The home

was new, so I was part of the crew of Latter-day Saints who spent a number of nights putting in landscaping. I remember the last night, standing next to the husband of the family as we finished. He surveyed our work and said to us standing nearby, "This is the third yard you Mormons have put in for us, and I think this is the best." And then he quietly but firmly told me of the great satisfaction he got from membership in his own church, a conversation we had often in the years he lived there.

In all that time, the acts of kindness extended to him and his family never ceased because the neighbors really came to love them. One evening I came home to see a truck in his driveway. I had been told they were moving to another state. I approached to see if I could help. I didn't recognize the man I saw loading household things into the truck. He said quietly as I drew near, "Hello, Brother Eyring." I hadn't recognized him because he was the son, now grown older, who had lived there, married, and moved away. And because of the love of many for him, he was now a baptized member of the Church. I don't know the end of that story because it will have no end. But I know that it begins with love.

Be better examples

Second, we will need to be better examples of what we invite others to do. In a darkening world, this command of the Savior will become more important: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Most of us are modest enough to think that our small candle of example might be too dim to be noticed. But you and your family are watched more than you may realize. I had the chance in the spring of this year to attend and speak at meetings with nearly 300 ministers and

leaders of other churches. I visited alone with as many as I could. I asked them why they had been so attentive to my message, which was to recount the origins of the Church, to tell of the young Joseph Smith's First Vision and of living prophets. In every case, they gave essentially the same answer. They told a story of a person or a family—a story of knowing some of you. One repeated often was of a neighbor family, Latter-day Saints: "They were the finest family I have ever known." Often they spoke of some community effort or public response to a disaster where members of the Church worked in a way which to them seemed remarkable.

The people I met at those meetings could not yet recognize the truth in the doctrine, but they had already seen its fruit in your lives, and so they were ready to listen. They were ready to listen to the truths of the Restoration—that families can be sealed forever and that the gospel can change our very natures. They were ready because of your examples.

Invite with testimony

The third thing we must do better is to invite with testimony. Love and example will open the way. But we still have to open our mouths and bear testimony. We are helped by a simple fact: truth and choice are inseparably connected. For everyone, there are some choices we must make to qualify for a testimony of spiritual truths. And for everyone, once we know a spiritual truth, we must choose whether we will conform our lives to it. That means there are some things we must do before we invite our friends to make choices. And when we bear testimony of truth to them, we must convey to them the choices which, once they know that truth, they must make. There are two important examples: inviting someone to read the Book of Mormon and inviting someone to agree to be taught by the missionaries.

For us to know that the Book of Mormon is true, we must read it and make the choice found in Moroni: pray to know if it is true. When we have done that, we can testify from personal experience to our friends that they can make that choice and know the same truth. When they know the Book of Mormon is the word of God, they will face another choice: whether to accept your invitation to be taught by the missionaries. To make that invitation with testimony, you will need to know that the missionaries are called as servants of God.

You can gain that testimony by choosing to invite the missionaries into your home to teach your family or friends. Missionaries will welcome the opportunity. When you sit with them as they teach, as I have, you will know they are inspired with power beyond their years and their education. Then, when you invite others to choose to be taught by the missionaries, you will be able to bear testimony that they will teach the truth and that they offer the choices which lead to happiness.

The Lord's assurance

Perhaps some of us may find it hard to believe that we love enough, or that our lives are good enough, or that our power to testify is sufficient for our invitations to our neighbors to be accepted. But the Lord knew we might feel that way. Listen to His encouraging words, which He directed to be placed at the first of the Doctrine and Covenants, when He gave us our charge: "And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days" (D&C 1:4).

And then listen to His description of the qualifications of those disciples—of us: "The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones" (D&C 1:19).

And then later, "That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the

weak and the simple unto the ends of the world" (D&C 1:23).

And then again, "And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high" (D&C 1:28).

That assurance was given to the first missionaries in the Church and to missionaries today. But it is given to all of us as well. We must have the faith that we can love enough and that the gospel has touched our lives enough that our invitation to choose can be heard as coming from the Master, whose invitation it is.

His is the perfect example for what we are to do. You have felt His love and His caring, even when you did not respond, as those you approach with the gospel may not respond. Time after time He has invited you to be taught by His servants. You may not have recognized that in the visits of home teachers and visiting teachers or in a bishop's phone call, but those were His invitations to be helped and taught. And the Lord has always made consequences clear and then allowed us to choose for ourselves.

Choose the way of eternal life

His servant Lehi taught his sons what has always been true for all of us: "And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit" (2 Nephi 2:28).

And then from Jacob this encouragement to meet your obligation to testify, as you must, that the choice to be taught by the missionaries is to enter the way toward eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God: "Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye

are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life" (2 Nephi 10:23).

I testify that only accepting and living the restored gospel of Jesus Christ brings the peace the Lord promised in this life and the hope of eternal life in the world to come. I testify that we have been given the privilege and the obligation to offer the truth and the choices which lead to those blessings to our Heavenly Father's children, who are our brothers and our sisters. Jesus is the Christ, He lives, and this is His work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elders Athos M. Amorín and Val R. Christensen of the Seventy have spoken to us, followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow thereafter.

We express gratitude to the Young Women choir of the Murray, Utah, area for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing a medley of "Love Is Spoken Here" and "Love at Home." After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy.

Elder David B. Haight

A friend of mine recently said to me, "Do you know what you and Steve Young, the quarterback of the 49ers, have in common?"

And I said, "I can think of a number of things—on either side of the fence." Then I said, "You tell me what we have in common."

And he said, "What you have in common is that we're wondering if you'll be back for the next season."

With the blessings of heaven and with a special, built-in nurse that I have, Ruby, to take care of me, and a loving family, I'm doing quite well.

I appreciate and am mindful of the pacemaker that I have for my heart, which comes in quite handy.

And I have a remodeled hip and a renovated knee that I consider just dandy.

My updated hearing aid and special glasses are quite a find,

But, oh, how I miss my mind.

Sustaining the prophets

I'm honored to be able to stand here for a few minutes and bear my testimony to you and encourage you in this great work of which we are blessed to be a part. I watched the raising of your hands when President Monson was presenting the sustaining of the General Authorities of the Church, but particularly our prophet, and as I watched those hands and the enthusiasm with which you raised them, I thought, "Here we are with all the blessings we have and the comfort that we have," and I thought of some other such events that took place in the history of the Church.

In my mind's eye, I thought of the gatherings of our own family, which is scattered across America—in Georgia; Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Pennsyl-

vania; Texas; California; and here in Salt Lake City. Of those little families in whatever the setting might be, there in their home or in the chapel, I thought I could see some of those little ones being taught to raise their hands and to be in harmony, perhaps their parents teaching them what we were doing. When we raised our hands, we not only just did it in motion because it looks like everybody's doing it, but because we accept and we're bearing witness about the knowledge we have and the testimony we have that President Hinckley is our prophet and our leader. We not only raise our hands in saying we sustain but that we follow his direction, that we listen, that we counsel, that we pray about it, that we're mindful of what comes from the lips of the prophet.

Sustaining of the Prophet Joseph

The Prophet Joseph Smith had received some instruction regarding the organization of the Church, which we have by way of revelation as set forth in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Imagine—on April the 6th, 1830, in Fayette, New York, in the Peter Whitmer farmhouse—a meeting in that little log cabin, maybe 20 by 30 feet, where the Church was organized. Just imagine in that little setting, where he blessed Oliver and Oliver blessed him, as they followed the direction that they had received and the Church organization was presented to that little assembly.

Joseph and Oliver and Hyrum and Samuel Smith and the two Whitmers had been baptized and acted in order to be "agreeable to the laws" of New York (D&C 20:1). But just imagine as you run through your mind the spiritual setting in that assembly and the feeling that they must have had as the proposition was presented to them to sustain—what we

have done here today—to sustain the Prophet and Oliver as the first elders, to set the Church in motion. Some of the diaries and the accounts of that occasion indicate they had the feeling of heavenly beings in that meeting.

Some were rebaptized. Some were baptized on that occasion for the first time, including the Prophet's father and mother—just imagine! The sacrament was served for the first time in this dispensation in an official meeting of the Church, now organized. Imagine the feeling of the passing of the bread and the water, emblems of the torn flesh and the spilt blood of the Savior.

Sustaining the Twelve in 1844

Imagine another setting of the sustaining in 1844, after the Prophet and Hyrum had been martyred, and of the meeting called in Nauvoo when Sidney Rigdon had now come from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, hopefully to take over as “guardian” and to be the leader of the Church. The members of the Twelve were hurrying from various parts of the world, returning to Nauvoo. Think of that setting and the meeting when Sidney Rigdon presented the proposition that he would logically be the one to be called because he was the First Counselor, even though he was in some disfavor with the Prophet. And imagine Brigham Young being there and speaking for the Twelve, explaining to that body of Saints how the faithful brethren had been taught by the Prophet regarding the Twelve and the authority that rested with the Twelve.

After they had presented both sides of the case and the voting took place, some of them stated that they saw and felt a change in Brigham Young as he spoke, that they thought they heard the voice of the Prophet, that they thought they could even see some facial features of the Prophet upon Brigham Young.

I'm saying this to you because as the years go on and as we learn more and as we're more sensitive to the spiritual direction that is in this work, we sense and feel the hand of the Lord in it. But think of the sustaining in that setting in 1844, to have the Church rest in the hands of the Twelve.

Sustaining the First Presidency in 1847

Then there was another setting later on, in 1847, when the Saints were accumulating on the Iowa side of the Missouri River. Brigham Young had been here in the Salt Lake Valley with that first company of the Saints, but in December he had gone back to the Missouri to meet with the Saints there. And in a setting in Kanesville, there were nine of the Twelve assembled: two were in the valley here, one had gone to Texas, and nine were there. In that setting, in the Orson Hyde home, the First Presidency was reorganized on December the 5th, 1847, but they needed to have it ratified by the Saints. And so that meeting was postponed for three weeks so they could build a little log tabernacle in Kanesville. And in three weeks, with the workmen there and the members of the Church who had come in by wagons getting ready to cross the Missouri and head for the valley, they built a little tabernacle.

In that meeting was presented a proposition that the Presidency of the Church would be reorganized, but they needed a sustaining like we've done here today, like that opportunity that is ours to raise our hands and sustain the prophet. So the First Presidency was reorganized; Brigham Young had selected Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards to be his counselors. Thus, it takes the sustaining of the people to give the leaders of the Church the authority that the Lord has designated by revelation that is necessary.

And so, as we see the work move forward and move on, I would only declare to you as I stand before you today that in those 90 and more years that I've had, as I've witnessed and felt and seen and been part of the spiritual experiences that have been mine, this is the work of the Lord. It's just as has been revealed. I've sensed it and I feel it, and I so declare to you.

"He that loseth his life for my sake . . ."

I remind you that the Savior taught, as recorded in Matthew, that whosoever "findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). Now, some scholars and others have thought: "Well, that's a paradox. It's probably a mistranslation. It really doesn't make very good sense." It's very clear in my mind, and I hope it is in yours, that as we live in the world of materialism, in Babylon that we live in today, and see the happenings of the world, whether you read the financial pages or the political pages or whatever, you can sense and feel that where we find our strength and where we find the answer to our challenges and our problems would be as we listen to the voice of the prophet—God's prophet here upon the earth.

In that statement of the Savior's, we see that as we live in the materialistic world, we're concerned with only the materialistic side of life. We think of all we can accumulate for ourselves. We're not thinking of others or not living to help other people live on a higher plane. The Lord is saying that when you find the life that He exemplifies, then you lose your self-centered life: "He that loseth his life for my sake . . ."

When we're concerned about doing something for someone else and when we're thinking about sharing the gospel or helping someone move on to a higher plane morally or physically, when we're

doing something for someone else and sharing with them, then we're coming to their aid, we're coming to their rescue. In all that, we find the life that the Savior talks about, the eternal blessings, the heavenly blessings, the temple blessings, all of those blessings of a loving family that we can have.

"I am a child of God"

I leave you my love, my witness, my knowledge, and my own testimony that God lives, He is our Father, that we are children of God, and as the little, simple song says:

I am a child of God,
And he has sent me here,
Has given me an earthly home
With parents kind and dear.

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,
Help me find the way.
Teach me all that I must do
To live with him someday.
["I Am a Child of God," *Children's Songbook*, 2-3; *Hymns*, no. 301]

It's as simple, it's as pure and as clean as that little, simple song. It teaches us what we need to know. I'm happy on this day and honored to have raised my hand in sustaining President Gordon B. Hinckley as President of the Church, and his counselors, Thomas S. Monson and James E. Faust, as the Presidency—with the Quorum of the Twelve and all of the other General Authorities. The gospel is true; it is the hope of the world; it will move onward to accomplish all that it must do. I so leave you my love and witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang a medley of "Love Is Spoken Here" and "Love at Home."

Elder F. Burton Howard offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 3, 1998. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. Jerold Ottley and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world. I think that with-

out question there is no gathering of men anywhere as large as this great priesthood meeting.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus combined men's choir, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Robert Bowden, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will open this session by singing "Come, O Thou King of Kings." The invocation will then be offered by Elder John M. Madsen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

Elder John M. Madsen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Awake, My Sons, Awake," and Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve will then speak to us.

The choir sang "Awake, My Sons, Awake."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

The Aaronic Priesthood and the sacrament

My beloved brethren, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you this evening. I address my remarks to the young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood and to the bishops and counselors who preside over them. I will speak about the sacred activities of Aaronic Priesthood holders in preparing, admin-

istering, and passing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the members of the Church.

Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

On May 15, 1829, John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood to the earth. He did so by laying his hands upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and speaking these words:

"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness" (D&C 13:1).

Later the Lord revealed these further truths:

"The lesser priesthood . . . holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;

"Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins" (D&C 84:26-27).

What does it mean that the Aaronic Priesthood holds "the key of the ministering of angels" and of the "gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins"? The meaning is found in the ordinance of baptism and in the sacrament. Baptism is for the remission of sins, and the sacrament is a renewal of the covenants and blessings of baptism. Both should be preceded by repentance. When we keep the covenants made in these ordinances, we are promised that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. The ministering of angels is one of the manifestations of that Spirit.

Baptism and the sacrament

We begin with the doctrine as taught by the Lord. During His ministry, Jesus taught that baptism is necessary for salvation. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Baptism is the first of the saving ordinances. When we are baptized, we covenant that we will take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and serve Him and keep His commandments.

At the conclusion of His ministry, Jesus introduced the sacrament of the

Lord's Supper. He broke bread and blessed it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body" (Matthew 26:26). "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). He took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

The Holy Ghost and the sacrament

When He introduced the sacrament, the Savior also gave teachings and promises about the Holy Ghost. On that sacred occasion known as the Last Supper, Jesus explained the mission of the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost. The Comforter would testify of Him and reveal other truths. Jesus also explained that He had to leave His disciples in order for the Comforter to come to them. When I depart, He told them, "I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). After His Resurrection, He told His Apostles to tarry in Jerusalem until they were given "power from on high" (Luke 24:49). That power came when "the promise of the Holy Ghost" was "shed forth" upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33).

Similarly, when the Savior introduced the sacrament in the New World, He promised, "He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled" (3 Nephi 20:8). The meaning of that promise is evident: "Now, when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled with the Spirit" (3 Nephi 20:9).

The close relationship between partaking of the sacrament and the companionship of the Holy Ghost is explained in the revealed prayer on the sacrament. In partaking of the bread, we witness that we are willing to take upon us the name

of Jesus Christ and always remember Him and keep His commandments. When we do so, we have the promise that we will always have His Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77).

Repentance and the sacrament

To have the continuous companionship of the Holy Ghost is the most precious possession we can have in mortality. The *gift* of the Holy Ghost was conferred upon us by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood after our baptism. But to realize the blessings of that gift, we must keep ourselves free from sin. When we commit sin, we become unclean and the Spirit of the Lord withdraws from us. The Spirit of the Lord does not dwell in "unholy temples" (see Mosiah 2:36-37; Alma 34:35-36; Helaman 4:24), and no unclean thing can dwell in His presence (see Ephesians 5:5; 1 Nephi 10:21; Alma 7:21; Moses 6:57).

A few weeks ago I used a chain saw to cut down a tree in my backyard. It was a dirty job, and when I was done I was splattered with a filthy mixture of sawdust and oil. In that condition I did not want anyone to see me. I just wanted to be cleansed in water so I would again feel comfortable in the presence of other people.

Not one of you young men and not one of your leaders has lived without sin since his baptism. Without some provision for further cleansing after our baptism, each of us is lost to things spiritual. We cannot have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and at the final judgment we would be bound to be "cast off forever" (1 Nephi 10:21). How grateful we are that the Lord has provided a process for each baptized member of His Church to be periodically cleansed from the soil of sin. The sacrament is an essential part of that process.

We are commanded to repent of our sins and to come to the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and partake of the sacrament in compliance with its covenants. When we renew our baptismal covenants in this way, the Lord renews the cleansing effect of our baptism. In this way we are made clean and can always have His Spirit to be with us. The importance of this is evident in the Lord's commandment that we partake of the sacrament each week (see D&C 59:8-9).

We cannot overstate the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood in this. All of these vital steps pertaining to the remission of sins are performed through the saving ordinance of baptism and the renewing ordinance of the sacrament. Both of these ordinances are officiated by holders of the Aaronic Priesthood under the direction of the bishopric, who exercise the keys of the gospel of repentance and of baptism and the remission of sins.

The ministering of angels

In a closely related way, these ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood are also vital to the ministering of angels.

"The word 'angel' is used in the scriptures for any heavenly being bearing God's message" (George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist [1987], 54). The scriptures recite numerous instances where an angel appeared personally. Angelic appearances to Zacharias and Mary (see Luke 1) and to King Benjamin and Nephi (see Mosiah 3:2; 3 Nephi 7:17-18) are only a few examples. When I was young, I thought such personal appearances were the only meaning of the ministering of angels. As a young holder of the Aaronic Priesthood, I did not think I would see an angel, and I wondered what such appearances had to do with the Aaronic Priesthood.

But the ministering of angels can also be unseen. Angelic messages can be delivered by a voice or merely by thoughts or feelings communicated to the mind. President John Taylor described "the action of the angels, or messengers of God, upon our minds, so that the heart can conceive . . . revelations from the eternal world" (*The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham [1943], 31).

Nephi described three manifestations of the ministering of angels when he reminded his rebellious brothers that (1) they had "seen an angel," (2) they had "heard his voice from time to time," and (3) also that an angel had "spoken unto [them] in a still small voice" though they were "past feeling" and "could not feel his words" (1 Nephi 17:45). The scriptures contain many other statements that angels are sent to teach the gospel and bring men to Christ (see Hebrews 1:14; Alma 39:19; Moroni 7:25, 29, 31–32; D&C 20:35). Most angelic communications are felt or heard rather than seen.

How does the Aaronic Priesthood hold the key to the ministering of angels? The answer is the same as for the Spirit of the Lord.

In general, the blessings of spiritual companionship and communication are available only to those who are clean. As explained earlier, through the Aaronic Priesthood ordinances of baptism and the sacrament, we are cleansed of our sins and promised that if we keep our covenants we will always have His Spirit to be with us. I believe that promise not only refers to the Holy Ghost but also to the ministering of angels, for "angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ" (2 Nephi 32:3). So it is that those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood open the door for all Church members who worthily partake of the sacrament to enjoy the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord and the ministering of angels.

Do not do anything that would distract

The doctrines I have just discussed are contained in the scriptures. From the scriptures we also know that those who officiate in the priesthood act in behalf of the Lord (see D&C 1:38; 36:2). I will now suggest how teachers and priests and deacons should carry out their sacred responsibilities to act in behalf of the Lord in preparing, administering, and passing the sacrament. I will not suggest detailed rules, since the circumstances in various wards and branches in our worldwide Church are so different that a specific rule that seems required in one setting may be inappropriate in another. Rather, I will suggest a principle based on the doctrines. If all understand this principle and act in harmony with it, there should be little need for rules. If rules or counseling are needed in individual cases, local leaders can provide them, consistent with the doctrines and their related principles.

The principle I suggest to govern those officiating in the sacrament—whether preparing, administering, or passing—is that they should not do anything that would distract any member from his or her worship and renewal of covenants. This principle of nondistractation suggests some companion principles.

Be clean and reverent

Deacons, teachers, and priests should always be clean in appearance and reverent in the manner in which they perform their solemn and sacred responsibilities. Teachers' special assignments in preparing the sacrament are the least visible but should still be done with dignity, quietly and reverently. Teachers should always remember that the emblems they are preparing represent the body and blood of our Lord.

Speak the sacrament prayers clearly

To avoid distracting from the sacred occasion, priests should speak the sacrament prayers clearly and distinctly. Prayers that are rattled off swiftly or mumbled inaudibly will not do. All present should be helped to understand an ordinance and covenants so important that the Lord prescribed the exact words to be uttered. All should be helped to focus on those sacred words as they renew their covenants by partaking.

On this subject I feel to share a painful experience from my youth. As a 16-year-old priest, I was just beginning a part-time job as a radio announcer at a local station. After I offered a prayer at the sacrament table in our ward, a girl who was present told me I sounded like I was reading a commercial. Can you imagine the shame I felt? After 50 years that rebuke still stings. Brethren, remember the significance of those sacred prayers. You are praying as a servant of the Lord in behalf of the entire congregation. Speak to be heard and understood, and say it like you mean it.

Be orderly

Deacons should pass the sacrament in a reverent and orderly manner, with no needless motions or expressions that call attention to themselves. In all their actions they should avoid distracting any member of the congregation from worship and covenant making.

Be well groomed and modestly dressed

All who officiate in the sacrament—in preparing, administering, or passing—should be well groomed and modestly dressed, with nothing about their personal appearance that calls special attention to themselves. In appearance as well as actions, they should avoid distracting anyone present from full attention to the

worship and covenant making that are the purpose of this sacred ordinance.

Be worthy to participate

This principle of nondistractedness applies to things unseen as well as seen. If someone officiating in this sacred ordinance is unworthy to participate, and this is known to anyone present, their participation is a serious distraction to that person. Young men, if any of you is unworthy, talk to your bishop without delay. Obtain his direction on what you should do to qualify yourself to participate in your priesthood duties worthily and appropriately.

Sing the sacrament hymn

I have a final suggestion. With the single exception of those priests occupied breaking the bread, all who hold the Aaronic Priesthood should join in singing the sacrament hymn by which we worship and prepare to partake. No one needs that spiritual preparation more than the priesthood holders who will officiate in it. My young brethren, it is important that you sing the sacrament hymn. Please do so.

These ordinances are vital

The Aaronic Priesthood holds the keys of “the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins” (D&C 84:27). The cleansing power of our Savior’s Atonement is renewed for us as we partake of the sacrament. The promise that we “may always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77) is essential to our spirituality. The ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood are vital to all of this. I testify that this is true, and I pray that our brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood will understand the importance of their sacred responsibilities and act worthily in them, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us. We shall now be pleased to

hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder H. Bryan Richards, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at the April conference.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Elders quorum helps a brother

In 1918 Brother George Goates was a farmer who raised sugar beets in Lehi, Utah. Winter came early that year and froze much of his beet crop in the ground. For George and his young son Francis, the harvest was slow and difficult. Meanwhile, an influenza epidemic was raging. The dreaded disease claimed the lives of George's son Charles and three of Charles's small children—two little girls and a boy. In the course of only six days, a grieving George Goates made three separate trips to Ogden, Utah, to bring the bodies home for burial. At the end of this terrible interlude, George and Francis hitched up their wagon and headed back to the beet field.

"[On the way] they passed wagon after wagon-load of beets being hauled to the factory and driven by neighborhood farmers. As they passed by, each driver would wave a greeting: 'Hi ya, Uncle George,' 'Sure sorry, George,' 'Tough break, George,' 'You've got a lot of friends, George.'

"On the last wagon was . . . freckled-faced Jasper Rolfe. He waved a cheery greeting and called out: 'That's all of 'em, Uncle George.'

"[Brother Goates] turned to Francis and said: 'I wish it was all of ours.'

"When they arrived at the farm gate, Francis jumped down off the big red beet wagon and opened the gate as [his father] drove onto the field. [George] pulled up, stopped the team, . . . and scanned the field. . . . There wasn't a

sugar beet on the whole field. Then it dawned upon him what Jasper Rolfe meant when he called out: 'That's all of 'em, Uncle George.'

"[George] got down off the wagon, picked up a handful of the rich, brown soil he loved so much, and then . . . a beet top, and he looked for a moment at these symbols of his labor, as if he couldn't believe his eyes.

"Then [he] sat down on a pile of beet tops—this man who brought four of his loved ones home for burial in the course of only six days; made caskets, dug graves, and even helped with the burial clothing—this amazing man who never faltered, nor flinched, nor wavered throughout this agonizing ordeal—sat down on a pile of beet tops and sobbed like a little child.

"Then he arose, wiped his eyes, . . . looked up at the sky, and said: 'Thanks, Father, for the elders of our ward.'"¹

It is of such elders that I wish to speak this evening. I wish to speak of brothers in the priesthood. I wish to speak of the priesthood quorum.

The priesthood quorum

President Boyd K. Packer has explained that "in ancient days when a man was appointed to a select body, his commission, always written in Latin, outlined the responsibility of the organization, defined who should be members, and then invariably contained the words: *quorum vos unum* meaning, 'of whom we will that you be one.'"²

"In the dispensation of the fulness of times, the Lord instructed that the priesthood should be organized into quorums, meaning selected assemblies of brethren given authority that His business might be transacted and His work proceed.

"A quorum is a brotherhood. . . . [Membership in a quorum] becomes a right of one ordained to an office in the priesthood."³

The scriptures establish the quorums of the priesthood and their respective duties in the Church of Jesus Christ today, including the First Presidency,⁴ the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,⁵ and the Quorums of the Seventy.⁶ The "standing ministers" in the stakes of Zion are identified, the high priests and elders,⁷ as are the three quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood: the priests, teachers, and deacons.⁸

Sixty years ago Elder Stephen L. Richards, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, provided a characteristically cogent statement of the function of priesthood quorums. Said he, "A quorum is three things: first, a class; second, a fraternity; and third, a service unit."⁹ Let us examine briefly these three aspects of priesthood quorums.

A class

First, a quorum is a class. When a priesthood quorum or group meets as a class, its members can learn together, be "nourished by the good word of God,"¹⁰ and grow spiritually. We study so that we may better teach.¹¹ Beginning this year, the priesthood has a curriculum program, shared in part by the Relief Society, that can revitalize quorums and make them "school[s] of the prophets."¹² On the second and third Sundays of the month, the course of study is based on the teachings of Presidents of the Church. The resource for instruction in 1998-99 is a compilation of excerpts from the sermons of Brigham Young. It is a text rich in doctrine and application. The curriculum continues on the fourth Sunday with

Teachings for Our Time, an opportunity to study current gospel issues approved by the First Presidency. Brethren, you who are the leaders of quorums and groups, please study the instructions that have been provided by the First Presidency regarding this new curriculum until you understand them fully. Then implement them precisely.

The Aaronic Priesthood quorums are also blessed with superb class material, although it wasn't always so. At the beginning of this century, while some stakes prepared printed, systematic lesson outlines for Aaronic Priesthood quorums, others left the young men to find their own way. This resulted "in some unusual priesthood meetings by our standards. One lesser priesthood group, for example, divided its class time between religious lessons and such adventure books as *Tom Sawyer*, *The Jungle Book*, *The Call of the Wild*, *Pigs Is Pigs*, and *Frank Among the Rancheros*."¹³

Today such "cultural enrichment" is for other times and settings; when the quorum meets as a class, the time is reserved for things of a higher order. Today's Aaronic Priesthood curriculum includes such topics as "covenants guide our actions," "respect for mothers and their divine role," "valuing and encouraging people with disabilities," and "moral courage," to name just a few. Aaronic Priesthood quorums deserve a real priesthood class as part of a solid quorum experience.

A fraternity

Second, a quorum is a fraternity. In the October general conference of 1982, Elder Robert L. Backman recounted the experience of a young man named Mark Peterson. Shortly after his ordination as a deacon, the deacons quorum presidency scheduled an appointment with Mark and his parents at their home.

"Promptly at the hour set, the doorbell rang. The members of the presi-

dency stood on the porch, dressed in suits, white shirts, and ties, and each one carrying his scriptures.

"Sitting down with Mark and his parents, they began with prayer, then handed an agenda to everyone there.

"The president then opened the scriptures, having Mark and his father read those references which speak of the power of the Aaronic Priesthood, what it is, and the particular duties of a deacon.

"The president then spoke about Mark's particular responsibilities and duties: how he should dress, how he should pass the sacrament, act as a messenger, collect fast offerings. And then they asked him if he had any questions.

"At the end of the visit they welcomed him to the quorum and offered help whenever he needed it. As they left, Mark . . . said to his Dad: 'They were awesome!'"¹⁴

The fraternity of priesthood quorums can indeed be awesome. When I became a member of a Quorum of the Seventy, I assumed that I might be accepted by my brethren in the course of time if I were able to prove myself worthy of their association. I hoped someday to measure up and be approved. I was surprised to find myself immediately welcomed and from the outset treated as a brother, as an equal by men much more talented and accomplished than I. I have been supported and encouraged, loved and tutored in my quorum from my very first day of membership in it. Consequently, I feel a deep desire to contribute to the work of the quorum and to assist my brethren as much as I can.

President David O. McKay taught: "If priesthood meant only personal distinction or individual elevation, there would be no need of groups or quorums. The very existence of such groups, established by divine authorization, proclaims our dependence upon one another, the indispensable need of mutual help and assistance."¹⁵

And let it be remembered that nowhere is the fraternity of quorums more crucial than in the case of newly baptized brethren and their families. Quorum and group leaders should provide the leading voice and laboring oar in every ward and branch council regarding retention of converts.

A service unit

Third, a quorum is a service unit. When I spoke earlier of the new Melchizedek Priesthood curriculum, I did not mention what takes place on the first Sunday of the month. That is a very special meeting. On the first Sunday, priesthood bearers meet in quorums and groups to learn their duties and plan their work. On the agenda are training and discussion, reports and assignments. It is a time to learn how to administer correctly priesthood ordinances and blessings. It is a time for the business of the priesthood. It is a time for putting the priesthood to work. I can imagine just such a meeting 80 years ago in Lehi, Utah, as the elders laid a plan to harvest the sugar beets of their beleaguered brother, George Goates.

Both Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood quorums will find their soul in service. Our great presiding High Priest and exemplar is Jesus Christ, who declared:

"Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

"And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."¹⁶

Years ago President Gordon B. Hinckley expressed something of a vision regarding quorums in the priesthood. He said: "It will be a marvelous day, my brethren—it will be a day of fulfillment of the purposes of the Lord—when our priesthood quorums become

an anchor of strength to every man belonging thereto, when each such man may appropriately be able to say, 'I am a member of a priesthood quorum of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I stand ready to assist my brethren in all of their needs, as I am confident they stand ready to assist me in mine. Working together, we shall grow spiritually as covenant sons of God. Working together, we can stand, without embarrassment and without fear, against every wind of adversity that might blow, be it economic, social, or spiritual.'"¹⁷

We must not delay or wait longer for this great day of fulfillment. Each of you who has received an ordination in the priesthood belongs to a quorum. If you live in a place where there are not enough brethren to form a quorum, you are a member of a priesthood group that will become a quorum. Resolve now to do all within your power to make of your priesthood quorum one worthy of the name and one faithful to its mission. Study with your brethren in the quorum class. Stand with them in the quorum fraternity. Work with them in quorum service. The quorum, brethren, the quorum, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Les Goates, quoted by Vaughn J. Featherstone, in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 46–48; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 36–37.

2. *A Royal Priesthood* (Melchizedek Priesthood personal study guide, 1975–76), 131.
3. "What Every Elder Should Know—and Every Sister as Well: A Primer on Principles of Priesthood Government," *Ensign*, Feb. 1993, 9.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 102:9–10; 107:9, 22, 78–81, 91–92.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:26–27; 107:23–24, 33, 35, 58.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:25–26, 34, 38, 93–97.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:38–45; 43:15–16; 107:7, 10–12, 17, 89; 124:133–35, 137.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:46–60; 107:60–63, 85–88.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1938, 118.
10. Moroni 6:4.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:13–14.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 88:127.
13. William Hartley, "The Priesthood Reform Movement, 1908–1922," *BYU Studies*, winter 1973, 138.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 53–54; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 38.
15. In Conference Report, Oct. 1968, 84; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1968, 84.
16. Mark 10:43–45.
17. "Welfare Responsibilities of the Priesthood Quorums," *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 86.

Elder H. Bryan Richards

Prepare young men to serve missions

"And Joshua said unto all the people [of Israel], . . . choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:2, 15).

As in the days of Joshua, so it is with us today. As parents, one of the choices we must make is whether or not we are going to prepare our young sons to serve full-time missions.

To help us understand the importance of this decision, let me quote from the prophets of our time.

President Howard W. Hunter noted: "Earlier prophets have taught that every able, worthy young man should serve a full-time mission. I emphasize this need today" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 118; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 88).

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: "I say what has been said before, that missionary work is essentially a

priesthood responsibility. As such, our young men must carry the major burden. This is their responsibility and their obligation" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 52).

What would the Lord say to a young man today who was making the decision to serve a full-time mission? In words filled with love, He said to 19-year-old Orson Pratt:

"My son Orson, hearken and hear and behold what I, the Lord God, shall say unto you. . . .

". . . Blessed are you because you have believed;

"And more blessed are you because you are called of me to preach my gospel" (D&C 34:1, 4-5).

Can you feel the love that the Lord has for a young man who has answered the call to serve?

As parents we have the responsibility to prepare our sons to be worthy and to have a desire to serve the Lord. We are stewards of those sons held in reserve for this day. The Lord has entrusted them to us, and we will be held accountable for them. One of the blessings of that stewardship will be preparing our sons to serve the Lord.

Responsibilities of parents and leaders

May I speak to the parents of the Church and their sons for a moment. One of the powerful stories in the Book of Mormon teaches us of the influence that parents can have in the lives of their young sons. This is the account of 2,060 young men who volunteered to defend the liberty of their country. They were led into battle by Helaman, yet "there was not one soul of them who did perish; yea, and neither was there one soul among them who had not received many wounds" (Alma 57:25). Why? Because "they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness." Then Helaman explains the reason behind this great miracle: "I did remember

the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them" (Alma 57:21). What did their mothers teach them? "That there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power" (Alma 57:26).

Parents, do you realize what great power you have in the lives of your sons? When you teach them that there is a just God and that He wants every able and worthy young man to serve a mission, your sons will have the faith to answer the Lord's call.

Bishops, as part of your stewardship you have a tremendous responsibility to prepare your young men to serve full-time missions. Begin early. Help them understand Alma's experiment. Plant the seed to serve a mission in their hearts. Then have them ask the Lord if it is a good seed. Then, if you help them nourish that seed, it will grow into the miracle of having that young man serve a mission.

I will always be grateful that Sister Richards, bishops, and priesthood leaders taught our sons and prepared them to serve missions.

How can we achieve a significant increase in the number of young men serving full-time missions? First of all, parents must understand the responsibility they have. They must ask our Heavenly Father to know how to prepare their sons to serve missions. That doesn't mean only those from America, England, Mongolia, or Brazil, but every able and worthy young man in the Church. Bishops, you must follow the same process.

Teach the worth of the soul

President Boyd K. Packer has said, "True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17). The doctrine that will change the behavior of our young men regarding missions is understanding the worth

of a single soul. Jesus Christ paid the supreme sacrifice in providing the infinite Atonement, which provides the only way for us to return and live with our Heavenly Father. When parents, bishops, and our young men understand this true doctrine, our young men will be prepared and have a desire to serve.

Importance of missionary service

May I quote from Elder Joe J. Christensen:

"The Lord did not say, 'Go on a mission if it fits your schedule, or if you happen to feel like it, or if it doesn't interfere with your scholarship, your romance, or your educational plans.' Preaching the gospel is a commandment and not merely a suggestion. It is a blessing and a privilege. . . . Remember, . . . the Lord and His prophets are counting on you" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 56; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 41).

There is not anything a young man can do that will be any more important than serving a full-time mission. The good they do as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ will carry on into eternity.

The greatest army of missionaries ever assembled in the history of the world is serving today. Don't let your sons miss being part of that great army.

These young men, trusted and proven before they came to earth, are not ordinary young men. They are choice spirits that have been held in reserve to come forth in this day.

As we ponder the great charge given to us by the Lord to proclaim the gospel to all the world, will you in your personal and family prayers plead with our Heavenly Father that every young man in the Church today will have the desire and live worthy to serve a full-time mission?

May our Heavenly Father bless us with the commitment to prepare our young men to serve. May the young men of the Church today become like the sons of Helaman, following every word of the Lord with exactness. May they become a light on a hill that shines brightly and says to all the world that they, like Joshua of old, have chosen to serve the Lord! I pray that it will be so, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder D. Todd Christofferson has just spoken to us, and he was followed by Elder H. Bryan Richards.

President James E. Faust will speak to us next. He will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "Ye Elders of Israel."

President James E. Faust

My beloved brethren, I express my love and appreciation to you for your devotion and faithfulness as the bearers of the priesthood of God.

Visit to World War I sites in France

Earlier this year, my three sons and I visited the sites in France where my father fought in the U.S. Army in World War I. Great was the suffering and terrible were the consequences to all in-

volved in that war. Millions lost their lives. Although my father was not killed, he carried mental and physical scars until he died. Despite his terrifying experiences, he prefaced his diary as follows: "If I had to do it again, I would do it because it was my duty."¹ As we traveled 80 years later through the beautiful countryside, we visited battle sites and cemeteries of the combatants on both sides. In the military cemetery outside Paris, with my hand resting on Stanford

Hinckley's cross, I called President Hinckley on a cellular phone to express my feelings on that occasion.

World War I was particularly tragic for our family because my father had some second cousins serving on the other side of that conflict in some of the same general battle areas. We eventually became acquainted with these relatives and found them to be decent, God-fearing Christians. They had nothing to do with the grand geopolitics or causes of the war. Like my father, they were serving their country because it was their duty. World War I and the wars that followed brought such great suffering and caused the deaths of countless innocent people. In its simplest terms, wars are so often caused by a great lust for power.

Priesthood is the greatest power source

Tonight I wish to talk to you young men of the priesthood about power and its proper use and its companion, the performance of duty. Power is highly attractive. It can be both good and bad. In your formative years, you young men are attracted to power figures of one kind or another. These often include sports idols, entertainers, people of wealth, and those who have political power. Unfortunately, some young men, particularly those who fall short scholastically, who don't make the team, or who are not chosen to sing in a specially selected choir may feel rejected and be lured into groups that they think will compensate for their inadequacies. This hunger for acceptance or power draws them like a moth to a flame to street gangs and other associations that can be violent and encourage habits which are dangerous to the body and to the soul.

You young holders of the priesthood have access to the greatest power source in the world. It is the priesthood of God. In complete contrast to other power sources, the holy priesthood,

through its proper exercise, continues to build spiritual and physical strength which endures through the eternities. It is "inseparably connected with the powers of heaven" and can be "handled only upon the principles of righteousness."² Regarding the priesthood, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated:

"[It] is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from heaven. . . . It is the channel through which the Almighty . . . has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time."³

Priesthood power comes from faithfulness

This power comes in proportion to our faithfulness in fulfilling our duties. As the Prophet Joseph observed, "The Lord gave us power in proportion to the work to be done, and strength according to the race set before us, and grace and help as our needs required."⁴ As an example, the prophet Elijah, using his priesthood, was able to call forth fire from heaven to demonstrate the power of God.

Before President Hugh B. Brown was a General Authority, he served in England as an officer in the Canadian army and had great power. Men stood at attention before him and called him "sir." One day Brother Brown received a message that he was wanted in the hospital. When he got there, someone directed him to a little room where a sick young man lay. Brother Brown remembered that he had once been that young man's Sunday School teacher. "Brother Brown," said the young man, "would you use your authority in my behalf? The doctors say I cannot live. Will you give me a blessing?" All the pride Brother Brown felt in wearing the uniform of the king disappeared as he laid his hands

upon the boy's head and gave him a blessing. The help that the boy needed was not from any authority of an officer in the king's army but from the authority of the priesthood.⁵

With the power of the priesthood come weighty responsibilities. Indeed, we can enjoy priesthood power only when we do our duty. The priesthood of this Church has in the past received some hard lessons regarding its duty. The early brethren were untested and untried. Under the Prophet Joseph's leadership, the Lord taught them and sifted them. They were persecuted and driven unmercifully in learning to do their duty. Many failed. Three times some of the early brethren endured searing, refining trials before they ultimately found refuge in these mountain valleys.

The refining trials of Zion's Camp

The first of these tests was Zion's Camp in the spring and summer of 1834. The second came just four years later in removing thousands of Saints from the state of Missouri to Illinois. Twelve years later came the epic exodus from Illinois to Winter Quarters and the next year to the mountain valleys of the western part of the continent.

Zion's Camp was formed to reestablish the Saints in Jackson County, Missouri. In this "effort to redeem Zion,"⁶ some 200 men traveled more than a thousand miles in the most trying circumstances under the personal leadership of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

George A. Smith, age 16, was selected to go on the camp and recorded some of the suffering, trials, and hardships the brethren endured. He stated that on May 26, 1834, "the day was exceedingly hot and we suffered much from thirst and were compelled to drink water from sloughs which were filled with living creatures. Here I learned to strain wigglers with my teeth."⁷ The next

day, an exhausted Solomon Humphrey lay down on the ground and fell asleep. "When he awoke he saw a rattlesnake coiled up within one foot of his head and [lying] between him and his hat, which he had in his hand when he fell asleep. The brethren gathered around him, saying, 'It is a rattlesnake, let us kill it.' Brother Humphrey said, 'No! I'll protect him, you shant hurt him for he and I have had a good nap together.'"⁸ I have no desire to have a nap with a rattlesnake!

Brother George A. Smith recorded: "The Prophet Joseph took a full share of the fatigues of the entire journey. In addition to the care of providing for the Camp and presiding over it, he walked most of the time and had a full proportion of blistered bloody and sore feet, which was the natural result of walking from 25 to 40 miles a day in a hot season of the year. But during the entire trip he never uttered a murmur or complaint, while most of the men in the Camp complained to him of . . . scanty supply of provisions, poor quality of bread, . . . maggotty bacon and cheese, &c. . . . Yet we were the Camp of Zion, and many of us were prayerless, thoughtless, careless, heedless, foolish or devilish. . . . Joseph had to bear with us and tutor us, like children. There were many, however, in the Camp who never murmured and who were always ready and willing to do as our leaders desired."⁹

Although Zion's Camp failed in its stated purpose of restoring the Saints to their lands in Jackson County, Missouri, it was invaluable as a stern schooling. They learned that faith is more important than life itself. At a conference held February 14, 1835, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy were chosen from the ranks of those who had served in Zion's Camp. These valiant brethren led the Church for the next 50 years.

Caring for the poor is a priesthood duty

The Lord taught another great priesthood duty during this period of Church history. In section 104 the Lord set forth the order of the Church concerning the poor:

"Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment."¹⁰ With this precedent, in January 1839, during the exodus from Missouri, many of the brethren covenanted to "stand by and assist one another . . . till there shall not be one left who desires to remove from the state."¹¹

In the bitter cold of February 1839, Daniel Stillwell Thomas reflected, "Before we crossed [the Mississippi River,] we unloaded our wagon and sent it back to assist in removing the poor and thus to save their lives, the mob still threatening them."¹² Daniel Thomas had five children and only one pair of shoes between them, yet he still sent the wagon back to save the destitute Saints.

Later, on October 6, 1845, a body of the priesthood met in the Nauvoo Temple and solemnly signed their names to a written covenant to provide the means for taking the poor and the destitute with the body of the Saints in the great migration west. In 1846 the Council decided the trustees might even sell the temples in Nauvoo and Kirtland and all of the property of the Church to help the Saints move westward.¹³

The continuing duty of the priesthood of the Church today is to care for all members, including the poor and the needy, the widows, the orphans, the single mothers and their families. We have an additional duty in our time to increase our labors to love the spiritually poor among our brethren so that they and their families might enjoy "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come."¹⁴

Priesthood duties of young men

You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood have only glimpsed the satisfaction that comes through the righteous exercise of your priesthood. This priesthood holds "the key of the ministering of angels."¹⁵ Priests may be permitted to perform the sacred ordinance of baptism in order to have our sins removed. The Aaronic Priesthood administers and passes the sacred emblems of the sacrament. Both ordinances relate directly to the Savior's Atonement. In addition, as home teaching companions you are to help watch over the Church, urging members "to pray . . . and attend to all family duties."¹⁶

Another duty particularly pertains to you wonderful young men. That is the duty to follow the counsel of those in authority over you. Listen to your parents. Be obedient to them whether you agree with them or not. They love you more than anyone else and have your best interests at heart. Listen to your quorum president, your bishop, your stake president, the apostles, seers, and revelators and especially President Hinckley, as well as the other General Authorities of the Church. They will lead you into the ways of righteousness.

Be true to this great trust

The priesthood of God has become the eminent power for good in the world. We are no longer a handful of people on the fringes of society. This great power for good has been entrusted to us; we must not weaken it by failing in our responsibilities. We must buckle on the armor of righteousness. We have the duty to be worthy in every respect so that we can invoke all of the great powers of the priesthood. We must be totally honest in all our dealings. We must be morally clean. We must help the poor and the needy. As the great army of God, we have the charge to foster the cause of truth and righteousness all over the world.

Brethren, we are the authorized servants of the risen Christ. With this authority comes the duty to move this holy work forward across the world. We are part of the greatest brotherhood in all the world. We will be held accountable for what we do with the keys, power, and authority granted to us. We must be true to this great trust in every way.

As we look to the future, we will continue to have obstacles, difficulties, challenges, and opposition. Satan has more tools at his disposal than ever before to deceive, distract, and corrupt our people. We will continue to be winnowed. One day in the future, we will have to account through President Gordon B. Hinckley to the Prophet Joseph for what we have done with this great power which the Lord has invested in us.

We are grateful that the work of God moves forward as powerfully as it does under the leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley. After the death of the Savior, His Apostles did great and marvelous things in His name. Peter and John were asked by Caiaphas and other high priests, "By what power . . . have ye done this?"¹⁷ Like Peter, we declare to the world that all this happens by and through the power of the holy priesthood and in the "name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."¹⁸

This is my solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. George A. Faust diary, in author's possession, 1.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.

3. *History of the Church*, 4:207.
4. *History of the Church*, 1:176.
5. Adapted from Hugh B. Brown, *Be What You Will to Be*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (14 Feb. 1967), 8–9.
6. B. H. Roberts, introduction to *History of the Church*, 3:xl.
7. "History of George Albert Smith" (typescript), Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 17.
8. "History of George Albert Smith," 18.
9. "History of George Albert Smith," 33.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 104:18.
11. *History of the Church*, 3:251; see also 3:250, 252–55.
12. "To the Editor and Readers of the Lehi Post" (typescript, n.d.), Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 3; spelling modernized.
13. See Brigham Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846–1847*, comp. Elden J. Watson (1971), 145.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 84:26.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 20:51.
17. Acts 4:7.
18. Acts 4:10.

The choir and congregation sang "Ye Elders of Israel."

President Hinckley

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

It is a joy and a privilege for me to stand before you, such a vast audience of priesthood holders both seen and unseen. General Church priesthood meetings have always been a treat—from

Aaronic Priesthood days until the present. To "come, listen to a prophet's voice, and hear the word of God,"¹ as a song from our hymnbook states, is a cherished blessing.

A boy's love for President Hinckley

We sustain Gordon B. Hinckley as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and as the prophet, seer, and revelator of the Church in our time. A letter which I received from a proud father tells of an experience with his then five-year-old son and the boy's love for the President of the Church and desire to emulate the President's example. The father wrote:

"When Christopher was five years old, he would get ready for church on Sundays mostly by himself. On one particular Sunday, he decided he wanted to wear a suit and tie, which to that point he had never done. He scoured the closet on his own for a hand-me-down tie and produced a rather used clip-on one that he didn't need to create a knot for. He attached the tie to his white shirt, then capped it off with the small navy jacket that had hung for years in the boys' closet.

"On his own, he went into the bathroom and painstakingly combed his blonde hair to perfection. About that time, I came into the bathroom to finish getting ready myself. I found Christopher beaming at himself in the mirror. Without taking his eyes off his reflection, he proclaimed proudly, 'Look, Papa—Christopher B. Hinckley!'" And Father realized that a boy had been watching the prophet of the Lord.

Our children are watching. They are absorbing eternal lessons. They are shaping their futures. What is the example we are presenting to them?

A son watches his father's example

Years ago when our youngest son, Clark, was attending a religion class at Brigham Young University, the instructor, during a lecture, asked Clark, "What is an example of life with your father that you best remember?"

The instructor later wrote to me and told me of the reply which Clark had given to the class. Said Clark: "When I was a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood, my dad and I went pheasant hunting near Malad, Idaho. The day was Monday—the last day of the season. We walked through countless fields in search of pheasants but only saw a few, and these we missed. Dad then said to me, 'Clark, let's unload our guns, and we'll place them in this ditch. Then we'll kneel down to pray.' I thought Dad would pray for more pheasants, but I was wrong. He explained to me that Elder Richard L. Evans was gravely ill and that at 12 noon on that particular Monday the members of the Quorum of the Twelve—wherever they may be at the time—were to kneel and, in a way, together unite in a fervent prayer of faith for Elder Evans. Removing our caps, we knelt, we prayed."

I well remember the occasion, but I never dreamed a son was watching, was learning, was building his own testimony.

Guide and inspire young men

In analyzing the statistical performance of those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood as deacons, teachers, and priests, we become concerned when significant numbers of deacons slip into inactivity and fail to be ordained teachers at the proper time. The same is true with some who are teachers but not ordained priests—and particularly priests who never receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Brethren, this should never be. We have an awesome responsibility to guide and inspire these young men on the priesthood trail, that no avalanche of sin or error will deter their progress or sweep them away from their eternal goals.

Bishops and bishops' counselors, will you undertake a study of the activity levels of each Aaronic Priesthood young man and outline your own plan to en-

sure the progress and activity of each one?

One newly called bishop, in his first meeting with his counselors, declared, "The Aaronic Priesthood is a prime responsibility of ours." To the second counselor, he directed, "I ask you to be personally responsible to ensure that every deacon, at the appropriate age, be worthy and be ordained a teacher." To the other counselor, he said, "Will you please do the same as pertains to the teachers, that they may, on schedule, be worthy and be ordained priests." Then the bishop continued, "I will take the same responsibility for the priests to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained elders. Together, and with God's help, we can do it." And they did.

Reaching the mind and heart of a boy

Our youth need less criticism and more models to follow. You advisers to the Aaronic Priesthood quorums are teachers and models for the young men. Do you know the gospel? Have you prepared the lesson? Do you know each boy and prayerfully determine how you might reach his mind, his heart, and help fashion his future?

Remember, it isn't sufficient to assume that when you teach, the boy is listening to what you say. Let me illustrate:

In what we call the west boardroom of the Church Administration Building, there hangs a lovely painting rendered by the artist Harry Anderson. The painting depicts Jesus sitting on a small stone wall with numerous children gathered around, knowing they are the object of His love. Each time I gaze at that painting, I think of the passage of scripture, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."²

On one occasion I had given a priesthood blessing in that room to a small lad who was soon to undergo major surgery.

I directed his attention and that of his parents to the painting of Jesus and the children. I then made a few remarks concerning the Savior and His never-failing love. I asked the boy if he had any questions. "Yes," he replied seriously. "Brother Monson, how does a boy go about getting a little goat and a leash for it like that one in the painting?"

For a moment I was stunned by the unanticipated question, a little deflated concerning my teaching ability, but then I responded: "Jesus gives to you and me gifts far more important than a goat on a leash. He provides a road map to heaven. His teachings, His example, His love are far greater gifts than that offered by the world."

"Come, follow me,"³ He invited. And we are wise when we follow Him!

Let all young men who bear the Aaronic Priesthood learn and live the Savior's teachings and prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.

A bishopric member trains and inspires

May I share with you brethren my personal experience as a teachers quorum president. The member of the bishopric who had responsibility for us invited the new presidency and secretary to come to his home for leadership training. He wanted our ideas concerning how we should go about our newly given duties. We obliged—on condition that he would invite his wife, Nettie, to serve us some of the meat pies for which she was famous. This he agreed to do. Brethren, isn't it remarkable how we men will obligate our wives to do things—often without notice? The resulting meeting was one of the best I have ever attended. We were taught to the level of our understanding and inspired to look after our quorum members.

After a delicious meat pie smothered with gravy, we asked the bishop's counselor and his wife to join in a game of

Monopoly®. I am certain they had other things to do, but they willingly complied with our request.

I don't remember who won the Monopoly game, but I have never forgotten the lessons learned that night in Church government and in the administration of a priesthood quorum.

Good advice: never lie

During the fervor of the early years of World War II, one of our teachers quorum members, Fritz, wanted to defend our country but didn't want to wait until he reached the minimum age required to serve. He falsified his age and enlisted in the United States Navy. Soon he found himself far away in the Pacific sea battles. The vessel on which he served was sent to the bottom, with many hands lost. Fritz survived and later appeared in our quorum meeting in full uniform, with battle ribbons affixed. I remember asking Fritz, "Fritz, do you have any advice for us?" We were all on the very doorstep of mandatory military service.

Fritz thought for a moment and then said, "Never lie about your age or about anything else!" That one-sentence declaration is remembered yet.

Purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood

Young men between the ages of 12 and 17 are in a time of preparation and personal spiritual growth. Accordingly, the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood are to help each person who is ordained:

1. To become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and live by its teachings.

2. To magnify priesthood callings and fulfill the responsibilities of his priesthood office.

3. To give meaningful service.

4. To prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and temple ordinances.

5. To commit to, prepare for, and serve an honorable full-time mission.

6. To prepare to become a worthy husband and father.⁴

Missionaries answer the Lord's call

Serving throughout the world is a great missionary force, going about doing good as did the Savior. Missionaries teach truth. They dispel darkness. They spread joy. They bring precious souls to Christ.

On that special day when a mission call is received, parents, brothers and sisters, and grandparents gather around the prospective missionary and note his nervousness as he carefully opens the letter of call. There is a pause, and then he announces where the prophet of the Lord has assigned him to serve. Feelings are very near to the surface. Tears come easily, and the family rejoices in the bond of love and the goodness of God.

The full-time missionaries and all others engaged in the work of the Lord have answered His call. We are on His errand. We shall succeed in the solemn charge given by Mormon to declare the Lord's word among the people. Wrote Mormon: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life."⁵

A missionary helps a German woman

In 1926 President Fred Tadge, president of the German-Austrian Mission, called a mission conference to be held at Dresden, Germany, in August. The missionaries were to walk to this conference from their fields of labor basically "without purse or scrip," although they had to carry a small amount of money or they could be arrested as vagabonds.

Elder Alfred Lippold and his companion, Elder Parker Thomas, took the

north route. Somewhere along the way, the two called at a home where they met a woman and her eight children. She told the elders that her husband had left her and the children and that they were now without money. After she had let them in, the woman said: "If you travel without purse or scrip, then you must be hungry. Sit down." She gave each of them a big slice of bread with plum jam on it. The missionaries blessed the breakfast and in the blessing on the food asked the Lord to give the woman what she needed.

The missionaries then departed. After they had walked about a mile, Elder Thomas said, "I must go back," which he did without explanation.

On his return, Elder Lippold asked, "Why did you go back?"

Elder Thomas explained: "In our prayer we asked that the woman be given what she needed. I *had* what was needed—a \$20 bill. It was in my pocket, and I went back to give it to her. It would have burned a hole in my pocket."

Service in Rarotonga

Thirty years ago I had responsibility for much of the work in the South Pacific. A Brother J. Vernon Monson was called, together with his wife, to journey to faraway Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, there to serve as district president. Later, in a letter to me, he reported:

"We are most grateful for the progress being made, and I would especially like to mention the goodwill and wonderful relations that have developed with the representatives of government and the business community toward us and the Church.

"One thing climaxed the development of this public acceptance," he wrote. "It was in having our nephew and niece, Dr. and Mrs. Odeen Manning, render an outstanding service here in the Cook Islands. Dr. Manning is an oph-

thalmologist, and I wrote to him outlining a proposal whereby he might render service to the people of Rarotonga. My proposal included the following: (1) no remuneration; (2) he must pay his own expenses; (3) that he turn his practice over to the other doctors to handle for the three months he would be away; (4) we would furnish them free board and room while in Rarotonga; and (5) that he bring his own surgical instruments, as none would be available in Rarotonga."

Brother Vernon Monson's letter to me continued:

"The Mannings airmailed their reply in two words: 'Offer accepted.' As preparations began, the government of the Cook Islands assigned competent doctors to assist Dr. Manning and to learn from him. In all, 284 patients were examined, with most being fitted for glasses. Fifty-three patients had serious eye operations, such as cataract surgery.

"The entire three-month program was wonderful and most heartwarming. Truly we were blessed. It has buoyed up the Saints, who gained new pride in being members of a faith which would bring medical service to these islands." The letter ended.

Years later, my wife and I were guests on a BYU-sponsored cruise to the Holy Land. One evening as we were seated on the ship's deck, the man sitting next to us turned to me and said, "Elder Monson, my name is Odeen Manning from Woodland Hills, California. I am an ophthalmologist by profession and served a brief medical mission to Rarotonga when my uncle and aunt were serving there."

I acknowledged that I was aware of his sacrifice and his service. I asked Dr. Manning, "As you reflect on this experience, would you wish to share with me your feelings concerning it?"

He responded with emotion, saying, "It was the most spiritually rewarding experience of my life."

I believe it was more than coincidence that my wife and I would be on the cruise vessel at that particular time and in that particular area of the deck, sitting next to a man we never before had met. Heaven was close as Dr. Manning and I embraced, and thanks were expressed for his service—not only to those who were blind and now could see, but also to our Lord and Savior. As Jacob declared, “Great are the promises of the Lord unto them who are upon the isles of the sea.”⁶

Testimony of the Savior

Of Him who delivered each of us from endless death, even Jesus Christ, I testify that He is a teacher of truth—but He is more than a teacher. He is the Exemplar of the perfect life—but He is more than an exemplar. He is the Great Physician—but He is more than a physician. He who rescued the “lost battalion” of mankind is the literal Savior of the world, the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One of Israel—even the risen Lord—who declared, “I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.”⁷

My dear brethren, let each of us:

- Learn of Him.
- Believe in Him.
- Trust in Him.
- Follow Him.
- Obey Him.

By so doing we can become like Him. Of this truth I solemnly bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “Come, Listen to a Prophet’s Voice,” *Hymns*, no. 21.
2. Mark 10:14.
3. Luke 18:22.
4. See *Aaronic Priesthood Leadership Handbook* (1991), 6.
5. 3 Nephi 5:13.
6. 2 Nephi 10:21.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 110:4.

President Hinckley

President Monson has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. in the morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow thereafter.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus—the men’s voices—for the beautiful music they have provided.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “The Lord Is My Shepherd.”

After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Ray H. Wood.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

To the young men

My brethren, it is a tremendous opportunity and an awesome responsibility to speak to you.

I wish to speak initially to the younger men who are here tonight. Thank you for

your presence, wherever you may be gathered. Thank you for attending seminary as well as your Sunday meetings. I honor you for your desire to learn of the gospel, to deepen your scholarship in studying the word of the Lord. I thank you for the desire you carry in your

hearts to serve missions. I thank you for your dreams of marrying in the temple and rearing honorable families of your own.

You are not "dead-end" kids. You are not wasting your lives in drifting aimlessly. You have purpose. You have design. You have plans that can only lead to growth and strength.

Pledge of young men in California

When your energies are harnessed, when your dreams are focused, marvelous things happen. I recently received a proclamation from a group of LDS young men from the northern area of California. They are from 19 stakes, and as they gathered in the mountains, they visited the scene of a pioneer tragedy. As the boys pondered the things they saw and the reminders of their inheritance, they were invited to sign a Mormon Trail Scout Encampment Proclamation. I should like to read this pledge to you:

"Be it known to all that we are Boy Scouts . . . and bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood of God. We pledge our allegiance to the values and principles that guided the men of the Mormon Battalion and the Latter-day Saint pioneer men and women who helped establish this state of California. As their grateful sons, we rejoice in our heritage of service.

"On this eighteenth day of July 1998, we pledge to become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We will study the scriptures. We will pray for strength to obey. We will work. We will strive with all our hearts to follow the example of Jesus.

"We will magnify the priesthood we have been given by serving other people. We will keep ourselves worthy to administer the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Wherever there is a need for help, like our forefathers, we will step forward.

"We will prove ourselves worthy of the greater, Melchizedek Priesthood. We commit ourselves to the Lord's army and will go forth as full-time missionaries to invite all to come unto Christ.

"We are young men of the covenant. We will prepare ourselves to receive the covenant of eternal marriage. We pray for righteous wives and children whom we will honor and protect with our own lives.

"Be it known that whatever the risks, whatever the temptations, whatever the state of the world around us, as our forefathers were faithful, so we will be. Like those who have gone before, we will turn away from self-aggrandizement and set aside personal gain in order to build a peaceful society, governed by God.

"At all times and in all places, we will be true to our pledge."

I compliment every boy who signed this pledge. I pray that not one will ever default on the promises he has made to himself, to the Church, and to the Lord.

What a different world this would be if every young man could and would sign such a statement of promise. There would be no lives wasted with drugs. There would be no gangs with children killing children and young men headed either for prison or death. Education would become a prize worth working for. Service in the Church would become an opportunity to be cherished. There would be greater peace and love in the homes of the people. There would be no viewing of pornography, no reading of sleazy literature. You would honor and respect the girls with whom you associate, and they would never have any fear about being alone with you in any set of circumstances. It would be as if the stripling warriors of Helaman had recruited the youth of the world to their way of living.

Importance of missionary service

On the agenda of your lives, of course, would be a mission. You would gladly go wherever you might be sent to do the work of the Lord, giving it your full time and attention, your strength and energy and love.

Permit me to read to you parts of a letter from a young man now serving a mission. It is written to his family, and I hope I do not violate propriety in reading it to this great gathering. I will not disclose the name of the writer or the mission in which he serves. He says:

"This past year has been great! I transferred out of the mission office and came to this small branch. My life has changed dramatically since that last transfer. I have in the past few months learned what is really important. I have learned what matters. I have learned to forget myself. I have learned to work effectively. I have learned to love others. I have learned that God loves me and that I love Him. In short, I have learned to live what I believe. . . .

"I have learned about people and things. I have watched tears of joy come to those who never knew they were children of God. I have seen the prayers of the penitent be answered. I have seen people absorb the gospel of Jesus Christ and want to change into new persons, all because of a feeling. . . .

"I often dream about the plan of salvation. I think about the marvelous work and a wonder that has taken place. I think about the power and force of angels that stand among us. I wonder at times how many of these are around me helping to bear testimony in a language I never thought could be fully understood.

"I ponder upon the peaceable things of immortal glory visioned by Enoch. . . . I am thankful to God to be who I am. My greatest blessing in life is to be alive—alive in the service of our God. In this, I find great peace and joy."

Now, my dear young friends, I hope all of you are pointed in the direction of missionary service. I cannot promise you fun. I cannot promise you ease and comfort. I cannot promise you freedom from discouragement, from fear, from downright misery at times. But I can promise you that you will grow as you have never grown in a similar period during your entire lives. I can promise you a happiness that will be unique and wonderful and lasting. I can promise you that you will reevaluate your lives, that you will establish new priorities, that you will live closer to the Lord, that prayer will become a real and wonderful experience, that you will walk with faith in the outcome of the good things you do.

God bless you young men, the boys, of this, His great Church. May each of you walk with a higher resolve, a determination to be Latter-day Saints in every meaning of the word. May achievement, accomplishment, and service become your reward in the fascinating and wonderful life which lies ahead of you.

To the older men

Now, brethren, I should like to talk to the older men, hoping that there will be some lesson for the younger men as well.

I wish to speak to you about temporal matters.

As a backdrop for what I wish to say, I read to you a few verses from the 41st chapter of Genesis.

Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, dreamed dreams which greatly troubled him. The wise men of his court could not give an interpretation. Joseph was then brought before him:

"Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

"And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fattished and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

"And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed. . . .

"And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: . . .

"And I saw in my dream . . . seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

"And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them:

"And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears. . . .

"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, . . . God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

"The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. . . .

". . . What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

"Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

"And there shall arise after them seven years of famine. . . .

". . . And God will shortly bring it to pass" (Genesis 41:17–20, 22–26, 28–30, 32).

Get our houses in order

Now, brethren, I want to make it very clear that I am not prophesying, that I am not predicting years of famine in the future. But I am suggesting that the time has come to get our houses in order.

So many of our people are living on the very edge of their incomes. In fact, some are living on borrowings.

We have witnessed in recent weeks wide and fearsome swings in the markets of the world. The economy is a fragile thing. A stumble in the economy in Jakarta or Moscow can immediately affect the entire world. It can eventually reach down to each of us as individuals. There is a portent of stormy weather ahead to which we had better give heed.

I hope with all my heart that we shall never slip into a depression. I am a child of the Great Depression of the thirties. I finished the university in 1932, when unemployment in this area exceeded 33 percent.

My father was then president of the largest stake in the Church in this valley. It was before our present welfare program was established. He walked the floor worrying about his people. He and his associates established a great wood-chopping project designed to keep the home furnaces and stoves going and the people warm in the winter. They had no money with which to buy coal. Men who had been affluent were among those who chopped wood.

Warning against consumer debt

I repeat, I hope we will never again see such a depression. But I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people. In March 1997 that debt totaled \$1.2 trillion, which represented a 7 percent increase over the previous year.

In December of 1997, 55 to 60 million households in the United States carried credit card balances. These balances averaged more than \$7,000 and cost \$1,000 per year in interest and fees. Consumer debt as a percentage of disposable income rose from 16.3 percent in 1993 to 19.3 percent in 1996.

Everyone knows that every dollar borrowed carries with it the penalty of paying interest. When money cannot be repaid, then bankruptcy follows. There were 1,350,118 bankruptcies in the United States last year. This represented a 50 percent increase from 1992. In the second quarter of this year, nearly 362,000 persons filed for bankruptcy, a record number for a three-month period.

We are beguiled by seductive advertising. Television carries the enticing in-

vitiation to borrow up to 125 percent of the value of one's home. But no mention is made of interest.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr., in the April 1938 general conference, said from this pulpit, "Once in debt, interest is your companion every minute of the day and night; you cannot shun it or slip away from it; you cannot dismiss it; it yields neither to entreaties, demands, or orders; and whenever you get in its way or cross its course or fail to meet its demands, it crushes you" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1938, 103).

Live within your means

I recognize that it may be necessary to borrow to get a home, of course. But let us buy a home that we can afford and thus ease the payments which will constantly hang over our heads without mercy or respite for as long as 30 years.

No one knows when emergencies will strike. I am somewhat familiar with the case of a man who was highly successful in his profession. He lived in comfort. He built a large home. Then one day he was suddenly involved in a serious accident. Instantly, without warning, he almost lost his life. He was left a cripple. Destroyed was his earning power. He faced huge medical bills. He had other payments to make. He was helpless before his creditors. One moment he was rich; the next he was broke.

Since the beginnings of the Church, the Lord has spoken on this matter of debt. To Martin Harris through revelation He said: "Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage" (D&C 19:35).

President Heber J. Grant spoke repeatedly on this matter from this pulpit. He said:

"If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any

one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet" (*Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [1941], 111).

Become self-reliant

We are carrying a message of self-reliance throughout the Church. Self-reliance cannot obtain when there is serious debt hanging over a household. One has neither independence nor freedom from bondage when he is obligated to others.

In managing the affairs of the Church, we have tried to set an example. We have, as a matter of policy, stringently followed the practice of setting aside each year a percentage of the income of the Church against a possible day of need.

I am grateful to be able to say that the Church in all its operations, in all its undertakings, in all of its departments, is able to function without borrowed money. If we cannot get along, we will curtail our programs. We will shrink expenditures to fit the income. We will not borrow.

One of the happiest days in the life of President Joseph F. Smith was the day the Church paid off its long-standing indebtedness.

What a wonderful feeling it is to be free of debt, to have a little money against a day of emergency put away where it can be retrieved when necessary.

President Faust would not tell you this himself. Perhaps I can tell it, and he can take it out on me afterward. He had a mortgage on his home drawing 4 percent interest. Many people would have told him he was foolish to pay off that mortgage when it carried so low a rate of interest. But the first opportunity he had to acquire some means, he and his wife determined they would pay off their mortgage. He has been free of debt since

Sunday, October 4, 1998

Morning Session

that day. That's why he wears a smile on his face, and that's why he whistles while he works.

Free yourselves from bondage of debt

I urge you, brethren, to look to the condition of your finances. I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt to the extent possible. Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage.

This is a part of the temporal gospel in which we believe. May the Lord bless you, my beloved brethren, to set your houses in order. If you have paid your

debts, if you have a reserve, even though it be small, then should storms howl about your head, you will have shelter for your wives and children and peace in your hearts. That's all I have to say about it, but I wish to say it with all the emphasis of which I am capable.

I leave with you my testimony of the divinity of this work and my love for each of you, in the name of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder Ray H. Wood offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 4, 1998. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to the fourth general session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to all who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these various facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" and now will favor us with "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

Elder Quentin L. Cook offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President James E. Faust

Grandfather's faith in paying tithing

It is always an overpowering responsibility to come to this pulpit. I do so in humility. I pray that you may understand by the Spirit all that I have to say.

I wish to speak about opening the windows of heaven. As a boy I learned a great lesson of faith and sacrifice as I worked on my grandfather's farm during the terrible economic depression of the 1930s. The taxes on the farm were delinquent, and Grandfather, like so many, had no money. There was a drought in the land, and some cows and horses were dying for lack of grass and hay. One day when we were harvesting what little hay there was in the field, Grandfather told us to take the wagon to the corner of the field where the best stand of hay stood and fill the wagon as full as we could and take it to the tithing yard as payment of his tithing in kind.

I wondered how Grandfather could use the hay to pay tithing when some of the cows that we were depending upon to sustain us might starve. I even questioned if the Lord expected that much sacrifice from him. Ultimately, I marveled at his great faith that somehow the Lord would provide. The legacy of faith he passed on to his posterity was far greater than money, because he established in the minds of his children and grandchildren that above all, he loved the Lord and His holy work over other earthly things. He never became wealthy, but he died at peace with the Lord and with himself.

I was taught more about the spirit of tithing by President Henry D. Moyle, who lived in my ward when I was serving as a young bishop. One tithing settlement, President Moyle came in and declared, "Bishop, this is a full tithe and a little bit more, because that's the way we have been blessed."

A key to opening the windows of heaven

Tithing is a principle that is fundamental to the personal happiness and well-being of the Church members worldwide, both rich and poor. Tithing is a principle of sacrifice and a key to the opening of the windows of heaven. In Primary I memorized the tithing poem: "What is tithing? I will tell you every time. Ten cents from a dollar, and a penny from a dime." But I did not understand it fully until it was taught by Grandfather and President Henry D. Moyle.

The law of tithing is simple: we pay one-tenth of our individual increase annually.¹ Increase has been interpreted by the First Presidency to mean income.² What amounts to 10 percent of our individual income is between each of us and our Maker. There are no legalistic rules. As a convert in Korea once said: "With tithing, it doesn't matter whether you are rich or poor. You pay 10 percent, and you don't have to be ashamed if you haven't earned very much. If you make lots of money, you pay 10 percent. If you make very little, you still pay 10 percent. Heavenly Father will love you for it. You can hold your head up proud."³

Why should members worldwide, many of whom may not have enough for their daily needs, be encouraged to keep the Lord's law of tithing? As President Hinkley said in Cebu in the Philippine Islands, if members, "even living in poverty and misery, . . . will accept the gospel and live it, pay their tithes and offerings, even though those be meager, . . . they will have rice in their bowls and clothing on their backs and shelter over their heads. I do not see any other solution."⁴

Paying tithing brings true prosperity

Some may feel that they cannot afford to pay tithing, but the Lord has promised that He would prepare a way for us to keep all of His commandments.⁵ To pay tithing takes a leap of faith in the beginning, but as Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."⁶ We learn about tithing by paying it. Indeed, I believe it is possible to break out of poverty by having the faith to give back to the Lord part of what little we have.

Members of the Church who do not tithe do not lose their membership; they only lose blessings. Through Malachi the Lord asks: "Will a man rob God? . . . But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."⁷ If we will trust in the Lord, He will open the windows of heaven to us as we give back to Him the one-tenth He asks of us. His promise is sure: "I will . . . pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."⁸ Although tithing carries with it both temporal and spiritual blessings, the only absolute promise to the faithful is, "Ye shall have the riches of eternity."⁹

President Heber J. Grant put it in context when he said: "Prosperity comes to those who observe the law of tithing. When I say prosperity I am not thinking of it in terms of dollars and cents alone. . . . What I count as real prosperity . . . is the growth in a knowledge of God, and in a testimony, and in the power to live the gospel and to inspire our families to do the same. That is prosperity of the truest kind."¹⁰

Sister Yaeko Seki experienced part of this precious promise. She writes:

"My family and I were spending a day at the Japan Alps National Park. . . . I was pregnant with our fourth child and was feeling rather tired, so I lay down under the trees. . . . I began thinking about our financial problems. My

heart became overwhelmed, and I burst into tears. 'Lord, we are full-tithe payers. We have sacrificed so much. When will the windows of heaven open unto us and our burdens be lightened?'

"I prayed with all my heart. Then I turned to watch my husband and children playing and laughing together. . . . Suddenly, the Spirit testified to me that my blessings were abundant and that my family was the greatest blessing Heavenly Father could give me."¹¹

Many of us have had the windows of heaven open up for us, so we do not look upon tithing as a sacrifice but rather a blessing and even a privilege.

Blessings of tithing settlement

One of the great blessings the people of this Church have is to meet with the bishop once each year, settle their tithing, and report that what they have paid in contributions constitutes a tithe. It is also a great blessing for the bishops to have this experience. I remember a man in our ward who had a large family who would bring all of his children with him when he came to tithing settlement. Starting with the youngest, he would ask each one to report to the bishop as to whether their contributions constituted a tithe. When all of the children had reported, he would report for his wife and his family. This family was abundantly blessed for their faithfulness.

Administering tithing funds

Rest assured that the tithes of this Church are administered as set forth in the revelation given in 1838 to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The 18 Church leaders designated in the 120th section of the Doctrine and Covenants meet together to administer these sacred funds. Those of us who sit on that council know that this sacred responsibility is done in accordance with the Lord's "voice unto them."¹²

Tithing and temples

President Hinckley has announced the building of more temples than there ever have been at any time in history. The need for temples all over the world is great. This is because they are spiritual sanctuaries. Those who attend the temples can find protection against Satan and his desire to destroy them and their families. To Church members in isolated communities of the Church who want to have a temple in their midst, I would suggest that you first show your faith by paying your tithing so that you are worthy to receive temple blessings. As the Lord revealed to the elders of the Church in Kirtland, "Now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people."¹³

Other offerings

The Lord speaks of offerings in the plural. He expects us, as a condition of faithfulness, to pay our tithing and our fast offerings to help the poor and the needy. But we are privileged to make other offerings, not by way of assignment, assessment, or ecclesiastical direction. Among these are donations to the General Missionary Fund, Humanitarian Aid Fund, and the Book of Mormon Fund. We are also privileged to voluntarily contribute to building the new temples President Hinckley has announced.

Recently I received an anonymous letter from a person who made a substantial sacrifice for the General Temple Fund of the Church. She said: "I decided when I wanted to spend any money on myself I would forgo it and put the money into the temple fund. This meant no new clothes or shoes, books, hair appointments, necklaces, or anything of a personal nature until I reached my goal. I thought this would be a sacrifice, but

instead I have found joy in it. It has been a rewarding and fulfilling experience."

Sacrifice is necessary to develop faith

The Prophet Joseph Smith once said, "A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation." He continues, "Those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith."¹⁴

Our donations are made holy by our faith. Recently I attended sacrament meeting in my own ward. Before the meeting began, a few people handed contribution envelopes to the members of the bishopric. They came with a smile and a happy countenance. These envelopes contained their tithes and other offerings which they were joyfully paying as a humble expression of their gratitude for the Lord's blessings. This was a testament of their faith.

The work of God is moving forward in many parts of the world like it never has before, particularly in countries where the economic standards are not high and new members are still learning the principle of faith and how it relates to blessings. To be faithful members of this Church requires sacrifice and consecration. It means that worldly pleasures and earthly possessions should not be our principal aim in life, because the gift of eternal life requires a willingness to sacrifice all we have and are in order to obtain it.

Sacrifice brings protection from evil

In Old Testament times the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, and many people died. He commanded David to offer a sacrifice at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. When David went

to see Araunah, and Araunah found out why he had come, he generously offered to give him whatever was needed for the sacrifice. David's response was profound: "I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."¹⁵ He bought the threshing floor, offered the sacrifice, and the plague ceased.

In our time we are surfeited with a pestilence of violence, evil, and wickedness in so many forms. Those who keep their covenants and pay their tithes and offerings will have some extra defense against these virulent modern-day forms of evil. But this protection will not come with a sacrifice which costs us nothing.

I say this because the world's religious drift is obvious. If something can be had cheaply, without exertion or sacrifice, people do not mind having a little bit of it. In contrast, the blessings of membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints require both exertion and sacrifice. Receiving the blessings requires the payment of tithes and offerings. Ours is not a Sunday-only religion. It demands exemplary conduct and effort every day of the week. It involves accepting calls and serving with fidelity in those callings. It means strength of character, integrity, and honesty to the Lord and our fellowmen. It means that our homes need to be places of sanctuary and love. It means a relentless battle against the bombardment of worldly evils. It means, at times, being unpopular and politically incorrect.

The Savior's ultimate offering

I feel honored and privileged to have a small part in this holy work. It is a great time of vast spiritual outreach all over the world. It is marvelous to behold. It is the work of God. It is directed by the head of this Church, who is our Lord and

Savior, Jesus the Christ. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet, seer, and revelator. I believe President Hinckley's inspired leadership blesses all mankind.

The ultimate offering was that offered by the Savior Himself in giving His very life. It causes each of us to wonder, *How many drops of blood were shed for me?* I witness that Jesus is the Christ, the holy Son of God, the healer of our souls, our Savior and Redeemer of mankind. Of this I testify in His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 119:4.
2. See *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), sec. 9, p. 1.
3. Letter from D. Brent Clement, president of the Korea Seoul Mission, 1981.
4. "Inspirational Thoughts," *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 7.
5. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
6. John 7:17.
7. Malachi 3:8.
8. Malachi 3:10.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 38:39.
10. *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 58.
11. "The Windows of Heaven," *Tambuli*, Mar. 1992, 17.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 120.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 64:23.
14. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 69, 70.
15. 2 Samuel 24:24; see verses 15–25.

The choir sang "This Is the Christ."

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust has just spoken to us, following which the choir sang "This Is the Christ."

Our next speaker will be Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder David E. Sorensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Brothers and sisters, I am very grateful to be with you today. My pate is still somewhat shiny, but not because my barber friends have magnified their calling. Rather, it reflects more treatments, which are encouraging in spite of my alternating conference hairstyles.

My gratitude continues to flow—foremost to the Lord, then to my special wife and family, competent and caring doctors and nurses, and so many friends and members who pray in my behalf.

The need for ultimate hope

For a variety of reasons, brothers and sisters, today's society seems to struggle in order to be *hopeful*. The associated causes and effects come in ever so subtly.

Our everyday usage of the word *hope* includes how we “hope” to arrive at a certain destination by a certain time. We “hope” the world economy will improve. We “hope” for the visit of a loved one. Such typify our sincere but proximate hopes.

Life's disappointments often represent the debris of our failed proximate hopes. Instead, however, I speak of the crucial need for ultimate hope.

Ultimate hope is a different matter. It is tied to Jesus and the blessings of the great Atonement, blessings resulting in the universal Resurrection and the precious opportunity provided thereby for us to practice emancipating repentance, making possible what the scriptures call “a perfect brightness of hope” (2 Nephi 31:20).

Moroni confirmed: “What is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ” (Moroni 7:40–41; see also Alma 27:28). Real hope, therefore, is not associated with things mercurial, but rather with things immortal and eternal!

Hope, faith, charity, and patience

Unsurprisingly, hope is intertwined with other gospel doctrines, especially faith and patience.

Just as doubt, despair, and desensitization go together, so do faith, hope, charity, and patience. The latter qualities must be carefully and constantly nurtured, however, whereas doubt and despair, like dandelions, need little encouragement in order to sprout and spread. Alas, despair comes so naturally to the natural man!

Patience, for example, permits us to deal more evenly with the unevenness of life's experiences.

Faith and hope are constantly interactive and are not always easily or precisely distinguished. Nevertheless, ultimate hope's expectations are “with surety” true (Ether 12:4; see also Romans 8:24; Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21). Yet in the geometry of the restored theology, hope corresponds to faith but sometimes has a greater circumference. Faith, in turn, constitutes “the assurance of things hoped for” and the proof of “things not seen” (Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:1; see also Ether 12:6). Thus hope sometimes reconnoiters beyond the present boundaries of faith, but it always radiates from Jesus.

No wonder souls can be stirred and rallied by real hope's “reveille” as by no other music. Even if a few comrades slumber or desert, “lively hope” is still there “smiling brightly before us” (1 Peter 1:3; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19). Hope caused downcast disciples to go quickly and expectantly to an empty garden tomb (see Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:8–12). Hope helped a prophet to see rescuing rain in a distant cloud which appeared to be no larger than a man's hand (see 1 Kings 18:41–46).

The anchor of the soul

Such ultimate hope constitutes the “anchor of the soul” and is retained through the gift of the Holy Ghost and faith in Christ (Hebrews 6:19; see also Alma 25:16; Ether 12:9). In contrast, viewing life without the prospect of immortality can diminish not only hope but also the sense of personal accountability (see 1 Corinthians 15:19; Alma 30:18).

Granted, the human scene includes many individuals who go decently about life’s labors, untouched by or unexpressive of deep religious feelings, but who, nevertheless, draw unknowingly upon “the light of Christ,” which to a degree lights every individual (see D&C 84:46; Moroni 7:16, 18; John 1:9). Commendably, other individuals have openly acknowledged spiritual intimations which sustain them.

Increasing despair and cynicism

Nevertheless, because proximate hopes are so vulnerable to irony and the unexpected, there is an increasing and profound sense of existential despair in the world. A grumpy cynicism now pervades politics. Many feel burdened by society’s other accumulating anxieties.

Even those who are spiritually secure themselves can sense the chill in the air. Cold secularism causes some of that shivering, as many have given in to what Senator Patrick Moynihan called “defining deviancy down” (“Defining Deviancy Down,” *The American Scholar*, winter 1993, 17). Much despair truly comes of iniquity—but as *God* defines iniquity (see Moroni 10:22).

There is so much unsettlement and divisiveness. No wonder the subsequent loss of hope almost inevitably sends selfishness surging as many, resignedly, turn to pleasing themselves.

When hope is stripped away, Paul noted this tendency for some to eat and drink, reasoning that “for to morrow we

die,” driven by the erroneous conclusion that “when a man [is] dead, that [is] the end thereof” (1 Corinthians 15:32; Alma 30:18).

Difficulties stir some people to repent

Much as I lament the gathering storms, there will be some usefulness in them. Events will help to draw fresh attention to God’s higher ways and His kingdom, which is to “become fair as the sun, and clear as the moon” (D&C 105:31).

Individuals and nations will continue to choose what they want, but they cannot alter the ultimate consequences of what they want.

Therefore, in this hastened ripening process, let us not be surprised that the tares are looking more like tares all the time. During this time when nations are in distress, with perplexity, there will actually be some redemptive turbulence: “For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance” (2 Nephi 28:19).

Being so “stirred up” will be a real thing, though we can only speculate as to how it will be achieved.

Meanwhile, those with ultimate hope accept the truth of this terse verse: “But all things must come to pass in their time” (D&C 64:32).

It is well, therefore, to ponder the status of hope in our present human context when God’s commandments seem unimportant to many. Granted, as the scriptures say, “it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right” (Mosiah 29:26). But if this does occur, bringing massive sea changes in society’s attitudes, then the judgments of God will come (see Mosiah 29:26–27). Only the acceptance of the revelations of God can bring both the direction and correction needed and, in turn, a “brightness of hope” (2 Nephi 31:20).

Qualities of real hope

Real hope keeps us "anxiously engaged" in good causes even when these appear to be losing causes on the mortal scoreboard (see D&C 58:27). Likewise, real hope is much more than wishful musing. It stiffens, not slackens, the spiritual spine. Hope is serene, not giddy, eager without being naive, and pleasantly steady without being smug. Hope is realistic anticipation which takes the form of a determination—not only to survive adversity but, moreover, to "endure . . . well" to the end (D&C 121:8).

Though otherwise a "lively" attribute, hope stands quietly with us at funerals. Our tears are just as wet, but not because of despair. Rather, they are tears of heightened appreciation evoked by poignant separation. Those tears of separation change, ere long, becoming tears of glorious anticipation.

Real hope inspires quiet Christian service, not flashy public fanaticism. Finley Peter Dunne impishly observed, "A fanatic is a man who does what he thinks the Lord would do if He knew the facts" (quoted in Robert Byrne, comp., *The Third—and Possibly the Best—637 Best Things Anybody Ever Said* [1986], no. 549).

Indeed, when we are unduly impatient with an omniscient God's timing, we really are suggesting that we know what is best. Strange, isn't it—we who wear wristwatches seek to counsel Him who oversees cosmic clocks and calendars.

Because God wants us to come home after having become more like Him and His Son, part of this developmental process, of necessity, consists of showing unto us our weaknesses. Hence, if we have ultimate hope we will be submissive because, with His help, those weaknesses can even become strengths (see Ether 12:27).

It is not an easy thing, however, to be shown one's weaknesses, as these are

regularly demonstrated by life's circumstances. Nevertheless, this is part of coming unto Christ, and it is a vital, if painful, part of God's plan of happiness. Besides, as Elder Henry B. Eyring has wisely observed, "If you want praise more than instruction, you may get neither" ("To Choose and Keep a Mentor," *Addresses Delivered at the 1993 Annual University Conference, Brigham Young University* [1993], 42).

Responses of the truly hopeful

By pressing forward hopefully, we can, repeatedly and joyfully, stand on what was yesterday's distant horizon, thereby drawing even further hope from our very own experiences. Hence Paul described how "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Romans 5:3-4). Therefore, we rightly sing of God, "We've proved him in days that are past" (*Hymns*, no. 19).

Granted, those with true hope still see their personal circumstances shaken at times—like a kaleidoscope. Yet with the "eye of faith," even in their changed, proximate circumstances, they still see divine design (Alma 5:15).

The truly hopeful, for instance, work amid surrounding decay at having strong and happy families. Their response is the steady, Joshua response: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

We may not be able to fix the whole world, but we can strive to fix what may be amiss in our own families. Tolkien reminds us: "It is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule" (*The Return of the King* [New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1965], 155).

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in our own little family plots, we can bequeath to the succeeding generations "clean earth to till"! Thus not only does charity begin at home, but so does hope!

Whatever our particular furrow, we can, in Paul's words, "plow in hope," not looking back, and refusing to let yesterday hold tomorrow hostage (1 Corinthians 9:10).

Genuine, ultimate hope helps us to be more loving even while the love of many waxes cold (see Matthew 24:12). We are to be more holy, even as the world ripens in iniquity; to be more courteous and patient in a coarsening and curt world; and to be of strong hearts even when the hearts of others fail them (see Moroni 10:22).

Reach out with hope

Hope can be contagious, especially if we are to be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh . . . a reason of the hope that is in [us]" (1 Peter 3:15). Said President Brigham Young, if we do not impart knowledge to others and do good, we "will become contracted in [our] views and feelings" (*Deseret News*, 9 May 1855, 68).

If we look for specific things we can do, the Holy Ghost will direct us, showing unto us "all things" which we should do, for this is one of His inspiring roles

(2 Nephi 32:5). Our opportunities for helping others who have lost hope may be no further away than in our own extended families, a discouraged neighbor next door, or someone just around the corner. By helping a child learn to read, visiting a lonely patient in a nursing home, or simply running an errand for a busy but overwhelmed parent, so much can be imparted to others. Likewise, a simple gospel conversation can impart hope. Meanwhile, never mind that the world will become more bipolar as between those who are secular and permissive and those who hold to spiritual values.

Therefore, being blessed with hope ourselves, let us, as disciples, rather than being contracted, reach out, including to those who, for whatever reason, have "moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:23).

As in Charles Wesley's words in the hymn "Come, Let Us Anew," our lives and times do glide swiftly away, and our glide paths vary widely, as we all know. But all those who prevail "by the patience of hope and the labor of love" will hear the glorious words "Well and faithfully done; Enter into my joy and sit down on my throne" (*Hymns*, no. 217).

May this glorious moment one day be ours to claim, through the gospel of hope—in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder David E. Sorensen

Elder Maxwell, you are a great treasure to the Church and a blessing to the world at large. May God bless you and keep you.

Brothers and sisters, it is a daunting experience to stand before you. When I was growing up, my family lived on a cattle ranch in south-central Utah, and I spent a lot of time in a saddle rounding up and caring for the cattle. I must confess there is a part of me right now that

would be more comfortable dodging a charging bull than speaking here today. However, I know I am among friends, and I believe with all my heart in the importance of the work we are doing.

This Church will fill the world

In the early days of the Church when there were just a few members, the Prophet Joseph Smith said to a group of

men: "You know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it. . . . It is only a little handfull of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world" (quoted by Wilford Woodruff, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 57). We are beginning to see a partial fulfillment of that prophecy.

Hastening of temple building

As Church membership has grown around the world, so has the need for temples. President Hinckley said 13 years ago, "The sacred and important work that goes on in temples must be accelerated, and for this to happen, it is necessary that temples be taken closer to the people rather than having the people travel so far to temples" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 54).

Let me share with you some numbers that show how far the Church has come in the effort to bring temples closer to the people:

In the year 1900, there were just four operating temples—all of them in the state of Utah.

In the next 50 years, from 1900 to 1950, four more temples were dedicated, for a total of eight. So in the first century, the Church built about one temple per decade.

In the 30 years between 1951 and 1980, another 11 temples were built, bringing the total to 19. This was a faster rate, but even still there were many members for whom a visit to a temple meant years of saving money and a long journey.

In the 1980s, the Church began a more intensive temple building effort; by 1997, 32 more temples had been dedicated, or about two per year.

The Church has now entered the most committed era of temple building in its history. In 1998, two temples have been dedicated, with 15 more under construction and an additional 26 temple sites being prepared for groundbreaking. These 43 temples, plus those currently operating, bring the total to 94.

This is an extraordinary blessing for us as members of the Church. The Old Testament describes some of the joy that comes from people building these holy places:

"And they sang together . . . in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord. . . . And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid" (Ezra 3:11; see also verses 10, 12–13).

Watching these new temples being built, I believe that we too will have occasion to praise the Lord and weep for joy.

Temples help us come to Christ

As we see the increased commitment President Hinckley and others have made to building new temples, we might pause and ask ourselves why temples are of such importance. Indeed, nonmembers of the Church may not even understand the distinction between our regular meetinghouses, of which there are many thousands, and these very special buildings we call temples.

President Hinckley explained the distinction this way: "These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53). In other words, temples are of great value to us because they help us express our core theology, that of coming to Christ.

Temples remind us of Christ

Temples do this in at least two ways. First, they symbolically and literally remind us and teach us about Christ and His Father. We know that Christ spent key parts of His ministry at the temple in Jerusalem (see John 7-8; Matthew 21-23; Mark 11-12; Luke 20) and drew frequently on temple symbolism in His teachings, often comparing Himself to symbols used in the temple, such as light and water (see, for example, John 7:38; 8:12). Our temple worship today includes many symbolic references to Christ, from the spires on the outside that point our minds heavenward, to the white clothing we wear inside the temple to symbolize that, as the book of Revelation says, we have come "out of great tribulation, and have washed [our] robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).

Temples stand as a constant physical reminder of the grace and the goodness of the Father. This helps communities of Saints strengthen themselves. President George Q. Cannon said, "Every foundation stone that is laid for a temple, and every temple completed . . . lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the power of God and Godliness" (Logan Temple cornerstone ceremony, 19 Sept. 1877; quoted in Nolan Porter Olsen, *Logan Temple: The First 100 Years* [1978], 34).

Temples have always symbolized being in the presence of the Lord. "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them," said the Lord. "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee" (Exodus 25:8, 22). There is a closeness to God that comes through consistent worship in the house of the Lord. We can come to know Him and feel welcome, "at home," in His house.

With temples in so many places around the world, more of us will have them nearby to remind us of Christ and

His sacrifice for us. The simple presence of a temple should serve as a reminder of covenants we have made, the need for integrity, and the fact that God is never far away.

Ordinances are centered in Christ

Beyond their physical presence and outward symbolism, temples can inspire us to come unto Christ in a second way—that is, by the ordinances we perform in them. All temple ordinances are centered in Jesus Christ and His divine mission, and they are performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Doctrine and Covenants 84 says, "And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh" (D&C 84:21). Each ordinance is calculated to reveal to us something about Christ and our relationship to God.

While some ordinances in the temple seem easy to understand, such as eternal marriage, others require careful and lengthy spiritual preparation before their full impact becomes clear to us. In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul described the need to have the Spirit of God with us in order to understand the things of God: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12; see also verses 11, 14). As the Spirit of God helps us understand and know His plan for us, we will find not only greater knowledge but also a greater measure of peace and compassion.

Temple ordinances also provide an opportunity to strengthen our families, something so much needed today. Strength can be provided through performing ordinances vicariously for our ancestors, thus forming a "welding link" between parents and children (D&C 128:18). For example, in the temple we

can be baptized vicariously for our ancestors who may not have had a chance to hear the gospel during their mortal lives (see 1 Corinthians 15:29).

In Japan I witnessed a 21-year-old man accept the gospel. After baptism, he was the only member of the Church in his family. He completed the family history work for his deceased grandfather so he could perform ordinance work vicariously for him, literally doing something for his grandfather that his grandfather could no longer do for himself. As this young man came up out of the baptismal font, he had tears in his eyes. He said, "Now I know and feel, I have a witness, that I am not the only member of this Church in my family." These ordinances strengthened his relationship with his family and brought a new closeness into his life.

The gates of heaven are open

At the dedication of the Manti Temple, Elder Lorenzo Snow prayed, "May this holy Temple be to them as one of the gates of heaven, opening into the straight and narrow path that leads to endless

lives and eternal dominion" (quoted in N. B. Lundwall, comp., *Temples of the Most High* [1941], 111).

Brothers and sisters, the gates of heaven are open to us, and the Lord Jesus Christ is inviting us to come unto Him, I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "My Redeemer Lives."

President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Twelve and Elder David E. Sorensen of the Seventy have just spoken to us. The choir then sang "My Redeemer Lives."

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." Following the singing, Sister Susan L. Warner, second counselor in the Primary general presidency, will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

Sister Susan L. Warner

All things bear record of Him

Because our Heavenly Father wants us to know Him and to feel His love, He planned a world filled with magnificent creations that bear record of Him and His Son, Jesus Christ. Have you ever counted all the things that bear record of the Savior? There are sunsets and seashells, lilacs and lakes, insects and animals, miraculous mornings and star-strewn skies.

The Lord Himself told Adam, "All things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are tempo-

ral, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: *all things bear record of me*" (Moses 6:63; italics added).

Wherever we live in this world, we see the glorious rising sun, which bears record of the Light of Christ that fills our hearts and enlightens our minds. The mighty rivers and the meandering streams bear record that the Savior is the source of the living water that can quench our thirst for spiritual things.

The lilies of the field and even the smallest sparrow bear record of His generous and personal care.

We should bear record of Him

But of all God's remarkable creations, only we, His children, are created in His image and likeness. Only we, His children, have the capacity to develop our own spiritual convictions. And only we, His children, can give voice and expression to our witness of Him. We, His children, rejoice in our privilege and sacred obligation to bear record of Him and His gospel.

Not long ago our granddaughter Susie received a copy of the scriptures. She lives in an area where her classmates and teacher are not members of the Church, so she wanted to share with them the Articles of Faith that were recorded in her new scriptures. She decided it would be appropriate to do this at school during the time that was scheduled for sharing something newsworthy. When the time came, eight-year-old Susie stood before her classmates and began, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Articles of Faith 1:1). She continued, but when she got to the seventh article of faith, one classmate loudly complained, "This isn't a current event!" The teacher quickly responded, "Well, it's news to me!"

Each of us can share the good news of the gospel and give words to our convictions. If we are sensitive to the whisperings of the Spirit, we can find opportunities to humbly express our beliefs. Even a shy eight-year-old child felt the desire to share the articles of her faith.

The Spirit will bear witness as we testify

When we bear record of the good news of the gospel, our spoken testi-

mony invites the Holy Ghost to bear His witness of the truth of the message. It is not our words that carry the power but rather the Spirit of God that accompanies our words and confirms them in the hearts of the listeners. Nephi explained in the Book of Mormon, "For when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1).

When we declare where we stand and humbly give words to what we believe and feel, the Spirit also bears witness to our own souls that what we speak is true. Elder Boyd K. Packer said it simply, "A testimony is to be *found* in the bearing of it!" ("The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 54).

Bear record to children

In a society of unstable values and confusing voices, testimony can be the means by which parents give children an anchor for their faith. We do this in our families by bearing record of Jesus Christ and His gospel with our actions and our words. We do this when we pray together, study the scriptures, and hold regular family home evenings. Around the dinner table, parents and children can share what they are learning in Church meetings and activities and their everyday experiences applying gospel principles. Within this sacred family circle, children can learn to express feelings of love and gratitude for Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and for the blessings that come to us as we live together in families on this beautiful earth.

Children have their own spiritual sensitivities, and they make their own observations of Heavenly Father's creations. They are naturally interested in the worm that slithers in the rain puddle, enchanted by the sound of the ocean heard in a seashell, spellbound by the magical

pattern of clouds moving across the sky. It is a delightful privilege for any of us to take the hand of a child and accompany him as he discovers this beautiful world, but it is an even greater and more sacred privilege to help a child know the Creator of this world and to bear record of the love that He has for every one of His children.

When we share our feelings with our little ones and bear record of Him, we open the door for them to share their experiences and to give words to their own spiritual insights and feelings. And when we help children identify the divine source of those feelings, their understanding and love for the Savior will grow line upon line, precept upon precept.

Teach children the scriptures

As young children hear the words from the scriptures and later read the scriptures for themselves, they become familiar with a vocabulary that enables them to express their spiritual feelings. Even very young children, long before they are able to read, can feel the message of the scriptures and begin to understand God's love for them.

Bradley, though only two years old, loved to be a part of family scripture time. When it was his turn, he held his scriptures and carefully turned each page, saying, "Heavenly Father loves me; Heavenly Father loves me." Experiencing the unfailing love of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is the foundation of testimony.

A grandfather testifies

I know a grandfather who, at a recent family gathering in the mountains, took his grandchildren for a walk. As they came to a clearing in the trees, he invited the young children to sit down on a log while he told them about a 14-year-old

boy named Joseph Smith, who wanted to ask Heavenly Father some questions that were troubling him. The grandfather explained that the boy Joseph went to a grove of trees near his home to pray, having faith that God would answer him. The grandchildren quietly listened, but four-year-old Johnny, who often has difficulty sitting still, could not contain himself. He blurted out, "I've heard that story before."

The grandfather told of Joseph's sincere prayer and how it was answered with a glorious visitation from Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. As he finished, little Johnny grabbed his grandfather's hand and said, "That was a good testimony, Grandpa." He loved hearing the story again.

Though the grandfather had repeated this sacred account many times throughout his life, he said, "Never did the Spirit of the Lord bear stronger witness than when I bore my testimony of Joseph Smith to my own grandchildren." The grandfather and the children had felt the witness of the Holy Ghost. Like Johnny, our children may have heard the scripture stories before, but have they heard us bear our personal testimony of the truthfulness of the accounts and the principles they teach?

Who can measure the influence of simple, sacred words of testimony? Who can calculate the impact of the Spirit that confirms those words? The seeds of testimony that are planted in the hearts of children when they are young are nourished throughout their lives by hearing the testimonies of those who love them enough to bear witness of the truth.

Parents have been given a sacred responsibility. But parents need help. Uncles, aunts, friends, leaders, and teachers add their witness when they share their testimonies with children and youth. Several times the scriptures tell us that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (D&C 6:28).

Leave a legacy of testimony

It is easy for those of us whose children are grown to feel discouraged and wish we had done more to bear record when our children were young. But it is never too late. My father, who passed away last year, was a living testimony to me throughout his life. But near the end of his life he also wrote his personal history in order to bear record not only to his children and grandchildren but to all of his posterity for generations to come. Nothing he could have left his family is more precious than the record of his testimony and love.

I remember how my father taught me of his testimony with the fingers of his hand:

1. God is our loving Father in Heaven.

2. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer.

3. Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and he was the instrument through which the gospel of Jesus Christ was

restored to the earth and the Book of Mormon was translated.

4. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's Church on the earth today.

5. This Church is led by a living prophet who receives revelation.

My brothers and sisters, this is *my* testimony. I humbly bear record to you that these things are true. With all of God's creations, may each of us bear record of Him. In His sacred name, Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "A Child's Prayer."

President Hinckley

Sister Susan L. Warner of the Primary general presidency has spoken to us, and the choir then sang "A Child's Prayer."

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Reasons to be optimistic

I speak particularly to the youth, although I hope all may benefit from this message. Some youth are pessimistic about the future. They justify that erroneous position by what they see around them and what is occurring in the world. They perceive their future threatened by worsening trends in divorce rates, escalating crime, drugs, terrorist acts, and other atrocities that cripple or destroy life. Throughout your life you have seen the terrible consequences of incorrect choices individuals make that damage their lives and often hurt others. These events are usually called mistakes, lack of judgment, or human weakness. They

are all accompanied by abundant self-justification. When viewed honestly, they are simply violations of the commandments of God that bring the tragic consequences He has warned will follow serious transgression.

Personally, I am enthusiastic about the future. You can be too. You are living in the most exciting period of time in history. Many reasons could be cited for that optimism. Yet your greatest source of hope and assurance is that you have the fulness of the teachings of the Master. They will show you how to live a good life. You can receive ordinances and covenants that, when righteously lived, ensure true happiness and significant attainment.

Life is beautiful

Life is beautiful when you make the effort to find beauty in it. In some of the most materially deprived parts of the world, I have seen the sunrise in all of its splendor and heard birds joyously welcoming a new day. I have seen beauty reflected in a small pot of flowers by a humble shelter or in the shy, beaming grin of a child at play, intent on discovering the world around him.

You can become depressed if all of your interests are focused on the media with its explicit details of the most worrisome world events. With care you can find much to reverently appreciate in this world Father in Heaven has given you. Begin by remembering that you are a son or daughter of God with divine potential. He will help you have a joyful, fulfilling life.

Making decisions

Since making the correct decisions is essential to attain your goals in life, consider how they should be made. There are two patterns for making decisions: the first I will call *decisions based upon circumstance*; the second, *decisions based upon eternal truth*. Let us examine each pattern.

The guiding principle in the pattern of *decisions based upon circumstance* is to make choices according to the outcome desired rather than upon what is right or wrong. There is no use of an underlying set of standards to consistently guide those decisions. Each choice is made upon what appears to give the most desired result now. One who follows this path is left to his own strength and capacity and the support of others who can be influenced to act in his favor. Satan encourages choices to be made in this manner. It gives him the greatest opportunity to tempt an individual to make decisions that will be harmful even

though they appear most appealing when made.

In time, one who makes decisions based upon circumstance is virtually assured to commit serious transgressions. There is no iron rod of truth to keep that person in the right way. He will continually face many subtle temptations to make deviations from the commandments. Those choices are justified by arguing that they are not that bad, that they are more socially acceptable and provide a broader base of friends. A clever individual without foundation principles can at times acquire, temporarily, impressive accomplishments. Yet that attainment is like a sand castle. When the test of character comes, it crumbles, often taking others with it.

The second pattern, making *decisions based upon eternal truth*, is the pattern of the Lord. It will always lead you to make decisions guided by His plan of happiness. Such decisions are centered in doing what is right, not in first deciding the result desired. Choosing to do what the Lord has defined as right will, in the long run, always lead to the best outcomes. However, that pattern may require you to set aside something you very much desire now for a greater future good.

The power of righteousness

Continually bless your life with the power of righteousness. It builds confidence. It engenders trust. It yields enduring, worthy achievement. To be righteous is to seek intently to be obedient to the commandments of God. It is to be clean in thought and act. It is to be honest and just. Righteousness is shown more in acts than in words. A righteous life requires discipline. Discipline is that characteristic which will give you the strength to avoid giving up what you want most in life for something you think you want now. It is a friend, not a harsh taskmaster

that makes life miserable. Discipline is easier to acquire when it is rooted in faith in Jesus Christ, when it is nourished by an understanding of His teachings and plan of happiness.

I commend each one of you select young men and women who live a righteous life, who consistently make decisions based upon eternal truths and not upon that which seems to be most appealing at the moment. In doing right you enlist the help of God to sustain you to be victorious. You need not fear the future. For you, it will be glorious as you continue to obey the laws of God. Not only will your worthiness bless you but also your eternal companion and children when those opportunities come. Yours is an uplifting example that others need in this world where discouragement fills the lives of so many with sadness and disappointment because of the incorrect choices they make.

By making choices consistent with eternal truth, you will develop righteous character and increasing strength to resist temptation. You are assured of the help of God in fulfilling your worthy decisions. You qualify to be led by the Spirit, to choose the correct path. It will warn you of temptations you might not otherwise recognize. The correct decisions you now make will help you prepare to be sealed in the temple to a worthy companion and to form and nurture your own eternal family. All who qualify for those blessings will, in the Lord's due time, have them here or in the next life.

Resist temptations to be immoral

It is in this area that Satan will try hardest to tempt you to make the wrong decisions. Forming your own family is at the very heart of the reason you are here on earth. Make sure that as you are seeking an eternal companion, you do nothing which will offend the Spirit. Satan

tempts a weaker individual to rationalize that when two are in love and agree that sexual intimacies can be performed, such things are acceptable. They positively are not. The boundaries of appropriate behavior are defined by God.

Strongly tied to the sacred, private parts of the body are powerful emotions intended to be used within the covenant of marriage between a man and woman in ways that are appropriate and acceptable to them both. They are an important part of the love and trust that bond a husband and wife together and prepare them for the responsibilities of a family. They bring the blessing of children. These emotions are not to be stimulated or used for personal gratification outside of the covenant of marriage. Do not touch the private, sacred parts of another person's body to stimulate those emotions. Do not allow anyone to do that with you, with or without clothing. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body. These things are wrong. Do not do them. Such practices would undermine your ability to be inspired by the Holy Ghost in the vitally important decisions you must make for your future. They lead to binding addictions and grievous transgressions.

Satan knows that those powerful emotions can be aroused by things you could see, hear, or touch. When stirred, those emotions can be used to lead one to destructive experimentation, then to serious transgressions. He uses pornography through videotapes, movies, magazines, computer images, or contaminated music for this purpose. Close your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to it. Unchecked, it would surely grow unrelentingly from initial curiosity step-by-step to become a raging monster. That demon would wreck wholesome desires, worthy companionship, and noble thoughts and acts until it could destroy you. Don't lift the cover of salacious material in any form, and you will not be captured by it. If you

have become entangled in that devastating web, stop immediately and seek help. Ask the Lord to guide you to that help and give you the strength to overcome that addictive habit.

Repent of serious transgressions

For a moment I speak to anyone who has succumbed to serious temptation. Please stop now. You can do it with the help from an understanding parent, bishop, or stake president. Serious transgression such as immorality requires the help of one who holds keys of authority, such as a bishop or stake president, to quietly work out the repentance process to make sure that it is complete and appropriately done. Do not make the mistake to believe that because you have confessed a serious transgression, you have repented of it. That is an essential step, but it is not all that is required. Nor assume that because someone did not ask you all the important details of a transgression, you need not mention them. You personally must make sure that the bishop or stake president understands those details so that he can help you properly through the process of repentance for full forgiveness. The Savior promised:

“Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:42–43).

Steadfastly choose to do right

Now^o to each of you: at times you may feel lonely and misunderstood—I have—because you don’t fit in with the

crowd. Be grateful that your righteous life molds you so that you don’t fit where you don’t belong. This is a temporary period of personal testing and growth. It will be replaced in time with true friends and greater happiness.

The world needs light. Be that light. Your righteousness gives others a confirmation of the goodness of life anchored in eternal truth. If, as a young man, you haven’t yet been a missionary, prepare to be one. You will bless many other lives and crown your own with great, enduring rewards. If you are a young woman, follow the inspired counsel of President Hinckley in the October 1997 conference concerning sister missionaries (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 72–73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 52).

I bear witness that the Savior lives. He loves you. He will guide you through the Holy Ghost, as you steadfastly choose to do what is right, to a future glorious beyond your dreams. I know He will. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We express our appreciation to this wonderful Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “O Thou Kind and Gracious Father.” After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Ned B. Roueché of the Seventy.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at two o’clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Questions that people ask about us

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is a tremendous honor to speak on this occasion.

We are interviewed frequently by the media these days. As many of you know, I recently appeared on the *Larry King Live* television program. I consented to do so because I felt that while there were possible hazards in it, there also was a great opportunity to speak to the world on issues before us.

In the course of the show Mr. King asked me point-blank, "What is your role? You're the leader of a major religion. What's your role?"

I replied: "My role is to declare doctrine. My role is to stand as an example before the people. My role is to be a voice in defense of the truth. My role is to stand as a conservator of those values which are important in our civilization and our society. My role is to lead."

This reply was extemporaneous. I never expected that question. But in the spirit of that response I have thought this morning that I would like to raise a half-dozen or so questions we are invariably asked by those of the media and other churches. For this occasion I must be necessarily brief. Every one of these issues is worthy of a full discourse.

I have chosen these questions at random, not putting them in any special order except for the first. I do not wish to argue with anyone. I respect the religion of every man and woman, and honor them in their desire to live it. I simply wish to set forth, as simply as I know how, my response to what people are asking about us.

The Mormon doctrine of Deity

Question 1: What is the Mormon doctrine of Deity, of God?

Since the time of the First Vision, people have raised this question, and they continue to raise it and will do so for so long as they believe in the God of their tradition, while we bear testimony of the God of modern revelation.

The Prophet Joseph declared, "It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 345).

"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Articles of Faith 1:1). This first article of faith epitomizes our doctrine. We do not accept the Athanasian Creed. We do not accept the Nicene Creed or any other creed based on tradition and the conclusions of men.

We do accept, as the basis of our doctrine, the statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith that when he prayed for wisdom in the woods, "the light rested upon me [and] I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

Two beings of substance were before him. He saw them. They were in form like men, only much more glorious in their appearance. He spoke to them. They spoke to him. They were not amorphous spirits. Each was a distinct personality. They were beings of flesh and bone whose nature was reaffirmed in later revelations which came to the Prophet.

Our entire case as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rests on the validity of this glorious First Vision. It was the parting of the curtain to open this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. Nothing on which

we base our doctrine, nothing we teach, nothing we live by is of greater importance than this initial declaration. I submit that if Joseph Smith talked with God the Father and His Beloved Son, then all else of which he spoke is true. This is the hinge on which turns the gate that leads to the path of salvation and eternal life.

Are we Christians? Of course we are Christians. We believe in Christ. We worship Christ. We take upon ourselves in solemn covenant His holy name. The Church to which we belong carries His name. He is our Lord, our Savior, our Redeemer through whom came the great Atonement with salvation and eternal life.

Attitude toward homosexuality

Question 2: What is your Church's attitude toward homosexuality?

In the first place, we believe that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God. We believe that marriage may be eternal through exercise of the power of the everlasting priesthood in the house of the Lord.

People inquire about our position on those who consider themselves so-called gays and lesbians. My response is that we love them as sons and daughters of God. They may have certain inclinations which are powerful and which may be difficult to control. Most people have inclinations of one kind or another at various times. If they do not act upon these inclinations, then they can go forward as do all other members of the Church. If they violate the law of chastity and the moral standards of the Church, then they are subject to the discipline of the Church, just as others are.

We want to help these people, to strengthen them, to assist them with their problems and to help them with their difficulties. But we cannot stand idle if they indulge in immoral activity, if they try to uphold and defend and live in a so-called

same-sex marriage situation. To permit such would be to make light of the very serious and sacred foundation of God-sanctioned marriage and its very purpose, the rearing of families.

Position on abortion

Question 3: What is your position on abortion?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were more than 1,200,000 abortions performed in 1995 in the United States alone. What has happened to our regard for human life? How can women, and men, deny the great and precious gift of life, which is divine in its origin and nature?

How wonderful a thing is a child. How beautiful is a newborn babe. There is no greater miracle than the creation of human life.

Abortion is an ugly thing, a debasing thing, a thing which inevitably brings remorse and sorrow and regret.

While we denounce it, we make allowance in such circumstances as when pregnancy is the result of incest or rape, when the life or health of the mother is judged by competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy, or when the fetus is known by competent medical authority to have serious defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.

But such instances are rare, and there is only a negligible probability of their occurring. In these circumstances, those who face the question are asked to consult with their local ecclesiastical leaders and to pray in great earnestness, receiving a confirmation through prayer before proceeding.

There is a far better way.

If there is no prospect of marriage to the man involved, leaving the mother alone, there remains the very welcome option of placing the child for adoption by parents who will love it and care for

it. There are many such couples in good homes who long for a child and cannot have one.

Position on polygamy

Question 4: What is the Church's position on polygamy?

We are faced these days with many newspaper articles on this subject. This has arisen out of a case of alleged child abuse on the part of some of those practicing plural marriage.

I wish to state categorically that this Church has nothing whatever to do with those practicing polygamy. They are not members of this Church. Most of them have never been members. They are in violation of the civil law. They know they are in violation of the law. They are subject to its penalties. The Church, of course, has no jurisdiction whatever in this matter.

If any of our members are found to be practicing plural marriage, they are excommunicated, the most serious penalty the Church can impose. Not only are those so involved in direct violation of the civil law, they are in violation of the law of this Church. An article of our faith is binding upon us. It states, "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law" (Articles of Faith 1:12). One cannot obey the law and disobey the law at the same time.

There is no such thing as a "Mormon fundamentalist." It is a contradiction to use the two words together.

More than a century ago God clearly revealed unto His prophet Wilford Woodruff that the practice of plural marriage should be discontinued, which means that it is now against the law of God. Even in countries where civil or religious law allows polygamy, the Church teaches that marriage must be monogamous and does not accept into its membership those practicing plural marriage.

Reasons for the Church's growth

Question 5: To what do you attribute the growth of the Church?

We are growing. We are growing in a wonderful way. Between natural growth and converts baptized, we are adding about 400,000 per year. On a base of 10 million, that is about 4 percent, which is exceptionally good for a church.

People are looking for a solid anchor in a world of shifting values. They want something they can hold to as the world about them increasingly appears to be in disarray.

They are welcomed as new converts and are made to feel at home. They feel the warmth of the fellowship of the Saints.

They are put to work. They are given responsibility. They are made to feel a part of the great onward movement of this, the work of God.

And, of course, we have missionaries to assist them in their search for truth.

They soon discover that much is expected of them as Latter-day Saints. They do not resent it. They measure up, and they like it. They expect their religion to be demanding, to require reformation in their lives. They meet the requirements. They bear testimony of the great good that has come to them. They are enthusiastic and faithful.

Position on spouse and child abuse

Question 6: What about spouse and child abuse?

We condemn most strongly abusive behavior in any form. We denounce the physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse of one's spouse or children. Our proclamation on the family declares: "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for

their physical and spiritual needs. . . . Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

We are doing all we know how to do to stamp out this terrible evil. When there is recognition of equality between the husband and the wife, when there is acknowledgment that each child born into the world is a child of God, then there will follow a greater sense of responsibility to nurture, to help, to love with an enduring love those for whom we are responsible.

No man who abuses his wife or children is worthy to hold the priesthood of God. No man who abuses his wife or children is worthy to be a member in good standing in this Church. The abuse of one's spouse and children is a most serious offense before God, and any who indulge in it may expect to be disciplined by the Church.

Financing the Church's operations

Question 7: How does the Church finance its operations?

Brother Faust has spoken on that very ably this morning. Those in the outside world wonder how we are able to do so much. They speak and write of the Church as having great wealth and tremendous assets.

We do have assets. We have houses of worship that dot the earth. We are building a large number of new ones every year. We carry on a great program of higher education, of seminaries and institutes. We have an unequaled family history facility. We foster a tremendous missionary organization that entails the maintenance of mission homes and other facilities in addition to the cost of maintaining the missionaries, which is borne by the missionaries themselves and their families. We carry on other programs, all of which require money.

But all of these and more are money consuming and not money creating. It costs a great deal to operate this Church. Its worldwide operations are financed through the consecrated tithes of faithful members. What a wonderful and glorious principle is the law of tithing. It is so simple to understand and follow. It is the Lord's law of finance.

I thank the Lord from the bottom of my heart for the faith of those who pay their honest tithes. Are they the poorer for it? We testify that somehow under the divine providence of the Lord, He makes it up to us and does so generously. It is not a tax. It is a voluntary offering given in confidentiality. It is a principle that carries with it a remarkable promise. God has stated that He will “open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). That is *His* promise. He has the capacity to fulfill that promise. And it is my testimony that He does so.

This is God's work

Well, that is all I have time for now. There could be many other items. These are only a sample of questions that those of a curious world ask of us.

We have to know this, you and I who subscribe to the doctrines of this Church, that this is God's work, directed by the Lord Jesus Christ, that it operates according to Their plan and Their pattern, and that it carries with it Their blessings.

Why are we such a happy people? It is because of our faith, the quiet assurance that abides in our hearts that our Father in Heaven, overseeing all, will look after His sons and daughters who walk before Him with love and appreciation and obedience. We will ever be a happy people if we will so conduct our lives. Sin never was happiness. Transgression never was happiness. Falsehood in word or behavior never was happiness.

Happiness lies in obedience to the teachings and commandments of God our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As I have said before from this pulpit, my brothers and sisters, we love you. We love you for your faith and goodness. We love you for your willingness to do whatever you are asked to do. We love you for your obedience to the will of the Lord.

Knowing this work to be true, we go forward, each of us. May we make a renewed effort to put on the whole armor of God and look to Him is my humble prayer in the name of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father."

Elder Ned B. Roueché offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 4, 1998. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked me, Brother Monson, to conduct this session.

We welcome our state and national officials and others who are our guests. You honor us by your presence. We also welcome all of the General Authorities of the Church to this session, including Andrew W. Peterson, who is recovering nicely after a very, very long time in rehabilitation.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Wm. Rolfe Kerr of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Wm. Rolfe Kerr offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Called to Serve." Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Called to Serve."

Elder L. Tom Perry

Counseling grandchildren at Bear Lake

Each year we have a family vacation at Bear Lake. It is an exciting week of getting acquainted with grandchildren. For the past few years I have listened to their opportunities and challenges. They have let me know of the increased pressures of being in the world but not of the world. Movies, television, Internet, designer clothes, extreme fashions, Sabbath-breaking activities, et cetera, escalate the magnitude of their temptations. Moreover, peer pressures force difficult decisions about whether to follow the crowd or stand up for the principles taught by converted and committed parents and the Church.

This year I decided to be a little more aggressive in counseling my grandchildren. I wanted to provide them with a framework to resist temptations and thrive in today's complex world. Our vacation at the lake extends for four days, so I decided to purchase a loose-leaf binder for each of them and include a topic for discussion for each day. Each insert included some scripture references and quotes that were intended to start fruitful discussions between the generations.

On the first day there was not much interest in discussions, but the momentum seemed to increase each day. The experiment had enough success that I would like to play grandfather to each of you young people listening today to see if we can stimulate some thoughtful discussions in your homes with your parents.

Appreciate the land where you live

Topic number 1: Appreciation for the land in which we live. During one of the early conferences of the Church, held on January 2 of 1831, the Lord, through revelation, gave the Prophet Joseph Smith

a vision of how He valued the land that He had created for His children. In Doctrine and Covenants 38:17–20 we read:

“And I have made the earth rich, and behold it is my footstool, wherefore, again I will stand upon it.

“And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh;

“And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.

“And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away.”

The Lord has blessed us with lands of promise to enjoy during our mortal probation. The nations of the earth, if they would continue to follow the ways of the Lord, could be a blessing to His children here. You special young sons and daughters, He expects you to be especially mindful of the bounteous blessings you have received from Him.

With these blessings, of course, come responsibilities. We are expected to be subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, and obey, honor, and sustain the law (see Articles of Faith 1:12). To obey, honor, and sustain, we must know the law and live it. We must be good citizens in our church, schools, and communities. We must also be prepared to make our contribution by giving service to others.

The best way I know of to make a contribution to the land we live in is to be prepared for the future. The Lord has promised us that if we are prepared, we should have no fear (see D&C 38:30). If we make an effort to obtain the best education available to us, we are in a

better position to be self-sufficient and not to become a burden on the society in which we live.

I read in a newspaper a few weeks ago of the earning potential with increased levels of education. The difference between no high school degree and a high school graduate is an average income increase of 38 percent. From a high school diploma to some college, the increase is 20 percent, and from a high school diploma to a university degree, the increase is 56 percent. Yes, education does pay. It is never too early to determine the direction you want to prepare yourself for. Don't wait until you register for college to decide what you want to study. It is such a waste of time and money to attempt to pursue an education without having a definite goal.

Self-esteem

Topic number 2: Self-esteem. In the eighth Psalm of David, he gave us a vision of who we are and the eternal opportunities which are ours. He said:

"O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. . . .

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: . . .

"O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:1, 3-6, 9).

Have you ever thought of yourself as a junior angel crowned with glory and honor? Every one of our Father in Heaven's children is great in His sight.

If the Lord sees greatness in you, how then should you see yourself? We have all been blessed with many talents and abilities. Some have been blessed with the talent to sing, some to paint, some to speak, some to dance, some to create beautiful things with their hands, and others to render compassionate service. Some may possess many, others only a few. It matters not the size or the quantity but the effort we put forth to develop the talents and abilities we have received. You are not competing with anyone else. You are only competing with yourself to do the best with whatever you have received. Each talent that is developed will be greatly needed and will give you tremendous fulfillment and satisfaction during your life.

The almost universal gift everyone can develop is the creation of a pleasant disposition, an even temperament. It will open more doors for you and give you more opportunities than any other characteristic I can think of.

Also, remember the promise of the Lord about caring for our physical bodies. If we keep them clean, nourish them properly, and get adequate rest, we will "find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures." We "shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint" (D&C 89:19-20).

Above all, we must live with hope. In the book of Ether in the Book of Mormon, Moroni reminds us: "And I also remember that thou hast said that thou hast prepared a house for man, yea, even among the mansions of thy Father, in which man might have a more excellent hope; wherefore man must hope, or he cannot receive an inheritance in the place which thou hast prepared" (Ether 12:32).

Live with hope that you can achieve and accomplish and develop the great gifts our Father in Heaven has given to you and one day "receive an inheritance" among the mansions of the Father.

Love of family

Topic number 3: Love of family. The words that the Prophet Joseph Smith remembered from that tremendous visit of the angel Moroni to him on the night of September 21, 1823, included a special promise made to families:

"Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

"And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.

"If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming" (D&C 2:1-3).

This great vision to the Prophet Joseph Smith reestablished the doctrine of eternal family units. The eternal family is central to the gospel of our Savior. There would be no reason for Him to return to earth to rule and reign over His kingdom unless the eternal family unit had been established for our Father in Heaven's children. When we understand the eternal role of the family, the nourishing and developing of strong family ties take on even greater significance.

I have watched with great interest the addition of a new granddaughter in our family. There was an immediate bonding with her brother and sister. Her siblings held her with such tender and loving care.

Learning to appreciate what it means to belong to an eternal family is of great importance to us. Remember, you are part of that eternal unit that requires your best effort. Be certain you bring warmth, kindness, understanding, consideration, and a strong love to your eternal family.

Love of God and obedience to His law

The final topic I included in the binder was under the heading of "Love of God." From the revelations received

by the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1831, we read, "Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him" (D&C 59:5).

The Lord has used the heart as a way of describing the innermost nature of His children. The scriptures are filled with references to the heart, such as the pure in heart, an abundant heart, a cheerful heart, and so forth. In 1 Samuel we read, "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

In our hearts do we feel a sense of gratitude and devotion to the Father? Are we of one heart with Him to whom we owe everything? The test of our devotion to the Lord seems to be the way we serve Him.

We have implanted in our souls a desire to be free. The Lord understood this when He granted us our mortal probation. With that freedom, however, comes accountability. We are instructed not to idle away our time or bury our talents and not use them. We are expected to make our lives better through our own initiatives and efforts. We must find our own relationship with our Eternal Father. We must gain our own testimony. We must decide whether to conform our lives to the Lord's standards. We must choose as Joshua did when he said:

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

I read an article the other day which stated that if an employer did not hire young, bright 16-year-olds today, with their advanced understanding and feel for technology, the business would be out

of date in the next decade. What a marvelous age you live in. With all of your increased opportunities, however, comes the challenge of staying close to the Lord and being obedient to His law. This is the way you remain strong and able to withstand the multitude of worldly pressures.

Personal testimony

My final entry in the binder I presented to my grandchildren was my personal testimony as to the truthfulness of the gospel of our Lord and Savior. I leave my testimony with each of you great young people that I know that God lives and that He directs His work among His children here on earth.

I know that He sent His Son to the world to be an atoning sacrifice for all mankind, and those who embrace His gospel and follow Him shall enjoy eternal life, the greatest gift God has given to His children.

I know that He directed the restoration of the gospel again here upon the earth through the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I know that the only lasting joy and happiness you will ever find during your mortal experience will come by following the Savior, obeying His law, and keeping His commandments. This is my witness to you, you great young people, in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Ronald T. Halverson, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy in the April conference.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Personal purity

As modern winds of immorality swirl luridly around them, I am concerned for any of our youth or young adults who may be confused about principles of personal purity, about obligations of total chastity before marriage and complete fidelity after it. Against what is happening in the world they see and hear, and hoping to fortify parents as they teach their children a higher standard, I wish to speak today about moral cleanliness. Because this subject is as sacred as any I know, I earnestly pray for the Holy Spirit to guide me in remarks that are more candid than I would wish to make. Today I know how Jacob in the Book of Mormon felt when he said on the same topic, "It grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech."¹

In approaching this subject, I do not document a host of social ills for which the statistics are as grim as the examples are offensive. Nor will I present here a checklist of do's and don'ts about dating and boy-girl relationships. What I wish to do is more personal—I wish to try to answer questions some of you may have been asking: *Why* should we be morally clean? *Why* is it such an important issue to God? Does the Church *have* to be so strict about it when others don't seem to be? How could anything society exploits and glamorizes so openly be very sacred or serious?

A river of fire

May I begin with a lesson from civilization's long, instructive story. Will and Ariel Durant have written: "No man [or woman], however brilliant or well-in-

formed, can . . . safely . . . dismiss . . . the wisdom of [lessons learned] in the laboratory of history. A youth boiling with hormones will wonder why he should not give full freedom to his sexual desires; [but] if he is unchecked by custom, morals, or laws, he may ruin his life before he . . . understand[s] that sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume in chaos both the individual and the group."²

A more important scriptural observation is offered by the writer of Proverbs: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? . . . Whoso committeth adultery . . . destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away."³

Why is sexual purity so important?

Why is this matter of sexual relationships so severe that fire is almost always the metaphor, with passion pictured vividly in flames? What is there in the potentially hurtful heat of this that leaves one's soul—or the whole world, for that matter—destroyed if that flame is left unchecked and those passions unrestrained? What is there in all of this that prompts Alma to warn his son Corianton that sexual transgression is "an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?"⁴

By assigning such seriousness to a physical appetite so universally bestowed, what is God trying to tell us about its place in His plan for all men and women? I submit to you He is doing precisely that—commenting about the very plan of life itself. Clearly among His greatest concerns regarding mortality are how one gets into this world and how one gets out of it. He has set very strict limits in these matters.

Fortunately, in the case of how life is terminated, most seem to be quite responsible. But in the significance of *giving* life, we sometimes find near-criminal irresponsibility. May I offer three reasons why this is an issue of such magnitude and consequence in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of the human soul

First is the revealed, restored doctrine of the human soul.

One of the "plain and precious" truths restored in this dispensation is that "the spirit and the body are the soul of man"⁵ and that when the spirit and body are separated, men and women "cannot receive a fulness of joy."⁶ That is the reason why obtaining a body is so fundamentally important in the first place, why sin of any kind is such a serious matter (namely because it is sin that ultimately brings both physical and spiritual death), and why the resurrection of the body is so central to the great triumph of Christ's Atonement.

The body is an essential part of the soul. This distinctive and very important Latter-day Saint doctrine underscores why sexual sin is so serious. We declare that one who uses the God-given body of another without divine sanction abuses the very soul of that individual, abuses the central purpose and processes of life—"the very key"⁷ to life, as President Boyd K. Packer once called it. In exploiting the body of another—which means exploiting his or her soul—one desecrates the Atonement of Christ, which saved that soul and which makes possible the gift of eternal life. And when one mocks the Son of Righteousness, one steps into a realm of heat hotter and holier than the noonday sun. You cannot do so and not be burned.

Please, never say: "Who does it hurt? Why not a little freedom? I can transgress now and repent later." Please don't be so foolish and so cruel. You cannot

with impunity "crucify Christ afresh."⁸ "Flee fornication,"⁹ Paul cries, and flee "*anything like unto it*,"¹⁰ the Doctrine and Covenants adds. Why? Well, for one reason, because of the incalculable suffering in both body and spirit endured by the Savior of the world so that we *could* flee.¹¹ We owe Him something for that. Indeed, we owe Him everything for that. "Ye are not your own," Paul says. "Ye [have been] bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."¹² In sexual transgression the soul is at stake—the body and the spirit.

The ultimate symbol of total union

Secondly, may I stress that human intimacy is reserved for a married couple because it is the ultimate symbol of total union, a totality and a union ordained and defined by God. From the Garden of Eden onward, marriage was intended to mean the complete merger of a man and a woman—their hearts, hopes, lives, love, family, future, everything. Adam said of Eve that she was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and that they were to be "one flesh" in their life together.¹³ This is a union of such completeness that we use the word *seal* to convey its eternal promise. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we perhaps could render such a sacred bond as being "welded"¹⁴ one to another.

But such a total union, such an unyielding commitment between a man and a woman, can only come with the proximity and permanence afforded in a marriage covenant, with solemn promises and the pledge of all they possess—their very hearts and minds, all their days and all their dreams.

Can you see the moral schizophrenia that comes from *pretending* you are one, pretending you have made solemn promises before God, sharing the physical symbols and the physical intimacy of your counterfeit union but then fleeing,

retreating, severing all such other aspects of what was meant to be a total obligation?

In matters of human intimacy, you must wait! You must wait until you can give everything, and you cannot give everything until you are legally and lawfully married. To give illicitly that which is not yours to give (remember, "you are not your own") and to give only part of that which cannot be followed with the gift of your whole self is emotional Russian roulette. If you persist in pursuing physical satisfaction without the sanction of heaven, you run the terrible risk of such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine *both* your longing for physical intimacy and your ability to give wholehearted devotion to a later, truer love. You may come to that truer moment of ordained love, of real union, only to discover to your horror that what you should have saved you have spent, and that only God's grace can recover the piecemeal dissipation of the virtue you so casually gave away. On your wedding day the very best gift you can give your eternal companion is your very best self—clean and pure and worthy of such purity in return.

A symbol of the relationship with God

Thirdly, may I say that physical intimacy is not only a symbolic union between a husband and a wife—the very uniting of their souls—but it is also symbolic of a shared relationship between them and their Father in Heaven. He is immortal and perfect. We are mortal and imperfect. Nevertheless we seek ways even in mortality whereby we can unite with Him spiritually. In so doing we gain some access to both the grace and the majesty of His power. Those special moments include kneeling at a marriage altar in the house of the Lord, blessing a newborn baby, baptizing and confirming a new member of the Church, partaking

of the emblems of the Lord's Supper, and so forth.

These are moments when we quite literally unite our will with God's will, our spirit with His spirit, where communion through the veil becomes very real. At such moments we not only acknowledge His divinity but we quite literally take something of that divinity to ourselves. One aspect of that divinity given to virtually all men and women is the use of His power to create a human body, that wonder of all wonders, a genetically and spiritually unique being never before seen in the history of the world and never to be duplicated again in all the ages of eternity. A child, your child—with eyes and ears and fingers and toes and a future of unspeakable grandeur.

Probably only a parent who has held that newborn infant in his or her arms understands the wonder of which I speak. Suffice it to say that of all the titles God has chosen for Himself, *Father* is the one He favors most, and *creation* is His watchword—especially human creation, creation in His image. You and I have been given something of that godliness, *but under the most serious and sacred of restrictions. The only control placed on us is self-control*—self-control born of respect for the divine sacramental power this gift represents.

Control sacred procreative powers

My beloved friends, especially my young friends, can you see why personal purity is such a serious matter? Can you understand why the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles would issue a proclamation declaring that “the means by which mortal life is created [is] divinely appointed” and that “the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife”?¹⁵

Don't be deceived and don't be destroyed. Unless such powers are con-

trolled and commandments kept, your future may be burned; your world could go up in flames. Penalty may not come on the precise day of transgression, but it comes surely and certainly enough. And unless there is true repentance and obedience to a merciful God, then someday, somewhere, the morally cavalier and unclean will pray like the rich man who wished Lazarus to “dip . . . his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”¹⁶

The peace and renewal of repentance

I have declared here the solemn word of revelation that the spirit and the body constitute the soul of man, and that through the Atonement of Christ the body shall rise from the grave to unite with the spirit in an eternal existence. That body is therefore something to be kept pure and holy. Do not be afraid of soiling its hands in honest labor. Do not be afraid of scars that may come in defending the truth or fighting for the right, but beware scars that spiritually disfigure, that come to you in activities you should not have undertaken, that befall you in places where you should not have gone. Beware the wounds of any battle in which you have been fighting on the wrong side.¹⁷

If some few of you are carrying such wounds—and I know that you are—to you is extended the peace and renewal of repentance available through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. In such serious matters the path of repentance is not easily begun or painlessly traveled. But the Savior of the world will walk that essential journey with you. He will strengthen you when you waver. He will be your light when it seems most dark. He will take your hand and be your hope when hope seems all you have left. His compassion and mercy, with all their cleansing and healing power, are freely given to all who truly wish complete for-

givenness and will take the steps that lead to it.

Glorify God in body and spirit

I bear witness of the great plan of life, of the powers of godliness, of mercy and forgiveness and the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ—all of which have profound meaning in matters of moral cleanliness. I testify that we are to glorify God in our body and in our spirit. I thank heaven for legions of the young who are doing just that and helping others do the same. I thank heaven for homes where this is taught. That lives of personal purity may be revered by all, I pray in the name of purity Himself, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jacob 2:7; see Jacob 2 and 3 for the full context of his sermon on chastity.

2. *The Lessons of History* (1968), 35–36.
3. Proverbs 6:27–28, 32–33.
4. Alma 39:5.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:34.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1972, 139; or *Ensign*, July 1972, 113.
8. See Hebrews 6:6.
9. 1 Corinthians 6:18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 59:6; italics added.
11. See especially Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–20.
12. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; italics added; see also verses 13–18.
13. See Genesis 2:23–24.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
15. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
16. Luke 16:24.
17. See James E. Talmage, in Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 117.

Elder Ronald T. Halverson

The gospel brings a woman peace and joy

Several years ago I interviewed a young woman for a temple recommend to receive her own endowment and to be married and sealed for time and all eternity. As I completed the interview and signed the recommend, tears were streaming down her cheeks. I said, “Please share with me your feelings.” Then she told me the following story.

Since her youth she had sought to find truth and direction in her life. She had yearned to find peace and happiness, but no matter where she looked, she could not find it. It had come to a point where she was very distraught, assuming there was really nothing in life that had true meaning or was fulfilling. In this frame of mind, one evening while visiting a dear friend and recounting her concerns and despair she said: “I looked

behind the sofa where I was sitting to the bookshelf. My eyes fell upon a particular volume, and a compelling feeling came over me. I knew I needed to find out what was written on its pages.”

She took the book from the shelf and read the title, the Book of Mormon. She asked her friend where she had received it. Her friend indicated that two young missionaries stopped her on the street and gave her the book but only after a commitment to read it. Due to a lack of time, she had just put it on the shelf.

“I started to read,” she said. “I could not put it down.” A feeling came over her that she had never felt before. Her friend told her that she could take the book with her. She went home and continued to read through the night. The next morning she went into the streets looking for the two young missionaries.

It didn't take long to find them. They agreed to teach her the gospel, and in a few weeks she was baptized a member of the Church.

Through her tears, she explained that since that day she had found a joy and inner peace that she never dreamed possible.

Living in a small town with few members and even fewer opportunities to marry in the Church, she didn't dare hope that she might one day marry in the temple. But she felt it was through the guidance of the Holy Spirit that she met a young man while vacationing in another country. He was a member of the Church and honored his priesthood. They had fallen in love, and he had asked her to marry him in the temple. The realization that she could now go to the house of the Lord and be sealed for time and all eternity brought joy to her soul and feelings of thankfulness and gratitude that were overwhelming and impossible to describe.

"I continue to ask myself," she said, "Why me? Why me? I am so blessed."

Her humble, sweet spirit and testimony touched me deeply. As she left, we both shed tears of joy and appreciation.

"In me ye might have peace"

I have often thought of that experience, and each time I do, it brings a deep feeling of gratitude for our Savior and what He has done for us, for the price that He paid to make it possible for each one of us to find inner peace in a troubled world.

President David O. McKay wrote:

"From the forty days' fast on the Mount of Temptation to the moment on the cross when he cried in triumph: 'It is finished,' Christ's life was a divine example of subduing and overcoming. Full of significance are his words spoken in his farewell address to his disciples:

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In

the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' (John 16:33)."¹

The peace that He spoke of is defined by one writer: "True joy is an intense inner peace and happiness."²

It is the peace that Paul spoke of, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."³ The gospel of Jesus Christ brings peace of mind, heals the soul, and calms the troubled heart. It gives definition and meaning to the purpose of life, the spiritual reassurance that God lives and Jesus is the Christ.

Joy and peace of mind that truth seekers throughout the world desire to find can be found only by knowing and living the principles of the gospel. The Savior said:

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."⁴

Elder Franklin D. Richards extended an invitation to all who seek true joy, in these words: "Those who are seeking a plan of life that will bring them peace, relief from inner tensions, happiness, and growth and development will find it in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ." He followed by saying, "We invite your sincere and prayerful consideration."⁵

Miracle of forgiveness brings peace

There may be those who feel like they are lost and too far gone to receive the great blessings that the gospel can give, but Elder Spencer W. Kimball wrote: "The essence of the miracle of forgiveness is that it brings peace to the previously anxious, restless, frustrated, perhaps tormented soul. In a world of turmoil and contention this is indeed a priceless gift."⁶

Share testimony to help others find peace

After the Savior taught His disciples of the peace He would leave with them and the Comforter He would send from the Father, He charged them by saying, "And ye also shall bear witness."⁷ He taught that "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."⁸

Brothers and sisters, there are many on the earth who desire a witness of truth and earnestly seek the peace and joy promised by the Savior, but "who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men . . . and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it."⁹

We live in a world where many hear of Christ but do not know Him. It is incumbent upon us as members of the Church to share our testimony with others. In humility we bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If they will but open their hearts to Him, they will find the reassurance, the peace and joy that His gospel brings. They will find strength to meet the challenges of life in a difficult world, and by accepting His teachings and keeping His command-

ments they will be heirs to His promised blessings.

To this I bear my humble witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Gospel Ideals* (1953), 396.
2. Hoyt W. Brewster Jr., *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia* (1988), 287.
3. Philippians 4:7.
4. John 15:10-11.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 14; or *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 37.
6. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 363.
7. John 15:27.
8. John 15:8.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.

President Monson

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Ronald T. Halverson of the Seventy.

Our next speaker will be Elder Earl M. Monson, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference. He will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "I Am a Child of God."

Elder Earl M. Monson

Establishing the Church

The Book of Mormon testifies of the resurrected Savior ministering to the Nephites. He included in His teachings some things about the latter days: "I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people . . . and shall establish again among them my Zion."¹

The prophet Daniel "foresaw and foretold the establishment of the kingdom of God in the latter days."² In this dispensation the Lord has declared, "If this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them."³

There are many references which confirm this is the time for His Church to be established in preparation for His Second Coming. We are the ones with the special opportunity of helping build His kingdom once again. I offer prayers of gratitude that I have any part in this work which has been spoken of for centuries by many prophets and the Lord Himself.

Establishing His Church is a unique assignment. We must take the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people in their own language without defiling the purity of the message. The Church must help de-

velop leaders of integrity—leaders from whom honest people everywhere can receive inspired guidance. The Church has an equal obligation for all who have lived, who now live, and who will yet live on this earth. The Church must teach correct laws and ordinances, in the Lord's way, which qualify the obedient believer for eternal life. There are many other requirements familiar to us that make the task of establishing such a church seem overwhelming, but such is the assignment from the Lord.

Comparison with building temples

And how is such a church established? On a much smaller scale, I know what it takes to build a beautiful temple, and it is more than detailed plans or quality materials. It requires skillful workers in every part of the process, each one doing his best work in a united effort. I also know that the leadership of an inspired prophet is vital in building lovely temples, as it is in every other part of this great work. I dearly cherish the special opportunities I have had to see inspiration and the Spirit of the Lord flow through President Hinckley. He is truly a prophet for this time.

As in building temples, dedicated workers are a necessary part of establishing the Lord's kingdom on earth. The work moves well if each one has a driving conviction in his heart and mind that Jesus Christ is the head of this Church, that He truly lives and guides this work, and that all of us have an important part in bringing it to pass. We must be willing to learn gospel principles, practice them, and pray about them with sincere hearts, with real intent and having faith in Christ. Then comes the assurance that the principles are true. And with true conversion comes an excitement about being part of this great work.

Strength based on personal testimony

It is an interesting thought that the Lord has declared this is the time to establish His Church, and then to realize it happens as each of us develops a firm, unwavering testimony of the truthfulness of its precepts. The Church can build temples, send missionaries throughout the world, and do marvelous humanitarian acts, but it still comes to what exists in our own thoughts and feelings and actions as to how solidly it is established. Will the good news of the gospel be shared with our neighbors; will new converts be warmly fellowshipped; will the temples be filled with dedicated patrons doing work for their ancestry; will families learn to live on a celestial level—all because we have a pure love for our Father in Heaven, His teachings, and His children?

President Kimball declared that the kingdom of God, which we seek to establish, "can only be done through consistent and concerted daily effort by every single member of the Church."⁴

The wonderful part is that every person devoted to the establishment of the latter-day Church of Jesus Christ receives innumerable and eternal blessings. It has been said that "the greatest waste in the world is the difference between what we are and what we may become."⁵ The gospel is at the heart of what we may become and how to get there. With that help we are able to live in this world while separating ourselves from that which is debasing, and we can become better people while we are here.

Choose the better part

Most of us want to live pure lives and contribute, yet we still falter occasionally. Perhaps it helps to reflect on Solomon's observation that as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he."⁶ It is my privilege to

know many who have focused their thoughts on the wholesome and the pure things of life. They ponder on the scriptures, and they strive to magnify callings given to them. The gospel becomes a way of life, and over time they evidence peace and tranquillity in themselves and bless greatly those around them.

We may not appreciate the capacity of our minds to absorb and remember if we think it doesn't matter what books or movies or other activities are fed into it. The Lord wisely told us to seek first for the kingdom of God, and then other desirable things will also come to us.

Elder Sterling W. Sill noted that "the mind, like the dyer's hand, is colored by what it holds." That is, if I hold in my hand . . . purple dye, my hand becomes purple."⁷ Those who help establish the Church know what is bad, but they consistently choose the better part and fill their minds with pure thoughts. Establishing the kingdom of God on the earth depends on individual members of the Church using their God-given agency to think and say and act in keeping with the gospel of Jesus Christ at all times.

Those who feel they are too busy or have too many problems to be part of this work are likely the ones who would receive the greatest benefit from wholehearted participation. And the valuable service they could give would greatly bless others as well.

Now is the time to establish the Lord's Church by securing a confirmation of the truthfulness of the gospel in

our own hearts and doing what priesthood leaders ask of us. As we do so, we can come to know the personal blessings found in a great plan of happiness. We will come to know our Savior and what He has done for us and feel His great love. A sweet assurance of what is truth comes into our lives. We will sense that we are an important part of an eternal cause. We will truly enjoy the leadership of a wonderful prophet and other great leaders. Our lives can be filled with the peace of the Lord and the benefit of having His Church solidly established on this earth. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 21:1.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 138:44.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 10:53.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 122; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 81.
5. Anonymous.
6. Proverbs 23:7.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 1954, 28.

The choir and congregation sang
"I Am a Child of God."

President Monson

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Merrill C. Oaks of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Gordon T. Watts of the Seventy. Elder Oaks and Elder Watts were sustained as members of the Seventy at the April conference.

Elder Merrill C. Oaks

Continuing revelation is essential

Just over two years before his death, the Prophet Joseph Smith published the Articles of Faith. The ninth article of faith states, "We believe all that God has

revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." I will speak concerning the final sentence, "He will

yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." This principle of continuing revelation is an essential part of the kingdom of God.

In the fourth and fifth verses of the Doctrine and Covenants section 21, the Lord declared to the Church their obligation to heed the guidance of His prophet:

"Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith."

The Prophet Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon and received the revelations laying the foundation for the restored Church. He had premonitions of his own death and hastened to confer on the Quorum of the Twelve all the priesthood keys. In the words of Wilford Woodruff: "And thus addressing the Twelve, [Joseph] exclaimed, 'upon your shoulders the kingdom rests, and you must round up your shoulders, and bear it; for I have had to do it until now. But now the responsibility rests upon you'" (*Times and Seasons*, 1 Nov. 1844, 698).

Revelation continues today

Revelation and guidance from heaven did not end with the death of Joseph Smith. "Many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" have been revealed through those who succeeded him as President of the Church. In the words of President Spencer W. Kimball:

"Since that momentous day in 1820, additional scripture has continued to come, including the numerous and vital revelations flowing in a never-ending stream from God to his prophets on the earth. . . .

"There are those who would assume that with the printing and binding of these sacred records [and he was speaking here of the four standard works], that would be the 'end of the prophets.' But again we testify to the world that revelation continues and that the vaults and files of the Church contain these revelations which come month to month and day to day. We testify also that there is, since 1830 when The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, and will continue to be, so long as time shall last, a prophet, recognized of God and his people, who will continue to interpret the mind and will of the Lord" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1977, 78).

We have large amounts of written historical material available to us, including sermons of early Church leaders. These give us background that help us understand the early events of the Restoration and the situations that existed in those days. This year we have the privilege of studying teachings of the prophet Brigham Young in priesthood and Relief Society meetings. There are wonderful continuity and agreement of these teachings and those of our more current prophets.

To those who are disturbed by changes

As the policies and procedures of the Church are refined by continuing revelation and inspiration, there are those who become disturbed by any changes. Some literally hunt for situations where earlier Church leaders or members made statements which are not in complete harmony with our understanding and practices today. The mind-set of some is that anything coming from an earlier time must be more correct.

I would offer the following thoughts on such matters: (1) Some of the procedures of the Church were not completely developed early in this dispensation and

have been amplified and clarified by subsequent prophets. (2) Our protection from erroneous doctrine lies in an overriding belief in continuing revelation to the current prophet.

President Harold B. Lee spoke of this by relating an experience:

"Years ago as a young missionary I visited Nauvoo and Carthage with my mission president, and we were holding a missionary meeting in the jail room where Joseph and Hyrum had met their deaths. The mission president related the historical events that led up to the martyrdom and then he closed with this very significant statement: 'When the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred, there were many saints who died spiritually with Joseph.' So it was when Brigham Young died: so it was when John Taylor died. Do revelations given to President John Taylor, for example, have any more authority than something that comes from our president and prophet today? Some Church members died spiritually with Wilford Woodruff, with Lorenzo Snow, with Joseph F. Smith, with Heber J. Grant, with George Albert Smith. We have some today willing to believe someone who is dead and gone and to accept his words as having more authority than the words of a living authority today" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 153).

President Lee amplified this by telling of his response to a man who was disturbed at a new policy of the Church which was different from one established in the time of Joseph Smith. He said to this questioning brother:

"Have you ever thought that what was contrary to the order of heaven in 1840 might not be contrary to the order of heaven in 1960?' He had not thought of that. He again was following a dead prophet, and he was forgetting that there is a living prophet today. Hence the importance of our stressing that word *living*" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, 153).

An ongoing stream of revelation

In summary, the Church is founded on continuing revelation to a current, living prophet. "Many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" have been revealed, and more are yet to be revealed through the living prophet. Beginning with Joseph Smith and continuing on to his successors as President of the Church, the ongoing stream of revelation has perfected our understanding of the gospel. The understanding of doctrines is more complete as taught by the Church today than at any prior time in this dispensation. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Gordon T. Watts

Gratitude

As a young boy, life on our small family farm was heaven. Often in our humble home there were not as many shingles as we had roof. The rest-room facility was connected by a long path that required some advance planning, and sometimes my worn shirt had more buttonholes than buttons. The Saturday night bath in front of a warm stove,

where your body experienced both extremes in temperature, was a luxury.

Then something changed. I started school and began to notice possessions I had not known. Some had nice clothing, beautiful homes with all the modern conveniences, and drove newer automobiles. Many my age were not required to arise early and do chores before going to school, only to go home at night and do them all over again. While they were

popular and confident, I became backward and shy. Regretfully, I began to forget how happy I had been with my basket of blessings as I indulged in comparing their seemingly endless bushels to mine. Thus, the blinders to humility began distorting reality, giving way to ingratitude. The expectation that more is deserved can cause our plate of plenty to appear empty. Gratitude has many faces and takes on many forms. Failure to recognize the Lord for all we have will soon result in selfish behavior.

"But where are the nine?"

The Savior, though always the giver, was seldom the receiver of gratitude.

"And as he [Christ] entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

"And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

"And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"¹

Contemplating the Savior's question "But where are the nine?" gives cause for deep reflection. In President Hinckley's opening remarks during last April conference, he said:

"And so, my beloved brothers and sisters, let us rejoice together now as we celebrate with appreciation the wondrous doctrines and practices which have come as a gift from the Lord in this most glorious time of His work. . . . Let us ever be grateful for these most precious gifts and privileges and act well our part as those who love the Lord."²

Notwithstanding all the "precious gifts and privileges" spoken of by our prophet, oftentimes we fail to recognize our abundant blessings. More importantly, some expressions of gratitude fall short of the Lord's expectations. "And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments."³

Gratitude begins with attitude

Gratitude begins with attitude. While to some every apple shines, to others the remaining blemishes after the polishing process are all that's visible. We must use caution not to be drawn into the growing populace of ungrateful people who have become calloused to blessings as they bicker in misery.

Joy and happiness are born of gratitude. Recently Sister Watts and I spent three years in another part of the world working with a very kind and gracious people. If worldly possessions equated to happiness, the majority of these Saints would be unhappy. Quite the contrary, gratitude abounds, resulting in a contagious display of rejoicing. It is evident that even though they live in a challenging environment with few advantages, they are a delightful people. A cheerfulness is generated by their gratitude for the gospel of Jesus Christ and the blessings derived from living the principles taught. One faithful district president expressed gratitude to have a bicycle for transportation to perform his calling. It seemed the more he pedaled, the happier he became. Perhaps there is a lesson here: if we are feeling ungrateful, we need to pedal a little faster. The depth and the willingness with which we serve is a direct reflection of our gratitude.

Elder James E. Talmage said, "Gratitude is twin sister to humility; pride is a foe to both."⁴ Also, President James E. Faust has said, "A grateful heart is a beginning of greatness."⁵

Gratitude in times of trial

In times of trial we can accept with gratefulness that which is to come, a gratitude for the blessings and gifts the Lord has in reserve for those who keep the commandments and serve Him in thanksgiving. An eternal friend and former neighbor who embraced the teachings of the gospel in our home so many years ago has recently felt the refiner's fire in the loss of his beloved companion. His recent words of indefinable gratitude for the gospel, temple covenants, and eternal marriage are engraved on my mind. In the passing of his sweet wife, this knowledge brings a comfort unknown to them before joining the Church. His words of "How can I ever thank you for sharing with our family this great eternal gift?" join with my own words of unspeakable gratitude to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, for the "precious gifts and privileges" offered to us all.

"And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glori-

ous; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more."⁶ God is the gracious giver, and I testify of Him and of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 17:12-17.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 4-5; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 6.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.
4. "With the Voice of Thanksgiving," *Sunday Night Talks*, 2nd ed. (1931), 483.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 110; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 86.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 78:19.

President Monson

Elder Merrill C. Oaks of the Seventy has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Gordon T. Watts, also of the Seventy.

We shall now hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

We are children of God

Recently I observed young men who attracted attention to themselves because of their extreme styles of dress and grooming. One made a revealing remark when he said, "I'm trying to find out who I really am." This occurred after I had come from a Church meeting where Primary children had sung "I Am a Child of God."¹ Such contrasting experiences emphasize the importance of knowing that we are literally children of God.

We are dual beings. Each soul is comprised of body and spirit,² both of which emanate from God. A firm understanding of body and spirit will shape our thoughts and deeds for good.

The body

The marvel of our physical bodies is often overlooked. Who has not encountered feelings of low self-esteem because of physique or appearance? Many people wish their bodies could be more to their liking. Some with naturally straight hair want it curly. Others with curly hair want it straight. Occasionally some ladies, believing that "gentlemen prefer blonds," become "decided blonds."

Your body, whatever its natural gifts, is a magnificent creation of God.³ It is a tabernacle of flesh—a temple for your spirit.⁴ A study of your body attests to its divine design.

Its formation begins with the union of two reproductive cells—one from the

mother and one from the father. Together, these two cells contain all of the new individual's hereditary information, stored in a space so small it cannot be seen by the naked eye. Twenty-three chromosomes from each parent unite in one new cell. These chromosomes contain thousands of genes which determine all of the physical characteristics of the unborn person. Approximately 22 days after these two cells unite, a little heart begins to beat. At 26 days, blood begins to circulate. Cells multiply and divide. Some become eyes that see; others become ears that hear.

Each organ is a wondrous gift from God. The eye has a self-focusing lens. Nerves and muscles control two separate eyes to make a single three-dimensional image. The eyes are connected to the brain, which records the sights seen. No cords or batteries are needed.

Each ear is connected to compact equipment designed to convert sound waves into audible tones. An eardrum serves as a diaphragm. Minute ossicles amplify sound vibrations and transmit a signal via nerves to the brain, which senses and remembers the sounds.

The heart is an incredible pump. It has four delicate valves that control the direction of blood flow. These valves open and close more than 100,000 times a day—36 million times a year. Yet, unless altered by disease, they are able to withstand this stress almost indefinitely. No man-made material developed to date can be flexed so frequently and so long without breaking.

Each day an adult heart pumps enough fluid to fill a 2,000-gallon⁵ tank. This work is equivalent to lifting a grown man⁶ to the top of the Empire State Building while expending only about four watts of energy. At the crest of the heart is an electrical generator that transmits energy down special lines, causing myriads of muscle fibers to work together.

Much could be said about each of the other precious organs in the body. They function in a marvelous manner, beyond my time or ability to describe.

Other attributes of the body are equally amazing, though less evident. For example, backup is provided. Each *paired* organ has instant backup available from the other of the pair. *Single* organs, such as the brain, the heart, and the liver, are nourished by *two* routes of blood supply. This design protects the organ if harm should come to any one channel.

Think of the body's system of self-defense. To protect it from harm, the body perceives pain. In response to infection, it generates antibodies. They not only help to combat the immediate problem, but they persist to strengthen resistance to infection in the future. One day my attention was directed to some three-year-old children who had lapped up water from a street gutter. The number of germs they ingested must have been incalculable, but not one of those youngsters became ill. As soon as that dirty drink reached each little stomach, its hydrochloric acid went to work to treat the water and protect the life of the child.

The skin provides protection. It also warns against injuries that excessive heat or cold might cause. It even sends signals that indicate trouble elsewhere. With fever, the skin perspires. When one is frightened, it pales. When one is embarrassed, it blushes.

The body repairs itself. Broken bones mend and become strong once again. Skin lacerations heal themselves. A leak in the circulation can seal itself.

The body renews its own outdated cells. The average red blood cell, for instance, lives about 120 days. Then it is replaced by a newly regenerated cell.

The body regulates its own vital ingredients. Essential elements and chemical constituents are adjusted continuously. And regardless of wide fluctuations

in the temperature of the environment, the temperature of the body is carefully controlled within narrow bounds.

If these qualities of normal function, defense, repair, regeneration, and regulation were to prevail in perpetuity, life here would continue without limit. Mercifully, our Creator provided for aging and other processes which ultimately result in physical death. We often think of death as untimely or tragic. But death, like birth, is part of life. Scripture tells us that "it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness."⁷ To return to God through the gateway of death is a joy for those who love Him.⁸

When death claims an individual in the prime of life, we take comfort in knowing that the very laws which do not allow life to persist here are the same laws that will be implemented at the time of the Resurrection, when the body will be endowed with immortality.

The spirit

Next I speak of the spirit. Prior to our mortal existence here, each spirit son and daughter lived with God. The spirit is eternal; it existed in innocence in the premortal realm⁹ and will exist after the body dies.¹⁰ The spirit provides the body with animation and personality.¹¹ "All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure."¹²

"The spirit of man [is] in the likeness of his person."¹³ Jesus so explained as the brother of Jared viewed the Lord's premortal body:

"Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

"... This body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to

be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh."¹⁴

Development of the spirit is of eternal consequence. The attributes by which we shall be judged one day are those of the spirit.¹⁵ These include the virtues of integrity, compassion, love, and more.¹⁶ Your spirit, by being housed in your body, is able to develop and express these attributes in ways that are vital to your eternal progression.¹⁷

Spirit and body, when joined together, become a living soul of supernal worth. Indeed, we are children of God—physically and spiritually.

Physical limitations

For reasons usually unknown, some people are born with physical limitations. Specific parts of the body may be abnormal. Regulatory systems may be out of balance. And all of our bodies are subject to disease and death. Nevertheless, the gift of a physical body is priceless. Without it, we cannot attain a fulness of joy.¹⁸

A perfect body is not required to achieve a divine destiny. In fact, some of the sweetest spirits are housed in frail frames. Great spiritual strength is often developed by those with physical challenges precisely because they are challenged. Such individuals are entitled to all the blessings that God has in store for His faithful and obedient children.¹⁹

Eventually the time will come when each "spirit and . . . body shall be reunited again in . . . perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame."²⁰ Then, thanks to the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can become perfected in Him.²¹

Personal behavior

How should these truths influence our personal behavior? We should gratefully acknowledge God as our Creator. Otherwise, we would be as guilty as goldfish swimming in a bowl, oblivious to the

goodness of their provider. "Ye must give thanks unto God," said the Lord, "for whatsoever blessing ye are blessed with."²² And we can practice virtue and holiness before Him continually.²³

We will regard our body as a temple of our very own.²⁴ We will not let it be desecrated or defaced in any way.²⁵ We will control our diet and exercise for physical fitness.

Should not equal attention be paid to spiritual fitness?²⁶ Just as physical strength requires exercise, so spiritual strength requires effort. Among the most important of spiritual exercises is prayer. It engenders harmony with God and a desire to keep His commandments. Prayer is a key to wisdom, virtue, and humility.

We will be careful about which counsel we heed. Many so-called experts give advice for the body—without thought for the spirit. Anyone who accepts direction contrary to the Word of Wisdom, for example, forsakes a law revealed to bring both physical *and* spiritual blessings.²⁷ Some recommendations regarding use of our reproductive organs are based solely—and inadequately—upon physical considerations. Beware of such one-sided views! Paul taught that "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."²⁸

That caution pertains to pornography, which is highly addictive. Scriptural warning is clear: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."²⁹ In time, addictions enslave *both* the body and the spirit. Full repentance from addiction is best accomplished in this life, while we still have a mortal body to help us.

As children of God, we should not let anything enter the body that might defile it. To allow sensors of sight, touch, or hearing to supply the brain with unclean memories is a sacrilege. We will cherish our chastity and avoid "foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown [us] in de-

struction and perdition."³⁰ We will "flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, [and] meekness"³¹—traits that edify the whole soul.

Who are we? We are children of God.³² Our potential is unlimited. Our inheritance is sacred. May we always honor that heritage—in every thought and deed—I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See *Hymns*, no. 301.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
3. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Magnificence of Man," *Ensign*, Jan. 1988, 64–69. The Psalmist stated: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? . . . For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Psalm 8:3–5; see also Hebrews 2:7, 9).
4. See 1 Corinthians 6:19.
5. About 7,570 liters.
6. Weighing 150 pounds (about 68.2 kilograms).
7. Alma 42:8; see also Alma 12:24–27.
8. The Psalmist expressed the viewpoint of Deity: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:38.
10. See Alma 40:11; Abraham 3:18.
11. See Job 32:8.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 131:7.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 77:2.
14. Ether 3:15–16.
15. The spirit, not the body, is the active, responsible component of the soul. Without the spirit, the body is dead (see James 2:26). It is the spirit, therefore, that chooses good or evil and will be held accountable for both the positive and negative attributes it possesses at the final judgment (see Alma 41:3–7).
16. Such as "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness,

godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence" (D&C 4:6).

17. See 2 Nephi 2:11-16, 21-26; Moroni 10:33-34.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:17.
19. See Abraham 3:25-26.
20. Alma 11:43; see also Alma 40:23; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Doctrine and Covenants 138:17.
21. See Moroni 10:32.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 46:32.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:33.
24. See 1 Corinthians 3:16.
25. Referring to the human body, the Apostle Paul taught, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:17).
26. See 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:9.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 89:18-21; see also Romans 8:6; 2 Nephi 9:38-39; Doctrine and Covenants 29:34-35.
28. Romans 8:13.
29. Romans 6:12.
30. 1 Timothy 6:9.
31. 1 Timothy 6:11. Verse 12 continues: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." That is our choice.
32. Looking up scriptural references that refer to *create* or *form* (or their derivatives), with either *man*, *men*, *male*, or *female* in the same verse, I found 55 instances that attest to our divine creation. One may represent the many that convey the same message: "The Gods took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them" (Abraham 4:26-27).

The decision to believe our creation was divine must be based on spiritual evidence and not on physical evidence alone, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither

can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The choir sang "How Gentle God's Commands."

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, following which the choir sang "How Gentle God's Commands."

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus; the Young Women choir from the Murray, Utah, area; and the Tabernacle Choir; and their conductors and organists for the truly beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We also express appreciation to local and national press representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference to many countries.

We are grateful that Sister Inis Hunter, the wife of President Howard W. Hunter, has been able to be with us in this and other sessions.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet and President, will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Let My Heart Be Pure" and "Lord, I Would Follow Thee." After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder D. Lee Tobler of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Reflect on messages and respond to them

Just a word in conclusion. We've been here a long time for those in the Tabernacle seated on the hard benches. I look forward to our holding conference in the new building, where the chairs will be upholstered.

We have had a wonderful conference. The Lord has blessed us, and we are deeply grateful. As we return to our homes, may we reflect upon the things which we have heard. Where there is need for reformation in our lives, may we make those adjustments which will lead to such. Where we have been stirred in our hearts, may we respond to the Spirit which has touched us. Where we have been lax in our duty, may we have the self-discipline to stand tall and do what is expected of us.

Report on construction of temples

I am pleased to report, my brethren and sisters, concerning the program of constructing smaller temples which has been mentioned in this conference many times. We dedicated the first of these in Monticello, Utah, a few months ago. We built a temple there so that we might learn from it. We have learned a few things, and we have been deeply gratified by the response of the Saints in that area and by their great enthusiasm for the beautiful structure which has come into their midst.

We will dedicate a number of new temples beginning the first of the year. Some of these will be larger, some smaller. During the last conference I expressed the hope that we would build 30 new temples during the next two years. I am sure that many thought this was just wishful dreaming on my part. It seemed totally unrealistic.

I am grateful to be able to say that our building people—our architects, our

engineers, our designers and furnishings experts—advise me that in all likelihood we will have 100 or more temples operating in the year 2000, nearly twice the number we have today. I assure you that nobody is sleeping on the job—no one who has anything to do with this immense project. I speak of these temples as smaller temples. Actually they do not look small; they look large. They are beautiful. They are built of the best materials and in the best fashion of which we know. Each will be a house of the Lord, dedicated to His holy purposes.

We shall not stop at these. We shall go on building. We know there are so very many locations where they are needed in order that you, the faithful Saints of this Church, may go to receive your own blessings and to extend those blessings to those who have passed beyond the veil of death. We pray that our people will be worthy to use them. Where repentance is needed, now is the time to turn about and prepare ourselves for their use.

The true and living Church

My brothers and sisters, these are momentous times in which we are living as Saints of the Most High. With the generous blessing of the Lord, with His revealed will before us, with the faithful Saints throughout the world, we find it possible to do that which was thought to be impossible only a very short time ago.

I have now been an officer in this Church for a very long time. I am an old man who cannot deny the calendar. I'm getting worried about that anatomy lesson Brother Nelson just gave us. I have lived long enough and served in enough different capacities to have removed from my mind, if such were necessary, any doubt of the divinity of this, the work of God. We respect those of other churches. We desire their friendship and

hope to render meaningful service with them. We know they all do good, but we unabashedly state—and this frequently brings criticism upon us—that this is the true and living Church of our Father in Heaven and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tribute and benediction

Now before I sit down, I want to pay a moment's tribute to this great choir to which we've listened today. They are magnificent. They are doing a great work. They are better than they've ever been, and they must go on improving. Their best today will not be good enough tomorrow. Keep it up, dear friends.

Let us go on rearing our children in righteousness and truth. Let us be good neighbors and good friends, loving and reaching out to those not of our faith as well as those who are of our faith. May the smiles of heaven rest upon you, my beloved associates, as I leave with you my witness and my testimony and my love for each of you wherever you may be across this broad world is my humble prayer and word of benediction in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Let My Heart Be Pure" and "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder D. Lee Tobler offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, directed by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A Young Women choir from the Murray, Utah, area provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Vickie Belnap directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

A combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus provided music for the general priesthood session. Jerold Ottley and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Craig Jessop and Jerold Ottley, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Clay Christiansen and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

A

- Amorím, Elder Athos M.** 37
Obedience and service; An example of service; Desire to obey and serve God

B

- Ballard, Elder M. Russell** 4
Extraordinary temple-building effort; An urgency in the work; Are we keeping pace? We must work harder and smarter; Use ward council to nurture converts; Use councils to bless individual lives; Examine commitment to the gospel; Focus on things that matter most
- Bateman, Elder E. Ray** 35
Pearls from the sand; Be friendly and share the gospel; A conversion story; Renew commitment to missionary work
- Burton, Bishop H. David** 8
A season of opportunity; A season to reverence the Sabbath day; A season of temple service; A season to reach out; Blessings of reaching out

C

- Christensen, Elder Val R.** 38
Overcoming discouragement; Change your attitude; Accept help from others; Develop trust in the Lord
- Christofferson, Elder D. Todd** 53
Elders quorum helps a brother; The priesthood quorum; A class; A fraternity; A service unit

E

- Eyring, Elder Henry B.** 40
A voice of warning; Mother's warning; Responsibility to warn our neighbors; Sweet moments of missionary work; The need to warn others is real; Do not procrastinate warning others; Love comes first; Be better examples; Invite with testimony; The Lord's assurance; Choose the way of eternal life

F

- Faust, President James E. (priesthood session)** 58
Visit to World War I sites in France; Priesthood is the greatest power source; Priesthood power comes from faithfulness; The refining trials of Zion's Camp; Caring for the poor is a priesthood duty; Priesthood duties of young men; Be true to this great trust

Faust, President James E. (Sunday morning session)	73
Grandfather's faith in paying tithing; A key to opening the windows of heaven; Paying tithing brings true prosperity; Blessings of tithing settlement; Administering tithing funds; Tithing and temples; Other offerings; Sacrifice is necessary to develop faith; Sacrifice brings protection from evil; The Savior's ultimate offering	
G	
General Authorities Present	1
General Priesthood Session	48
H	
Haight, Elder David B.	45
Sustaining the prophets; Sustaining of the Prophet Joseph; Sustaining the Twelve in 1844; Sustaining the First Presidency in 1847; "He that loseth his life for my sake . . ."; "I am a child of God"	
Hales, Elder Robert D.	15
The healing process of the soul; Pondering is important for healing; Exercise faith, study, and pray; Pondering brings gratitude and peace; Repentance brings spiritual healing; The Savior's pain; Alma the Younger's pain and joy; Understanding the pains of mortality; The Lord is the ultimate caregiver; Draw near to the Savior	
Halverson, Elder Ronald T.	102
The gospel brings a woman peace and joy; "In me ye might have peace"; Miracle of forgiveness brings peace; Share testimony to help others find peace	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session)	3
Welcome to conference; Construction of new assembly building; Church members are one great family	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session)	67
To the young men; Pledge of young men in California; Importance of missionary service; To the older men; Get our houses in order; Warning against consumer debt; Live within your means; Become self-reliant; Free yourselves from bondage of debt	
Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session)	90
Questions that people ask about us; The Mormon doctrine of Deity; Attitude toward homosexuality; Position on abortion; Position on polygamy; Reasons for the Church's growth; Position on spouse and child abuse; Financing the Church's operations; This is God's work	

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session) 115

Reflect on messages and respond to them; Report on construction of temples; The true and living Church; Tribute and benediction

Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. 98

Personal purity; A river of fire; Why is sexual purity so important? The doctrine of the human soul; The ultimate symbol of total union; A symbol of the relationship with God; Control sacred procreative powers; The peace and renewal of repentance; Glorify God in body and spirit

J**Jensen, Sister Virginia U. 12**

Love and reverence for prophets; "Come, listen to a prophet's voice"; A photographer's experience; Blessings of having living prophets; The prophet will never lead us astray; Lessons taught in the proclamation on the family; Heed the words of the living prophet

M**Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 77**

The need for ultimate hope; Hope, faith, charity, and patience; The anchor of the soul; Increasing despair and cynicism; Difficulties stir some people to repent; Qualities of real hope; Responses of the truly hopeful; Reach out with hope

Monson, Elder Earl M. 104

Establishing the Church; Comparison with building temples; Strength based on personal testimony; Choose the better part

Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 62

A boy's love for President Hinckley; A son watches his father's example; Guide and inspire young men; Reaching the mind and heart of a boy; A bishopric member trains and inspires; Good advice: never lie; Purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood; Missionaries answer the Lord's call; A missionary helps a German woman; Service in Rarotonga; Testimony of the Savior

Monson, President Thomas S. (Saturday morning session) 20

One leper returns to give thanks; "In every thing give thanks"; A boy expresses gratitude for a bicycle; "Count your many blessings"; Express thanks to parents; Express thanks to teachers; Express thanks to peers; A miracle at Murray High School; Compassionate response to girls' deaths; Counsel at the funeral; One source of true peace; Words of comfort about children who die; "Joy cometh in the morning"

Music, Summary of Conference 116

N

- Nelson, Elder Russell M.** 110
 We are children of God; The body; The spirit; Physical limitations; Personal behavior

O

- Oaks, Elder Dallin H.** 48
 The Aaronic Priesthood and the sacrament; Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood; Baptism and the sacrament; The Holy Ghost and the sacrament; Repentance and the sacrament; The ministering of angels; Do not do anything that would distract; Be clean and reverent; Speak the sacrament prayers clearly; Be orderly; Be well groomed and modestly dressed; Be worthy to participate; Sing the sacrament hymn; These ordinances are vital
- Oaks, Elder Merrill C.** 106
 Continuing revelation is essential; Revelation continues today; To those who are disturbed by changes; An ongoing stream of revelation

P

- Packer, President Boyd K.** 27
 Parents in Zion; Balancing family and Church; Church's inspired guidance for families; Use care in scheduling activities; Keep family and Church in perspective; Do not burden families unnecessarily; Importance of learning at home; Use the ward council to establish balance; Most important things learned at home
- Perry, Elder L. Tom** 95
 Counseling grandchildren at Bear Lake; Appreciate the land where you live; Self-esteem; Love of family; Love of God and obedience to His law; Personal testimony
- Priesthood Session, General** 48

R

- Richards, Elder H. Bryan** 56
 Prepare young men to serve missions; Responsibilities of parents and leaders; Teach the worth of the soul; Importance of missionary service

S

- Saturday Afternoon Session** 25
- Saturday Morning Session** 2

Scott, Elder Richard G.	86
Reasons to be optimistic; Life is beautiful; Making decisions; The power of righteousness; Resist temptations to be immoral; Repent of serious transgressions; Steadfastly choose to do right	
Sorensen, Elder David E.	80
This Church will fill the world; Hastening of temple building; Temples help us come to Christ; Temples remind us of Christ; Ordinances are centered in Christ; The gates of heaven are open	
Summary of Conference Music	116
Sunday Afternoon Session	94
Sunday Morning Session	72
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	26

W

Warner, Sister Susan L.	83
All things bear record of Him; We should bear record of Him; The Spirit will bear witness as we testify; Bear record to children; Teach children the scriptures; A grandfather testifies; Leave a legacy of testimony	
Watts, Elder Gordon T.	108
Gratitude; "But where are the nine?" Gratitude begins with attitude; Gratitude in times of trial	
Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	30
Significant dates and events in our lives; The Savior's birth and mortal ministry; The Savior's Second Coming; Faith, hope, and charity; Faith; Hope; Charity; Family; Temples; Testimony	

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



4 02980 49000

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-ninth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 3 and 4, 1999

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-ninth
Annual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
April 3 and 4, 1999

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Report of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1999, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 3 and 4, 1999. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 3, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Harold G. Hillam, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, and David E. Sorenson

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madson, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Carl B. Pratt, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorín, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Eran A. Call, Val R. Christensen, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Stephen B. Oveson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Lynn G. Robbins, Ned B. Roueché, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Richard E. Turley Sr., Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Lance B.

Wickman, Richard H. Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, and Robert S. Wood

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1999, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we greet you this morning as we assemble in the first general session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder Andrew W. Peterson.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the overflow

locations in the nearby Assembly Hall and Joseph Smith Memorial Building and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Tabernacle.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Robert C. Bowden, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Gathering for conference

Welcome to conference! We again welcome you, my brothers and sisters, to this great world conference. Six months between conferences once seemed like a long time. Now it seems to pass ever so rapidly. We gather together again as a

great family, more than 10 million strong, to listen and learn from those who are called to lead, to renew our faith and build our resolution to live better, and to mingle together in pleasant sociality.

We are a happy and blessed people, working to build the cause and kingdom of God on earth. Regardless of race or

nationality, whether we be poor or rich, old or young, we meet to share our common testimony of the Lord, in whose name we worship.

Work of the Church moves forward

I am pleased to report that the Church is in good condition. The work continues to move forward; I will point out just two or three areas.

We now have approximately 60,000 missionaries. Come July there will be 333 missions. We are trying to fulfill the mandate of the Lord when He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

Additionally, there are 137,629 volunteers and missionaries in nonproselyting activities. These are, for the most part, mature individuals who contribute their time and talents without compensation of any kind but with a great love for the work of the kingdom. Their united contribution is the equivalent of 15,174 full-time employees with a payroll value of \$531 million. What a remarkable thing this is!

Our family history work goes forward with increasing momentum. There is a tremendous interest in one's roots everywhere. As the years pass, all of this will lead to the fulfillment of the great purpose for which this work is done. The hearts of the children are being turned to their fathers, that the purposes of the Lord may be fulfilled.

We are constructing temples on a scale never before dreamed of to carry forward this work to its destined conclusion. Since last October we have dedicated temples in Anchorage, Alaska; Colonia Juárez, Mexico; and Madrid, Spain. It is anticipated that we will dedicate 14 more during the remainder of this year.

This is a tremendous undertaking, with many problems, but no matter the

difficulty, things work out and I am confident we will reach our goal.

We are constructing chapels in large numbers to accommodate the needs of our people. There is an old proverb that says it is an ill wind that blows no good. The economic problems that have afflicted Asia and other parts of the world have brought lower real estate prices, thus permitting us to acquire building sites at lower costs.

In many areas of the Church, sacrament meeting attendance is up and the level of activity is increasing.

I mention these items simply to indicate the robust growth of the work throughout the world.

Strengthen and value each member

We are prone to speak of large numbers such as the total membership of the Church. But we must never forget that we are all individuals with our own needs and problems, our own hopes and dreams, our own faith and convictions. Some are strong, some weak, but we all try. We have problems to deal with—they are serious and difficult. We need one another to build and strengthen each other. We must never lose sight of the fact that we are to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

We must never forget that we live in a world of great diversity. The people of the earth are all our Father's children and are of many and varied religious persuasions. We must cultivate tolerance and appreciation and respect one another. We have differences of doctrine. This need not bring about animosity or any kind of holier-than-thou attitude.

At this moment our hearts reach out to the brutalized people of Kosovo. It is difficult for us to understand how those who claim to be Christians can act so barbaric to those of another faith. I am grateful that we are rushing humanitarian aid to the victims of these atrocities.

I am pleased to report that the Church is better known and better understood. Generally the media have been kind to us. They have dealt honestly with us. There are exceptions, of course, and this we regret. The old images of the past continue to be dragged forth by those who deal in sensationalism and exploitation. But television images fade almost immediately with the tremendous amount of information given. Yesterday's newspaper is soon forgotten. Meanwhile the Church goes forward on its appointed mission in the direction of its appointed destiny.

We will work together with patience, never losing sight of the great mission given us by Him who is our leader and whose Church this is.

Now I invite you to listen to the Brethren and sisters. All who speak feel

the responsibility in so doing. Much of prayer and effort have gone into that which will be said. May our faith be increased in the great, salient underpinnings of our doctrine and our practice as members of this great Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "O My Father."

President Hinckley

The choir just sang "O My Father." We will now be pleased to hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Sunday School organized

On Sunday morning, December 9, 1849, at 8:00, about 30 children between the ages of 8 and 13 arrived in a small classroom that had been built in a home. They stamped their feet on the threshold, shook the snow off their coats and hats, then took their places on simple benches. They waited expectantly for the class to begin. It was a cold, snowy day outside, but the fireplace radiated a warm and friendly glow. Richard Ballantyne's eyes shone brightly as he called the Sunday School to order. He led the boys and girls in a song, and then he gave a quiet but fervent prayer, dedicating this room in his home for teaching children the gospel of Jesus Christ. His voice was rich, and his words rolled forth as words do under the spell of reverence and emotion. Thus we have the founding of the first Sunday School in the Salt Lake Valley.

Organizing a Sunday School was not foreign to him. In his native Scotland he had organized a Sunday School in the Relief Presbyterian Church, of which he was an active member. It was natural for him to have a great desire to educate young people in the knowledge of the gospel. He had been reared in a home where his father was fond of repeating from memory whole chapters of the Bible and then reciting them to his children. It was a home where they would not even take a sip of water without first taking off their hats and saying grace, as was also the custom before they would eat a meal.

Rumors were spreading around the Scottish home that a new prophet had been raised up in America. At first Richard paid little attention to these rumors, but as his religious questions became more perplexing, he openly sought further light and knowledge. It was in 1841 that Elder Orson Pratt appeared in

Edinburgh. Richard listened to his message and investigated the Church for a year. Finally he was converted and was baptized in the North Sea. He said, "I was so convinced that Joseph Smith was a prophet and the Book of Mormon was the word of God, and that if I did not accept it I would be damned."

As was the case of many of those early converts to the Church, he sold his business and emigrated to America, taking with him his mother and some of his brothers and sisters. They arrived in Nauvoo on November 11, 1843, at a time when there was great turmoil in the city. They eventually left Illinois and made the trek to Winter Quarters. There he was married and soon made preparation for the long journey west. They arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in September of 1848 and immediately commenced building a home. It was in this home that the first Sunday School in the valley was held. When the chapel—the old 14th Ward—was completed, the Sunday School moved to the new meetinghouse.

Brother Ballantyne had a fervent desire to teach young people the gospel of our Lord and Savior throughout his entire life. Thanks be to the late Conway Ballantyne Sonne, a cousin of mine, for this history of the first Sunday School (see Conway B. Sonne, *Knight of the Kingdom: The Story of Richard Ballantyne* [1949], 8–49).

Everyone has a responsibility to teach

As we contemplate celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Sunday School, it should be a time of reawakening within us our responsibility to be good teachers. Nearly all of our associations and relationships involve the process of teaching. One of the major responsibilities of parents is to teach their children. Many of our assignments in the world of work involve being a teacher. Every assignment we receive in the Church requires some form of teach-

ing. The Lord directed us in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand" (D&C 88:77–78).

January 1 we received a new resource to assist us in becoming more effective teachers. The new *Church Handbook of Instructions* has a section discussing gospel teaching and leadership. The principles explained in this section have universal application. Two sets of instructions in this section deal with special ways that teachers can prepare themselves to become more effective in their assignments.

Teach as the Savior taught

The first set of instructions encourages us to follow the Savior's example and teach as He taught. Through divine instruction, the Lord was prepared for the greatest of all roles in mortality. In Luke we read, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40).

This is followed by an account in the scriptures of the Savior's early life. When He was 12 years of age, He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover, as was their custom. As they were returning to their home after the celebration, they discovered that Jesus was not with them. Returning to Jerusalem, they found Him.

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, and they were hearing him, and asking him questions.

"And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding, and answers" (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 2:46–47).

This example from the Savior's early life shows the sense of urgency He felt about teaching the word of God. One prophet who felt a similar sense of urgency was Jacob, the younger brother of Nephi. Jacob and his brother Joseph were consecrated priests and teachers of their people. They took their responsibilities very seriously, assuming they themselves would be held accountable if they did not teach the people with all diligence. In verse 19 of the first chapter of Jacob, he wrote:

"And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by laboring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day."

Study the word of God before teaching

Like the Savior, teachers should also feel a sense of urgency about learning the word of God. We discover in section 93 of the Doctrine and Covenants that the Savior did not receive a "fulness at . . . first, but received grace for grace" (v. 12). In the Lord's admonition to Hyrum Smith, He declared sage counsel to all teachers. He said, "Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men" (D&C 11:21).

Fundamental to becoming good teachers is serious study of the word of the Lord, that we are able to impart our acquired knowledge to others.

How blessed we are to have the words of the holy prophets preserved through the many dispensations of time. Because the Lord commanded His prophets to make a record of His teachings, the Old and New Testaments give us

a continuity of gospel teaching from the very beginning of time. Then the miracle of the Book of Mormon was brought forth as another witness of the mission of our Lord and Savior. Added to this we have the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants and the teachings and revelations contained in the Pearl of Great Price.

Because teaching is such a universal assignment, it is requisite of every member of the Church to prepare himself or herself through study of the holy scriptures.

Teach by the Spirit

The second set of instructions in the teaching section of the new handbook addresses the importance of teaching by the Spirit. In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 42, we read:

"And they shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them, and these shall be their teachings, as they shall be directed by the Spirit.

"And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" (vv. 13-14).

It is our privilege to have the Holy Ghost, a member of the Godhead, as our constant companion to edify and inspire us in our preparation as teachers. We should prepare ourselves through obedience to God's commandments, that our confidence will wax strong when we call upon the Lord, that His Spirit might magnify us as we teach. When we have the Spirit to direct us, we are capable of teaching with great power. Again in the Doctrine and Covenants we read how the Spirit-assisted flow of knowledge between giver and receiver is the very essence of the inspired teaching:

"Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

"And if it be by some other way it is not of God.

"And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

"If it be some other way it is not of God.

"Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?

"Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together" (D&C 50:17-22).

Our teaching will be effective if we approach it humbly through prayer and study. We will then be assisted by the Spirit in imparting the word, consistent and in harmony with what the Lord would have us teach.

Example of a teacher's influence

Most teachers never realize the full impact of their teaching. I am certain a special Primary teacher never anticipated that the way she taught would impress me so much that many years later I would emulate her teaching technique in a boardroom in New York City. She was very skilled in holding our attention by the use of visual aids. A flannel board, which she used in her presentations, was popular in those days.

Now fast-forward with me to a critical time in my professional career. In 1962 I accepted a position in New York as the controller of a large retail firm. One of my new responsibilities was to make a budget presentation to the board of directors. Weeks before the presentation, I was called into the office of the president of the firm and told how demanding the board of directors was on the person who presented the budget. I was warned to make a presentation that would captivate the board and guarantee support for our proposed budget. I left his office

feeling overwhelmed and burdened with self-doubt.

The next day I visited the boardroom, looked around, and tried to find a way that I could make the presentation effective. As I sat in the boardroom, I observed a large piece of flannel that covered the better part of the wall. I'm sure it had been placed there for its acoustic value. As I looked at the large piece of flannel, I thought of my Primary teacher and the use of the flannel board. I sent to Salt Lake for some flannel-backed paper. When it arrived, I prepared three different projections of the budget on that paper.

As the budget presentation was made and the discussion followed, I could pull off one budget projection and replace it with another as appropriate. The members of the board were fascinated with my presentation using the flannel board technique. Each time I would present one of our second options and tell the board the consequences, they would immediately go back to the first budget projection, the one we really wanted to have approved. The presentation seemed to be very effective, and when it was over, I was complimented, thanks to my Primary teacher. I don't know if the presentation was the reason or not, but the following week I was called into the president's office and informed that the board of directors had approved my promotion from the management level to the officer level.

This is just a simple example of how effective teaching, whether it be in the home, a Church classroom, or some other place, can have a profound effect on an individual and his or her future. A great teacher can make a great difference in a great many lives.

President David O. McKay gave us this instruction on the importance of teaching: "Teaching is the noblest profession in the world. Upon the proper education of youth depend the permanency and purity of home, the safety and

perpetuity of the nation. The parent gives the child an opportunity to live; the teacher enables the child to live well" (David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals* [1953], 436).

May God bless us that we will be more determined to study and prepare and improve our abilities to be effective

teachers. Let us all remember that it is through inspired teaching that the gospel message is carried to the world. It is my humble prayer that we will all accept the challenge to teach our brothers and sisters the word of God in all diligence. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Joe J. Christensen

Overcome greed and selfishness

They say the gospel is to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comforted. My purpose today is to speak to the comforted: the rich, the poor, and all of us in between.

The Lord has said, "Wo unto you rich men, . . . for your riches will canker your souls." He has also said, "Wo unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, . . . [and] whose eyes are full of greediness."¹

Many of you probably have heard this little prayer somebody wrote:

"Dear God,

"So far today I have done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or overly indulgent. But in a few minutes, Lord, I am going to get out of bed, and from then on, I am probably going to need a lot more help."

When it comes to overcoming being greedy, selfish, and overly indulgent, we all need a lot more help. In his candid manner, President Brigham Young said: "The worst fear . . . I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church. . . . My greater fear . . . is that they cannot stand wealth."²

Our prosperity brings some real challenges because many are getting rich, more of us are waxing fat, and as a result of greed, selfishness, and overindulgence,

we could lose the Spirit and literally kick ourselves out of the Church.

Materialism consuming our thoughts

Money and material things are on the minds of almost everyone. As Morris Chalfant wrote: "The great [question] of the twentieth century is[,] 'How can I acquire wealth?' No question occupies a larger place in the minds and . . . hearts of . . . people today than this. . . . This is true of men in every station and in every walk of life."³

Money in and of itself is not an evil, but as Paul taught Timothy, it is the *love* of money that is the root of all evil.⁴ There are some of the wealthy who deal with their prosperity very well, using their resources to bless others and build the kingdom. For many, however, wealth presents major difficulties.

As we deal with the materialism that threatens us, here are four suggestions for each of us to consider.

Wants are not needs

First, we should not confuse wants with needs.

My mother taught me an important lesson along these lines. For many years my father had a practice of trading for a new car every year. Then shortly after World War II when grain prices increased, we were surprised one day when Dad drove home in a more expensive car.

One morning my mother asked, "How much more did the new car cost than the other one?"

When Dad told her, my mother said, "Well, the other car has always been able to get me where I need to go. I think we ought to give the difference to someone who needs it more than we do."

And so it was. The next year Dad returned to the less-expensive cars, and they continued their generous ways.

If we are not careful, it is easy for our wants to become needs. Remember the line "There, there, little luxury, don't you cry. You'll be a necessity by and by."

Avoid spoiling children

Second, we should avoid spoiling children by giving them too much.

In our day many children grow up with distorted values because we as parents overindulge them. Whether you are well-to-do or, like most of us, of more modest means, we as parents often attempt to provide children with almost everything they want, thus taking away from them the blessing of anticipating, of longing for something they do not have. One of the most important things we can teach our children is to deny themselves. Instant gratification generally makes for weak people. How many truly great individuals do you know who never had to struggle?

Elder Maxwell has voiced this concern when he said: "A few of our wonderful youth and young adults in the Church are unstretched. They have almost a free pass. Perks are provided, including cars complete with fuel and insurance—all paid for by parents who sometimes listen in vain for a few courteous and appreciative words. What is thus taken for granted . . . tends to underwrite selfishness and a sense of entitlement."⁵

A wise young mother said: "I choose not to give our children what I can afford to give them. I hold back for their sake."

In the words of Fred Gosman, "Children who always get what they want will want as long as they live."⁶ And somewhere along the line it is important for the character development of our children to learn that "the earth still revolves around the sun" and not around them.⁷ Rather, we should train our children to ask themselves the question, How is the world a better place because they are in it?

We live in a world of entertainment in full color with a lot of fast action, a world in which many children grow up thinking that if it isn't fun, it is boring and not worthwhile. Even in family activities we need to strike a balance between play and work. Some of my most memorable experiences while growing up centered around family activities: learning how to shingle a roof, build a fence, or working in the garden. Rather than being all work and no play, for many of our children it is almost all play and very little work.

As a consequence of overindulgence, many children leave homes ill-prepared to meet the real world. President Hinckley said: "Of course, we need to earn a living. The Lord told Adam that in the sweat of his face should he eat bread all the days of his life. It is important that we qualify ourselves to be self-reliant, particularly that every young man at the time of marriage be ready and able to assume the responsibilities of providing for his companion and for the children who may come to that home."⁸

All too many enter marriage who have never learned to cook, sew, or develop other important life skills. Ignorance of these needed skills, along with the lack of understanding of the management of money, sow the seeds for many failures in our children's marriages.

I fear that in many cases we are rearing children who are slaves to expensive fads and fashions. Remember the scripture "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."⁹ How do we

determine where our treasure is? To do so, we need to evaluate the amount of time, money, and thought we devote to something. Might it not be well to evaluate how much focus we place on shopping and spending?

This does not mean that our children should not dress in some of the appropriate clothing that is in fashion because that can be very important to them. But they don't need a closet full. As members of the Church, we have a responsibility to present ourselves in a well-groomed, attractive, and modest manner. With good planning this can be done without being driven to spend extravagantly on our clothing.

More than 10 times the prophets in the Book of Mormon warn us about the problems of pride related to the nature of our clothing. Here is one example of them: "And it came to pass . . . that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen. . . . In all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel."¹⁰

We would do well if in all these areas of material things we and our children would follow the oft-quoted motto of our pioneer forebears to "fix it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without."

Live modestly and avoid debt

Third, as we have heard so often, live modestly and avoid debt as if it were a plague.

President Hinckley recently reminded us of President Heber J. Grant's statement: "'If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet.' (*Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [1941], 111)."¹¹

Samuel Johnson said, "Do not accustom yourself to consider debt as an inconvenience, you will find it [to be] a calamity."

How much house do we really need to accommodate our family comfortably? We should not endanger ourselves either spiritually or economically by acquiring homes which are ostentatious, feed our vanity, and go far beyond our needs.

If we are to be self-reliant and in a position to share, obviously we must acquire some resources. If we live within our means and avoid debt, resources can be accumulated. There are those with average incomes who, over a lifetime, do amass some means, and there are those who receive large salaries who do not. What is the difference? It is simply spending less than they receive, saving along the way, and taking advantage of the power of compound interest.

Financial consultants indicate that "most people have it all wrong about wealth. . . . Wealth is not the same as income. If you make a good income each year and spend it all, you are not getting wealthier. You are just living high. Wealth is what you accumulate, not what you spend."¹²

Give generously to others

Finally, be generous in giving and sharing with others.

The more our hearts and minds are turned to assisting others less fortunate than we, the more we will avoid the spiritually cankerous effects that result from greed, selfishness, and overindulgence. Our resources are a stewardship, not our possessions. I am confident that we will literally be called upon to make an accounting before God concerning how we have used them to bless lives and build the kingdom.

The prophet Jacob provides us with some excellent counsel about how riches

can be acquired and for what they should be used:

"But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

"And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them . . . for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted."¹³

In addition to paying an honest tithing, we should be generous in assisting the poor. How much should we give? I appreciate the thought of C. S. Lewis on this subject. He said: "I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. . . . If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, . . . they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them."¹⁴

There are many worthy individuals and causes to which we might contribute. We should give generously to the fast offering and humanitarian funds of the Church. And if we desire our families to live lives of depth and meaning, we must have the courage to examine honestly where our treasures lie and avoid the pitfalls that result from greed, selfishness, and overindulgence.

Let us each remember:

- First: Not to confuse wants with needs.
- Second: Avoid spoiling our children.
- Third: Live modestly and avoid debt.
- Fourth: Be generous in giving to others.

Giving really is at the heart of our faith. At this Easter time, we again commemorate that "God [our Heavenly Father] so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,"¹⁵ who came to the earth and could have possessed any material thing but rather chose to give to all of us an example of a simple life free

from any shade of greed, selfishness, or overindulgence. May we strive daily to live more like He lived, the ultimate example of a life of depth and meaning.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, this is His Church led by living prophets, and His tomb was literally empty on that third day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 56:16–17.
2. Reported in James S. Brown, *Life of a Pioneer* (1900), 122–23; see also Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* (1936), 128.
3. Morris Chalfant, "The Sin of the Church," *Wesleyan Methodist*, quoted by John H. Vandenberg in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 131; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1965, 1154.
4. See 1 Timothy 6:10.
5. BYU devotional, 12 Jan. 1999.
6. *Spoiled Rotten: American Children and How to Change Them* (1992), 37.
7. *Spoiled Rotten*, inside front cover, 11.
8. "Thou Shalt Not Covet," *Ensign*, Mar. 1990, 2.
9. Matthew 6:21.
10. Alma 4:6.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53.
12. Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko, *The Millionaire Next Door* (1996), 1.
13. Jacob 2:18–19.
14. *Mere Christianity* (1952), 67.
15. John 3:16.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Following the singing, Sister Carol B. Thomas, first counselor in the Young Women

general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Twelve.

The chorus and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Sister Carol B. Thomas

Temples bless members' lives

Brothers and sisters, I *think* I am happy to be here today.

My assignment with the Young Women presidency puts me in many happy situations. One month ago a training assignment took me to Guayaquil, Ecuador. I arrived at the hotel after dark. The next morning I opened my curtains, and there across the valley was a beautiful granite building standing majestically on the Santa Ana Hills. Its stunning beauty was evident, but it wasn't until I saw the angel Moroni on top that I, with tears in my eyes, realized that here was a temple, a symbol of the glorious blessings that will come to the members of the Church in that part of the world.

"Temples are unique among all buildings. . . . They are places of covenants and promises. At their altars we kneel before God our Creator and are given promise of his everlasting blessings" (Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 632-33). Wherever we went, we found that temples are being built, temples that will lift the Saints of God and change the face of countries, whether in South America or throughout the world.

Has it only been one year since our beloved prophet announced the building of 32 more temples? President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "This is the greatest era of temple building in all the history of the world" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 629).

Our youngest son, Spencer, now serving a mission in Mongolia, wrote that his mission president was addressing

the missionaries and members concerning their duty in building up the Church there. "As President Cox opened the discussion for questions, the first response was, 'When is Mongolia going to have a temple?' These people," Spencer said, "are hungering for the gospel to play a greater part in their lives. They don't even have a Book of Mormon yet, and they want a temple."

Why all this fuss about temples? Simply put, the purpose of temples "is to redeem all mankind who are obedient to the laws and commandments of God. The gospel in its fulness was revealed to Adam. . . . [And] Saints of all ages have had temples in one form or another" (David B. Haight, in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 29-30; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 23-24).

Preparing families to attend the temple

Joseph Smith said, "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead" (*History of the Church*, 6:313). If this is true, then as parents and family members our greatest challenge is to prepare our families for the temple. Parents have the primary responsibility, but grandparents, aunts and uncles, even brothers and sisters all may teach the family.

When my husband and I were married in the temple, we understood the importance of never discussing the temple outside the temple, not because the ceremonies were secret but because they were sacred. "They are kept confidential lest they be given to those who are unprepared" (Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy*

Temple [booklet, 1982], 2). But in a family setting, there are many precious truths that, with sensitivity and common sense, will help prepare our children for the temple.

Consider:

- *The sacred nature of the temple clothing.* In the temples all are dressed in white. White is the symbol of purity.

- *The temple is the Lord's classroom.* President Hinckley has said, "[The temple] becomes a school of instruction in the sweet and sacred things of God" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 635).

- *What it means to be worthy for the temple.* Can we teach our children that receiving one's endowment and the wearing of the sacred garment will not require a change of wardrobe or lifestyle if the principles of temple worthiness are understood and lived in their earlier years? A young woman who wears knee-length skirts will not have to buy a new wardrobe after she receives her endowment in the temple. A young man who anticipates going to the temple will respect the Church's moral standards in his social behavior.

- *Understanding gospel language.* What do the words *endowment*, *ordinances*, *sealings*, and *keys* really mean? The story is told of a little boy who overheard his parents discussing doing temple sealings. He asked, "Are you going to do the walls next week?"

Teach children about the temple

Where may we teach our children? Family home evening is the formal setting, but there are so many more places where we may talk about our spiritual feelings for the temple. One of my favorite times was when my children were in bed at night. Occasionally I would lie on their bed and tell them of spiritual things. There in the peace and the quiet, the sweet Spirit can bear testimony to their heart and soul that the things you are saying are true.

We may assume that Joseph and Mary taught their family about the temple. As Elder Perry has discussed, when the Savior was a 12-year-old boy, His parents took Him to the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. When Jesus was left behind, He was not found in places or entertainments for a boy His age. His parents found Him in the temple. Perhaps when Mary tucked Him in bed at night, she shared her testimony of these sacred and precious truths.

My first memory of temples was when I was a little girl. I knew the temple must be a pretty wonderful place because my parents faithfully attended, and they always came home together in such a good mood. I understood the sacred nature of the temple clothing by the way my mother spoke about it with love and respect.

President Howard W. Hunter has said: "Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say. . . . Keep a picture of a temple in your home that your children may see it" ("A Temple-Motivated People," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 5). I noticed every home I visited in Africa had a picture of a temple hung simply and beautifully on the wall.

Attending the temple brings blessings

New understanding comes as we prepare our families for the temple. May I share a few things I have learned:

1. *Going to the temple often provides balance in our lives.* After returning home we have an increased sense of well-being; the influence of the Spirit can shield us from the frustrations of the world. Listen to this promise by President Hinckley: "If there were more temple work done in the Church, there would be less . . . selfishness, less . . . contention, less . . . demeaning [of] others. The whole Church would increasingly be

lifted to greater heights of spirituality, love for one another, and obedience to the commandments of God" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 622).

2. *The spiritual atmosphere of the temple curbs our appetite for worldly things.* When we attend frequently, we no longer have such a need to wear the latest fashion, and we are not so easily drawn to the entertainment of the world.

3. *The temple is a place of revelation.* Many years ago I was walking into the temple, and in my mind I heard the words, *Learn public speaking.* I thought to myself, *When will I ever have need for public speaking?* Over several months' period of time I tried very inadequately to conjure up some enthusiasm to obey the prompting I had received. I even checked out a tape from the local library by a public speaker who admitted that his goal was to someday speak in the Mormon Tabernacle. I thought at the time, *I'll never be speaking in the Tabernacle!*

Elder John A. Widtsoe has said, "At the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come to [us], as a revelation, the solution of the problems that vex [our lives]. . . . It is a place where revelations may be expected" ("Temple Worship," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 63-64).

4. *One of the biggest lessons I have learned is that Satan will try to keep us from going to the temple.* During a discussion with friends once, they shared with me that whenever they attend, they don't tell anybody they are going. They just jump into their cars and go because if they don't, something is sure to happen to keep them away.

I remember reading of a warning given by the president of the Logan Temple that Satan's followers will "whisper in the ears of the people persuading them not to go to the Temple" ("Genealogical Department," *Church News*, 12 Dec. 1936, 8). "Temple work brings so much resistance because it is the source of so much

spiritual power to the Latter-day Saints" (Boyd K. Packer, "The Holy Temple," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 36).

5. *The Spirit of Elijah is brooding in the land.* As we work with youth of the Church, we see they are being drawn to their temples.

In Nicaragua, Central America, a group of 49 young women and their leaders took 2,000 names to the Guatemala City Temple. It took each girl a year to save enough money to go. These faithful young women rode a bus almost two days' journey through three country borders and spent two or three days at the temple before returning home.

In another ward, young people have located the names of 10,000 ancestors as they have turned their hearts to their families. Where temples are available, we see youth doing baptisms for the dead, sometimes on an individual weekly basis.

6. *In the temple the Spirit of the Lord provides comfort and peace, especially during moments of despair.* Recently I met a 35-year-old woman in the temple. As we visited, I asked if her husband was with her. With a look of tenderness in her eyes, she shared with me that he had died of a brain tumor three months ago. The temple is her anchor; the Spirit found in the temple gives her comfort and peace, and perhaps her husband was there.

Attend as often as circumstances allow

Each of us may ask ourselves, "How often should I attend the temple?" Our leaders will never tell us how often we should attend because it is different for every person. Many women of various ages who live close to a temple try to go once a week. When one of my friends worked full time, she spent one day a month in the temple, attending several sessions. These women are obedient, but they also understand the strength of priesthood power that comes into their lives.

For young parents, attending the temple may be a once-a-month date. President Packer has said: "Perhaps you will understand . . . we are trying to establish family history as . . . a 'cottage industry.' . . . Couples raising little children should not feel inadequate or guilty . . . if they cannot afford the time or money to attend a distant temple frequently. Mother makes a contribution by noting important events, collecting pictures, bits of memorabilia, . . . all as it fits into the schedule of a busy mother" ("A Plea to Stake Presidents," leadership training meeting, 1 Apr. 1988, 5).

Emphasize the temple

My own mother didn't do scrapbooks, but she gave me a love for my heritage. She told me story after story about my ancestors as she taught me to love them.

President Packer continues: "Father and mother can speak of ordinances and

covenants. By the inflection of their voices, they can italicize the word 'temple' every time they say it. . . . In proper season, family obligations will be a bit less and income a bit more. Then members can and should give more to this sacred [temple] work" ("A Plea to Stake Presidents," 5).

We plead with you mothers and fathers to teach your sons and daughters the meaning of the temple covenants. Teach them that "wearing the garment is [a] sacred privilege. . . . [It] is an outward expression of an inner commitment to follow the Savior Jesus Christ" (First Presidency letter, 5 Nov. 1996, 2).

Brothers and sisters, as servants of the living God, we shall press forward in this sacred temple work. May we teach our children that as they spiritually prepare themselves for the temple, they may stand in the presence of the Lord, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Gratitude to God the Father

On this Easter weekend I wish to thank not only the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ but also His true Father, our spiritual Father and God, who, by accepting the sacrifice of His firstborn, perfect Son, blessed all of His children in those hours of atonement and redemption. Never more than at Easter time is there so much meaning in that declaration from the book of John which praises the Father as well as the Son: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."¹

I am a father, inadequate to be sure, but I cannot comprehend the burden it must have been for God in His heaven to

witness the deep suffering and Crucifixion of His Beloved Son in such a manner. His every impulse and instinct must have been to stop it, to send angels to intervene—but He did not intervene. He endured what He saw because it was the only way that a saving, vicarious payment could be made for the sins of all His other children, from Adam and Eve to the end of the world. I am eternally grateful for a perfect Father and His perfect Son, neither of whom shrank from the bitter cup nor forsook the rest of us who are imperfect, who fall short and stumble, who too often miss the mark.

Jesus' relationship with His Father

In considering such beauty of the "at-one-ment" in that first Easter season,

we are reminded that this relationship between Christ and His Father is one of the sweetest and most moving themes running through the Savior's ministry. Jesus' entire being, His complete purpose and delight, were centered in pleasing His Father and obeying His will. Of Him He seemed always to be thinking; to Him He seemed always to be praying. Unlike us, He needed no crisis, no discouraging shift in events to direct His hopes heavenward. He was already instinctively, longingly looking that way.

In all His mortal ministry Christ seems never to have had a single moment of vanity or self-interest. When one young man tried to call Him "good," He deflected the compliment, saying only one was deserving of such praise—His Father.

In the early days of His ministry He said humbly, "I can of mine own self do nothing: . . . I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."²

Following His teachings, which stunned the audience with their power and authority, He would say: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. . . . I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true."³ Later He would say again, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."⁴

To those who wanted to see the Father, to hear from God directly that Jesus was what He said He was, He answered: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."⁵ When Jesus wanted to preserve unity among His disciples, He prayed using the example of His own relationship with God: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are [one]."⁶

Even as He moved toward the Crucifixion, He restrained His Apostles who

would have intervened, by saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"⁷ When that unspeakable ordeal was finished, He uttered what must have been the most peaceful and deserved words of His mortal ministry. At the end of His agony, He whispered, "It is finished. . . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."⁸ Finally it was over. Finally He could go home.

I confess that I have reflected at length upon that moment and the Resurrection, which was shortly to follow it. I have wondered what that reunion must have been like: the Father that loved this Son so much, the Son that honored and revered His Father in every word and deed. For two who were one as these two were one, what must that embrace have been like? What must that divine companionship be yet? We can only wonder and admire. And we can, on an Easter weekend, yearn to live worthily of some portion of that relationship ourselves.

Strengthen relationships with children

As a father, I wonder if I and all other fathers could do more to build a sweeter, stronger relationship with our sons and daughters here on earth. Dads, is it too bold to hope that our children might have some small portion of the feeling for us that the Divine Son felt for His Father? Might we earn more of that love by trying to be more of what God was to His child? In any case, we do know that a young person's developing concept of God centers on characteristics observed in that child's earthly parents.⁹

Absence of fathers damages children

For that reason and many others, I suppose no book I have read in recent months has alarmed me more than a work entitled *Fatherless America*. In this study the author speaks of "fatherless-

ness" as "the most harmful demographic trend of this generation," the leading cause of damage to children. It is, he is convinced, the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from poverty to crime to adolescent pregnancy to child abuse to domestic violence. Among the principal social issues of our time is the flight of fathers from their children's lives.¹⁰

Of even greater concern than the physical absenteeism of some fathers is the spiritually or emotionally absent father. These are fatherly sins of omission that are probably more destructive than sins of commission. Why are we not surprised that when 2,000 children of all ages and backgrounds were asked what they appreciated most about their fathers, they answered universally, "He spends time with me"?¹¹

A young Laurel I met on a conference assignment not long ago wrote to me after our visit and said, "I wish my dad knew how much I need him spiritually and emotionally. I crave any kind comment, any warm personal gesture. I don't think he knows how much it would mean to me to have him take an active interest in what is going on in my life, to offer to give me a blessing, or just spend some time together. I know he worries that he won't do the right thing or won't say the words well. But just to have him try would mean more than he could ever know. I don't want to sound ungrateful because I know he loves me. He sent me a note once and signed it 'Love, Dad.' I treasure that note. I hold it among my dearest possessions."¹²

Most fathers are wonderful

Well, as with that young woman, I don't want this talk to sound ungrateful, nor is it meant to make fathers feel they have fallen short. Most fathers are wonderful. Most dads are terrific. I don't know who wrote these little storybook

verses remembered from my youth, but they go something like this:

Only a dad with a tired face,
Coming home from the daily race, . . .
Toiling and striving from day to day,
Facing whatever may come his way,

...
Glad in his heart that his own rejoice
To see him come home and to hear
his voice. . . .

Only a dad, but he gives his all,
[Smoothing] the way for his children
small,

Doing with courage [so] stern and
grim

The deeds that his father did for him.
These are the lines that for him I pen:
Only a dad, but the best of men.¹³

Follow God's example of fatherhood

And, brethren, even when we are not "the best of men," even in our limitations and inadequacy, we can keep making our way in the right direction because of the encouraging teachings set forth by a Divine Father and demonstrated by a Divine Son. With a Heavenly Father's help we can leave more of a parental legacy than we suppose.

One new father wrote: "Often as I watch my son watch me, I am taken back to moments with my own dad, remembering how vividly I wanted to be just like him. I remember having a plastic razor and my own can of foaming cream, and each morning I would shave when he shaved. I remember following his footsteps back and forth across the grass as he mowed the lawn in summer.

"Now I want my son to follow my lead, and yet it terrifies me to know he probably will. Holding this little boy in my arms, I feel a 'heavenly homesickness,' a longing to love the way God loves, to comfort the way He comforts, to protect the way He protects. The answer to all the fears of my youth was always

‘What would Dad do?’ Now that I have a child to raise I am counting on a Heavenly Father to tell me exactly that.”¹⁴

Influence of a father’s love

A friend from college days wrote to me recently, saying: “Much in my chaotic childhood was uncertain, but one thing I knew for sure: that my dad loved me. That certainty was the anchor of my young life. I came to know and love the Lord because my father loved him. I have never called anyone a fool or taken the Lord’s name in vain because he told me the Bible said I shouldn’t. I have always paid my tithing because he taught me it was a privilege to do so. I have always tried to take responsibility for my mistakes because my father did. Even though he was estranged from the Church for a [time], at the end of his life he served a mission and worked faithfully in the temple. In his will he said that any money left over from taking care of his [family] should go to the Church. He loved the Church with all of his heart. And because of him, so do I.”¹⁵

Surely that must be the spiritual application of Lord Byron’s couplet: “Yet in my lineaments they trace / Some features of my father’s face.”¹⁶

Scriptural examples of a father’s impact

At a vulnerable moment in young Nephi’s life, his prophetic future was determined when he said, “I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father.”¹⁷ At the turning point of the prophet Enos’s life, he said it was “the words which I had often heard my father speak”¹⁸ which prompted one of the great revelations recorded in the Book of Mormon. And sorrowing Alma the Younger, when confronted by the excruciating memory of his sins, “remembered also to have heard [his] father prophesy . . . concerning the coming of . . . Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for

the sins of the world.”¹⁹ That brief memory, that personal testimony offered by his father at a time when the father may have felt nothing was sinking in, not only saved the spiritual life of this, his son, but changed forever the history of the Book of Mormon people.

Of Abraham, the grand patriarch, God said, “*I know him. . . . He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.*”²⁰

I bear my witness this Easter weekend that “great things [will] be required at the hand[s] of [the] fathers,” as the Lord declared to the Prophet Joseph Smith.²¹ Surely the greatest of those things will be to have done all they could for the happiness and spiritual safety of the children they are to nurture.

In that most burdensome moment of all human history, with blood appearing at every pore and an anguished cry upon His lips, Christ sought Him whom He had always sought—His Father. “Abba,” He cried, “Papa,” or from the lips of a younger child, “Daddy.”²²

This is such a personal moment it almost seems a sacrilege to cite it. A Son in unrelieved pain, a Father His only true source of strength, both of them staying the course, making it through the night—together.

Fathers, this Easter weekend may we be renewed in our task as parents, bolstered by images of this Father and this Son as we embrace our children and stand with them forever, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 3:16.
2. John 5:30.
3. John 7:16, 28.
4. John 12:49.
5. John 14:7, 9.
6. John 17:11.
7. John 18:11.
8. John 19:30; Luke 23:46.

9. See "Parent-Child Relationships and Children's Images of God," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Mar. 1997, 25-43.
10. David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (1995), 1.
11. See "Becoming a Better Father," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 27.
12. Personal correspondence.
13. Edgar A. Guest, "Only a Dad," in *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People*, ed. Jack M. Lyon and others (1996), 90-91.
14. Personal correspondence.
15. Personal correspondence from Robert A. Rees.
16. *Parishina*, stanza 13, lines 285-86.
17. 1 Nephi 2:16.
18. Enos 1:3.
19. Alma 36:17.
20. Genesis 18:19; italics added.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 29:48.
22. Mark 14:36.

The chorus sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

President Hinckley

Sister Carol Thomas of the Young Women presidency and Elder Jeffrey Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve have spoken to us, with the chorus singing "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service in carrying this conference to the world.

We express deep appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus for the beautiful music they have given and to Brother Bowden particularly for what may be his final presentation in this capacity. He has done a tremendous work, and we are so deeply grateful to him.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our next speaker and final speaker, following which the choir will sing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." The benediction will be given by Elder Carl B. Pratt of the Seventy, following which the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President James E. Faust

My dear brothers, sisters, and friends, I earnestly seek the influence of the Spirit during the few moments that I stand at this pulpit. I pray for guidance and wisdom so that what I say may be acceptable to our Heavenly Father.

People have looked to our day

Brethren and sisters, ours is the time of which the Prophet Joseph Smith spoke, "upon which prophets, priests and kings [in ages past] have dwelt with peculiar delight; [and] have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful

anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; . . . we are the favored people that God has [chosen] to bring about the Latter-day glory."¹ Since the Prophet Joseph said this in 1842, men have acquired more knowledge than in all of the time before his ministry.

The two greatest historical events

We stand on the brink of the next century. From this vantage point, we need to remember that the most significant events in the last 2,000 years were not the marvels of science, technology,

and travel. They were the Savior's Atonement and the Restoration of the gospel with the priesthood keys and authority. These two singular events will continue to be of transcendent importance to mankind as we move forward in time. The past, present, and future pivot on these marvelous divine interventions.

Secular knowledge helps the Lord's work

On January 1, 1901, in this very building, the First Presidency greeted the world as follows:

"A new century dawns upon the world today. The hundred years just completed were the most momentous in the history of man upon this planet. It would be impossible in a hundred days to make even a brief summary of the notable events, the marvelous developments, the grand achievements and the beneficial inventions and discoveries, which mark the progress of the ten decades now left behind in the ceaseless march of humanity. The very mention of the nineteenth century suggested advancement, improvement, liberty and light. Happy are we to have lived amidst its wonders and shared in the riches of its treasures of intelligence!"²

When this statement was made 100 years ago, people still traveled by horse and buggy. The age of the telephone and electricity was just dawning. There was no air travel, no e-mail, no fax machines, no Internet. There has been an explosion of secular knowledge. I believe that God has opened up these treasures of intelligence to enhance His purposes on the earth. The new century will bring exponential advances in that treasury.

Prepare spiritually for the future

My message today is about preparing ourselves for the future. This is our time, and it involves more than just looking at the clock. Some of us are watching our

clocks quite anxiously as they tick their way inexorably into the next century. Our awareness of time affects how we think and act. This is illustrated by the story about the clock in a restaurant window. It "had stopped a few minutes past noon. One day a friend asked the owner if he knew the clock was not running. 'Yes,' replied the restaurant man, 'but you would be surprised to know how many people look at that clock, think they are hungry, and come in to get something to eat.'"³

If only there were some kind of divine timepiece that would arouse a spiritual hunger in people! What are most people hungry for? I believe it is spiritual and moral leadership. Increases in technology, scientific inventions, and medical miracles have been marvelous and incredible. But we must use them properly to bring us joy, and that requires spiritual and moral leadership. Civilization has been around for a long time. While computers are a great convenience and wonderfully helpful in reducing drudgery, we are reminded that the Nephites "lived after the manner of happiness"⁴ even without computers. Electronic marvels can actually bring some pitfalls. For example, surfing the Internet may draw us into that which, if pursued, can destroy our marriages, our homes, and even our lives.

Fear the breakdown of morals, not Y2K

Today many people are obsessed with the Y2K problem and worry about the date coming up right because of the way computers measure time. As someone once said about time: "[It] changes with time: in youth, time marches on; in middle age, time flies; and in old age, time runs out."⁵ We have come to rely on electronics for much of our daily work, and we are naturally concerned about the need to reprogram computers to move into the next century. While some

glitches may occur, I am optimistic that no great catastrophic computer breakdown will disrupt society as we move into the next century. I have a far greater fear of the disruption of the traditional values of society.

Indeed, I am more concerned about the failure of our moral computers of honesty, integrity, decency, civility, and sexual purity. How many people today are truly incorruptible? So many get caught up in waves of popular issues and tides of rhetoric. This breakdown of moral values is happening because we are separating the teachings of God from personal conduct. An honorable man or woman will personally commit to live up to certain self-imposed expectations, with no need of an outside check or control. I would hope that we can load our moral computers with three elements of integrity: dealing justly with oneself, dealing justly with others, and recognizing the law of the harvest.

Face the future with the Savior

I also hope our personal worship of the Savior will remain uncomplicated so that the simple majesty of gospel truth can work to bring us peace. We must keep our faith simple and our worship pure. Religion is more than a ritual; it is righteousness.

I have no doubt that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an institution can meet the challenge of entering into the year 2000. Growth in membership, the number of new temples, and the inspired organization are all in place to move with strength into the next century. Having the images of technology in our minds is commendable, but in order to move forward spiritually we need to have the Savior's image in our countenances⁶ and in our hearts.

As the milestone year 2000 approaches, excitement abounds because we enter not only into a new century but

also the third thousand years since the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the World. This solitary figure, Jesus of Nazareth, without position or status or wealth, changed the world. So far as we know, during His life He owned no land nor any worldly things except the simple clothes He wore.

His message was also simple: "Peace be to this house."⁷ "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."⁸ "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."⁹ With these and other simple principles, He introduced a new way of life. He taught of love, the doctrines of hope and salvation, the pathway for peace in this world and the world to come. He spoke of the Resurrection, when spiritual darkness would be removed and the bright light and hope of eternal life given to all mankind.

Following His ascension into heaven, Peter, James, and John and the other unlettered Apostles and Seventy became men of steel as they carried this enlightened message to the world. With their primitive means of travel and communication, this small missionary band went forward boldly with this new message of hope. They did a majestic work in carrying the inspired doctrines of Christ far and wide.

Technology aids mission of the Church

Advances in travel and communication have helped the institutional Church move forward at a rapid pace in proclaiming the gospel. Media referrals are introducing our missionaries to more investigators. Church-produced videos help the missionaries explain the gospel message and the mission of the Church. But are we as individuals doing our part to move this holy work forward? Today the information highway, with all of its means of communication, affords an opportunity for us to carry the mission with

a thousandfold greater speed and ease than Peter, James, and John and the other intrepid disciples. Thousands of messengers, their feet shod with the gospel of peace, now go forth with the message of God.

Technology provides significant support to the ongoing mission of the Church. In the late 1950s, as the jet age began, President David O. McKay boarded a jet after dedicating the temple in New Zealand. As he arrived in Los Angeles, he said to Elder Henry D. Taylor and others, "Brethren, next Thursday when the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve meet, I am going to recommend that a stake be organized in New Zealand." He then said, "With these fast planes it will be possible for the General Authorities to travel swiftly to any part of the world, to visit stakes as they are organized."¹⁰ We now have hundreds of stakes outside of the United States.

Advances in communication and travel during this last century have hastened the pace at which the word of the Lord goes out from Zion.¹¹ I feel much like Isaiah, who spoke of our time, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."¹² I believe that this marvelous outpouring of knowledge has heightened our ability to take the Lord's saving message to the world, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations."¹³

Deeper, daily worship necessary

As we approach the year 2000, the pressure of mastering the wonders of technology becomes more and more challenging. In this pursuit we could become technologically wise but spiritually illiterate. Undoubtedly, education unlocks the doors of the future for us. But we should be sure that our computers of faith are working so that we can constantly remain on the course of rig-

teousness. We can do this with daily prayer, scripture reading, family home evenings, and keeping our covenants and ordinances on a daily basis. Our worship needs to go deeper than the outward symbols, embracing the simple, profound principles of human conduct embodied in the Savior's teachings: "Repent and [turn] unto me with full purpose of heart."¹⁴ We should in faith "become as [little children] and be baptized in [His] name."¹⁵ The Savior's injunction to us is, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you."¹⁶

The most difficult of all challenges given to us is, "I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect."¹⁷ Perfection is an eternal goal. While we cannot be perfect in mortality, striving for it is a commandment which ultimately, through the Atonement, we can keep.

Remember, the marvels of modern science and technology will not exalt us. Indeed, the great challenge we face as we prepare for the future is to be more spiritually enlightened. All of this new, expanding intellectual property must certainly be mastered through great effort and learning. But technical savvy is not fully useful unless there is a spiritual purpose and meaning to it. I am certain the Lord expects us to apply it to the advancement of His purposes and the blessing of mankind, but we must adopt those lofty ideals as personal goals and desires before we can direct technology to those purposes.

Follow Church leaders, love others

As we approach the beginning of the third thousand years since the Savior's birth, how should the 10 million of us who have been baptized in His name carry on His work? We can do this by following the direction set by President

Hinckley, the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the other General Authorities. Much of our work ought to focus on changing our own lives and thinking. It should encompass what the Savior called the new commandment: "That ye love one another."¹⁸ To all of us, the feeding of His sheep is a continuing responsibility.¹⁹

Greater knowledge, blessings in future

As the Prophet Joseph indicated, this is our day and time. I believe the future holds greater blessings for mankind than ever before. I rejoice in this great outpouring of spiritual knowledge, when "the earth [is being] filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."²⁰ Knowledge and intelligence are dropping "as the gentle rain from heaven"²¹ to bless all of our lives. We should seize every opportunity to move forward in faith, looking beyond the year 2000 into a future bright with hope, acknowledging that all good gifts come by divine providence. With such increased knowledge comes a higher responsibility. If we work hard, wisely manage our personal stewardships, and live providently, the Lord will prosper us in our use of this heightened knowledge to advance His holy work.

President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet for our day and time. He is keenly aware of this higher responsibility and is energetically doing all he can to bring about God's purposes on earth. Each of us needs to do all we can to help move this work forward. As the Psalmist said, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."²² I have a conviction of this and so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 4:609-10.
2. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965-75), 3:333.
3. In Jacob M. Braude, comp., *Braude's Treasury of Wit and Humor* (1964), 178.
4. 2 Nephi 5:27.
5. Evan Esar, comp., *20,000 Quips and Quotes* (1995), 812.
6. See Alma 5:14.
7. Luke 10:5.
8. Matthew 22:37.
9. Matthew 22:39.
10. Henry D. Taylor, in Conference Report, Apr. 1960, 118-19.
11. See Micah 4:2.
12. Isaiah 11:9.
13. Luke 24:47.
14. 3 Nephi 10:6.
15. 3 Nephi 11:37.
16. 3 Nephi 12:44.
17. 3 Nephi 12:48.
18. John 13:34.
19. See John 21:15-17.
20. Habakkuk 2:14.
21. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1, line 184; see also Deuteronomy 32:2.
22. Psalm 118:23.

The chorus sang "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today."

Elder Carl B. Pratt offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 169th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1999, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music was provided by a combined choir from Ricks College, under the direction of Brothers Kevin Brower and Clyde Luke, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from Ricks College, under the direction of Kevin Brower and

Clyde Luke, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Richard D. Allred of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder Richard D. Allred offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "O Love That Glorifies the Son." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote. Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will then read the report of the Church Audit Committee. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1998.

The choir sang "O Love That Glorifies the Son."

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I, Brother Monson, now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the

First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Those who can join with us in extending a vote of appreciation to Elders Adhemar Damiani, Ernani Teixeira, and Robert S. Wood for their service as Area Authority Seventies, please manifest it. Thank you.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Adhemar Damiani, Stephen B. Oveson, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Richard H. Winkel, and Robert S. Wood as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Benjamin De Hoyos, Steven E. Snow, and Pedro Jorge da Cruz Penha as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it. Thank you. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as at present constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and your prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy to take their places on the stand.

Church Audit Committee Report for 1998

Ted E. Davis

The Church Audit Committee consists of three members who are independent of all Church officers, employees, departments, and Church-affiliated organizations. We report directly to the First Presidency and have access to all records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibilities.

The Church also has an auditing department that is independent of all other Church operations and departments. The Church Auditing Department is separate and independent from the Church Audit Committee. The Church Auditing Department's staff consists of certified

public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors. The department audits the various financial statements of the Church in accordance with recognized professional auditing standards. It also monitors contributions and expenditures of local ecclesiastical units.

The Church Audit Committee has reviewed the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over contributions and expenditures of Church funds and that safeguard assets of the Church. We have also reviewed budgeting, accounting and reporting, and auditing systems for the year ended 31 December 1998.

Expenditures of Church funds for 1998 were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under direction of the Appropriation and Budget Committees.

Church-affiliated organizations, including Deseret Trust Companies and Deseret Management Corporation and its subsidiaries, report to independent boards of directors, maintain their own accounting systems in accordance with accepted business practices, and report in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. These organizations are audited by the Church Auditing

Department and/or independent public accounting firms. Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education are also audited by independent public accounting firms.

Based on our review of financial, budgeting, and other control policies and procedures, and our review of all audit reports issued in 1998 and responses thereto, the Church Audit Committee is of the opinion that, in all material respects, Church contributions received and expended during the year ended 31 December 1998 have been managed in accordance with revelation and established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee
Ted E. Davis, chairman
Donald D. Salmon
Frank M. McCord

Church Statistical Report for 1998

F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, for the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the membership growth and status of the Church as of 31 December 1998. These statistics are based on 1998 reports available prior to this conference.

Church units

Stakes	2,505
Districts	631
Missions	331
Wards and branches	25,551

Church membership

Total membership	10,354,241
Increase in children of record	
during 1998	76,829
Converts baptized	
during 1998	299,134

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	57,853
------------------------	--------

Temples

Temples dedicated during 1998	2
(Monticello Utah and Preston England Temples)	
Temples in operation	53

Temples announced, including
those under construction
at the end of 1998 45

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Dallas N. Archibald of the First Quorum of the Seventy; *Sister June Dixon Oaks*, wife of Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Ferne Gardner Hunter*, widow of Elder Milton R. Hunter, former member of the First Council of the Seventy; *Sister Norma Creer Harbertson*, wife of Elder Robert B.

Harbertson, former member of the Seventy; *Sister Margaret Romney Jackson Judd*, former counselor in the Young Women general presidency; *Leonard James Arrington*, former Church historian; *Glenn E. Nielson*, former member of the Church Finance Committee.

President Faust

Our first speaker will be Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Richard G. Scott, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Selfishness is self-destruction

In one degree or another we all struggle with selfishness. Since it is so common, why worry about selfishness anyway? Because selfishness is really self-destruction in slow motion. No wonder the Prophet Joseph Smith urged, "Let every selfish feeling be not only buried, but annihilated" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 178). Hence annihilation—not moderation—is the destination!

Surging selfishness, for example, has shrunk some people into ciphers; they seek to erase their emptiness by sensations. But in the arithmetic of appetite, anything multiplied by zero still totals zero! Each spasm of selfishness narrows one's universe that much more by reducing his awareness of or concern with others. In spite of its outward, worldly swagger, such indulgent individualism is actually provincial, like goldfish in a bowl congratulating themselves on their self-sufficiency, never mind the food pellets or changes of water.

Long ago it took a Copernicus to tell a provincial world that this planet was not the center of the universe. Some selfish moderns need a Copernican reminder that they are not the center of the universe either!

Signs of selfishness

The early and familiar forms of selfishness are: building up self at the expense of others, claiming or puffing credit, being glad when others go wrong, resenting the genuine successes of others, preferring public vindication to private reconciliation, and taking "advantage of one because of his words" (2 Nephi 28:8).

By focusing on himself, a selfish person finds it easier to bear false witness, to steal, and covet, since nothing should be denied him. No wonder it is so easy for governments to pander to the appetites of the natural man, especially if the trains continue to run on time, reassuring him all the while that his permissiveness is somehow permissible.

Selfishness likewise causes us to be discourteous, disdainful, and self-centered while withholding from others needed goods, praise, and recognition as we selfishly pass them by and notice them not (see Mormon 8:39). Later on come rudeness, brusqueness, and the further flexing of elbows.

In contrast to the path of selfishness, there is no room for road rage on the straight and narrow way. There will be no spouse or child abuse when there is unselfish love at home. Furthermore, unselfishness is best grown in the family garden, and, likewise, diligently performing seemingly ordinary Church duties can further help us to overcome selfishness. The unselfish are also more free. As G. K. Chesterton said, if we can be interested in others, even if they are not interested in us, we will find ourselves "under a freer sky [and] in a street full of splendid strangers" (*Orthodoxy* [1959], 21).

Meekness cures selfishness

In daily discipleship, the many ways to express selfishness are matched by many ways to avoid it. Meekness is the real cure, for it does not merely mask selfishness but dissolves it! Smaller steps could include asking ourselves inwardly before undertaking an important action, *Whose needs am I really trying to meet?* Or in significant moments of self-expression, we can first count to 10. Such thoughtful filtering can multiply our offering by 10 as a mesh of reflective meekness filters out destructive and effusive ego.

We can also meekly let our ideas have a life of their own without oversponsoring them. Rather, let the Spirit impel our worthy ideas.

Selfishness accelerates cultural decline

Alas, gross, individual selfishness is finally acculturated. Then societies can

eventually become without order, without mercy, without love, perverted, and past feeling (see Moroni 9). Society thereby reflects a grim, cumulative tally which signals a major cultural decline. This happened anciently when a people actually became "weak, because of their transgression" (Helaman 4:26). Speaking behaviorally, when what was once the lesser voice of the people becomes more dominant, then the judgments of God and the consequences of foolish selfishness follow (see Mosiah 29:26–27).

Cultural decline is accelerated when single-interest segments of society become indifferent to general values once widely shared. This drift is facilitated by the indifferent or the indulgent as society is led carefully down to hell (see 2 Nephi 28:21). Some may not join in this drift, but instead they step aside, whereas once they might have constrained, as is their representative right. Of such circumstances Yeats lamented, "The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity" (W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming," lines 7–8).

Today in place of some traditionally shared values is a demanding conformity, pushed, ironically, by those who eventually will not tolerate those who once tolerated them. While incremental iniquity may not cause a huge decline all at once, the same somber direction is nevertheless continued, subtly and carefully, with no arousing jolts or jars (see 2 Nephi 28:21).

Such are some of the *proximate* consequences of selfishness, yet some of its consequences are *ultimate*—impacting us salvationally.

Selfishness: cause of all cardinal sins

Selfishness is actually the detonator of all the cardinal sins. It is the hammer for the breaking of the Ten Commandments, whether by neglecting parents, the Sabbath, or by inducing false witness, murder, and envy. No wonder the selfish

individual is often willing to break a covenant in order to fix an appetite. No wonder those who will later comprise the celestial kingdom, after they have paid a price, were once unrepentant adulterers, whoremongers, and those who both loved and made lies.

Some of the selfish wrongly believe that there is no divine law anyway, so there is no sin (see 2 Nephi 2:13). Situational ethics are thus made to order for the selfish. So in the management of self, one can conquer by his genius and strength because there really is no crime whatsoever (see Alma 30:17).

Selfishness distorts perception

Unsurprisingly, therefore, selfishness leads to terrible perceptual and behavioral blunders. For instance, Cain, corrupted by his seeking of power, said after slaying Abel, "I am free" (Moses 5:33; see also 6:15).

One of the worst consequences of severe selfishness, therefore, is this profound loss of proportionality, like straining at gnats while swallowing camels (see Matthew 23:24; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 23:21, footnote 24a). Today there are, for example, those who strain over various gnats but swallow the practice of partial-birth abortions. Small wonder, therefore, that selfishness magnifies a mess of pottage into a banquet and makes 30 pieces of silver look like a treasure trove.

Developmentally, what transpires is like what happened to an ancient group of children "who did grow up . . . that they became for themselves"—hardened and errant (3 Nephi 1:29; see also v. 30). Devastating cultural change can and does happen "in the space of not many years," including replacing the much-needed spirit of community with a diversified alliance of dalliance (see Helaman 4:26).

Determined to walk in his own way, the natural man often persists to the

point where he is "past feeling," having been sedated by pleasing the carnal mind (see 1 Nephi 17:45; see also Ephesians 4:19). Sadly, like the drug addict, he is always in need of a fresh fix.

Selfish people use others

The severely selfish *use* others but do not *love* them. Let the Uriahs of the world beware! (see 2 Samuel 11:3–17). Centuries before Christ, the prophet Jacob warned unchaste men, "Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them" (Jacob 2:35). When love waxes cold, let the poor and the needy beware too, for they will be neglected, as happened in ancient Sodom (see Matthew 24:12; see also Ezekiel 16:49). Strange as it seems, when severely selfish people are no longer little in their own sight, everybody else shrinks! (see 1 Samuel 15:17).

Even the early droplets of selfish decisions suggest a direction. Then the little inflecting rivulets come, merging into small brooks and soon into larger streams; finally one is swept along by a vast river which flows into the "gulf of misery and endless wo" (Helaman 5:12).

Watch for societal selfishness

We actually have an obligation to notice genuine, telltale societal signs. It was Jesus who warned, "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" suggesting the need for a different kind of weather forecasting (Matthew 16:3).

For what happens in cultural decline both leaders and followers are really accountable. Historically, of course, it is easy to criticize bad leaders, but we should not give followers a free pass. Otherwise, in their rationalization of their degeneration they may say they were just following orders, while the

leader was just ordering followers! However, much more is required of followers in a democratic society, wherein individual character matters so much in both leaders and followers.

Examples of unselfish leaders

The prophet Mormon unselfishly consented to lead a people who were in steep decline. He prayed for them, but confided that his prayers were without faith because of the people's wickedness (see Mormon 3:12). Other times a visionary leader, like Joseph in Egypt, lifts people out of the endangered routine they're in by preparing them for the specific challenges of the future (see Genesis 41:46-57). A few, like Lincoln, though in a political role, provide spiritual leadership as well. Lincoln, by the way, warned of how individuals of ambition and talents would continue to arise and that such an individual "thirsts and burns for distinction, and if possible . . . will have it, *whether at the expense of emancipating slaves or enslaving freemen*" (cited in John Wesley Hill, *Abraham Lincoln: Man of God* [1927], 74; italics in original).

Of unselfish George Washington it has been written: "In all history few men who possessed unassailable power have used that power so gently and self-effacingly for what their best instincts told them was the welfare of their neighbors and all mankind" (James Thomas

Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* [1974], xvi).

Power is most safe with those, like Washington, who are not in love with it! A narcissist society, in which each person is busy looking out for number one, can build neither brotherhood nor community. Aren't we glad in this Easter season and in all seasons that Jesus did not selfishly look out for number one?

No wonder we have been told, "Thou shalt have *no other gods before me*," and this includes self-worship! (Exodus 20:3; italics added). One way or another, the grossly selfish will finally be shattered, whimpering, against the jagged, concrete consequences of their selfishness.

A young girl's unselfish prayer

In contrast, as I close, consider unselfish Melissa Howes, whose comparatively young father died of cancer several months ago. Just before, Melissa, who was then nine, was voice in family prayer, pleading, "Heavenly Father, bless my daddy, and if you need him more than us, you can have him. We want him, but Thy will be done. And please help us not to be mad at you" (letter from Christie Howes, 25 Feb. 1998).

What spiritual submissiveness for one so young! What an unselfish understanding of the plan of salvation! May unselfish submissiveness be our path too, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

Elder Richard G. Scott

Eternal marriage is a blessing

One of the most beautiful, comforting doctrines of the Lord—one that brings immense peace, happiness, and unbounded joy—is that principle called eternal marriage. This doctrine means that a man and woman who love each

other deeply, who have grown together through the trials, joys, sorrows, and happiness of a shared lifetime can live beyond the veil together forever with their family who earn that blessing. That is not just an immensely satisfying dream; *it is a reality*. Any husband and wife who have shared the joys of marriage here on

earth would want that blessing. But only those who meet the requirements established by the Lord will receive that supernatural gift. I bear witness that all those things that have and will bring me the greatest happiness in life have roots in the temple ordinances. Decide now to receive the ordinances of the temple at the appropriate time. Don't let anything overcome that resolve.

Prepare for temple ordinances

If you are now ready to receive the ordinances of the temple, prepare carefully for that crowning event. Before entering the temple, you will be interviewed by your bishop and stake president for your temple recommend. Be honest and candid with them. That interview is not a test to be passed but an important step to confirm that you have the maturity and spirituality to receive the supernal ordinances and make and keep the edifying covenants offered in the house of the Lord. Personal worthiness is an essential requirement to enjoy the blessings of the temple. Anyone foolish enough to enter the temple unworthily will receive condemnation.

Worthy character is best forged from a life of consistent, correct choices centered in the teachings of the Master. For a moment I speak to you who are preparing for that sweet period of discovery known as courtship leading to eternal marriage. It can be a wondrously beautiful time of growth and sharing, a time when you should focus your thoughts, actions, and plans on two individuals: the parents of your own future children. Prepare to be a successful parent by being completely worthy in every thought and act during courtship.

Attributes to look for in a spouse

There is more to a foundation of eternal marriage than a pretty face or an

attractive figure. There is more to consider than popularity or charisma. As you seek an eternal companion, look for someone who is developing the essential attributes that bring happiness: a deep love of the Lord and of His commandments, a determination to live them, one that is kindly understanding, forgiving of others, and willing to give of self, with the desire to have a family crowned with beautiful children and a commitment to teach them the principles of truth in the home.

An essential priority of a prospective wife is the desire to be a wife and mother. She should be developing the sacred qualities that God has given His daughters to excel as a wife and mother: patience, kindness, a love of children, and a desire to care for them rather than seeking professional pursuits. She should be acquiring a good education to prepare for the demands of motherhood.

A prospective husband should also honor his priesthood and use it in service to others. Seek a man who accepts his role as provider of the necessities of life, has the capacity to do it, and is making concerted efforts to prepare himself to fulfill those responsibilities.

I suggest that you not ignore many possible candidates who are still developing these attributes, seeking the one who is perfected in them. You will likely not find that perfect person, and if you did, there would certainly be no interest in you. These attributes are best polished together as husband and wife.

Counsel with the bishop

Since many aspects of the temple experience are significantly different than regular worship services, get the counsel of your bishop to help prepare you. He can arrange for a specially trained individual to discuss important aspects of the temple to help you understand and appreciate more fully that sacred experience.

Savor each ordinance separately

The endowment and sealing ordinances of the temple are so gloriously rich in meaning that you will want to allow significant time to receive those ordinances and to ponder their meaning. You may want to divide them into two temple visits. On your first visit, if possible, take an endowed member of your family or a close friend of your own gender to escort you. Because of the sacred nature of the temple experience, you would want to limit those who accompany you to a few family or close friends. Do not let receptions, wedding breakfasts, farewells, or other activities overshadow the sacred temple experience. Above all, do not be overly concerned. You will be helped in every step by caring temple workers. They will be intent on making your visit the glorious experience you anticipate.

Outside of the temple, we do not speak of the specific, sacred matters that unfold there. However, while within the temple, there will be authorized individuals to help answer your questions. On your first visit you will receive carefully prepared, specific instructions by authorized individuals regarding those matters which are not discussed outside of the temple walls. May your first experience in the temple be as moving and inspiring as was mine. It will be, as you carefully prepare.

Be worthy to receive the ordinances

Be worthy. To commit in courtship intimate acts intended to unfold only within the bonds of marriage is transgression. Such activity offends the Holy Ghost, lays the foundation for heartache and disappointment, and could mask traits or characteristics that could prove conflictive or incompatible within the covenant of marriage. Seeds of distrust that mature into divorce and loss of temple

blessings are often sown through violation of the laws of personal purity. Don't make that mistake.

Sealing creates a new family unit

When you are sealed forever in the house of the Lord, a new family unit is created. Parents, who have had direct responsibility for you since your birth, now move into an advisory role. Their counsel is precious now, but you and your eternal companion now make the decisions together.

As a husband and worthy priesthood bearer, you will want to emulate the example of the Savior, whose priesthood you hold. You will make giving of self to wife and children a primary focus of your life. Occasionally a man attempts to control the destiny of each family member. He makes all the decisions. His wife is subjected to his personal whims. Whether that is the custom or not is immaterial. It is not the way of the Lord. It is not the way a Latter-day Saint husband treats his wife and family.

Attend the temple regularly

How grateful I am that President Hinckley has been inspired by the Lord to construct new temples at an unprecedented rate so that the ordinances are more accessible to members throughout the world. If you have received temple ordinances but do not now visit the temple, even when there is one nearby, with all the tenderness of my heart I invite you to come back to the temple. There are many reasons. It is a place of peace, solitude, and inspiration. Regular attendance will enrich your life with greater purpose. It will permit you to provide deceased ancestors the exalting ordinances you have received. Go to the temple. You know it is the right thing to do. Do it now.

Study, participate in the ordinances

The temple ordinances are so imbued with symbolic meaning as to provide a lifetime of productive contemplation and learning. Ponder each word and activity in the temple. Study how they interrelate. As you ponder the significance of those matters, think of them in light of your relationship to the Savior and His to our Father in Heaven. Contemplate how the understanding you receive enhances your earth life by giving proper emphasis on things which are critically important.

Arrange to participate for deceased ancestors in the sealing and other ordinances as well as the endowment. I find it helpful when receiving ordinances for another to try and relate to that person specifically. I think of him and pray that he will accept the ordinance and benefit from it. Do these things with a prayer in your heart that the Holy Spirit will enhance your understanding and enrich your life. Those worthy prayers will be answered.

Keep hope for a temple marriage

May I share a personal experience to help any who feel anguish when eternal marriage is mentioned since you believe your spouse will not prepare for that sacred experience because of deeply rooted characteristics or habits. About five years into our marriage, we had a growing experience. Our precious two-year-old son Richard died while undergoing surgery to correct a congenital heart defect. Within six weeks our daughter Andrea passed away at birth. My father, then not a member of the Church, loved little Richard very much. He said to my inactive mother, "I cannot understand how Richard and Jeanene seem to be able to accept the loss of these children."

Mother, responding to a prompting, said, "Kenneth, they have been sealed in the temple. They know that their children will be with them in the eternities if they live righteously. But you and I will not have our five sons because we have not made those covenants."

My father pondered those words. He began to meet with the stake missionaries and was soon baptized. In just over a year Mother, Dad, and the children were sealed in the temple. Later, President Kimball put his hands on my father's head, promised him the vigor and strength of youth, and gave him the sealing power. He worked as a sealer for 11 years in the Washington D.C. Temple with Mother at his side. You do your part. Don't abandon hope for a temple marriage.

If you are single and haven't identified a solid prospect for celestial marriage, live for it. Pray for it. Expect it in the timetable of the Lord. Do not compromise your standards in any way that would rule out that blessing on this or the other side of the veil. The Lord knows the intent of your heart. His prophets have stated that you will have that blessing as you consistently live to qualify for it. We do not know whether it will be on this or the other side of the veil. But live for it. Pray for it.

Eternal marriage brings joy

I know the exquisite joy that comes from an eternal marriage sealed at a temple altar through the holy sealing power. When there is righteousness, a commitment to give of self, obedience to the commandments of God, and the resolve to seek His will in all things together, that joy is unspeakable. I do not have words to express the fulfillment and peace that flow from such a supernal experience, even when there is a temporary interruption of the glory of life

together on earth. It is that joy and happiness I want so much for each of you. More importantly, that is what your Father in Heaven wants for you.

Come to the temple now. It will greatly bless your life and provide essential ordinances for those beyond the veil that they cannot obtain by themselves.

I testify that with unimaginable suffering and agony at an incalculable price, the Savior earned His right to be our Intermediary, our Redeemer, our Final Judge. Through faith in Him and receipt of the requisite ordinances and covenants, you will earn your right to the blessings of eternal marriage, made possible through His infinite Atonement. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elders Neal A. Maxwell and Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" Following the singing, Elder Stephen A. West of the Seventy will address us. He will be followed by Elder Robert J. Whetten, also of the Seventy. Following Elder Whetten, Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder Stephen A. West

Modern example of a good Samaritan

A few years ago, my wife and I served as a resource to a little inner-city branch of the Church that was composed of about 35 members. The branch president, Daniel Sawyer, a man I greatly admire, may have been the only member of that branch who had belonged to the Church for more than three or four years. Our meetings were held in a row house in one of the most troubled neighborhoods of a large eastern city. The house was located on a street where many buildings had been burned and looted during the extensive riots in 1968, and now, 25 years later, some of those damaged or destroyed buildings still had not been repaired or rebuilt. Up to the front of the row house were a few exterior stairs leading from the sidewalk up through a door which opened to some rooms that had been modified for use as classrooms and as an office. Another

door opening right from the sidewalk led down a few interior stairs to the basement, which was furnished with a sacrament table, a podium for the speaker, and folding chairs. Some of the most memorable Church experiences my wife and I have had took place in that setting.

One Sunday right in the middle of the branch sacrament meeting, a woman walked in the door off the street. She was a homeless woman who was wearing dirty, ragged clothes, coughing, choking, and blowing her nose into a filthy handkerchief. In a loud, hoarse voice she said, "I want to sing! I want to pray!" and walked right to the front row and sat down next to a member who was wearing a white blouse, leaned against her, and laid her head on her shoulder. The member immediately put her arms around this guest and held her in her arms throughout the remainder of the meeting. It happened that the speaker had been talking about the parable of the good Samaritan¹ as

the woman had come in. As this woman coughed and choked, the speaker continued telling of the parable. As he came to the end of his talk and was quoting a relevant scripture, suddenly in a loud voice this homeless woman finished giving the verse that the speaker had begun. In talking of this after sacrament meeting with the speaker, we thought it had probably been a long time since someone had affectionately put an arm around our visitor. We wondered what better illustration you could have of the parable of the good Samaritan than what we had just seen, and we were reminded of the Savior's words that preceded His telling of that parable: "Thou shalt love . . . thy neighbour as thyself."²

Modern example of the widow's mite

A second experience in the branch dealt with a kind and conscientious woman who faithfully turned in envelopes containing a few coins for payment of her tithing. One day as she came to church, she was also holding in her hand a plastic sandwich bag with a piece of dried-up bread in it. She handed the plastic bag to us and said: "If you are going to belong to a church, you ought to contribute. I can't contribute much, but I can contribute the sacrament bread."

As we used her bread for the sacrament, the whole experience carried an additional meaning that day. Going through my mind was the verse that reads:

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

"And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you,

That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

"For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."³

Example of giving to others

A third experience in the branch came during a discussion the members were having in Sunday School concerning when you should give to those who ask you for aid. One of the members, who had come with his wife from Africa to further his education, raised his hand and told us of the following experience. As he had been walking home in the neighborhood, he had been approached by a man who put a pistol to his chest and demanded all his money. Our member took the money from his pockets and handed it over to the man and then said, "If you need the money that badly, I have more." He opened his briefcase and took out additional money, which he gave to the robber, saying, "Understand, you are not taking this from me; I am giving it to you in the name of the Lord because you need it." He said the robber looked at him in amazement, put the pistol in his belt, and said, "Where do you live? I'm going to walk you home because you're too good a man to be on these streets, and you are not safe here."

As they started to walk to the member's apartment, suddenly they were surrounded by police cars because a woman had seen the holdup from her apartment window and had called the police. The police arrested the robber and took him away. Having been the victim, this member was asked to be a witness later at the trial of the robber. At the trial, he testified that although the robber had demanded his money, he had told him that he gave the money to him in the name of the

Lord and that if the robber needed it that badly, he wanted him to have it.

Since then, when I hear the Savior's words, "Him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also,"⁴ my mind goes back not only to the Holy Land but also to the hard streets in that eastern city.

These are just a few small modern-day experiences that were not witnessed by many, but as they show, these were some exemplary people who lived in difficult conditions. One of the members, pointing to my 40-year-old Book of Mormon, the leather cover of which had largely torn away through wear, leaving frayed corners and exposing the cardboard backing, said, "Many of those in our branch are like your Book of Mormon, tattered and worn on the outside, but inside are great and important things."

A young girl's testimony of Jesus

Finally, may I tell you of a nine-year-old Spanish-American girl I interviewed one evening in Texas for baptism. I asked her if she knew who Jesus was. Her answer was, "Yes." "Who is He?" I asked. Sweeping her hand over her head and gesturing at everything in sight, she said, "He owns all of this!" Could any nine-year-old or perhaps any of us have summed it up any better? In only five words she had described the Savior with simple clarity: "He owns all of this!" When the interview was over, she told her mother she did not want to leave the chapel but wanted to stay and sleep that night in "Jesus' house." "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."⁵

"Be not weary in well-doing"

The Savior said to His disciples in the New World:

"Ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do;

"Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye."⁶

In the meridian of time, among other things, the Savior gave a touch here, a kind word there, food (both real and spiritual) to the hungry, advice and counsel to those in need. He gave prayers with the frightened, kindness to the passed-over, respect and affection for the children, loving care for those who are burdened. "And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things."⁷ "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."⁸

In these times when so much of our daily experience seems to point to a world moving in the wrong direction, may we take courage, faith, and comfort from the small, quiet, and gentle acts of caring, loving, humble, and dedicated followers of Christ. May we similarly replicate in our own lives the very lessons the Savior taught almost 2,000 years ago in my prayer, to which I add my testimony that He lives, and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Luke 10:30-37.
2. Luke 10:27.
3. Mark 12:41-44.
4. Luke 6:29.
5. John 17:3.
6. 3 Nephi 27:21-22.
7. 1 Nephi 16:29.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.

Elder Robert J. Whetten

Love others as the Savior does

Alone in that upper room with the eleven, Jesus uses these last teaching moments of His mortal ministry to teach: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you. . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."¹ He talks of His coming death and Resurrection: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."² He reaffirms His divine sonship: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."³ And He promises that the Father will send them another comforter, the Holy Ghost: "He shall teach you all things."⁴

Jesus' unconditional love for us motivated His atoning sacrifice for our sins. How He lived His life is the example we should follow. Without His love we would be unable to return to our Heavenly Father. His way should be our way. "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."⁵ He showed us that we must go about doing good, that the spiritual and physical welfare of our fellowmen is as important as our own, and that we should show genuine concern and compassion for all of our Heavenly Father's children.

Seek to be filled with charity

Moroni defines Christlike love as charity. "And now I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity; wherefore, except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father."⁶ It's not enough to say we believe and that we love Him; we must be found possessed with His kind of love for others at that

last day. It is not necessary for us to lay down our life for others as He did, but like the Savior, we should bless the lives of others by giving of what our life is made up of—our time, our talents, our means, and ourselves.

Mormon urges us to "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are *true followers* of his Son, Jesus Christ."⁷ Like faith, Christlike love is a gift of the Spirit, is granted upon the principles of personal righteousness and in accordance to our level of obedience to the laws upon which it is predicated. And like faith, love must be exercised to grow.

Love and serve others

We all live our lives one day at a time, and each of us, regardless of our age or circumstances, is presented each day with choices in our relationships with others. As we deny ourselves and reach out to serve others, the Spirit will refine us and teach us and we will come to learn what Paul meant: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith."⁸ Our compassionate service to others will grow into divine love and change us, and "when he shall appear we shall be like him."⁹

Brigham Young taught, "We should commence our labors of love and kindness with the family to which we belong; and then extend them to others."¹⁰ King Benjamin counseled parents to teach their children "to love one another, and to serve one another."¹¹ President Kimball taught that "God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another mortal that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other in the kingdom."¹²

A young girl shows Christlike love

Last January an earthquake in the central mountain region of Colombia left the city of Armenia devastated. Concerned stake presidents called the Area Presidency in Quito to find out what the needs of the members living in Armenia were. The district president confirmed that many Church members had lost their homes and had found shelter in the four undamaged chapels but urgently needed food and clothing. The Relief Society and priesthood leaders swung into action, and donations from members throughout Colombia poured into a designated chapel in each city. Seven-year-old Neidi had come with her parents to the chapel in the city of Cali and watched as Bishop Villareal received donations from members.

"Bishop, how can I help the children in Armenia?"

"Neidi, your parents have already helped."

She went to the other end of the chapel and observed that little clothing and no shoes for children were being packed. Neidi came back to the bishop with her shoes in her hand. "Now I know how I can help. Please give these shoes to another little girl in Armenia who has lost hers." Her bare feet made no sound as she slipped away.

Be full of love

King Benjamin counseled his people to yield to the enticings of the Holy Ghost, put "off the natural man and [become] a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and [become] as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love."¹³

In the late spring of 1829, as the marvelous events of the Restoration were unfolding, the Lord told Joseph Knight through the Prophet Joseph, "And no one can assist in this work ex-

cept he shall be humble and full of love."¹⁴ Today each worthy young man is asked to give two years in full-time missionary service. As missionaries teach His gospel and serve others, they are granted gifts of the Spirit, including a Christlike love for those they serve. Missionary service can and should become the foundation for a lifetime of happiness built on love and service to others.

And motherhood, like priesthood, is a divine call to serve and to nurture others. Who that has witnessed the pure love of a mother for her child can deny that this kind of love is of God? Sisters, this same kind of Christlike love can and should be extended to others throughout your life.

Give "all that you have and are"

When the rich man who came to Jesus asked, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" the Lord reiterated the commandments, and the man answered, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."¹⁵

As His disciples today, we should ask, "What lack I yet?" You can go about doing good, you can love and serve others in your family, in the Church, and in the community. At some point you must be willing "to render to him all that you have and are."¹⁶

Some of the truest followers I know are couples that have put the anticipated ease and pleasures of retirement on hold and followed Him into full-time service in His kingdom. If your desire is to grow in your discipleship together, talk to your bishop about a mission. Every mission in the Church needs more missionary couples, and the soon-to-be 100 temples in operation need more workers. President Hinckley has asked:

"Why are missionaries happy? Because they lose themselves in the service of others.

"Why are those who labor in the temples happy? Because their labor of love is in very deed harmonious with the great vicarious work of the Savior of mankind."¹⁷

Lift one another's burdens

I am grateful to have been surrounded by loved ones who have blessed my life with their love and service. Like the converts in Alma's time, if we are to be called His people, we must be "willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light."¹⁸ Each of us can think of true followers that have lifted the burdens of many through their Christlike love and service. Ernest LeRoy Hatch was the medical doctor in the community in which I grew up in northern Mexico. He was also my mission president and served several other missions. For much of his life he carried with him the written words to the hymn "More Holiness Give Me." The last two lines read, "More fit for the kingdom, more used would I be, more blessed and holy—more, Savior, like thee."¹⁹

As His true followers, the Savior wants us to love others as He loves them—more unconditionally, more purely, more perfectly. As in the past,

His apostles and prophets in our day continue to exemplify and teach that this Christlike love is the very essence of His gospel. I have come to know and feel of their love one for another and for each of us. I bear witness that they are true disciples of Jesus Christ. This Church is His kingdom on the earth. We have His and their example of love and service. May we be true disciples as well, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 13:34–35.
2. John 15:13.
3. John 14:6.
4. John 14:26.
5. 3 Nephi 27:27.
6. Ether 12:34.
7. Moroni 7:48; italics added.
8. Galatians 5:22.
9. Moroni 7:48.
10. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 271.
11. Mosiah 4:15.
12. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.
13. Mosiah 3:19.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.
15. Matthew 19:16, 20–21.
16. Mosiah 2:34.
17. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 595.
18. Mosiah 18:8.
19. *Hymns*, no. 131.

Elder Robert D. Hales

The Spirit strengthens families

Strengthening families is our sacred duty as parents, children, extended family members, leaders, teachers, and individual members of the Church.

The importance of spiritually strengthening families is taught clearly in the

scriptures. Father Adam and Mother Eve taught their sons and daughters the gospel. The sacrifices of Abel were accepted by the Lord, whom he loved. Cain, on the other hand, "loved Satan more than God" and committed serious sins. Adam and Eve "mourned before the Lord,

because of Cain and his brethren," but they never ceased to teach their children the gospel (see Moses 5:12, 18, 20, 27; 6:1, 58).

We must understand that each of our children comes with varying gifts and talents. Some, like Abel, seem to be given gifts of faith at birth. Others struggle with every decision they make. As parents, we should never let the searching and struggling of our children make us waver or lose our faith in the Lord.

Alma the Younger, when "racked with torment . . . [and] harrowed up by the memory of [his] many sins," remembered hearing his father teach about the coming of "Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world" (Alma 36:17). His father's words led to his conversion. In like manner, our teaching and testimony will be remembered by our children.

The 2,000 stripling warriors in the army of Helaman testified that their righteous mothers had powerfully taught gospel principles to them (see Alma 56:47-48).

At a time of great spiritual searching, Enos said, "The words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life . . . sunk deep into my heart" (Enos 1:3).

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord says that parents are to teach their children "to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old. . . .

"And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:25, 28).

Teaching the gospel strengthens families

As we teach our children the gospel through word and example, our families are spiritually strengthened and fortified.

The words of living prophets are clear regarding our sacred duty to strengthen our families spiritually. In 1995 the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles issued a proclamation to the world, declaring that "the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children. . . . Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, [and] to observe the commandments of God" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

In February of this year, the First Presidency issued a call to all parents "to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility."

In the February letter, the First Presidency taught that by teaching and rearing children in gospel principles, parents can protect their families from corrosive elements. They further counseled parents and children "to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform" (First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999; cited in *Church News*, 27 Feb. 1999, 3).

With the help of the Lord and His doctrine, all the hurtful effects from challenges a family may meet can be understood and overcome. Whatever the

needs of family members may be, we can strengthen our families as we follow the counsel given by prophets.

The key to strengthening our families is having the Spirit of the Lord come into our homes. The goal of our families is to be on the strait and narrow path.

Ideas for strengthening families

Countless things can be done within the walls of our homes to strengthen the family. May I share a few ideas that may help identify the areas that need strengthening in our own families. I offer them in a spirit of encouragement, knowing that each family—and each family member—is unique.

Home should be a safe place

- Make our homes a safe place where each family member feels love and a sense of belonging. Realize that each child has varying gifts and abilities; each is an individual requiring special love and care.

- Remember, “a soft answer turneth away wrath” (Proverb 15:1). When my sweetheart and I were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple, Elder Harold B. Lee gave us wise counsel: “When you raise your voice in anger, the Spirit departs from your home.” We must never, out of anger, lock the door of our home or our heart to our children. Like the prodigal son, our children need to know that when they come to themselves they can turn to us for love and counsel.

- Spend individual time with our children, letting them choose the activity and the subject of conversation. Block out distractions.

Teach children to pray, read the scriptures, listen to worthy music

- Encourage our children’s private religious behavior, such as personal

prayer, personal scripture study, and fasting for specific needs. Measure their spiritual growth by observing their demeanor, language, and conduct toward others.

- Pray daily with our children.

- Read the scriptures together. I remember my own mother and father reading the scriptures as we children sat on the floor and listened. Sometimes they would ask, “What does that scripture mean to you?” or “How does it make you feel?” Then they would listen to us as we responded in our own words.

- Read the words of the living prophets and other inspiring articles for children, youth, and adults in Church magazines.

- We can fill our homes with the sound of worthy music as we sing together from the hymnbook and the *Children’s Songbook*.

Hold family home evening, councils

- Hold family home evening every week. As parents we are sometimes too intimidated to teach or testify to our children. I have been guilty of that in my own life. Our children need to have us share spiritual feelings with them and to teach and bear testimony to them.

- Hold family councils to discuss family plans and concerns. Some of the most effective family councils are one-on-one with each family member. Help our children know their ideas are important. Listen to them and learn from them.

Share the gospel, support Church leaders, participate as a family

- Invite missionaries to teach less-active or nonmember friends in our homes.

- Show that we sustain and support Church leaders.

- Eat together when possible, and have meaningful mealtime discussions.

- Work together as a family, even if it may be faster and easier to do the job ourselves. Talk with our sons and daughters as we work together. I had that opportunity every Saturday with my father.

Teach children to be good friends, prepare for the future

- Help our children learn how to build good friendships and make their friends feel welcome in our homes. Get to know the parents of the friends of our children.

- Teach our children by example how to budget time and resources. Help them learn self-reliance and the importance of preparing for the future.

Share heritage, family traditions

- Teach our children the history of our ancestors and of our own family history.

- Build family traditions. Plan and carry out meaningful vacations together, considering our children's needs, talents, and abilities. Help them create happy memories, improve their talents, and build their feelings of self-worth.

Teach the importance of obeying the commandments, receiving ordinances

- By word and example, teach moral values and a commitment to obeying the commandments.

- After my baptism and confirmation, my mother drew me aside and asked, "What do you feel?" I described as best I could the warm feeling of peace, comfort, and happiness I had. Mother explained that what I was feeling was the gift I had just received, the gift of the Holy Ghost. She told me that if I lived worthy of it, I would have that gift with me continually. That was a teaching moment that has lived with me all my life.

Teach our children the significance of baptism and confirmation, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, partaking of the sacrament, honoring the priesthood, and making and keeping temple covenants. They need to know the importance of living worthy of a temple recommend and preparing for a temple marriage.

- If you have not yet been sealed in the temple to your spouse or children, work as a family to receive temple blessings. Set temple goals as a family.

- Be worthy of the priesthood which you hold, brethren, and use it to bless the lives of your family.

- Through the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood, dedicate our homes.

Be aware of community, school, and Church activities

Resources are available outside the home. Wise use of them will strengthen our families.

- Encourage our children to serve in the Church and community.

- Talk to our children's teachers, coaches, counselors, advisers, and Church leaders about our concerns and the needs of our children.

- Know what our children are doing in their spare time. Influence their choice of movies, television programs, and videos. If they are on the Internet, know what they are doing. Help them see the importance of wholesome entertainment.

- Encourage worthwhile school activities. Know what our children are studying. Help them with their homework. Help them realize the importance of education and of preparing for employment and self-sufficiency.

- Young women: Attend Relief Society when you reach your 18th birthday. Some of you may be reluctant to make that transition. You may fear that you won't fit in. My young sisters, this is not

the case. There is much in Relief Society for you. It can be a blessing to you throughout your life.

- **Young men:** Honor the Aaronic Priesthood. It is the preparatory priesthood, preparing you for the Melchizedek Priesthood. Become fully active in the elders quorum when you are ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood. The brotherhood, the quorum instruction, and the opportunities to serve others will bless you and your family throughout your life.

Follow the Lord's example of love

Every family can be strengthened in one way or another if the Spirit of the Lord is brought into our homes and we teach by His example.

- Act with faith; don't react with fear. When our teenagers begin testing family values, parents need to go to the Lord for guidance on the specific needs of each family member. This is the time for added love and support and to reinforce your teachings on how to make choices. It is frightening to allow our children to learn from the mistakes they may make, but their willingness to choose the Lord's way and family values is greater when the choice comes from within than when we attempt to force those values upon them. The Lord's way of love and acceptance is better than Satan's way of force and coercion, especially in rearing teenagers.

- Remember the Prophet Joseph Smith's words: "Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind, while the opposite course has a tendency to harrow up all the harsh feelings and depress the human mind" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 240).

Children who stray will return

- While we may despair when, after all we can do, some of our children stray from the path of righteousness, the words of Orson F. Whitney can comfort us: "Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving [mother's and] father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for [our] careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with [our] faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110).

Single adults, extended family can lend strength

- What if you are single or have not been blessed with children? Do you need to be concerned about the counsel regarding families? Yes. It is something we all need to learn in earth life. Unmarried adult members can often lend a special kind of strength to the family, becoming a tremendous source of support, acceptance, and love to their families and the families of those around them.

- Many adult members of the extended family do much parenting in their own right. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, cousins, and other family members can have great impact on the family. I want to express my appreciation for those in my own extended family who have guided me by their example and testimony. Sometimes extended family

members can say things parents cannot say without starting an argument. After a long heart-to-heart discussion with her mother, one young woman said: "It would be awful to tell you and Dad I had done something wrong. But it would be worse to tell Aunt Susan. I just couldn't let her down."

No perfect families

Knowing that we are in mortality to learn and to develop our faith, we should understand that there must be opposition in all things. During a family council in my own home, my wife said, "When you may think that someone has a perfect family, you just do not know them well enough."

Set house, family in order

Brothers and sisters, as parents let us heed the admonition, even the rebuke, given by the Lord to Joseph Smith and the leaders of the Church in 1833 to "set in order [our] own house" (D&C 93:43). "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40). "Set in order [our] family, and see that they are more diligent and concerned at home, and pray always, or they shall be removed out of their place" (D&C 93:50).

The prophets of our day have given a similar admonition and warning to parents to set in order our families. May we be blessed with the inspiration and love to meet opposition with faith within our families. We will then know that our trials are to draw us closer to the Lord and to one another. May we listen to a prophet's voice and set in order our own homes (see D&C 93:41-49). The family is strengthened as we draw near to the Lord, and each member of the family is strengthened as we lift and strengthen and love and care for one another. "Thee lift me and I'll lift thee, and we'll ascend together" (Quaker proverb).

May we be able to welcome and maintain the Spirit of the Lord in our homes to strengthen our families. That each of our family members can stay on the "strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:18), I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elders Stephen A. West and Robert J. Whetten of the Seventy have just spoken to us, followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow thereafter.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Ricks College for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

The choir will now sing "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings." Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing a medley of "From Homes of Saints" and "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Eran A. Call of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

The law of witnesses

Witnesses and witnessing are vital in God's plan for the salvation of His children. In the Godhead the function of the Holy Ghost is to bear witness of the Father and the Son (see 2 Nephi 31:18). The Father has borne witness of the Son (see Matthew 3:17; 17:5; John 5:31–39), and the Son has borne witness of the Father (see John 17). The Lord has commanded His servants to testify of Him (see Isaiah 43:10; Mosiah 18:9; D&C 84:62), and all of the prophets have borne witness of Jesus Christ (see Acts 10:42–43; Revelation 19:10).

The scriptures state that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1; D&C 6:28; see also Deuteronomy 19:15). The most important ordinances of salvation—baptism, marriage, and other ordinances of the temple—are required to have witnesses (see D&C 127:6; 128:3).

The Bible witnesses of Jesus Christ by prophecies of His coming, by accounts of His ministry, and by the testimonies of those who carried His message to the world. The Book of Mormon has the same content: witnesses preceding, during, and following the ministry of the Messiah. Appropriately, it is now subtitled “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.”

Book of Mormon witnesses

There are witnesses of the Book of Mormon itself. I have chosen to speak about the significance of their testimonies and about the life of one of them.

While Joseph Smith was translating the Book of Mormon, the Lord revealed that in addition to the Prophet's testimony, the world would have “the testimony of three of my servants, whom I shall call and ordain, unto whom I will show

these things” (D&C 5:11; see also 2 Nephi 27:12–13; Ether 5:2–4). “They shall know of a surety that these things are true,” the Lord declared, “for from heaven will I declare it unto them” (D&C 5:12).

There were also eight witnesses, but their testimony is a subject for another time.

Testimony of the Three Witnesses

The three men chosen as witnesses of the Book of Mormon were Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. Their written “Testimony of Three Witnesses” has been included in all of the almost 100 million copies of the Book of Mormon the Church has published since 1830. These witnesses solemnly testify that they “have seen the plates which contain this record” and “the engravings which are upon the plates.” They witness that these writings “have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us.” They testify, “We declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true.”

Further, “the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things” (“The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon).

Three Witnesses never denied testimony

People who deny the possibility of supernatural beings may reject this remarkable testimony, but people who are open to believe in miraculous experiences

should find it compelling. The solemn written testimony of three witnesses to what they saw and heard—two of them simultaneously and the third almost immediately thereafter—is entitled to great weight. Indeed, we know that upon the testimony of one witness great miracles have been claimed and accepted by many religious people, and in the secular world the testimony of one witness has been deemed sufficient for weighty penalties and judgments.

Persons experienced in evaluating testimony commonly consider a witness's opportunity to observe an event and the possibility of his bias on the subject. Where different witnesses give identical testimony about the same event, skeptics look for evidence of collusion among them or for other witnesses who could contradict them.

Measured against all of these possible objections, the testimony of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon stands forth in great strength. Each of the three had ample reason and opportunity to renounce his testimony if it had been false or to equivocate on details if any had been inaccurate. As is well known, because of disagreements or jealousies involving other leaders of the Church, each one of these three witnesses was excommunicated from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by about eight years after the publication of their testimony. All three went their separate ways, with no common interest to support a collusive effort. Yet to the end of their lives—periods ranging from 12 to 50 years after their excommunications—not one of these witnesses deviated from his published testimony or said anything that cast any shadow on its truthfulness.

Furthermore, their testimony stands uncontradicted by any other witnesses. Reject it one may, but how does one explain three men of good character uniting and persisting in this published testimony

to the end of their lives in the face of great ridicule and other personal disadvantage? Like the Book of Mormon itself, there is no better explanation than is given in the testimony itself, the solemn statement of good and honest men who told what they saw.

Martin Harris as a witness

Having a special interest in Martin Harris, I have been saddened at how he is remembered by most Church members. He deserves better than to be remembered solely as the man who unrighteously obtained and then lost the initial manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon.

Martin well-respected in the community

When the Book of Mormon was published, Martin Harris was nearly 47 years of age, more than 20 years older than Joseph Smith and the other two witnesses. He was a prosperous and respected citizen of Palmyra, New York. He owned a farm of over 240 acres, large for the time and place. He was an honored veteran of two battles in the War of 1812. His fellow citizens entrusted him with many elective offices and responsibilities in the community. He was universally respected for his industry and integrity. Assessments by contemporaries described him as "an industrious, hard-working farmer, shrewd in his business calculations, frugal in his habits," and "strictly upright in his business dealings" (quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* [1981], 96–97, 98).

This prosperous and upright older man befriended the young and penniless Joseph Smith, giving him the \$50 that permitted him to pay his debts in Palmyra and locate in northeastern Pennsylvania, about 150 miles away. There, in April 1828, Joseph Smith began his first persistent translation of the Book of Mormon. He

dictated, and Martin Harris wrote until there were 116 pages of manuscript.

Stolen and lost 116 pages

Martin's persistent requests to show this manuscript to his family wearied Joseph into letting him take it to Palmyra, where its pages were stolen from him, lost, and probably burned. For this the Lord rebuked Martin and Joseph. Joseph had his gift of translation suspended for a season, and Martin was rebuked as "a wicked man" who had "set at naught the counsels of God, and . . . broken the most sacred promises which were made before God" (D&C 3:12-13; see also D&C 10). Fortunately, both Joseph and Martin were later forgiven by the Lord, and the work of translation resumed with other scribes. We obviously honor Joseph for his magnificent ministry, but Martin's subsequent faithfulness continues under a shadow from which this important man should be rescued.

I will review some of the high points of Martin Harris's life following the devastating episode of the stolen and lost manuscript.

Selected as one of the Three Witnesses

About nine months after Martin's rebuke, the Prophet Joseph received a revelation declaring that there would be three witnesses to the plates and if Martin would humble himself he would be privileged to see them (see D&C 5:11, 15, 24). A few months later, Martin Harris was selected as one of the Three Witnesses and had the experience and bore the testimony described earlier.

Finances printing of Book of Mormon

One of Martin Harris's greatest contributions to the Church, for which he should be honored for all time, was his financing the publication of the Book of

Mormon. In August 1829 he mortgaged his home and farm to Egbert B. Grandin to secure payment on the printer's contract. Seven months later the 5,000 copies of the first printing of the Book of Mormon were completed. Later, when the mortgage note fell due, the home and a portion of the farm were sold for \$3,000. In this way Martin Harris was obedient to the Lord's revelation:

"Thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon. . . .

"Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage" (D&C 19:26, 35).

Consecrates his property to Zion

Other records and revelations show Martin Harris's significant involvement in the activities of the restored Church and his standing with God. He was present at the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830, and was baptized that same day. A year later he was called to journey to Missouri with Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Edward Partridge (see D&C 52:24). In Missouri that year—1831—he was commanded to "be an example unto the church, in laying his moneys before the bishop of the church" (D&C 58:35), thus becoming the first man the Lord called by name to consecrate his property in Zion. Two months later he was named with Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and others to be "stewards over the revelations and commandments" (D&C 70:3; see also 70:1), a direction to publish and circulate what later became the Doctrine and Covenants.

Serves a mission in Pennsylvania

In 1832 Martin Harris's older brother, Emer, who is my great-great-grandfather, was called on a mission from Ohio (see D&C 75:30). Emer spent a

year preaching the gospel near his former home in northeastern Pennsylvania. During most of this time Emer's companion was his brother Martin, whose zeal in preaching even caused him to be jailed for a few days. The Harris brothers baptized about 100 persons. Among those baptized was a family named Oaks, which included my great-great-grandfather. Thus, my middle name and my last name come from the grandfathers who met in that missionary encounter in Susquehanna County in 1832–33.

Serves on the first high council

Back in Kirtland, Ohio, after his mission, in February 1834 Martin Harris was chosen by revelation to serve on the first high council in the Church (see D&C 102:3). Less than three months later, he left Kirtland with the men of Zion's Camp, marching 900 miles to Missouri to relieve the oppressed Saints there.

Helps select the Twelve Apostles

One of the most important events of the Restoration was the calling of a Quorum of Twelve Apostles in February 1835. The Three Witnesses, including Martin Harris, were appointed to "search out the Twelve" (D&C 18:37), to select them and, under authority granted by the Prophet and his counselors, to ordain them [these ordinations were then confirmed under the hands of the First Presidency] (see B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:372–75).

Loses confidence in Joseph Smith

From a position of great influence and authority, all three witnesses fell, each in his own way. During 1837 there were intense financial and spiritual conflicts in Kirtland, Ohio. Martin Harris later said that he "lost confidence in Joseph Smith" and "his mind became

darkened" (quoted in *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 110). He was released from the high council in September 1837 and three months later was excommunicated.

Moves to Kirtland, is rebaptized

Martin's wife, Lucy, who had been involved in the loss of the manuscript pages, died in Palmyra in 1836. Within a year thereafter, Martin and his family located in Kirtland, and Martin married Caroline Young, a niece of Brigham Young.

When most of the Saints moved on—to Missouri, to Nauvoo, and to the West—Martin Harris remained in Kirtland. There he was rebaptized by a visiting missionary in 1842. In 1856 Caroline and their four children took the long journey to Utah, but Martin, then 73 years of age, remained on his property in Kirtland. In 1860 he told a census taker that he was a "Mormon preacher," evidence of his continuing loyalty to the restored gospel. Later he would tell a visitor, "I never did leave the Church; the Church left me" (quoted in William H. Homer Jr., "'... Publish It upon the Mountains': The Story of Martin Harris," *Improvement Era*, July 1955, 505), meaning of course that Brigham Young led the Church west and the aging Martin remained in Kirtland.

During part of his remaining years in Kirtland, Martin Harris acted as a self-appointed guide-caretaker of the deserted Kirtland Temple, which he loved. Visitors reported his alienation from the leaders of the Church in Utah but also his fervent reaffirmation of his published testimony of the Book of Mormon.

Moves to Utah, reaffirms his testimony

Finally, in 1870, Martin's desire to be reunited with his family in Utah resulted in a warm invitation from Brigham

Young, a ticket for his passage, and an official escort from one of the Presidents of Seventy. A Utah interviewer of the 87-year-old man described him as "remarkably vigorous for one of his years, . . . his memory being very good" (*Deseret Evening News*, 31 Aug. 1870). He was rebaptized, a common practice at that time, and spoke twice to audiences in this Tabernacle. We have no official report of what he said, but we can be sure of his central message since over 35 persons left similar personal accounts of what he told them during this period. One reported Martin saying, "It is not a mere belief, but is a matter of knowledge. I saw the plates and the inscriptions thereon. I saw the angel, and he showed them unto me" (quoted in *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 116).

When he reiterated his testimony of the Book of Mormon in the closing days of his life, Martin Harris declared, "I tell you of these things that you may tell others that what I have said is true, and I dare not deny it; I heard the voice of God commanding me to testify to the same" (quoted in *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 118).

Dies at age 92

Martin Harris died in Clarkston, Utah, in 1875, at age 92. His life is commemorated in the memorable pageant *Martin Harris: The Man Who Knew*, produced each summer in Clarkston, Utah.

Return and feast at the Lord's table

What do we learn from this example? (1) Witnesses are important, and the testimony of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon is impressive and reliable. (2) Happiness and spiritual progress lie in following the leaders of the Church. (3) There is hope for each of us, even if we have sinned and strayed from a favored position.

The Lord's invitation is warm and loving: "Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints" (The First Presidency, "An Invitation to Come Back," *Church News*, 22 Dec. 1985, 3). I testify that this is the word of the Lord and the work of the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Anderson, Richard Lloyd. *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*. 1981. chaps. 7-8. 95-120.
2. Homer, William H., Jr. "' . . . Publish It upon the Mountains': The Story of Martin Harris." *Improvement Era*. Mar.-July 1955. 144-46, 194-95, 238-39, 244, 310-11, 344-46, 387, 462-63, 505-7, 524-26.
3. James, Rhett Stephens. *The Man Who Knew: The Early Years*. 1983. "Dramatic Biography Annotations." 95-169.
4. Ludlow, Daniel H., ed. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. 5 vols. 1992.
Anderson, Richard Lloyd. "Book of Mormon Witnesses." 1:214-16.
James, Rhett Stephens. "Martin Harris." 2:574-76.
Marriott, Robert L. "Witnesses, Law of." 4:1569-70.
5. Roberts, B. H. *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. 6 vols. 1930. 1:371-76.
6. Tuckett, Madge Harris, and Belle Harris Wilson. *The Martin Harris Story*. 1983.

The choir sang a medley of "From Homes of Saints" and "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth."

Elder Eran A. Call offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 169th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 3, 1999. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from Brigham Young University. Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by closed circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be given by the combined men's choir from BYU under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We will begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

Elder Neil L. Andersen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." Following the singing, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Russell M. Nelson

It is a joy to be with you tonight, brethren, and wonderful to see so many young men with their fathers. We are assembled because of our desire to hearken to the leaders of the Church. But this congregation is unique. I don't see any mothers. Not one of us could be here without a mother, yet we are all here—without our mothers.

Tonight I am attending with a son, sons-in-law, and grandsons. Where are their mothers? Gathered in the kitchen of our home! What are they doing? Making

large batches of homemade doughnuts! And when we return home, we will feast on those doughnuts. While we enjoy them, these mothers, sisters, and daughters will listen intently as each of us speaks of things he learned here tonight. It's a nice family tradition, symbolic of the fact that everything we learn and do as priesthood bearers should bless our families.¹

Let us speak about our worthy and wonderful sisters, particularly our mothers, and consider our sacred duty to honor them.

A young man's sin dishonors his mother

When I was a young university student, one of my classmates urgently pleaded with a group of us—his Latter-day Saint friends—to donate blood for his mother, who was bleeding profusely. We went directly to the hospital to have our blood typed and tested. I'll never forget our shock when told that one of the prospective donors was unfit because of a positive blood test for a venereal disease. That infected blood was his own! Fortunately, his mother survived, but I'll never forget his lingering sorrow. He bore the burden of knowing that his personal immorality had disqualified him from giving needed aid to his mother, and he had added to her grief. I learned a great lesson: if one dishonors the commandments of God, one dishonors mother, and if one dishonors mother, one dishonors the commandments of God.²

Honor motherhood

During my professional career as a doctor of medicine, I was occasionally asked why I chose to do that difficult work. I responded with my opinion that the highest and noblest work in this life is that of a mother. Since that option was not available to me, I thought that caring for the sick might come close. I tried to care for my patients as compassionately and competently as Mother cared for me.

Many years ago the First Presidency issued a statement that has had a profound and lasting influence upon me. "Motherhood," they wrote, "is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels."³

Because mothers are essential to God's great plan of happiness, their sacred work is opposed by Satan, who would destroy the family and demean the worth of women.

You young men need to know that you can hardly achieve your highest potential without the influence of good women, particularly your mother and, in a few years, a good wife. Learn now to show respect and gratitude. Remember that your mother is your mother. She should not need to issue orders. Her wish, her hope, her hint should provide direction that you would honor. Thank her and express your love for her. And if she is struggling to rear you without your father, you have a double duty to honor her.

A mother's letter saves her child

The influence of your mother will bless you throughout life, especially when you serve as a missionary. Long years ago, Elder Frank Croft was serving in the state of Alabama. While preaching to the people, he was forcefully abducted by a vicious gang, to be whipped and lashed across his bare back. Elder Croft was ordered to remove his coat and shirt before he was tied to a tree. As he did so, a letter he had recently received from his mother fell to the ground. The vile leader of the gang picked up the letter. Elder Croft closed his eyes and uttered a silent prayer. The attacker read the letter from Elder Croft's mother. From a copy of that letter, I quote:

"My beloved son, . . . remember the words of the Savior when He said, . . . 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for you will have your reward in Heaven for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' Also remember the Savior upon the cross suffering from the sins of the world when He had uttered these immortal words, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Surely, my boy, they who are mistreating you . . . know not what they do or they would not do it. Sometime, somewhere, they will understand

and then they will regret their action and they will honor you for the glorious work you are doing. So be patient, my son, love those who mistreat you and say all manner of evil against you and the Lord will bless you and magnify you. . . . Remember also, my son, that day and night, your mother is praying for you."

Elder Croft watched the hateful man as he studied the letter. He would read a line or two, then sit and ponder. He arose to approach his captive. The man said: "Feller, you must have a wonderful mother. You see, I once had one, too." Then addressing the mob, he said: "Men, after reading this Mormon's mother's letter, I just can't go ahead with the job. Maybe we had better let him go." Elder Croft was released without harm.⁴

We are deeply grateful for the faithful mothers and fathers of our wonderful missionaries. The love they bear for their children is sublime.

Honor your sisters

We who bear the holy priesthood have a sacred duty to honor our sisters. We are old enough and wise enough to know that teasing is wrong. We respect sisters—not only in our immediate families but all the wonderful sisters in our lives. As daughters of God their potential is divine. Without them eternal life would be impossible. Our high regard for them should spring from our love of God and from an awareness of their lofty purpose in His great eternal plan.

Hence, I warn against pornography. It is degrading of women. It is evil. It is infectious, destructive, and addictive. The body has means by which it can cleanse itself from harmful effects of contaminated food or drink. But it cannot vomit back the poison of pornography. Once recorded, it always remains subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind, with power to draw you away from the wholesome things in life. Avoid it like the plague!

Honor your wife

To you who are not yet married, think about your future marriage. Choose your companion well. Remember the scriptures that teach the importance of marriage in the temple:

"In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

"And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

"And if he does not, he cannot obtain it."

The highest ordinances in the house of the Lord are received by husband and wife together and equally—or not at all!

In retrospect I see that the most important day of my life was the day when my sweetheart, Dantzel, and I were married in the holy temple. Without her I could not have the highest and most enduring blessings of the priesthood. Without her I would not be the father to our wonderful children or grandfather to our precious grandchildren.

As fathers we should have love unbounded for the mothers of our children. We should accord to them the gratitude, respect, and praise that they deserve. Husbands, to keep alive the spirit of romance in your marriage, be considerate and kind in the tender intimacies of your married life. Let your thoughts and actions inspire confidence and trust. Let your words be wholesome and your time together be uplifting. Let nothing in life take priority over your wife—neither work, recreation, nor hobby.

An ideal marriage is a true partnership between two imperfect people, each striving to complement the other, to keep the commandments, and to do the will of the Lord.

The family is ordained of God

The family is the most important unit of society and of the Church. The family is ordained of God. It is central to

His plan for the eternal destiny of His children.⁶ "God has established families to bring happiness to his children, to allow them to learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and to prepare them for eternal life."⁷

Fathers preside over the family in love

Parents have the primary responsibility for the welfare of their children.⁸ The Church does not replace that parental responsibility. Ideally, the Latter-day Saint family is presided over by a worthy man who holds the priesthood. This patriarchal authority has been honored among the people of God in all dispensations. It is of divine origin, and that union, if sealed by proper authority, will continue throughout eternity. He who is the Father of us all and the source of this authority demands that governance in the home be in love and righteousness.⁹

You fathers can help with the dishes, care for a crying baby, and change a diaper. And perhaps some Sunday you could get the children ready for Church, and your wife could sit in the car and honk.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."¹⁰ With that kind of love, brethren, we will be better husbands and fathers, more loving and spiritual leaders. Happiness at home is most likely to be achieved when practices there are founded upon the teachings of Jesus Christ.¹¹ Ours is the responsibility to ensure that we have family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Ours is the responsibility to prepare our children to receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation and the blessings promised to tithe payers. Ours is the privilege to bestow priesthood blessings of healing, comfort, and direction.

The home is the great laboratory of love. There the raw chemicals of selfishness and greed are melded in the crucible of cooperation to yield compassionate concern and love one for another.¹²

Express love to your wife, mother, sisters

Honor the special sisters in your lives, brethren. Express your love to your wife, to your mother, and to the sisters. Praise them for their forbearance with you even when you are not at your best. Thank the Lord for these sisters who—like our Heavenly Father—love us not only for what we are but for what we may become. Humbly I thank God for my mother, my sisters, my daughters, granddaughters, and for my special sweetheart, companion, and friend—my wife!

May God bless us to honor each virtuous woman, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 23:3.
2. Many scriptures teach us to honor our parents. See Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Matthew 15:4; 19:19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:20; Ephesians 6:2; 1 Nephi 17:55; Mosiah 13:20; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 19:19, The Holy Scriptures: Inspired Version; Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 7:12, Bible appendix.
3. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 6:178. In 1935 the First Presidency stated, "The true spirit of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gives to woman the highest place of honor in human life" (in *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6:5).
4. See Arthur M. Richardson, *The Life and Ministry of John Morgan* (1965), 267–68.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–3.
6. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. *Family Guidebook* (pamphlet, 1992), iv.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–45.
10. Ephesians 5:25.
11. See *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
12. See Mosiah 4:14–15; Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–31.

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elders Ray H. Wood, Ned B. Roueché, and D. Lee Tobler, members of the Seventy.

Elder Ray H. Wood

Disobedience of one affects all

After the children of Israel had crossed the river Jordan and Jericho had been destroyed, they confronted the city of Ai. Ai was a smaller city than Jericho, with fewer defenders, and Joshua thought to conquer it with only 3,000 soldiers. But the men of Ai smote the force of Israel and put them to flight. Joshua prostrated himself before the Lord and queried the reason for their defeat. Then came the answer—and a lesson.

When Jericho was destroyed, the Lord forbade them from taking any of the precious possessions to be found therein. But one man, Achan, seized and attempted to hide some of the spoils. "When I saw [them]," he said, "I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent" (Joshua 7:21). The Lord commanded them to be destroyed, and Achan was stoned to death.

It may seem difficult for us to understand how the dishonesty of one man could have had such a far-reaching effect to cause the defeat of the army of Israel and the death of 36 men. Elder James E. Talmage observed, "A law of righteousness had been violated, and things that were accursed had been introduced into the camp of the covenant people; this transgression interposed resistance to the current of divine help, and until the people had sanctified themselves the power was not renewed unto them" (*The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [1924], 105; see also Joshua 7:10–13).

Sin causes loss of Spirit

When a person violates any of God's commandments, if there is no repentance the Lord withdraws His protective and sustaining influence. When we lose power with God, we know of a certainty that the problem lies within us and not within God. "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10). Our misdeeds bring despair. They sadden and extinguish the "perfect brightness of hope" offered by Christ (2 Nephi 31:20). Without God's help, we are left to ourselves.

Priesthood works only in righteousness

Priesthood is authority to act as an authorized agent of the Lord to perform ordinances which provide certain spiritual blessings to all individuals. It is power to convey the mind and will of God in Church government, in obtaining His word through revelation, in preaching the gospel, and in administering the ordinances of exaltation for both the living and the dead. Truly it is a mighty thing to bear the priesthood of God.

We are told that "the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness" (D&C 121:36). President Spencer W. Kimball reminds us: "There is no limit to the power of the priesthood . . . you hold. The limit comes in you if

you do not live in harmony with the Spirit of the Lord and you limit yourselves in the power you exert" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 498; italics added).

As holders of the priesthood of God, we must remember that we "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9). We are commanded to "come . . . out from the wicked, and be . . . separate, and touch not [the] unclean things" (Alma 5:57).

Magnify, be worthy of the priesthood

When a man, young or old, accepts and receives the priesthood, there comes a sacred responsibility of magnifying that priesthood. This requires each one of us to serve with diligence, to teach with faith and testimony, to lift and strengthen those whose lives we touch. This means that we cannot live only unto ourselves, but we are also responsible for the growth, development, and welfare of others.

There should be nothing automatic about ordination to any office of the priesthood because of age or circumstances. Blessed be the priesthood leader who conscientiously interviews each candidate for priesthood office and receives from that candidate a report of prior honorable service, an affirmation of personal purity and worthiness, and a confirmation of magnified effort and future intent to willingly bear and fulfill the great responsibility of priesthood office.

Priesthood mantle not to be neglected

There should be nothing casual, nonchalant, or indifferent about holding priesthood. Once accepted, it should not be ignored, neglected, or cast aside. It is a mantle of honor and power that may be ours forever.

By accepting a call to priesthood, each man binds himself by his own integrity to act in a certain way. This brings a sense of responsibility, generating in each of us a power of reinforcement for positive action and a deterrent to slothfulness.

For those who take these sacred and holy callings lightly, President George Q. Cannon cautions us: "We must honor the Priesthood we hold or that Priesthood, instead of exalting us, will be the means of damning us. . . . It is a fearful thing to receive the Priesthood of God and not magnify it" (*Gospel Truth*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist, 2 vols. [1957-74], 1:229).

Jesus Christ is the example

As we consider the priesthood, let us not forget its true title: the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the great high priest of God. He is the source of all priesthood authority and power on this earth. As our Savior, Mediator, and Redeemer, He is our great exemplar of the path we are to follow—in word, in deed, in belief, in doctrine, in faith, in ordinances, and in our personal righteousness. "For even hereunto were [we] called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

He has promised us glory, eternal life, exaltation, even all He has, if we faithfully bear His priesthood and magnify all of our callings. We become joint heirs with Him in the kingdom of His Father. The Apostle Paul said it well: "And all those who are ordained unto this priesthood are made like unto the Son of God, abiding a priest continually" (Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 7:3).

I bear my solemn witness that it may be so, "relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save" (2 Nephi 31:19), even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In His sacred name, Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Ned B. Roueché

My dear brethren, I am humbled by this opportunity and ask for an interest in your faith and prayers. May we be blessed and guided by the Spirit to hear and feel this evening.

Example of reactivation

A number of years ago I received a telephone call that would change my life—my eternal life.

A good sister from my ward called to invite me to perform a dance floor show number at a Mutual activity evening that was being held in a couple of weeks. Dancing was a hobby of mine, and I was studying ballroom dancing at a studio in Salt Lake City. I had never been to a youth MIA dance before, and I was excited to accept the invitation to perform.

My partner and I arrived on the appointed evening and were greeted enthusiastically. I was surprised to find that we were the only ones on the program. It was an exciting experience, and I thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

The following Sunday morning, I decided to go to church in our ward for the first time since I was ordained a deacon. At that time none of my family was active. I found people who welcomed me warmly, and they demonstrated a genuine friendship and caring. These experiences started me on the road to activity and service in the Church that has been a joy to me throughout the years.

The senior Aaronic Priesthood committee, as it was called then, was a group of brethren who worked with men who were older than the normal Aaronic Priesthood age. These were just regular men who were doing what the Lord wanted them to do. They took me under their wing, and we became good friends. A wonderful returned missionary gave our class instruction. He taught the basics of the gospel and helped prepare me to serve a mission. During this same

time I was asked to help teach dancing in the ward, which gave me a feeling of being needed, and it also gave me a responsibility.

The next 15 months flew by, filled with growth and happiness as I progressed. I soon received a call to serve a mission in Mexico. I quickly grew to love the language, the country, and its people. Sharing the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ gave me a foundation upon which to build the rest of my life.

I know what it means to have a friend, a responsibility, and to be nurtured by the good word of God. There are many that do not understand what is missing in their lives and hunger for those tender feelings that come from knowing the love of our Savior. They are good people who lie dormant, as it were, awaiting the awakening of their soul by those who bring the “good news.” There are others who watch us, observe our examples, and say, “I like what I see; how can I become a part of it?”

“The worth of souls is great”

I invite you brethren of the priesthood, both young and old, to look around you, seek out, and extend a warm hand of friendship to those less active and nonmembers. Invite them to participate with you. Become their friend, and you will make a difference and bless their lives for generations to come.

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

“For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

“And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

“And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!”¹

And may I add this wonderful promise of His: "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."²

At this Easter season, as we celebrate His Resurrection, let us focus our attention on the price that He paid so willingly for all of those who will follow Him and do His will.

I invite all to come and enjoy these great blessings of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ that has been restored.

Let us cast aside the traditions of men, all the things that clutter our lives and lead us carefully away from what Moroni called "the right way,"³ and lift our hearts to Him who has ransomed us, even Jesus Christ our Savior, and follow Him.

Listen to the feelings of your heart and follow its prompting as you hear the messages of this conference. You will be taught from on high and receive answers to your prayers.

Let us go forth with greater enthusiasm to succor those in need and bring souls unto Him, that they may be fed, nurtured by His good word, and know His tender love. "You shall be laden with sheaves upon your back, for the laborer is worthy of his hire,"⁴ and there will be rejoicing in many hearts.

That evening so long ago when I was invited to share my talent, the door opened to a wonderful new world of friends and activity in the Church. I am grateful for those who reached out with a warm hand of fellowship, invited me in, nurtured me, and blessed my life.

I leave you with my witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. This is His Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10-13.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
3. Moroni 6:4.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 31:5.

Elder D. Lee Tobler

My beloved brethren of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood, this is a special blessing to stand at this pulpit where prophets and apostles of God and righteous and capable men and women have for many decades taught and counseled the members of the Church.

Help families without the priesthood

Tonight it is my humble desire to be a voice of encouragement to priesthood leaders, particularly to stake and ward councils, to increase their attention to the families in the Church who do not as yet have the blessing of the Melchizedek Priesthood in their homes. These are families where the father has not yet

received the priesthood, which is so necessary in blessing and guiding his family. For these families the fulness of the gospel—particularly the blessings of the temple—awaits not only their own efforts but also the loving efforts of Church members who already understand what the temple ordinances mean to the family.

Impact of priesthood in a home

As children we were raised in a home where it was clearly understood that the priesthood was as essential to life as was the water we drank to satisfy our thirst. My mother had experienced in her own family the joy of her large family coming into full Church activity and then

as a family going to the Salt Lake Temple. At the age of 47 years, my Grandfather Shoell had been brought into the priesthood with all of its attendant blessings. Upon the completion of a full-time mission, Mother sought a special priesthood blessing, asking that she might be directed to a worthy priesthood bearer who would not only be her husband but would also be a worthy priesthood father to her children. After that priesthood blessing, all of those righteous desires came into being for her and for us as a family in southern Nevada. From the start we were a family grounded in the priesthood and ordinances of the restored gospel, especially the sacred temple ordinances. This gave us as children a sense of being whole and complete, not only for our immediate family but also with our mother's and father's extended families.

Early on we learned of the healing power of the priesthood as Father, sometimes alone and at other times assisted by men of the ward, exercised that priesthood in our home. In the 1930s in that small Nevada pioneer town, there were no doctors. The nearest doctors were in Las Vegas or St. George. The first thought in times of accidents and sickness was to receive a blessing, invoking that priesthood power. I remember Mother saying from time to time, "We don't have doctors here in Bunkerville, but we have the priesthood to bless us, and that is enough." And mighty were the blessings which calmed and reassured both young and old. We were never powerless when the priesthood was there. I have always been grateful for that early awareness of the power of the priesthood of God in our home.

Priesthood protects homes from evil

Our homes today face unprecedented challenges that are tearing at the fabric of the family—that are taking away from

the homes a sense of peace and confidence about the future. The evil forces parading immoral conduct, dishonesty, and enslavement through drugs seem to be strengthening. These moral issues and challenges will certainly not go away. We will also find that the temporal challenges with respect to everyday living will intensify. We all have become very aware that employment is no longer as secure as in former years as businesses and nonbusiness institutions all around the world merge and consolidate in order to be more competitive. The family farm is increasingly exposed to worldwide markets and general economic conditions rather than just local or national conditions of earlier years.

In virtually all pursuits, the rapidly changing conditions in the world are bearing down on families. They are causing a sense of uneasiness in parents and children. These conditions, coupled with the steady erosion of moral values, can best be dealt with in the family. This is achieved when the powers of righteousness are marshalled in the home under the worthy priesthood leadership of the father, equally yoked with a good and righteous mother.

Families with priesthood need not fear

Indeed, in the February 11, 1999, letter to all the members throughout the world, the First Presidency called again upon fathers and mothers to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles. Further, they counseled that the home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions.

Where the priesthood foundations to cope with these challenges are in place in the family, as in the home of my youth, then we will not fear the eventual outcomes in future years. We may be

bruised and worn, but the outcome will be of highest eternal worth. Families where the priesthood is honored and exercised will be able to endure the present pressures and become eternal families. And in the process, individual members of families will have been perfected and prepared for the rewards of the faithful.

Help fathers prepare for the priesthood

There are in every ward and branch many families without the priesthood. In these families there are husbands and fathers who are simply waiting for a supportive invitation to become prepared to bear the Melchizedek Priesthood. Their wives pray and wait for that outstretched hand. These are men who, through our teaching and nurturing, can be made capable to bear that priesthood. They can be fathers of revelation and guidance to their families. They can be fathers who give blessings to their own children, who baptize them and confirm them. Husband and wife will go to the temple, and they will take their children to the temple to be sealed together for time and all eternity. They will ordain their sons to the priesthood, and they will bless their sons and daughters in sickness and in health. Most of them are already good providers to their families in a temporal sense. They must now learn how to provide for their families in an eternal spiritual sense.

There is a way for each ward through councils to reach out to all these men and women and their families and to open the roads to the temple for them. How else will we or they receive exaltation or cope with the challenges that lie ahead? May I make an appeal to the bishops and branch presidents, to Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, to the ward and branch councils to establish a high priority to reach out to these families in a prayerful, thoughtful way. Christ's Church will rise to its full stature when these families are brought safely under the mantle of the priesthood. Of Him and of His great work I testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elders Ray H. Wood, Ned B. Roueché, and D. Lee Tobler of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us. He will be followed by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the Presidency.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

President James E. Faust

My beloved brethren, I come to this pulpit this evening with profound feelings of love and respect for your faithful obedience in honoring the priesthood you bear. I have prayed for guidance in what I should say because I wish to raise a warning voice.

Lack of restraint leads to destruction

In today's society the difference between right and wrong is being obscured by loud, seductive voices calling for no restraints in human conduct. They advocate absolute freedom without regard to

consequences. I state unequivocally that such behavior is the high road to personal destruction.

Example of President McKay's horse

Tonight I speak to the priesthood of this Church and particularly to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood about how to become really free. Obedience leads to true freedom. The more we obey revealed truth, the more we become liberated. President David O. McKay spoke about his horse Dandy, who wanted complete freedom and no restraints. President McKay said:

"Under the saddle he was as willing, responsive, and cooperative as a horse could be. . . .

"But Dandy resented restraint. He was ill-contented when tied and would nibble at the tie-rope until he was free. He would not run away—just wanted to be free. Thinking other horses felt the same, he would proceed to untie their ropes. . . .

" . . . His curiosity and desire to explore the neighborhood led him and me into trouble. Once on the highway he was hit by an automobile. . . .

"Recovering from that, and still impelled with a feeling of wanderlust, he inspected the fence throughout the entire boundary. He even found the gates wired. . . .

"One day, however, somebody left the gate unwired. Detecting this, Dandy unlatched it, took [my dog Scotty] with him, and together they . . . went to an old house used for storage. Dandy's curiosity prompted him to push open the door. . . . There was a sack of grain. What a find! Yes, and what a tragedy. The grain was poison bait for rodents! In a few minutes Dandy and [Scotty] were in spasmodic pain, and shortly both were dead."

President McKay continued: "How like Dandy are many of our youth! . . . They are impulsive, full of life, full of

curiosity. . . . They too are restive under restraint, but if they are kept busy, guided carefully and rightly, they prove to be responsive and capable; if left to wander unguided, they all too frequently violate principles of right, which often leads to snares of evil, disaster, and even death."¹

Being bridled, or yielding obediently to restraint, is necessary for our personal growth and progression. Recently a nationally broadcast program talked about wild horses that are being tamed by prisoners. As the prisoners formed friendships with the horses, they learned about patience, controlling tempers, respect for others, and the value of working within a system. As they watched the horses learn to be obedient to their commands, they realized how they could have avoided the terrible mistakes that had put them in prison. I add that obedience to righteous principles would have offered them freedom from social diseases, shame, degradation, and feelings of guilt. Like the horses, they could still learn, progress, and achieve.

Earth obeys God's commands

We hear many persuasive voices demanding freedom from restrictions, particularly from moral restraints. However, we learn from the history of the earth that any successful society has had boundaries. Consider the earth itself. It was formed out of matter and in the beginning was empty, desolate, and dark. Then came order as God commanded that the light should be divided from the darkness. God's command was obeyed, and the earth had its first day, followed by its first night. Then God ordered the creation of the atmosphere. He organized the sun, the moon, and the stars to shine in their appropriate times and seasons. After a series of commands and obedience to commands, the earth not only became habitable but beautiful.²

Brother Jake Garn, former U.S. senator, traveled into space with a team of American astronauts a few years ago. Recalling the view they had of the enormity of the heavens from the space shuttle *Discovery*, he commented that to orbit the earth is to recognize that we are all children of God and that the earth operates in obedience to God's laws. He spoke also of the magnificent beauty of the earth from space and that it is absolutely breathtaking.³

This earth on which we dwell is an individual planet occupying a unique place in space. But it is also part of our solar system, an orderly system with eight other planets, asteroids, comets, and other celestial bodies that orbit the sun. Just as the earth is a planet in its own right, so each of us is an individual in our own sphere of habitation. We are individuals, but we live in families and communities where order provides a system of harmony that hinges on obedience to principles. Just as order gave life and beauty to the earth when it was dark and void, so it does to us. Obedience helps us develop the full potential our Heavenly Father desires for us in becoming celestial beings worthy someday to live in His presence.

Earning trust leads to more freedom

Now, brethren, another element of freedom is trust. Almost 60 years ago, when I was going on my first mission, President McKay taught us missionaries a great truth. Without a word he walked over to the blackboard, picked up a piece of chalk, and wrote, "It is better to be trusted than to be loved." I have pondered that statement and have seen some fine examples of it. I will relate one example from the scriptures.

Pharaoh trusts Joseph

Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel, was sold into slavery in Egypt. Because

of treachery in the house of Potiphar, Joseph went to prison. Pharaoh had two troubling dreams. Hearing of Joseph's discernment from the chief butler, he sent for him to interpret the dreams. Joseph told him through inspiration that seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh not only recognized this true interpretation but he trusted Joseph and appointed him to be second only to Pharaoh in power. The years passed and the famine came. In time Joseph rescued all of his brothers and his father from starvation.⁴ Because he earned the implicit trust of those who were over him, Joseph enjoyed a great amount of freedom. Like Joseph, you too can be trusted by others, but trust must be earned.

Obedience brings blessings

As in all things, the Savior is our pattern. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience."⁵ In our own finite way, we too can learn obedience even as Christ did. As young children we learn respect for authority as we obey our parents, thus earning their trust. If we don't obey, we are like the boy Jack whose father said to him, "Every time you disobey, I get another gray hair." "Wow, Dad," Jack answered, "so it was you who gave Grandpa all his gray hair."⁶ Hopefully in the schoolroom we learn other lessons of discipline that help us to get along with others. When obedience becomes our goal, it is no longer an irritation; instead of a stumbling block, it becomes a building block.

Obedience to the Word of Wisdom keeps us from addictions so we do not become slaves to alcohol, drugs, or tobacco. Our bodies will be healthy and our minds clear because the promise associated with this principle is that "all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones."⁷

An additional promise in this revelation says we “shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures.”⁸ So by obedience we also gain knowledge. As the Savior said, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.”⁹

Obedience brings peace in decision making. If we have firmly made up our minds to follow the commandments, we will not have to redecide which path to take when temptation comes our way. That is how obedience brings spiritual safety.

A man obeys promptings

Brethren, another aspect of obedience is our obedience to spiritual promptings. This too can be liberating. How many times have we felt regret for ignoring a prompting from a higher source?

Ephraim Hanks is a remarkable example of a young man's obedience to spiritual promptings. In the fall of 1856, after he had gone to bed, he heard a voice say to him, “The handcart people are in trouble and you are wanted; will you go and help them?” Without any hesitation he answered, “Yes, I will go if I am called.”

He rode quickly from Draper to Salt Lake City. As he arrived he heard the call for volunteers to help the last handcart companies come into the valley. Eph jumped up and said, “I am ready now!” He was as good as his word, leaving at once and alone.

A terrific storm broke as he took his wagon eastward over the mountains. It lasted three days, and the snow was so deep that it was impossible to move the wagons through it. So Eph decided he would go on horseback. He took two horses, one to ride and one to pack, and picked his way carefully through the snow to the mountains. Dusk came as he made his lonely camp at South Pass. As

he was about to lie down he thought about the hungry Saints and instinctively asked the Lord to send him a buffalo. As he opened his eyes at the end of his prayer, he was startled at the sight of a buffalo standing barely 50 yards away. He took aim, and one shot sent the animal rolling down into the hollow where he was encamped.

Early the next morning, he took the two horses and the buffalo meat and reached Ice Springs Bench. There he shot another buffalo, even though it was rare to find buffalo in this area this late in the season. After he had cut the meat into long strips, he loaded up his horses and resumed his journey. And now I quote from Eph's own narrative:

“I think the sun was about an hour high in the west when I spied something in the distance that looked like a black streak in the snow. As I got near to it, I perceived it moved; then I was satisfied that this was the long looked for handcart company, led by Captain Edward Martin. . . . When they saw me coming, they hailed me with joy inexpressible, and when they further beheld the supply of fresh meat I brought into camp, their gratitude knew no bounds. Flocking around me, one would say, ‘Oh, please, give me a small piece of meat;’ another would exclaim, ‘My poor children are starving, do give me a little;’ and children with tears in their eyes would call out, ‘Give me some, give me some.’ . . . Five minutes later both my horses had been released of their extra burden—the meat was all gone, and the next few hours found the people in camp busily engaged in cooking and eating it, with thankful hearts.”¹⁰

Certainly Ephraim Hanks's obedience to spiritual promptings led him to become a vanguard hero as he forged ahead alone through that devastating winter weather to preserve many pioneer lives. Because he listened to the whisperings

of the Spirit and obeyed the counsel of the Brethren, Eph became a notable liberating force in the lives of those desperate, struggling pioneers.

Obedience brings freedom and liberty

Freedom and liberty are precious gifts that come to us when we are obedient to the laws of God and the whisperings of the Spirit. If we are to avoid destruction, which was the fate of President McKay's horse Dandy and his companion, fences or guardrails must be built, beyond which we cannot go. The fences which we must stay within are the principles of revealed truth. Obedience to them makes us truly free to reach the potential and the glory which our Heavenly Father has in store for us.

I testify to you of the importance of obedience. I also wish to testify to you, my brethren, of the prophetic mantle which rests upon President Hinckley,

which enables him to receive the inspiration and guidance from the head of this Church, the Lord and Savior, which I do in His sacred name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Rick Walton and Fern Oviatt, comp., *Stories for Mormons* (1983), 86–87.
2. See Abraham 4.
3. Conversation with E. Jake Garn, 23 Feb. 1999.
4. See Genesis 37; 39–42.
5. Hebrews 5:8.
6. Adapted from Jacob M. Braude, comp., *Braude's Treasury of Wit and Humor* (1964), 147.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 89:18.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 89:19.
9. John 7:17.
10. See Sidney Alvarus Hanks and Ephraim K. Hanks, *Scouting for the Mormons on the Great Frontier* (1948), 132–33, 135–36.

President Thomas S. Monson

Safeguarding life's foundations

I am honored tonight to be with the vast army of priesthood bearers who daily respond to calls to serve, who teach diligently as the Lord has commanded, and who labor mightily to bring a correction course to a specific challenge which the Church must meet—namely, to live in the world without being of the world.

In this day in which we live, the floodwaters of immorality, irresponsibility, and dishonesty lap at the very moorings of our individual lives. If we do not safeguard those moorings, if we do not have deeply entrenched foundations to withstand such eroding influences, we are going to experience difficulty.

One of the greatest safeguards we have in the Church is a strong, firm, committed, dedicated, and testifying Melchizedek Priesthood base.

Living and dead water

In my office I have two small earthen containers. One is filled with water I retrieved from the Dead Sea. The other contains water from the Sea of Galilee. Occasionally I will shake one of the bottles to ensure that the water has not diminished. When I follow this practice, my mind turns to these two different bodies of water. The Dead Sea is void of life. The Sea of Galilee is filled with life and with memories of the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Too few young men becoming elders

There is another body of water found throughout the Church today. I speak of the pool of prospective elders in each ward and each stake. Picture in your mind a river of water gushing into the pool. Then consider a trickle of water emerging from that stagnated pool—a trickle which represents those going forward into the Melchizedek Priesthood. The pool of prospective elders is becoming larger and wider and deeper more rapidly than any of us can fully appreciate.

It is essential, even critical, that we study the Aaronic Priesthood pathway, since far too many boys falter, stumble, then fall without advancing into the quorums of the Melchizedek Priesthood, thereby eroding the active priesthood base of the Church and curtailing the activity of loving wives and precious children.

What can we as leaders do to reverse this trend? The place to begin is at the headwaters of the Aaronic Priesthood stream. There is an ancient proverb which purports to correctly determine the sanity of an individual. A person is shown a stream of water flowing into a stagnant pond. He is given a bucket and asked to commence to drain the pond. If he first takes steps to effectively dam the inflow to the pond, he is adjudged sane. If on the other hand he ignores the inflow and tries to empty the pond bucket by bucket, he is designated as insane.

The bishop, by revelation, is the president of the Aaronic Priesthood and is president of the priests quorum in his ward. He cannot delegate these God-given responsibilities. However, he can place accountability with those called as quorum advisers, men who can touch the lives of boys.

The bishop's counselors, other ward officers and teachers, and particularly the fathers and the mothers of our young men can be of immeasurable help. Also very effective can be the service rendered by Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies.

This, then, is our goal: to save every young man, thereby assuring a worthy husband for each of our young women, strong Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, and a missionary force trained and capable of accomplishing what the Lord expects.

A wise first step is to guide each deacon to a spiritual awareness of the sacredness of his ordained calling. In one ward, this lesson was effectively taught pertaining to the collection of fast offerings.

Some young men learn about tithing

On fast day the ward members were visited by deacons and teachers so that each family could make a contribution. The deacons were a bit disgruntled, having to arise earlier than usual to fulfill this assignment.

The inspiration came for the bishopric to take a busload of the deacons and teachers to Welfare Square here in Salt Lake City. Here they saw needy children receiving new shoes and other items of clothing. Here they witnessed empty baskets being filled with groceries. There was no money exchanged. One brief comment was made: "Young men, this is what the money you collect on fast day provides—even food, clothing, and shelter." The Aaronic Priesthood young men smiled more, stepped higher, and served with a willing mind in the filling of their assignments.

Assign priesthood duties

A question: Is every ordained teacher given the assignment to home teach? What an opportunity to prepare for a mission. What a privilege to learn the discipline of duty. A boy will automatically turn from concern for self when he is assigned to "watch over" others.

And what of the priests? These young men have the opportunity to bless the sacrament, to continue their home teaching duties, and to participate in the sacred ordinance of baptism.

Example of priests blessing sacrament

I remember as a deacon watching the priests as they would officiate at the sacrament table. One priest by the name of Barry had a lovely voice and would read the sacrament prayers with clear diction—as though he were competing in a speech contest. The other members of the ward, particularly the older sisters, would compliment him on his “golden voice.” I think he became a bit proud. Jack, another priest in the ward, was hearing impaired, which caused his speech to be unnatural in its sound. We deacons would twitter at times when Jack would bless the emblems. How we dared to do so is beyond me, for Jack had hands like a bear and could have crushed any one of us.

On one occasion Barry, with the beautiful voice, and Jack, with the awkward delivery, were assigned together at the sacrament table. The hymn was sung; the two priests broke the bread. Barry knelt to pray, and we closed our eyes. But nothing happened. Soon we deacons opened our eyes to see what was causing the delay. I shall ever remember the picture of Barry frantically searching the table for the little white card on which were printed the sacrament prayers. It was nowhere to be found. What to do? Barry's face turned pink and then crimson as the congregation began to look in his direction.

Then Jack, with that bearlike hand, reached up and gently tugged Barry back onto the bench. He himself then knelt on the little footstool and began to pray: “O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it.”¹ He continued the prayer, and the bread was passed. Jack also blessed the water, and it was passed. What respect we deacons gained that day for Jack, who though handicapped in speech, had memorized

the sacred prayers! Barry, too, had a new appreciation for Jack. A lasting bond of friendship had been established.

Leaders, families are a major influence

Beyond the influence of the bishopric and the Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers is the impact of the home. Help of parents, when enlisted wisely, can frequently make the difference between success and failure. A survey we conducted recently reveals that the influence of the home is a dominant factor in determining missionary service and temple marriage.

I know in my experience of only three wards with a full complement of 48 priests. These wards were presided over by Joseph B. Wirthlin, Alfred B. Smith, and Alvin R. Dyer. Almost without exception, each young man filled a mission and married in the temple. One of the keys to their success was to call to service as Aaronic Priesthood advisers men who were models for the young men to follow. An ideal model is a returned missionary, fresh from his mission and filled with testimony, where a young Aaronic Priesthood holder can say, “That’s the man I want to follow.”

Impact goes far beyond the young man

As we dam off that inflow of Aaronic Priesthood streaming into the pool of prospective elders, we will solve more problems than we realize. We will ensure that every young man will more likely than not go on a mission and will marry in the temple. Then there will not be that disproportionate number of worthy young women with few worthy young men to select as an eternal companion. We are not talking about a boy; we’re talking about husbands, fathers, grandfathers, patriarchs to their own families. Let’s put a solid foundation beneath our Aaronic Priesthood young men.

Rescue adult converts too

Let us not overlook the adult converts to the Church who receive the Aaronic Priesthood but who are not ordained to the office of elder in a timely fashion. They then join the brethren who remain in that stagnant pool of inactivity. There are those wards and stakes which have rescued vast numbers of fine men who had felt trapped by no outlet in the pond. In traveling the Church, I kept records of those units which had caught the vision of this rescue effort. All of them had similar experiences. They learned that the rescue work is best done one-on-one and at the ward level. The bishop has to be involved, for isn't he the president of the Aaronic Priesthood as well as the presiding high priest of his ward?

Choose instructors prayerfully

Worthy and well-prepared instructors must be called to help in such a critical effort. Brethren, prayerfully analyze your situation and then call to the colors those whom the Lord has prepared to go forth to serve and to save. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."² Ponder the joy that comes to a wife and children when Daddy sees the light, mends his ways, and follows in the footsteps of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Example of an effective teacher

An example of true love and inspired teaching was found in the life of the late James Collier, who had through his personal efforts reactivated a large number of brethren in Bountiful, Utah. I was invited by Brother Collier to address those who had now been ordained elders and who, with their wives and families, had been to the Salt Lake Temple to receive those eternal covenants and blessings for which they had so earnestly strived.

At the banquet honoring this achievement, I could see and I could feel the love

that Jim had for those whom he had taught and rescued and the love they had for him. Unfortunately, Jim Collier at that time was afflicted with a terminal illness and had to persuade the doctors to allow him to leave the hospital to attend this final night of recognition.

As Jim stood at the pulpit, a large smile came over his face. With emotion he expressed his love to the group. There wasn't a dry eye to be found. Brother Collier quipped, "Everyone wants to go to the celestial kingdom, but no one wants to die to get there." Then, lowering his voice, Jim continued, "I'm prepared to go, and I will be there waiting on the other side to greet each of you, my beloved friends."

Jim returned to the hospital. His funeral service was held just a short time later.

Seek divine help

In fulfilling our responsibility to those who bear the Aaronic Priesthood, both the youth and the prospective elders, I urge that we remember that there is no need for us to walk alone. We can look up and reach out for divine help. "The recognition of [a] power higher than man . . . does not in any sense debase him. If in his faith he ascribes beneficence and high purpose to the power which is superior to himself, he envisions a higher destiny and nobler attributes for his kind and is stimulated and encouraged in the struggle of existence. . . . He must seek[,] believing, praying, and hoping that he will find. No such sincere, prayerful effort will go unrequited—that is the very constitution of the philosophy of faith."³ So taught President Stephen L. Richards.

Pursue the right path

A line from the delightful play *The King and I* gives us encouragement in our labors. The King of Siam lay dying.

With him is Anna, his English tutor, whose son asks her the question, "Was he as good . . . as he could have been?" Anna answers wistfully, "I don't think any man has ever been as good . . . as he could have been—but this one [really] tried."⁴

The Prophet Joseph declared, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God."⁵

Let us walk these clearly defined paths. To help us do so we can follow the shortest sermon in the world. It can be found on a common traffic sign. It reads, "Keep Right."

"Do you work for God?"

This advice was found and followed by Joe, who had been asked to get up at six in the morning and drive a crippled child 50 miles to a hospital. He didn't want to do it, but he didn't know how to say no. A woman carried the child out to the car and set him next to the driver's seat, mumbling thanks through her tears. Joe said everything would be all right and drove off quickly.

After a mile or so, the child inquired shyly, "You're God, aren't you?"

"I'm afraid not, little fellow," replied Joe.

"I thought you must be God," said the child. "I heard Mother praying next to my bed and asking God to help me get

to the hospital, so I could get well and play with the other boys. Do you work for God?"

"Sometimes, I guess," said Joe, "but not regularly. I think I'm going to work for Him a lot more from now on."

My brethren, will you? Will I? Will we? I pray humbly, yet earnestly, that we will. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moroni 4:3.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1937, 35, 38.
4. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, *The King and I* (1951).
5. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 255–56.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust and President Thomas S. Monson of the First Presidency have just spoken to us.

The Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. We should be in our places at about 9:15.

Daylight saving time, we remind you, begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. Move your clocks ahead, or you will miss half the conference.

We express our gratitude to this wonderful chorus from BYU, which has sung to us. Following my remarks they will sing again "The Spirit of God," and the benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard E. Cook of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brethren, it is a tremendous honor and responsibility to speak to you. I pray the Lord will bless me.

Priesthood is tremendous brotherhood

What a tremendous brotherhood this is, composed of hundreds of thousands of

men and boys who have been ordained to the priesthood of God. What a mighty concourse this would be if we were all to come together in one great gathering. It would astonish the world. There is nothing like it of which I am aware.

Priesthood is the backbone of Church

You are the backbone of the Church, my brethren. From your ranks come the bishops and branch presidents, the district and stake presidents, the Area Authority Seventies, and all of the General Authorities.

You young men are the substance of a great missionary program whose influence is felt throughout the world. Altogether, you are men and boys who have taken on the whole armor of God to move forward His work in the earth.

Whenever we gather in one of these meetings, I am sorry that we cannot accommodate all who wish to come. From the moment the doors of the Tabernacle were opened tonight, there was a flood of young men and their fathers. Hopefully the new hall will be finished a year from now, and we will be able to accommodate all who wish to come.

And to you brethren who are taking advantage of the broadcast and satellite transmission of these proceedings, we feel at one with you.

I think, my brethren, that our Father in Heaven smiles down upon us. I think it must be of great comfort to Him to look upon the hundreds of thousands of men and boys who love Him, who carry in their hearts a testimony of Him and His Beloved Son, who give leadership and direction to His Church, who stand as heads of families where there is righteousness and where truth is taught and exemplified.

We have become a great body of men, young and old. There is scarcely anything we cannot accomplish if we work unitedly together with one mind and one purpose and one heart.

Realize the importance of priesthood

I hope that each of us is aware of the tremendous thing that has come to us with ordination to the priesthood. This is the authority of God in the earth. It comes from Him as a divine bestowal. It carries with it the power and the authority to govern in the affairs of the Church. It carries with it the power and the authority to bless in the name of the Lord, to lay hands upon the sick and call down the powers of heaven. It is sacred and holy. It partakes of the divine. Its authority is expressed in mortality and reaches beyond the veil of death.

I hope we are worthy of the priesthood we bear. I plead with you, every one of you, to conduct your lives in such a way as to be worthy of it.

Rise above the evils of the world

As we have been reminded, this is a season of great evil in the world. No one needs to be reminded of that. We are constantly exposed to the muck and filth of pornography, to salacious and evil behavior totally unbecoming anyone who holds the priesthood of God.

It is a challenge to work in the world and live above its filth.

Dishonesty is rampant. It is manifest in cheating that goes on in schools, in businesses that rob and defraud. Temptations are everywhere about us; unfortunately, some succumb to these.

Brethren, be strong. Rise above the evils of the world. We need not be prudish. We need not adopt a holier-than-thou attitude. We need only let our personal integrity, our sense of right and wrong, and simple honesty govern our actions.

Let us live the gospel in our homes. Let there be an honest manifestation of love between husbands and wives, between children and their parents. Control the voice of anger. Be absolutely loyal one to another.

Do what is right

Simply "do what is right [and] let the consequence follow" (*Hymns*, no. 237). So live that each morning you may kneel in prayer, seeking the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, as well as its protective power, as you go about your work of the day. So live that each night, before retiring, you may come before the Lord in prayer without shame or embarrassment or the need to plead for forgiveness. I do not hesitate to say that God will bless you if you will do so. Someday you will grow old and look back upon your life. You will be able to say: "I lived with integrity. I cheated no one, not even myself. I reveled in the companionship of my wife, who is the mother of our children. I am proud of those children. I am grateful to God for His manifest blessings."

If such can be your lot, I promise that when the shades of old age gather about you, there will be tears of gratitude in your eyes and the throbbing of a thankful heart beating in your breast.

Gratitude for bishops

Now, some years ago, more than 10 years ago, I spoke from this pulpit concerning the bishops of the Church. I wish to return briefly to that subject again tonight.

I carry in my heart a deep appreciation for our bishops. I am profoundly grateful for the revelation of the Almighty under which this office was created and functions.

Church organization effective in crisis

As all of you are aware, last fall a terrible storm hit Central America. For six days and nights, Hurricane Mitch locked in over that area and particularly over Honduras. The winds blew ferociously, and the rains fell without letup.

Rivers swelled and took with them houses that had been built along their banks. More than 200 bridges were washed out in Honduras, destroying means of travel. The soil from the highlands washed towards the sea in a deluge of filthy mud. Houses were filled to the tops of the windows. Yards and streets were filled. People fled in terror, leaving all behind them.

One of our bishops secured a big truck and went about gathering his people, taking them to higher ground. When the truck could no longer get through, he somehow secured a boat. He was looking after his flock.

I went down there to see what had happened and to give comfort, where possible. I beheld a miracle. I witnessed in operation the simple and marvelously effective organization of this Church.

Every member of this Church has a bishop or a branch president. I have only commendation for other relief efforts which came in from across the world. But I have unending admiration for the wonderful manner in which the Church operated. The bishops appealed to their stake presidents, who appealed to the Area Presidency, who appealed to headquarters here in Salt Lake City. Within hours great quantities of basic foodstuffs, medicine, and clothing were on their way from our storehouses.

A warehouse was rented in San Pedro Sula in the area of the greatest damage. It was the bishops who marshaled their people to work shifts in the warehouse putting into plastic bags enough food to take care of a family for a week, clothing to put on their backs, medicine to safeguard them against disease. Every bishop knew his own people. He, with his Relief Society president, knew their needs. These were not faceless strangers working as employees of government. They were friends, each a member of a ward family small enough that they knew one

another's needs. There was no argument, no greedy grasping for food and clothing. Everything was orderly. It was systematic. It was friendly. It was motivated by love and concern, and it was done quickly to meet an immediate need. It was the gospel at work in a quiet and magnificent manner.

The waters finally subsided, but mud was left in a thick and ugly coating on everything. Nothing became more valuable than shovels and wheelbarrows. And together, again under the direction of the bishops, the mud was cleaned from the houses.

We visited a meetinghouse on a Saturday. There were many people there, with a bishop, a loving father to his flock, giving direction. The pews, which had been floating in the water, were taken out and carefully cleaned. Mud was scraped from the walls and the floors. Then the mops came out and the polishing cloths, and before nightfall that Saturday evening, the building had been made ready for worship services on the Sabbath.

I stand in humble gratitude and respect and admiration for the bishops of this Church. In the most dire of circumstances, I watched them in La Lima, Honduras. I spoke with them, shook their hands, loved them. How thankful I am for these men who, without regard for their own comfort, give of their time, of their wisdom, of their inspiration in presiding over our wards throughout the world. They receive no compensation other than the love of their people. There is no rest for them on the Sabbath nor very much at other times. They are the ones closest to the people, best acquainted with their needs and circumstances.

Requirements of bishops

The requirements of their office are today as they were in the days of Paul, who wrote to Timothy:

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

"Not given to wine, no striker [that is, not a bully or a violent person], . . . not a brawler, not covetous" (1 Timothy 3:2-3).

In his letter to Titus, Paul adds that "a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; . . .

"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:7, 9).

Example of a bishop's influence

All during the years of my childhood and youth, even until the time I was ordained an elder and came home from a mission, I had only one bishop. He was a remarkable man. He served for 25 years. We knew him, and he knew us. We always addressed him as "Bishop Duncan," and he always called us by our first names. We had great respect for him—an almost awesome respect. But we had no fear of him. We knew that he was our friend. His was a very large ward, and how very well he served his people.

I spoke at his funeral. Next to my own father, he probably had the greatest influence on my young life. How grateful I am for him.

Since then, I have had a number of bishops. Without exception, every one of them has been a dedicated and inspired leader.

Role of bishops

Now let me say a few words directly to the bishops who are with us this night. And much of what I say to you might be echoed to the stake presidents and others in similar callings. I hope you know that I carry in my heart a great feeling of love for you. I know that your people love you. Tremendous is your trust. In calling you we have placed in you our total confidence.

We expect you to stand as the presiding high priest of the ward, a counselor to the people, a defender and helper of those in trouble, a comfort to those in sorrow, a supplier to those in need. We expect you to stand as a guardian and protector of the doctrine that is taught in your ward, of the quality of the teaching, of the filling of the many offices which are necessary.

Your personal behavior must be impeccable. You must be a man of integrity, above reproach of any kind. Your example will set the tone for the direction your people follow. You must be fearless in denouncing evil, willing to take a stand for the right, uncompromising in your defense of truth. While all of this requires firmness, it must be done with kindness and love.

You are the father of the ward and the guardian of your people. You must reach out to them in their times of sorrow and sickness and distress. You stand as president of the Aaronic Priesthood and with your counselors must give leadership to the deacons and the teachers and the priests to see that they grow in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

You are a husband to your wife, her beloved companion, her protector and provider. You are a father to your children and must nurture them with love and teach them with appreciation.

You may expect that the adversary will work on you. You, of all men, must exercise self-discipline, standing far apart from sin and evil of any kind in your own life. You must shun pornography, shut off the television set when it carries salacious entertainment, be pure in thought and deed.

You cannot use your office to further your business interests among your people, lest some accuse you of benefiting from your service as bishop.

You stand as a common judge in Israel. This is almost a terrifying responsibility. In some instances, you must determine even the eligibility of your people

to be members of the Church. You must determine their worthiness to receive baptism, their worthiness to be ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood, their eligibility to serve missions, and above all, their qualifications to enter the house of the Lord and partake of the blessings there to be had. You are to see that none goes hungry or without clothing or shelter. You must know the circumstances of all over whom you preside.

You must be a comforter and a guide to your people. Your door must be ever open to any cries of distress. Your back must be strong in sharing their burdens. You must reach out in love even to the wrongdoer.

Blessing for bishops

My brethren, I invoke the blessings of the Almighty upon you in the great responsibility which you carry. May God bless you with health and strength. May He touch your mind with wisdom and understanding, with appreciation and love. May the interests of your people be the dominant concern of your life, without sacrificing the demands of your employment or the proper attention given your family.

I thank the Lord for each of you. I love you for what you do. I pray for you, every one of you, wherever you may be. I plead with you to shield yourselves from the darts of the adversary. I counsel you to put on the whole armor of God.

May the blessings of heaven come down upon your wives and your children. Someday you will be released. That will be a day of sadness. The memories of your people will remain throughout your life. They will sanctify your days and bring peace and rest and gladness. God bless you my beloved brethren, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "The Spirit of God."
Elder Richard E. Cook offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 169th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 4, 1999. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "He Is Risen!" President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you this beautiful Easter Sabbath morning to the fourth general session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be given by the Tabernacle Choir under the direction of Jerold Ottley, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "He Is Risen!" and will now sing "With Humble Heart." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Duane B. Gerrard of the Seventy.

The choir sang "With Humble Heart."
Elder Duane B. Gerrard offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We will now hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

Jesus taught in parables

When Jesus walked and taught among men, He spoke in language easily understood. Whether He was journeying along the dusty way from Perea to Jerusalem, addressing the multitudes on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, or pausing beside Jacob's well in Samaria, He taught in parables. Jesus spoke frequently of having hearts that could know and feel, ears that were capable of hearing, and eyes that could truly see.

Example of a blind man

One not so blessed with the gift of sight was the blind man who, in an effort

to sustain himself, sat day in and day out at his usual place on the edge of a busy sidewalk in one of our large cities. In one hand he held an old felt hat filled with pencils. With his other hand he held out a tin cup. His simple appeal to the passerby was brief and to the point. It had a certain finality to it, almost a tone of despair. The message was contained on the small placard held about his neck by a string. It read, "I am blind."

Most did not stop to buy his pencils or to place a coin in the tin cup. They were too busy, too occupied by their own problems. That tin cup had never been filled or even half-filled. Then one beautiful spring day a man paused and, with a

marking pen, added several new words to the shabby sign. No longer did it read, "I am blind." Now the message read, "It is springtime and I am blind." The cup was soon filled to overflowing. Perhaps the busy people were touched by Charles L. O'Donnell's exclamation, "I have never been able to school my eyes against young April's blue surprise." To each, however, the coins were a poor substitute for the desired ability to actually restore sight.

Different kinds of blindness

Each of us knows those who do not have sight. We also know many others who have their eyesight but who walk in darkness at noonday. These in this latter group may never carry the usual white cane and carefully make their way to the sound of the familiar "tap, tap, tap." They may not have a faithful Seeing Eye dog by their side nor carry a sign about their neck which reads, "I am blind," but blind they surely are. Some have been blinded by anger, others by indifference, by revenge, by hate, by prejudice, by ignorance, by neglect of precious opportunities. Of such the Lord said, "Their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."¹

Well might each lament, "It is springtime, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored, and yet I am blind." Some, like the friend of Philip of old, call out, "How can I [find my way], except some man should guide me?"²

Many years ago, while attending a stake conference, I noticed that a counselor in the stake presidency was blind. He functioned beautifully, performing his duties as though he had sight. It was a stormy night as we met in the stake office situated on the second floor of the

building. Suddenly there was a loud clap of thunder. The lights in the building almost immediately went out. Instinctively I reached out for our sightless leader, and I said, "Here, take my arm and I will help you down the stairway."

I'm certain he must have had a smile on his face as he responded, "No, Brother Monson, give me *your* arm, that I might help *you*." And he added, "You are now in *my* territory."

The storm abated, the lights returned, but I shall never forget the trek down those stairs, guided by the man who was sightless yet filled with light.

Jesus heals a blind man

Long ago and at a place far distant, as Jesus passed by He saw a man who was blind from birth. His disciples questioned the Master as to why this person was blind. Had he sinned or had his parents sinned, causing him to have this affliction?

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. . . .

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

"When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

"And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. . . . He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."³

A great dispute ensued among the Pharisees concerning this miracle:

"Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man [Jesus] is a sinner.

"He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."⁴

Peter denies Christ, receives new birth

One thinks of the fisherman called Simon, better known to you and to me as Peter, chief among the Apostles. Doubting, disbelieving, impetuous Peter, in fulfillment of the Master's prophecy, indeed did deny Him thrice. Amidst the pushing, the jeers, and the blows, "the Lord in the agony of His humiliation, in the majesty of His silence, . . . 'turned and looked upon Peter.'"⁵⁵ As one chronologist described the change: "It was enough. . . . [Peter] 'knew no more danger, he feared no more death.' . . . [He] rushed forth into the night . . . 'to meet the morning dawn.' . . . This broken-hearted penitent [stood] before the tribunal of his own conscience, and there his old life, his old shame, his old weakness, his old self was doomed to that death of godly sorrow which was to issue in a new and a [nobler] birth."⁵⁶

"Put on the new man"

The Apostle Paul had a similar experience to that of Peter. From the day of his conversion until the day of his death, Paul urged men to "put off . . . the old man" and to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."⁵⁷

Simon the fisherman had become Peter the Apostle. Saul the persecutor had become Paul the proselyter.

The passage of time has not altered the capacity of the Redeemer to change men's lives. As He said to the dead Lazarus, so He says to you and to me: "Come forth."⁵⁸

All have the Light of Christ

Said President Harold B. Lee: "Every soul who walks the earth, wherever he lives, in whatever nation he may have been born, no matter whether he be in riches or in poverty, had at birth an endowment of that first light which is called the Light of Christ, the Spirit of

Truth, or the Spirit of God—that universal light of intelligence with which every soul is blessed. Moroni spoke of that Spirit when he said:

"For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God."⁵⁹

You and I know those who qualify for the Savior's blessing in accordance with this definition.

Example of seeing Christ in others

Such was Walter Stover of Salt Lake City. Born in Germany, Walter embraced the gospel message and came to America. He established his own business. He gave freely of his time and of his means.

Following World War II Walter Stover was called to return to his native land. He directed the Church in that nation and blessed the lives of all whom he met and with whom he served. With his own funds he constructed two chapels in Berlin—a beautiful city that had been so devastated by the conflict. He planned a gathering in Dresden for all the members of the Church from that nation and then chartered a train to bring them from all around the land so they could meet, partake of the sacrament, and bear witness of the goodness of God to them.

At the funeral services for Walter Stover, his son-in-law Thomas C. LeDuc said of him, "He had the ability to see Christ in every face he encountered, and he acted accordingly."

Must have light to give light

The poet wrote:

I met a stranger in the night, whose lamp had ceased to shine;

I paused and let him light his lamp
from mine.

A tempest sprang up later on, and
shook the world about,
And when the wind was gone, my lamp
was out.

But back came to me the stranger—his
lamp was glowing fine;
He held the precious flame and lighted
mine.¹⁰

Perhaps the moral of this poem is
simply that if you want to give a light to
others, you have to glow yourself.

Joseph Smith's First Vision

When the Prophet Joseph Smith
went into a grove of trees made sacred
by what occurred there, he described the
event:

"It was on the morning of a beautiful,
clear day, early in the spring of eighteen
hundred and twenty. It was the first time
in my life that I had made such an attempt,
for amidst all my anxieties I had never as
yet made the attempt to pray vocally."¹¹

After enduring a harrowing experi-
ence from an unseen power, Joseph con-
tinued:

"I saw a pillar of light exactly over
my head, above the brightness of the
sun, which descended gradually until it
fell upon me. . . .

"... When the light rested upon me
I saw two Personages, whose brightness
and glory defy all description, standing
above me in the air. One of them spake
unto me, calling me by name and said,
pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved
Son. Hear Him!*"¹²

Joseph listened. Joseph learned.

On occasion I will be asked, "Brother
Monson, if the Savior appeared to you,
what questions would you ask of Him?"

My reply is always the same: "I would
ask no question of Him. Rather, I would
listen!"

A blind man seeks a blessing for sight

Late one evening on a Pacific isle, a
small boat slipped silently to its berth at
the crude pier. Two Polynesian women
helped Meli Mulipola from the boat and
guided him to the well-worn pathway
leading to the village road. The women
marveled at the bright stars which twin-
kled in the midnight sky. The friendly
moonlight guided them along their way.
However, Meli Mulipola could not ap-
preciate these delights of nature—the
moon, the stars, the sky—for he was blind.

His vision had been normal until
that fateful day when, while working on
a pineapple plantation, light turned sud-
denly to darkness and day became per-
petual night. He had learned of the
restoration of the gospel and the teach-
ings of The Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints. His life had been
brought into compliance with these
teachings.

He and his loved ones had made this
long voyage, having learned that one
who held the priesthood of God was vis-
iting among the islands. He sought a
blessing under the hands of those who
held the sacred priesthood. His wish was
granted. Tears streamed from his sight-
less eyes and coursed down his brown
cheeks, tumbling finally upon his native
dress. He dropped to his knees and
prayed: "Oh, God, thou knowest I am
blind. Thy servants have blessed me that
if it be thy will, my sight may return.
Whether in thy wisdom I see light or
whether I see darkness all the days of my
life, I will be eternally grateful for the
truth of thy gospel which I now see and
which provides me the light of life."

He arose to his feet, thanked us for
providing the blessing, and disappeared
into the dark of the night. Silently he
came; silently he departed. But his pres-
ence I shall never forget. I reflected upon

the message of the Master: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."¹³

Temples reflect the Light of Christ

Today is a day of temple building. Never before have so many temples been erected and dedicated. President Gordon B. Hinckley, God's prophet on this earth, has a vision of the vital ordinances performed in such houses of the Lord. Temples will bless all who attend them and who sacrifice for their completion. The light of Christ will shine on all—even those who have gone beyond.

President Joseph F. Smith, speaking of work for the dead, declared, "Through our efforts in their behalf their chains of bondage will fall from them, and the darkness surrounding them will clear away, that light may shine upon them and they shall hear in the spirit world of the work that has been done for them by their children here, and will rejoice with you in your performance of these duties."¹⁴

The Apostle Paul urged, "Be thou an example of the believers."¹⁵ And from James: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."¹⁶

Trust the true light

I close with the words of the poet Minnie Louise Haskins, who wrote:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown!"

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me toward the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.¹⁷

On this Easter morning and always, may our light so shine that we glorify our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, whose name is the only name under heaven whereby we might be saved. That we may ever walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ is my humble prayer, in His holy name, amen.

NOTES

1. Matthew 13:15.
2. Acts 8:31.
3. John 9:3, 5–7.
4. John 9:24–25.
5. Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1874), 580; Luke 22:61.
6. *The Life of Christ*, 581.
7. Ephesians 4:22, 24.
8. John 11:43.
9. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 115; Moroni 7:16.
10. Author unknown.
11. Joseph Smith—History 1:14.
12. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17; italics in original.
13. John 8:12.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 6.
15. 1 Timothy 4:12.
16. James 1:22.
17. From "The Gate of the Year," in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 92.

The choir sang "When Saints Unite to Sing God's Praise."

President Hinckley

President Monson has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "When Saints Unite to Sing God's Praise."

Our next speaker will be President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

President Boyd K. Packer

Last night in the priesthood session, President Hinckley gave a tribute, counsel, and a blessing to our bishops. Under the rule of two witnesses, explained to us by Elder Oaks yesterday, I stand as a second witness.

A bishop abandons his own work to help

Years ago I served on a stake high council with Emery Wight. For 10 years Emery had served as bishop of rural Harper Ward. His wife, Lucille, became our stake Relief Society president.

Lucille told me that one spring morning a neighbor called at her door and asked for Emery. She told him that he was out plowing. The neighbor then spoke with great concern. Earlier that morning he had passed the field and noticed Emery's team of horses standing in a half-finished furrow with the reins draped over the plow. Emery was nowhere in sight. The neighbor thought nothing of it until much later when he passed the field again, and the team had not moved. He climbed the fence and crossed the field to the horses. Emery was nowhere to be found. He hurried to the house to check with Lucille.

Lucille calmly replied, "Oh, don't be alarmed. No doubt someone is in trouble and came to get the bishop."

The image of that team of horses standing for hours in the field symbolizes the dedication of the bishops in the Church and of the counselors who stand by their side. Every bishop and every counselor, figuratively speaking, leaves his team standing in an unfinished furrow when someone needs help.

I have passed that field many times over the years. It is a reminder of the sacrifice and the service of those called to serve in bishoprics of wards and of their wives and families, without whose help they could not serve.

Recently, very early on a Sunday morning, I stood in that field. I looked up toward the home where Emery and Lucille reared their children and to the foothills beyond. As a boy, with other Scouts I left that home with Bishop Wight. We hiked into the hills, with Emery teaching us every step of the way.

Responsibilities of bishops

"A bishop," Paul wrote to Timothy, "must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach."¹

Those words *apt to teach* have special meaning. *Apt* means "inclined, ready, prepared."

In all the world there is nothing quite like the office of bishop in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Except for parents, the bishop has the best opportunity to teach and to cause to be taught the things that matter most. And a bishop has the remarkable opportunity to teach parents about their responsibility; then he must allow them time to teach their children.

The bishop is responsible for the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and for the young women as well. He receives and accounts for tithes and offerings. He is responsible for the temporal affairs of the Church, to seek out the poor, and he has many other duties.

The bishop is "to judge his people by the testimony of the just, and *by the assistance of his counselors*, according to the laws of the kingdom which are given by the prophets of God."² He is to judge them as to their worthiness to receive the ordinances and serve in offices.

He is to counsel and correct and to preach the gospel to his flock, individually and collectively. In all of this, he is to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Crucifixion, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Restoration.

Bishops are called and ordained

I have heard this described as voluntary service because neither the bishop nor his counselors are paid for what they do. They too pay their tithes and offerings, and they devote endless hours to their calling. They are paid only in blessings, as are those who serve with them.

But one does not exactly volunteer or aspire to be bishop. He is *called* to be bishop, "called of God, by prophecy." Then he is both ordained and set apart "by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

A man is *ordained* a bishop, an office in the priesthood; then he is *set apart* and given the keys to preside over a ward. He with his two counselors form a bishopric—a type of presidency.

Once ordained, he is a bishop for the rest of his life. When he is released from presiding over a ward, his ordination becomes dormant. If called again to preside over a ward, his previous ordination is reactivated. When he is released, it becomes dormant again.

Right to revelation

Inherent in the ordination to be bishop is both the right and the obligation to be directed by inspiration. The bishop has the power to discern by the Spirit what he is to do.

Revelation is the one credential that all bishops have in common. Bishops come from many cultures, many occupations. They vary in experience, personality, and age, but they do not differ in their right to be guided spiritually.

Years ago a friend of mine went to a large university to study under the ranking authority in the field of counseling and guidance. This professor quickly took an interest in this personable, intelligent young Latter-day Saint. He attracted attention as he moved through the course work required for a doctor's degree.

He chose the Latter-day Saint bishop as the subject for his dissertation. All went well until he described the ordination of a bishop, the power of discernment, and the right of a bishop to spiritual guidance.

His doctoral committee felt that such references had no place in a scholarly paper, and they insisted that he take them out. He thought he might at least say that Latter-day Saints *believe* the bishop has spiritual insight. But the committee denied him even this, for they would be quite embarrassed to have this spiritual ingredient included in a scholarly dissertation.

He was told that with some little accommodation—specifically, leaving out all the references to revelation—his dissertation would be published and his reputation established.

He did the best he could. His dissertation did not contain enough about the Spirit to satisfy him and too much to be fully accepted by his worldly professors. But he received his degree.

I asked this friend what was the most important thing he had learned in his study of bishops. He answered, "I learned that the mantle is far, far greater than the intellect, that the priesthood is the guiding power."

Be considerate of a bishop's time

Do not doubt that an ordinary soul called from the ranks to be bishop can give inspired counsel and correction. Unfortunately, some who could be helped so much are reluctant to seek counsel from the bishop, while others endlessly seem to need counseling and comfort and feel neglected if they are not constantly tended.

Bishops are inspired! Each of us has agency to accept or reject counsel from our leaders, but never disregard the counsel of your bishop, whether given over the pulpit or individually, and never turn down a call from your bishop.

It can be a tough world, a tough life, and in some ways it's even tougher in the Church. Eliza R. Snow wrote:

Think not when you gather to Zion,
Your troubles and trials are through,
That nothing but comfort and pleasure
Are waiting in Zion for you:
No, no, 'tis designed as a furnace,
All substance, all textures to try,
To burn all the 'wood . . . and [the]
stubble,'
The gold from the dross purify. . . .

Think not when you gather to Zion,
The Saints here have nothing to do
But to look to your personal welfare,
And always be comforting you.
No; those who are faithful are doing
What they find to do with their might;
To gather the scattered of Israel
They labor by day and by night.⁴

When we need help the bishop is there, but be careful not to impose unnecessarily upon his time. Bishops can do only so much. The bishopric must have time to make a living and time for their own families.

The Church is no bigger than a ward

Often we are asked how the relatively few Apostles in the First Presidency and the Twelve can manage the Church, now more than 10 million strong.

Actually the Church is no bigger than a ward. Each bishop has counselors. He wears a special mantle and is designated as the presiding high priest in the ward. There are other high priests, and there is a presidency of elders. There are auxiliary leaders and teachers sufficient for the need. When we serve obediently, ever willingly, our pay, like the bishop's, comes in blessings.

No matter if the Church grows to be a hundred million (as it surely will!), it will still be no bigger than a ward. Everything needed for our redemption, save for the

temple, is centered there—and temples now come ever closer to all of us.

Small numbers of wards are grouped together under the shelter of stakes and branches under districts. There is a stake presidency and a council to train the bishopric and other leaders to train those who serve with them.

This organization, in place across the world, is a product of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This miracle of willing service is possible because of individual testimonies of the Redeemer.

The revelation, present when this system was conceived, did not end there, for the purpose of it all is to shelter families. Families are grouped together in a ward or branch.

It is the responsibility of the bishop to see that each family is bound together in enduring covenants and each individual is safe and happy. The system works best when the bishop recognizes the preeminent responsibility of parents.

Parents' responsibilities to family

While the bishop is sometimes referred to as the "father of the ward," we should remember he is not called to rear the children of the ward.

Our handbooks state:

"Parents have primary responsibility for the welfare of their children.⁵ The bishopric and other ward leaders support but do not replace them in this responsibility."⁶

"Quorums, auxiliaries, programs, and activities in the Church should strengthen and support the family. They should enhance gospel-centered family activities, not compete with them."⁷

The First Presidency recently wrote to the Church:

"The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility. . . .

"... However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform."⁸

Families, like wards, vary in size and shape. Time moves on; one generation replaces another. Babies are born and mature to become parents and then grandparents. One family divides itself to become several. Wards grow and are divided. Where there was one, there are others.

Whatever happens in the world, whatever heights of civility or depths of depravity emerge in society, the plan remains unaltered. The Church will grow until it fills the whole earth. At once it will remain no bigger than the ward.

The Church provides activities and associations and ordinances and ordinations and covenants and contracts and corrections which prepare each of us for exaltation. It follows a pattern made in the heavens, for no mortal mind could have designed it.

Now and always hereafter, ordinary men will leave their teams standing in an unfinished furrow, the reins draped over the plow, when someone needs help. The women and children serve with them and will sustain them supplied with truth from the books of revelation, the gem of them all being the Book of Mormon, which testifies of Christ, of the Atone-

ment, of His Resurrection; and I testify of Him. Sheltered in the ward within the plan which He revealed, we with our families will be safe. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

- 1 Timothy 3:2.
- Doctrine and Covenants 58:18; italics added.
- Articles of Faith 1:5.
- "Think Not, When You Gather to Zion," *Hymns* (1948), no. 21, vv. 1, 3.
- See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25-28.
- Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 178.
- Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, 299.
- First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999, cited in *Church News*, 27 Feb. 1999, 3.

The choir sang "He Died! The Great Redeemer Died."

President Hinckley

Elder Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, has just spoken to us. The choir has sung "He Died! The Great Redeemer Died."

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Marlin K. Jensen

Good morning, brothers and sisters.

Although, candidly, one is never completely comfortable with an assignment like this, I do sincerely appreciate the opportunity to speak to all of you on this beautiful Easter morning.

My wise father once told me that if I listened carefully to what people talk about from the pulpit in church, I would

know which principles of the gospel were of concern to them and those with which they might be struggling at any given time. Through the years my father's observation has caused me to be very careful in the choice of subjects about which I speak! Nevertheless, I have an admission to make today. Since President Gordon B. Hinckley shared with us the

three fundamental needs every new member of the Church has for a friend, a responsibility, and nourishing by the good word of God, I have been personally concerned about my performance as a friend.

Friendship is a fundamental need

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "friendship is one of the grand fundamental principles of 'Mormonism.'"¹ That thought ought to inspire and motivate all of us because I feel that friendship is a fundamental need of our world. I think in all of us there is a profound longing for friendship, a deep yearning for the satisfaction and security that close and lasting relationships can give. Perhaps one reason the scriptures make little specific mention of the principle of friendship is because it should be manifest quite naturally as we live the gospel. In fact, if the consummate Christian attribute of charity has a first cousin, it is friendship. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul slightly, friendship "suffereth long, and is kind; [friendship] envieth not; . . . seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; . . . [friendship] never faileth."²

Friendship starts at home

Like so much of what is worthwhile in life, our needs for friendship are often best met in the home. If our children feel friendship within the family, with each other, and with parents, they will not be desperate for acceptance outside the family. I think one of life's most satisfying accomplishments for my wife and me is to have lived long enough to see our children become good friends. It's definitely a miracle that those in our family who in younger years occasionally threatened one another with serious bodily harm now seek out and genuinely enjoy each other's friendship. Similarly, I think no finer compliment can be paid to parents

than to have children say that their parents are among their best friends.

Friendship is also a vital and wonderful part of courtship and marriage. A relationship between a man and a woman that begins with friendship and then ripens into romance and eventually marriage will usually become an enduring, eternal friendship. Nothing is more inspiring in today's world of easily dissolved marriages than to observe a husband and wife quietly appreciating and enjoying each other's friendship year in and year out as they experience together the blessings and trials of mortality. A recently published report on 25 years of landmark marital research finds that "the linchpin of a lasting marriage . . . is a simple concept with a profound impact: friendship."³ In a poignant letter written by the Prophet Joseph Smith to his wife, Emma, during the separations and tribulations of Missouri, he comforted her by saying, "Oh my affectionate Emma, I want you to remember that I am a true and faithful friend, to you and the children, forever."⁴

Church organization fosters friendship

The inspired organization of the Church also fosters friendships. From our youngest to our oldest years we are in settings where friendship and sociality can flourish. In interviews, meetings, classes, quorums, councils, activities, and a variety of other opportunities for association, we can make friends and find understanding. The salutation prescribed for greeting the elders attending the School of the Prophets in Kirtland expresses the spirit of friendship that might well serve as a creed for each of us: "I receive you to fellowship, in a determination that is fixed, immovable, and unchangeable, to be your friend . . . through the grace of God in the bonds of love."⁵

Friendship needed to serve, teach

All of our interactions in the Church are made more enjoyable and productive when they are accompanied by genuine feelings of friendship. A teacher of the gospel, for instance, who doesn't befriend his or her students will seldom teach with lasting influence and effect. I still treasure a one-sentence entry in my high school yearbook in which a seminary teacher I loved and from whom I learned much told me he was grateful to be my friend.

A bishop, no matter how skilled in administrative matters, must be a friend to children, youth, and adults if he is to help them reach their spiritual potential. I was touched once when a young woman I knew went to her bishop to confess a serious transgression. She had been worried about how the bishop might react to her deviation from the gospel path and had only gone to him after considerable urging. When I asked her afterward what his response had been, she told me with great emotion that her bishop had wept with her and that in working with him to gain the Lord's forgiveness, she now considered her bishop to be one of her best friends.

Reach out to others

There is a particular challenge we face as Latter-day Saints in establishing and maintaining friendships. Because our commitment to marriage, family, and the Church is so strong, we often feel challenged by constraints of time and energy in reaching out in friendship to others beyond that core group. I experienced this dilemma personally in recent days as I tried to steal a few moments at home to prepare this talk. Twice, friends from my past whom I love dearly but see only occasionally dropped in to visit. During what ought to have been choice times of reunion and reminiscence, I ironically found myself growing inwardly

impatient for the visits to end so that I could get back to writing my talk about friendship!

I have since felt ashamed. How selfish we can be. How unwilling to be inconvenienced, to give, to bless and be blessed. What kind of parents or neighbors or servants of the Lord Jesus Christ can we be without being a friend? In this information age, is not friendship still the best technology for sharing the truths and way of life we cherish? Is not our reluctance voluntarily to reach out to others in friendship a significant obstacle to helping God accomplish His eternal purposes?

Sincere friendship at core of fellowship

Years ago when I was serving as a bishop, a recently converted family moved into our rural Utah community. These good people had joined the Church in the eastern United States and had been warmly fellowshipped and put to work in a small branch there. When they came to our larger, more-established ward, they somehow slipped through the cracks. Some of the family members, particularly the father, became disenchanted with the Church and its members.

One Sunday morning when I noticed the father was missing from priesthood meeting, I left the meetinghouse and drove to his home. He invited me in, and we had a very honest conversation about the struggle he was having with his new faith and neighbors. After exploring various possibilities for responding to his concerns, none of which seemed to appeal to him very much, I asked him with a tone of frustration in my voice just what we could do to help him. I've never forgotten his reply:

"Well, bishop," he said (and I will need to paraphrase here slightly), "for heaven's sake, whatever you do, please don't assign me a *friend*."

I learned a great lesson that day. No one wants to become a "project"; we all

want spontaneously to be loved. And, if we are to have friends, we want them to be genuine and sincere, not "assigned."

Be a friend

Brothers and sisters, my message today is very simple: if we truly want to be tools in the hands of our Heavenly Father in bringing to pass His eternal purposes, we need only to be a friend. Consider the power of each one of us, 10 million strong, of our own free will and choice reaching out to those not yet of our faith in unconditional friendship. We would no longer be accused of offering warm bread and a cold shoulder. Imagine the consequences for good if each active family in the Church offered consistent concern and genuine friendship to a less-active family or a new-member family. The power is in each one of us to be a friend. Old and young, rich and poor, educated and humble, in every language and country, we all have the capacity to be a friend.

Our Savior, shortly before His Crucifixion, said to His disciples: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends."⁶ Having been so richly blessed by Christ's friendship, I pray that we will now be to others what He is to us: a true friend. At no time will we be more Christ-like than when we are a friend. I testify of the inestimable value of friends in my own

life and express my gratitude to all of them this morning. I know that when we offer ourselves in friendship, we make a most significant contribution to God's work and to the happiness and progress of His children. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 316.
2. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, 8.
3. John Gottman, as cited in Karen S. Peterson, "Friendship Makes Marriages a Success," *USA Today*, 1 Apr. 1999, p. 1D.
4. Quoted in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 3:1345.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:133.
6. John 15:13-14.

President Hinckley

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth." Following the singing, Sister Sheri L. Dew, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth."

Sister Sheri L. Dew

Christ offers salvation to all

In His last discourse to His disciples prior to Gethsemane and Calvary, the Savior declared that He was "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). On this beautiful Easter morning, I testify with the prophet Alma that "there is no other

way . . . whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ" (Alma 38:9).

The Savior's Atonement is stunningly inclusive! "For as in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22; italics added). Come one, come all, the Lord has invited. The gospel of Jesus Christ is for every man and

woman, boy and girl. He doesn't change the rules for the rich or the poor, the married or unmarried, the Portuguese or the Chinese. The gospel is for *every one* of us, and the spiritual requirements and rewards are universal. In matters pertaining to salvation, "*all are alike unto God*" (2 Nephi 26:33; italics added). The Lord's motives stand in stark contrast to those of Lucifer, who is obsessed with attempting to make us feel less than who we are as sons and daughters of God. He despises a consecrated people and delights at obscuring our vision and enticing us away from the path that leads back to our heavenly home.

Example of losing the way

As a young BYU student I learned a little something about staying on course when heading home. One Christmas Eve my brother and I left to drive home to Kansas. But early in our journey we learned that a huge snowstorm was heading our way, so we pulled out a map, identified a detour that would skirt the edge of the storm, and headed into parts unknown. Our creative navigating proved dangerous. Our new route was unfamiliar, and we still ran right into the blizzard. To make matters worse, late that night as we were creeping along in blinding snow on an obscure highway, our old Ford quit. We were stranded. And we had absolutely no idea where we were.

Eventually we caught a ride to the nearest town, where we found that we were still hours from home and marooned in Last Chance, Colorado. At that point there was only one thing to do. We called home for help. In the middle of the night our father left to come and rescue us. By the next afternoon we were all safely home.

I'll never forget Christmas Eve in Last Chance, where we were immobilized by a problem largely of our own making and one we were unequipped to solve. That day our father did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Now, each one of us is

on the path towards our eternal home. And for various reasons we all need rescue—rescue from loneliness and heartache, from despair and disillusionment, from the consequences of innocent mistakes and blatant sin.

The Savior is the only chance

Where do we turn for help? "In the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way" (Ether 12:11). The Savior isn't our last chance; He is our only chance. Our only chance to overcome self-doubt and catch a vision of who we may become. Our only chance to repent and have our sins washed clean. Our only chance to purify our hearts, subdue our weaknesses, and avoid the adversary. Our only chance to obtain redemption and exaltation. Our only chance to find peace and happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

Left to his own devices, the natural man inevitably succumbs to Satan (see Mosiah 3:19), who abandons his prey once he lures them from the straight and narrow path. But the Savior will guide those who follow Him *all* the way home. Lehi's family endured an intense wilderness experience designed to teach, test, and sanctify them. Likewise, the path from our former home to eternal life runs right through this earthly wilderness, where we may expect similar challenges and difficulties. But in our journey we are not alone, for the Lord's promise to Nephi is the same to us: "I will prepare the way before you, [and] inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall be led towards the promised land. . . . After ye have arrived . . . ye shall know that . . . the Lord, did deliver you" (1 Nephi 17:13–14).

The Lord knows the way, is the way

The Lord knows the way because He *is* the way and is our only chance for successfully negotiating mortality. His Atonement makes available all of the

power, peace, light, and strength that we need to deal with life's challenges—those ranging from our own mistakes and sins to trials over which we have no control but we still feel pain.

The Lord has promised to heal our broken hearts and “to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18); to give power to the faint, to heal the wounded soul, and to turn our weakness into strength (see Isaiah 40:29; Jacob 2:8; Ether 12:27); to take upon Him our pains and sicknesses, to blot out our transgressions if we repent, and loose the bands of death (see Alma 7:11–13). He promised that if we will build our lives upon His rock, the devil will have no power over us (see Helaman 5:12). And He has vowed that He will never leave us or forsake us (see Hebrews 13:5). There is simply no mortal equivalent. Not in terms of commitment, power, or love. He is our only chance.

Activate the power of the Atonement

Our responsibility is to learn to draw upon the power of the Atonement. Otherwise we walk through mortality relying solely on our own strength. And to do that is to invite the frustration of failure and to refuse the most resplendent gift in time or eternity. “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed . . . and he receive not the gift?” (D&C 88:33). My brother and I would have been foolish to not seek or accept our father's help when we were stranded. Likewise, the Lord is our advocate, and He “knoweth the weakness of man and how to succor them who are tempted” (D&C 62:1). In other words, He knows how to succor *all* of us. But we activate the power of the Atonement in our lives. We do this by first believing in Him, by repenting, by obeying His commandments, by partaking of sacred ordinances and keeping covenants, and by seeking after Him in fasting and prayer, in the scriptures, and in the temple.

All of which requires our faith in the Lord. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said that “if there is any one thing you and I need . . . , it is faith.”¹ To have faith in Christ is to believe in Him, follow Him, and rely on Him. And it is to be blessed with the peace of conscience and mind that the Apostle Paul spoke of when he said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

Being happy when life is hard

Not long ago the Relief Society general presidency was asked to meet with two journalists from eastern Europe who were intrigued about service performed by our sisters in their country. We explained that from its earliest days this grand organization of righteous women has sought to not only “relieve the poor but to save souls.”² When they asked if we help women with their “emotional problems,” explaining that many in their country were discouraged, we responded that in Relief Society we study the doctrines of the gospel, and the gospel teaches us how to be happy even when life is hard. One of the reporters was incredulous: “Is it possible?” she asked. “Is it possible to be happy when life is hard?” Her question tugged at me, for I knew that she did not know where to turn for peace.

Is it possible to be happy when life is hard? To feel peace amid uncertainty and hope in the midst of cynicism? Is it possible to change, to shake off old habits and become new again? Is it possible to live with integrity and purity in a world that no longer values the virtues that distinguish the followers of Christ?

Yes. The answer is yes because of Jesus Christ, whose Atonement ensures that we need not bear the burdens of mortality alone. There is nothing this confused world needs more, nothing that inspires a greater sense of well-being, nothing that has greater power to

strengthen families than the gospel of Jesus Christ. President Howard W. Hunter said, "Whatever Jesus lays his hands upon lives. If Jesus lays his hands upon a marriage, it lives. If he is allowed to lay his hands on the family, it lives."³ The Savior will do for *each* of us what He has promised to do—if we will have faith in Him and receive His gift.

Jesus Christ is the only answer

Through the years I, like you, have experienced pressures and disappointments that would have crushed me had I not been able to draw upon a source of wisdom and strength far greater than my own. He has never forgotten or forsaken me, and I have come to know for myself that Jesus is the Christ and that this is His Church. With Ammon I say: "[For] who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy . . . ? Behold, . . . I cannot say the smallest part which I feel" (Alma 26:16). I testify that in this, the twilight of the dispensation of the fulness of times, when Lucifer is working

overtime to jeopardize our journey home and to separate us from the Savior's atoning power, the only answer for *any* of us is Jesus Christ.

May we recommit to seek after this Jesus of whom the prophets have testified. May we yoke ourselves to Him, draw liberally upon the matchless power of His Atonement, and rise up as sons and daughters of God and shake off the world. To "those who will have him to be their God" (1 Nephi 17:40), the Lord has extended a magnificent promise: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88). Jesus Christ is our only chance. He will show us the way because He *is* the way, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 186.
2. *Relief Society Minutebook*, 9 June 1842, 3.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 93; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 65.

Elder David B. Haight

My dear brethren and sisters, what a beautiful day. What a wonderful day this is, what a wonderful time to be alive, and what a wonderful time to be a member of the Church.

Even though my eyesight isn't as good as it used to be, as I get older I find that my vision improves, that I see the larger picture more clearly as time goes on. I look at Ruby sitting over here, bless her heart; this year we will celebrate our 69th wedding anniversary. And so on this day, my heart is filled with gratitude for the blessings that I have received and for the influence that the Church has had upon me and my life, with Ruby by my side,

and for the sons that we have raised, Bruce and Robert, and our daughter, Karen, and their families. I can also see in my mind's eye at this time, not only here in Utah but in California and in Texas and in North Carolina and in Boston, great-grandchildren in front of the television. And they're probably saying, "That old guy up there is Grandpa. He's kind of looking old, isn't he? But he's our grandpa." And to all of them I express my love and gratitude.

Love and service bring rewards

As I get older and as I look back upon the world and upon the life that I have

lived, I sense that it is the love that we share and the service that we render that really is the great payoff.

Some years ago near the end of a plane trip that I was on, on an assignment, the stewardess came along asking what we wanted as a refreshment, as a drink. And I told her that I would take a 7-Up or some lemon drink.

As she brought it to me and handed me the drink, she noticed my tie pin. And on my tie pin, which I have here in my hand—we were using these in the Scottish Mission years ago—there was the crest of the royal family of England. But in the center of that crest we had emblazed the London Temple. And so on this tie pin was the temple with that crest around it. As the stewardess handed me the 7-Up, she said, “My, that’s an unusual tie pin. What is on it?”

And I said, “That’s a temple.”

And this young lady said, “A temple? A temple of what?”

And I said, “A temple of the Lord.”

And she said, “A what?”

And I said, “It’s a temple of the Lord.”

And I could see some interest in her, and she said, “What church do you belong to?”

I told her of our Church, and then I said to her, because I could see there was some interest, “If you will give me your name and address, I will have some young men come by and call on you, and they will tell you about this temple and about temples.”

She looked at me rather strangely and walked away. Then in a few moments she came back and handed me a little slip of paper with her name, Penny Harryman, with a Los Angeles address.

I called the mission president, and I told him, as we always do, “Send two of your best. I want you to go out and visit with this young lady,” because I had said to her, “I’ll have some young men come and see you, and if you do what they will ask you to do and listen to them, I

promise you that you can have the greatest blessings that could come into your life.”

A little over a year later, a telephone call came into my office one day, and a girl’s voice said, “My name is Penny Harryman. Do you remember me?”

And I said, “Of course I do.”

She said, “Could you arrange to marry my fiancé and me in the Salt Lake Temple if we could arrange the time?”

I said, “Of course I would.”

And while I was sealing this young lady to this young man that she had met during that course of events, I found that her mother was walking around Temple Square in Salt Lake, wondering what we were doing to her daughter in the temple because she wasn’t permitted to be there.

As time goes on, it is the love that we give and the service that we render that becomes so important in our lives.

Showing love for the Savior

Following the Resurrection we all know of those appearances that the Savior made—one of them was when He met with Peter and the fishermen on the shores of Galilee. It was evidently very early in the morning, and He called out and asked them if they were having any success. They said no, and He told them to cast the nets on the other side. And then in that account which is so beautifully recorded by John, they drew the nets in, and there were lots of fish.

The Savior was there. There was a fire, according to John’s account, and they ate fish and honeycomb or bread. And on that occasion, the Savior said to Peter, “Son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15; see vv. 1–17). Undoubtedly He had pointed to those fish that were probably still jumping there in the net.

“Lovest thou me more than these?”

They were poor. They could take the fish and sell them, sell them for money, do something with them.

Peter said, indicating that the Savior knew all things, "Thou knowest that I love thee." And the Savior said to Peter, "Feed my lambs" (v. 15).

Then the second time, the Savior said to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" and Peter then was grieved because the Savior had asked him the second time, and the Savior said, "Feed my sheep" (v. 16).

Then the third time He asked him, "Lovest thou me? . . . Feed my sheep" (v. 17).

What are we doing? In attempting to prove to the Savior on this day which is so precious to all of us, when we celebrate, preach, and teach of the Resurrection and of the Savior breaking the bands of death, what are we doing and how do we demonstrate to the Savior the love we have for Him? Wouldn't it be through our obedience and through our service and what we do with the time that we have?

Need for couple missionaries

I had an interesting letter the other day from a stake president down in the Phoenix, Arizona, area. He asked if I could arrange to come down sometime, and he'd arrange for a fireside. He wanted me to talk to the "snowbirds." He pointed out that hundreds of people, "snowbirds," fly into Arizona in the wintertime, coming from various parts of the United States to settle down there during the winter months. And he said, "They're retired now, wonderful people, well qualified. They come and are now in the wards." If you're a snowbird, you know, you can spend part of the time in Arizona and part of the time somewhere else, and so you're sort of free to do what you'd like to do.

Let me just remind all of you of the great need we have out in the world as the missionary program moves forward for couple missionaries to help strengthen the branches and the stakes throughout the world as we bring more people into the Church.

Examples of missionary service

You all have probably heard much about the story of what happened in Mongolia when Ken Beesley was there and helped the government in establishing an institution of higher learning, teaching them about curriculum and administration, and in so doing he started opening the door for the Church.

You have also probably heard of President Gary Cox and his wife, Sister Joyce Cox, who were called to go there as missionaries and then as mission president and of the wonderful service that they rendered.

And then came Dr. John Bennett and his wife, Carolyn, who had served in Mongolia and who told of when they thought they were going to be called to the Canary Islands because someone there had invited them to come, but when their mission call came it was to Mongolia. They were astonished. I read some of their comments later on, of what had happened to them in Mongolia, all of the lives that they touched and the service that they rendered. And even though back home they'd had a brother die and they'd had children be married and have receptions, they said, "We were able to keep in touch with them by telephone while this was all going on."

Think of what has happened in Mongolia now, where we have some 1,300 members and nine branches.

I think also of Brother Ken Woolstenhulme and his wife, Sister Karren Woolstenhulme, from up in Oakley, Utah, who wanted to go out somewhere where the action was, and they were sent to Perth, Australia. They are now in a little branch more than 300 miles north of Perth, up in an area where they write and tell of the excitement that has come into their lives as they watch and are part of the development of the Church in that part of the world.

If you're retired and wondering what to do with those extra years, there's a

world out there of excitement. I think of Talmage Nielsen here in Salt Lake City, a retired doctor, and his wife, who served missions in both South America and in Frankfurt, Germany, helping us there with medical problems, as well as assisting with medical problems in Russia. After being home long enough to kiss the grandchildren hello and good-bye, they were then called to serve in Hawaii, where he was director of the visitors' center. I know the great time, experience, and blessings that they have had serving together in these three missions.

When I talked with him recently, I said, "Now what are you going to do with the rest of your life?"

And he said, "Well, I'm 72."

And I said, "You're 72? Well, I have 20 years on you! And when I think of what has happened to me in the last 20 years, Talmage, think of what you can still do as you go out into the world."

I leave you my witness, my testimony, that the gospel is true, that God lives, that He is our Father, and that in some miraculous way He reaches our hearts and our consciences regarding the truthfulness of this work. We sense it, we feel it,

and we feel of His love and His mercy regarding all of us.

May we live the principles of the gospel. May we use our time effectively, all of the time that we have, I humbly pray as I leave you my love and my witness of the truthfulness of this work in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Our Savior's Love."

President Hinckley

Sister Sheri L. Dew, second counselor in the Relief Society presidency, has spoken to us, followed by Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir then sang "Our Savior's Love." We express appreciation to the choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

Following my remarks this session will conclude with the choir singing "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" The benediction will then be offered by Elder Wayne M. Hancock.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Gratitude for the members

My brothers and sisters, I feel so deeply grateful as I stand before you. Of all men, I feel so richly blessed. I am blessed by your love. Wherever I go, you are so very kind to me. I am blessed by your faith. Your tremendous service, your devotion, your loyalty—all become a part of my own faith. How really wonderful you are. It is plainly evident that the gospel, when lived, makes people better than they otherwise would be.

How unselfish you are with your time and your means. All across this broad

world you serve to build our Father's kingdom and to move His work forward.

I telephoned a man last week. He is retired. He has served as a mission president, and he and his wife are now serving as missionaries. I asked him if they would be willing to go to preside over a new temple. He broke down with emotion. He was overcome. He could not talk. He and his wife will leave their children and grandchildren for another long period to serve the Lord in another capacity. Will they miss their grandchildren? Of course they will. But they will go, and they will serve faithfully.

How deeply grateful I am for the devotion and the loyalty of the members of the Church throughout the earth who respond to every call, no matter the inconvenience, no matter what comfort they must forgo.

Gratitude for Jesus Christ

But of all the things for which I feel grateful, I am most thankful this Easter morning for the gift of my Lord and my Redeemer. This is Easter, when, with all of Christendom, we commemorate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This was not an ordinary thing. It was the greatest event in human history. I do not hesitate to say that.

"If a man die, shall he live again?" asked Job (Job 14:14). There is no question of greater importance than this.

No one escapes death

Those of us who live in comfort and security seldom give any thought to death. Our minds are on other things. Yet there is nothing more certain, nothing more universal, nothing more final than the closure of mortal life. No one can escape it, not one.

I have stood at the tomb of Napoleon in Paris, at the tomb of Lenin in Moscow, and before the burial places of many others of the great leaders of the earth. In their time they commanded armies; they ruled with almost omnipotent power; their very words brought terror into the hearts of people. I have reverently walked through some of the great cemeteries of the world. I have reflected quietly and thoughtfully as I have stood in the military cemetery in Manila in the Philippines where are buried some 17,000 Americans who gave their lives in the Second World War and where are remembered another 35,000 who died in the terrible battles of the Pacific and whose

remains were never found. I have walked with reverence through the British cemetery on the outskirts of Rangoon, Burma, and noted the names of hundreds of young men who came from the villages, towns, and great cities of the British Isles and gave their lives in hot and distant places. I have strolled through old cemeteries in Asia and Europe and yet other places and reflected on the lives of those who were once buoyant and happy, who were creative and distinguished, who gave much to the world in which they lived. They have all passed into the oblivion of the grave. All who have lived upon the earth before us are now gone. They have left all behind as they have stepped over the threshold of silent death. None has escaped. All have walked their way to "the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns" (*Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1, lines 79–80). Shakespeare so described it.

Through Jesus Christ all live

But Jesus the Christ changed all that. Only a God could do what He did. He broke the bonds of death. He too had to die, but on the third day following His burial, He rose from the grave, "the first-fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20), and in so doing brought the blessing of the Resurrection to every one of us.

Contemplating this wondrous thing, Paul declared: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Jesus as a young boy

Two weeks ago I was in Jerusalem, that great and ancient city where Jesus walked 2,000 years ago. Standing on a high point, I looked down upon the Old City. I thought of Bethlehem, a few miles to the south, where He was born in a lowly manger. He who was the Son of God, the Only Begotten Son, left His Father's

celestial courts to take on mortality. At His birth angels sang and wise men came to bestow gifts. He grew as did other boys in Nazareth of Galilee. There He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

With Mary and Joseph He visited Jerusalem when He was 12. On their journey home, they missed Him. They came back to Jerusalem and found Him in the temple conversing with the learned doctors. When Mary upbraided Him for not being with them, He answered, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). His words were a premonition of His future ministry.

Jesus' early ministry

That ministry began with His baptism in the river Jordan at the hands of His cousin John. When He arose from the water, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and His Father's voice was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). That declaration became the affirmation of His divinity.

He fasted for 40 days and was tempted of the devil, who sought to take Him from His divinely appointed mission. To the adversary's invitation He responded, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7), again declaring His divine sonship.

Jesus' teachings

He walked the dusty roads of Palestine. He had no home that He could call His own, no place to rest His head. His message was the gospel of peace; His teachings were those of generosity and love: "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy [cloak] also" (Matthew 5:40).

He taught with parables. He performed miracles the like of which were

never performed before or since. He healed those whose sickness was of long standing. He caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk. He raised the dead, and they lived again to speak His praises. Surely no man had ever done such before.

A few followed Him, but most hated Him. He spoke of the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites, as whited sepulchres. They plotted against Him. He drove the money changers from the house of the Lord. They doubtless joined those who planned to destroy Him. But He was not deterred. He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

Was not all of this enough to make His memory immortal? Was it not enough to place His name among and even above those of the great men who have walked the earth and who have been remembered for what they said or did? Certainly He would have been ranked among the great prophets of all time.

But all of this was not enough for the Son of the Almighty. It was but prelude to greater things to come. They came in a strange and terrible way.

Betrayal and crucifixion

He was betrayed, arrested, condemned to death, to die in awful agony by crucifixion. His living body was nailed to a cross of wood. In unspeakable pain His life slowly ebbed away. While yet He breathed, He cried out, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

The earth shook as His spirit passed. The centurion who had seen it all declared in solemnity, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

Events of the Resurrection

Those who loved Him took His body from the cross. They dressed it and placed

it in a new tomb offered by Joseph of Arimathea. The tomb was sealed with a great stone at its opening, and a guard was set.

His friends must have wept. The Apostles He loved and whom He had called as witnesses of His divinity wept. The women who loved Him wept. None had understood what He had said about rising the third day. How could they understand? This had never happened before. It was totally unprecedented. It was unbelievable, even for them.

There must have been a terrible sense of dejection and hopelessness and misery as they thought of their Lord, taken from them in death.

But that was not the end. On the morning of the third day, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary returned to the tomb. To their utter amazement, the stone was rolled away and the tomb was open. They peered inside. Two beings in white sat at either end of the burial site. An angel appeared to them and said:

"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

"He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

"Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (Luke 24:5-7).

These simple words—"He is not here, but is risen"—have become the most profound in all literature. They are the declaration of the empty tomb. They are the fulfillment of all He had spoken concerning rising again. They are the triumphant response to the query facing every man, woman, and child who was ever born to earth.

Appearances following the Resurrection

The risen Lord spoke to Mary, and she replied. He was not an apparition. This was not imagination. He was real,

as real as He had been in mortal life. He did not permit her to touch Him. He had not yet ascended to His Father in Heaven. That would happen shortly. What a reunion it must have been, to be embraced by the Father, who loved Him and who also must have wept for Him during His hours of agony.

He would appear to two men on the road to Emmaus. He would converse with them and eat with them. He would meet with His Apostles behind closed doors and teach them. Thomas was not present on the first occasion. On the second occasion the Lord invited him to feel of His hands and His side. In utter wonder he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). He spoke with 500 at one time.

Millions have believed in Christ

Who can dispute the documentation of these facts? There is no record of any repudiation of the testimony of those who had these experiences. There is abundant evidence that they bore witness of these events throughout their lives, even giving their own lives in affirmation of the reality of the things they had experienced. Their word is clear, and their testimony is secure.

Men and women by the millions through the centuries have accepted that testimony. Countless numbers have lived and died in affirmation of its truth, which has come to them by the power of the Holy Ghost and which they could not in truth deny. Surely no event of human history has been tested more widely as to its validity.

Book of Mormon is a witness

And there is another witness. This biblical companion, the Book of Mormon, testifies that He appeared not only to those of the Old World but also to those of the New. For had He not at one time declared, "Other sheep I have, which are

not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd"? (John 10:16).

To those of this hemisphere He appeared following His Resurrection. At His descent through the clouds of heaven, the voice of God the Eternal Father was heard again in solemn declaration: "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him" (3 Nephi 11:7).

Here again He called Twelve Apostles who would become witnesses of His name and divinity. He taught the people and blessed and healed them as He had done in Palestine, and peace reigned in the land for 200 years as the people sought to live by that which He had taught them.

Joseph Smith's witness of God

And if all of this is not enough, there is the testimony, sure and certain and unequivocal, of the great prophet of this dispensation, Joseph Smith. As a boy he went into the woods to pray seeking light and understanding. And there appeared before him two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above him in the air. One of them spoke to him, calling him "by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

This same Joseph declared on a subsequent occasion:

"We beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness. . . .

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!" (D&C 76:20, 22).

Testimony of Jesus Christ

And so on this wonderful Easter morning, as the servants of the Almighty, as prophets and apostles in His great cause, we lift our voices in witness and testimony of our immortal Savior. He came to earth as the Son of the Everlasting Father. He did as Isaiah prophesied He must do. He bore "our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

" . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

In everlasting immortality He arose the third day from the rock-hewn grave. He spoke with many. His Father repeatedly affirmed His divine sonship.

Thanks be to the Almighty. His glorified Son broke the bonds of death, the greatest of all victories. As Paul declared, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

He is our triumphant Lord. He is our Redeemer, who atoned for our sins. Through His redeeming sacrifice all men shall rise from the grave. He has opened the way whereby we may gain not only immortality but also eternal life.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bear witness and testimony of these things this Easter day. I speak in solemnity and reverence and gratitude, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

Elder Wayne M. Hancock offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 169th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 4, 1999. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

Music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will now sing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder J. Kent Jolley of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder J. Kent Jolley offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Love One Another." Following the singing, Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

The choir sang "Love One Another."

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Preaching the gospel is a powerful force

There has been a war between light and darkness, between good and evil, since before the world was created. The battle still rages, and the casualties seem to be increasing. All of us have family members we love who are being buffeted by the forces of the destroyer, who would make all God's children miserable. For many of us there have been sleepless nights. We have tried to add every force for good we can to the powers swirling around the people who are at risk. We have loved them. We have set the best example we could. We have pled in prayer

for them. A wise prophet long ago gave us counsel about another force which we may at times underestimate and thus use too little.

Alma was the leader of a people faced with destruction by ferocious enemies. In the face of that danger, he could not do everything, so he had to choose. He could have built fortifications or created armaments or trained armies. But his only hope of victory was to get God's help, and for that he knew the people must repent. And so he chose to try one thing first:

"And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the

people to do that which was just—yea, it had . . . more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God” (Alma 31:5).

The gospel opens eyes, hearts

The word of God is the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and by His prophets. Alma knew that words of doctrine had great power. They can open the minds of people to see spiritual things not visible to the natural eye. And they can open the heart to feelings of the love of God and a love for truth. The Savior drew on both those sources of power, to open our eyes and open hearts, in the 18th section of the Doctrine and Covenants as He taught His doctrine to those whom He wants to serve Him as missionaries. As you listen, think of that young man in your family now wavering in preparing himself for a mission. Here is how the Master taught two of His servants and how you might teach His doctrine to the young man you love:

“And now, Oliver Cowdery, I speak unto you, and also unto David Whitmer, by the way of commandment; for, behold, I command all men everywhere to repent, and I speak unto you, even as unto Paul mine apostle, for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called.

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:9–10).

He began by saying how much He trusts them. Then He draws their hearts to Him by saying how much His Father and He love every soul. He next goes to the foundation of His doctrine. He describes how much we have cause to love Him:

“For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all

men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

“And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

“And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!” (D&C 18:11–13).

Having given the doctrine of His mission to open their hearts, He gives them His command: “Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people” (D&C 18:14).

Finally, He opens their eyes to see beyond the veil. He takes them and us to a future existence, described in the great plan of salvation, where we may yet be. He tells us of wonderful associations, worth giving our all to enjoy:

“And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!” (D&C 18:15–16).

In those few passages, He teaches doctrine to open our hearts to His love. And He teaches doctrine to open our eyes to see spiritual realities, invisible to any mind not illuminated by the Spirit of Truth.

Prepare to teach by the Spirit

The need to open eyes and hearts tells us how we must teach doctrine. Doctrine gains its power as the Holy Ghost confirms that it is true. We prepare those we teach, as best we can, to receive the quiet promptings of the still, small voice. That takes at least some faith in Jesus Christ. It takes at least some humility, some willingness to surrender to the Savior’s will for us. The person you would help may have little of either, but you can urge that they desire to believe.

More than that, you can take confidence from another of the powers of doctrine. Truth can prepare its own way. Simply hearing the words of doctrine can plant the seed of faith in the heart. And even a tiny seed of faith in Jesus Christ invites the Spirit.

We have more control over our own preparation. We feast on the word of God in the scriptures and study the words of the living prophets. We fast and pray to invite the Spirit for ourselves and the person we would teach.

Teach simple, basic doctrine

Because we need the Holy Ghost, we must be cautious and careful not to go beyond teaching true doctrine. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Truth. His confirmation is invited by our avoiding speculation or personal interpretation. That can be hard to do. You love the person you are trying to influence. He or she may have ignored the doctrine they have been taught. It is tempting to try something new or sensational. But we invite the Holy Ghost as our companion when we are careful to teach only true doctrine.

One of the surest ways to avoid even getting near false doctrine is to choose to be simple in our teaching. Safety is gained by that simplicity, and little is lost. We know that because the Savior has told us to teach the most important doctrine to little children. Listen to His command:

"And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents" (D&C 68:25).

We can teach even a child to understand the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It is

therefore possible, with God's help, to teach the saving doctrine simply.

Teach children the doctrine

We have the greatest opportunity with the young. The best time to teach is early, while children are still immune to the temptations of their mortal enemy, and long before the words of truth may be harder for them to hear in the noise of their personal struggles.

A wise parent would never miss a chance to gather children together to learn of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Such moments are so rare in comparison with the efforts of the enemy. For every hour the power of doctrine is introduced into a child's life, there may be hundreds of hours of messages and images denying or ignoring the saving truths.

The question should not be whether we are too tired to prepare to teach doctrine or whether it wouldn't be better to draw a child closer by just having fun or whether the child isn't beginning to think that we preach too much. The question must be, "With so little time and so few opportunities, what words of doctrine from me will fortify them against the attacks on their faith which are sure to come?" The words you speak today may be the ones they remember. And today will soon be gone.

Your teaching will be remembered

The years pass, we teach the doctrine the best we can, and yet some still do not respond. There is sorrow in that. But there is hope in the scriptural record of families. Think of Alma the Younger and Enos. In their moments of crisis, they remembered the words of their fathers, words of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It saved them. Your teaching of that sacred doctrine will be remembered.

Two doubts may creep into your mind. You may wonder if you know the

doctrine well enough to teach it. And if you have already tried to teach it, you may wonder why you can't see much of the good effects.

A young woman preaches the gospel

In my own family there is a story of a young woman who had the courage to start to teach doctrine when she was only a new convert with little education. And the fact that the effects of her teaching haven't ended gives me patience to wait for the fruits of my own efforts.

Mary Bommeli was my great-grandmother. I never met her. Her granddaughter heard her tell her story and wrote it down.

Mary was born in 1830. The missionaries taught her family in Switzerland when she was 24. She was still living at home, weaving and selling cloth to help support her family on their small farm. When the family heard the doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, they knew it was true. They were baptized. Mary's brothers were called on missions, going without purse or scrip. The rest of the family sold their possessions to go to America to gather with the Saints.

There was not enough money for all to go. Mary volunteered to stay behind because she felt she could earn enough from her weaving to support herself and save for her passage. She found her way to Berlin and to the home of a woman who hired her to weave cloth for the family's clothing. She lived in a servant's room and set up her loom in the living area of the home.

It was against the law then to teach the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Berlin. But Mary could not keep the good news to herself. The woman of the house and her friends would gather around the loom to hear the Swiss girl teach. She talked about the appearance of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith, of the visi-

tation of angels, and of the Book of Mormon. When she came to the accounts of Alma, she taught the doctrine of the Resurrection.

That caused some problems with her weaving. In those days many children died very young. The women around the loom had lost children in death, some of them several children. When Mary taught the truth that little children were heirs of the celestial kingdom and that those women might again be with them and with the Savior and our Heavenly Father, tears rolled down the faces of the women. Mary cried too. All those tears falling got the cloth wet that Mary had woven.

Mary's teaching created a more serious problem. Even though Mary begged the women not to talk about what she told them, they did. They shared the joyous doctrine with their friends. So one night there was a knock at the door. It was the police. They took Mary off to jail. On the way she asked the policeman for the name of the judge she was to appear before the next morning. She asked if he had a family. She asked if he was a good father and a good husband. The policeman smiled as he described the judge as a man of the world.

At the jail Mary asked for a pencil and some paper. She wrote a letter to the judge. She wrote about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as described in the Book of Mormon, about the spirit world, and about how long the judge would have to think and to consider his life before facing the final judgment. She wrote that she knew he had much to repent of which would break his family's heart and bring him great sorrow. She wrote through the night. In the morning she asked the policeman to take her letter to the judge. He did.

Later, the policeman was summoned by the judge to his office. The letter Mary had written was irrefutable evidence that she was teaching the gospel and so breaking the law. Nevertheless, it wasn't long until the policeman came back to

Mary's cell. He told her that all charges were dismissed and that she was free to go, on the conditions she had stated in her letter. Her teaching the doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ had opened eyes and hearts enough to get her cast into jail. And her declaring the doctrine of repentance to the judge got her cast out of jail. (See Theresa Snow Hill, *Life and Times of Henry Eyring and Mary Bommeli* [1997], 15–22.)

Gospel teaching influences generations

The teaching of Mary Bommeli touched more than those women around the loom and the judge. My father, her grandson, talked to me during the nights as he approached death. He spoke of joyous reunions that were coming soon in the spirit world. I could almost see the bright sunlight and the smiles in that place of paradise as he talked about it with such assurance.

At one point I asked him if he had some repenting to do. He smiled. He chuckled softly as he said, "No, Hal, I've been repenting as I went along." The doctrine of paradise that Mary Bommeli taught those women was real to her grandson. And even the doctrine Mary taught the judge had shaped my father's life for good. That will not be the end of Mary Bommeli's teaching. The record of her words will send true doctrine to generations of her family yet unborn. Because she believed that even a new convert knew enough doctrine to teach it, the minds and

hearts of her descendants will be opened, and they will be strengthened in the battle.

Your descendants will teach doctrine to each other because you taught it. Doctrine can more than open minds to spiritual things and hearts to the love of God. When that doctrine brings joy and peace, it also has the power to open mouths. Like those women in Berlin, your descendants will not be able to keep the good news to themselves.

I am grateful to live in a time when we and our families have the fulness of the gospel restored. I am grateful for the Savior's mission of love for us and for the words of life which He has given us. I pray that we may share those words with those we love. I testify that God our Father lives and loves all His children. Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son in the flesh and our Savior. He is risen. We can be washed clean through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The keys of the priesthood are restored. President Gordon B. Hinckley holds those keys. I know that is true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

The Savior's love and compassion

My beloved brothers and sisters, what a wonderful Easter day this has been. As we reflect on the life of the Savior and His Resurrection, certainly the many im-

ages of those who petitioned Him for help come to my mind. I can easily imagine the deformed legs of a man unable to walk since birth or the tears flowing down a widow's cheek as she follows the body of her only son as it is carried to its tomb.

I see the empty eyes of the hungry, the trembling hands of the sick, the pleading voice of the condemned, the disconsolate eye of the outcast. All of them are reaching toward a solitary man, a man without wealth, without home, without position.

I see this man, the Son of the living God, look on each of them with infinite compassion. With a touch of His holy hand, He brings comfort to the downcast, healing to the sick, liberation to the condemned. With a word the dead man rises from his bier and the widow embraces her enlivened son.

These and other miraculous acts of mercy and kindness, some widely known, others quiet and gentle, define for me one of the salient characteristics of the Savior: His love and compassion for the down-trodden, the weary, the weak, the suffering. Indeed, these acts of compassion are synonymous with His name.

Although nearly 2,000 years have passed since the mortal ministry of the Son of God, His loving example and His teachings remain an integral part of who we are as a people and who we are as a church. Today, through its inspired welfare program, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members strive to emulate His example as we seek to relieve suffering and foster self-reliance.

Scope of Church welfare

The welfare program of the Church is well known throughout the world. People from all walks of life travel to Church headquarters to see firsthand how the Church cares for the poor and needy without creating dependency on the part of those who receive or bitterness on the part of those who give. A president of a country, after visiting Welfare Square, canceled the remainder of his appointments for the day. "There is something here that is more important than anything else I have on my schedule," he said. "I must stay and learn more."

Over the years the Church welfare program has grown to meet the ever-increasing needs of an expanding Church. In North America today 80 Church farms produce nutritious food for the needy. Eighty cannery facilities preserve and package this life-sustaining food. More than 100 bishops' storehouses stand ready to assist more than 10,000 bishops and branch presidents as they carry out their sacred obligation to seek out and assist the poor and needy in their wards and branches. Fifty Deseret Industries operations offer work and training to thousands. Worldwide, 160 employment centers help more than 78,000 people find jobs each year. Sixty-five LDS Social Services offices help member couples adopt children and provide counseling to those in need.

I feel certain that the great leaders whom the Lord raised up to pioneer this modern-day welfare effort would be well pleased with the advancement of this inspired program of today.

The Lord's way

"It has always been a cardinal teaching with the Latter-day Saints," President Joseph F. Smith wrote, "that a religion which has not the power to save people temporally and make them prosperous and happy here, cannot be depended upon to save them spiritually, to exalt them in the life to come."¹

The temporal and the spiritual are linked inseparably. As we give of our time, talents, and resources to tend the needs of the sick, offer food to the hungry, and teach the dependent to stand on their own, we enrich ourselves spiritually beyond our ability to comprehend.

The Lord declared in a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith: "It is my purpose to provide for my saints. . . . But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in

that the rich are made low."² The Lord's way consists of helping people help themselves. The poor are exalted because they work for the temporary assistance they receive, they are taught correct principles, and they are able to lift themselves from poverty to self-reliance. The rich are made low because they humble themselves to give generously of their means to those in need.

We teach members to be self-reliant, to do everything possible to sustain themselves, and to seek help from their families for needed assistance. When members and their families are doing all they can to provide necessities but still cannot meet basic needs, the Church stands ready to help.

In the Church the bishop has the specific charge to care for "the poor, the needy, the single parent, the aged, the disabled, the fatherless, the widowed, and others who have special needs."³

A ward helps a man in need

I am aware of how one bishop marshaled his resources to assist a man who came to him for help. The man had been happily married for years, but because of a later addiction to alcohol and drugs he was left without a job, home, or family. Hard years of living on the street had degraded and humiliated him. With tears streaming down his face, he pleaded with his bishop for help.

The ward welfare committee discussed this challenge. One man knew a dentist who might be willing to replace the man's broken front teeth. The Relief Society president suggested that nutritious food from the bishops' storehouse might improve his health. Another suggested that this man needed someone who could spend time with him daily and help him find the strength to overcome his addictions.

As the suggestions streamed in, the bishop realized that an entire ward of concerned brothers and sisters stood ready to help.

Soon the bishop began to notice improvements. Priesthood brethren gave the man a blessing. A charitable dentist replaced his broken teeth. Food from the bishops' storehouse improved his health. A faithful elderly couple agreed to serve as special home teachers. They were with him daily to help him stick to his resolve.

Following established principles, this good brother offered to help others in the ward. Slowly his life began to improve. Gradually the look of desperation and misery gave way to one of joy and happiness. Although it was a painful process, he was able to free himself from his addictions. He became an active member in the Church. A life of destitution and misery turned into one of hope and happiness. This is the Lord's way of caring for those in need.

The Church and humanitarian relief

The Church does not limit its relief efforts to its members but follows the admonition of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he said, "A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race."⁴ He instructed members "to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted."⁵

In a little over a decade, the Church has shipped more than 27,000 tons of clothing, 16,000 tons of food, and 3,000 tons of medical and educational supplies and equipment to relieve the suffering of millions of God's children in 146 countries in many parts of the world. We do not ask, "Are you members of our church?" We ask only, "Do you suffer?"

Humanitarian relief after a hurricane

We are all aware of Hurricane Mitch, which devastated Nicaragua and Honduras last October and November. With

terrific force it flooded homes and caused mud slides. More than 10,000 people died and another 2 million were left homeless. This very strong hurricane destroyed homes and covered streets with mud that seemed as hard as cement.

Almost immediately the Church began sending life-sustaining food, clothing, medicine, and blankets to help both members of the Church and those of other faiths. Once the shipments arrived at their destination, Church members came by the hundreds to unload the trucks and assemble the supplies into boxes. The items in each box would sustain a family for a week.

Our dear President Gordon B. Hinckley, who is the chairman of the General Welfare Committee, felt troubled by the suffering in Central America. One sleepless night he felt a prompting to go and offer his love and support to those who had endured this great loss. The prophet's visit lifted the spirits and gave hope to thousands. "As long as [the Church] has any resources," he told them, "we will stand by you in times of trouble."⁶ And I testify to you, brothers and sisters, that he truly is a prophet of God. And I sustain him with all my heart.

Examples of Church members serving

In addition to providing needed supplies in times of disaster and catastrophe, nearly 1,300 members of the Church have accepted calls from the Lord to serve the needy of many nations. Let me give two examples.

Brother David and Sister Dovie Glines, from Ivins, Utah, currently live in Ghana, Africa, where they teach business, computer, and office management skills to those who are seeking to improve their employment.

Brother Mark Cutler is a retired surgeon from Clayton, California. He and his wife, Bonnie, serve in Vietnam. Brother Cutler is a consultant and instructor for local physicians. Sister Cutler teaches

English and medical terminology to the hospital doctors and staff.

Welfare and the member

In addition to helping others, families and individual members would do well to review their own level of self-reliance. We may ask ourselves a few questions:

Are we wise stewards of our money? Do we spend less than we earn? Do we avoid unnecessary debt? Do we follow the counsel of the Brethren to "store sufficient food, clothing, and where possible fuel for at least one year"?⁷ Do we teach our children to value and not waste what they have? Do we teach them to work? Do they understand the importance of the sacred law of tithing? Do we have sufficient education and adequate employment? Do we maintain good health by living the Word of Wisdom? Are we free from the adverse effects of harmful substances?

If in honesty we answer "no" to any of these questions, we may wish to improve our self-reliance plan. Prophets have provided fundamental guides for us.

First, one of today's evils is the sin of covetousness. Inordinate desire for material possessions can become an obsession that consumes our thoughts, drains our resources, and leads to unhappiness. Some members of the Church are increasingly burdened with unnecessary debt because of this sin. President Heber J. Grant said: "If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet."⁸

"Industry, thrift, self-reliance continue as guiding principles of this effort," President Thomas S. Monson, chairman of the Welfare Executive Committee of the Church, has admonished. "As a people, we should avoid unreasonable debt. . . .

'Pay thy debt, and live.' (2 Kings 4:7.)
What wise counsel for us today!"

Second, from the beginning God has commanded us to work¹⁰ and has warned us against idleness.¹¹ Sadly, many in our world today encourage idleness, especially in the form of mindless, inane entertainment that is on the Internet, on television, and in computer games.

Third, I commend to you the counsel of President Hinckley when he said: "Get all the education you can. . . . Cultivate skills of mind and hands. Education is the key to opportunity."¹² Yes, education is the catalyst that will hone and sharpen our talents, skills, and abilities and cause them to blossom.

Fourth, those who choose to follow the example of the Savior and relieve suffering could look to the amount they contribute to fast offerings. These sacred funds are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to bless the sick, the suffering, and others in need.

Contributing a generous fast offering blesses the givers richly and allows them to become partners with the Lord and the bishop in helping relieve suffering and fostering self-reliance. In our prosperous circumstances, perhaps we should evaluate our offerings and decide if we are as generous with the Lord as He is with us.

Follow the Savior's example of giving

If the Savior were among us in mortality today, He would be found ministering to the needy, the suffering, the sick. Following this example may be one of the reasons President Spencer W. Kimball said: "When viewed in this light, we can see that [welfare] is not a program, but the essence of the gospel. *It is the gospel in action.* It is the crowning principle of a Christian life."¹³

When the welfare program emerged from its humble beginnings in the midst of the Great Depression, few imagined that 60 years later it would have blossomed

and flourished to the point where it blesses literally millions of the world's needy.

The beautiful hymn "Because I Have Been Given Much" touches on an inspired lesson in giving.

Because I have been sheltered, fed by
thy good care,
I cannot see another's lack and I not
share
My glowing fire, my loaf of bread,
My roof's safe shelter overhead,
That he too may be comforted.¹⁴

Brothers and sisters, the Savior, who set the pattern for us, is pleased with those who "remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted."¹⁵ He is pleased with those who hearken to His admonition to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."¹⁶

May we follow His example is my prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "The Truth about Mormonism," *Out West*, Sept. 1905, 242.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 104:15-16.
3. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1: Stake Presidencies and Bishoprics* (1998), 14.
4. *History of the Church*, 4:227.
5. *Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, 732.
6. Address given in Honduras, 21 Nov. 1998; see also "President Hinckley: 'We Will Not Forget You,'" *Church News*, 28 Nov. 1998, 3, 6-7.
7. First Presidency letter, 24 June 1988.
8. *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 111.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 46.
10. See Genesis 3:19.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:124.
12. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 172.
13. In Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 123-24; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 77.
14. *Hymns*, no. 219.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 52:40.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

Life is a homeward journey

My dear brothers and sisters, as this general conference draws to a close, my thoughts turn to those who feel lonely, afraid, or who have lost their way. If you or someone you know is "out there . . . in the shadows" (Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 48), please listen!

Mortal life is like unto the traveler on a homeward journey. The miles seem long, the minutes slow, the events of the day protracted and tedious. Eventually, however, familiar scenes come into view. They may be hills or valleys, country landscapes or towering buildings, a teeming thoroughfare or a quiet neighborhood street. Whatever the scene, its familiarity quickens the traveler's step, invigorates his wearied soul, and restores sweet feelings of anticipation and peace. At long last he is home again.

Select the path carefully

In our mobile, bustling world, this experience of the homeward journey is repeated daily in the lives of millions of people. If we look closely, we can learn much about mortality from such a common occurrence. One thing is certain—we make a colossal mistake if we approach this mortal journey frivolously or take whatever path presents itself without thought as to where it leads. As one beloved Apostle has observed: "Truly, of all the errors mortals could make, God's plan of salvation is the wrong thing to be wrong about! No error could be more enormous or more everlasting in its consequences!" (Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 30; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 22).

The successful traveler understands and acts correctly on four things, namely:

the eternity of life, the nature of sin, the beauty of repentance, and the power of the Atonement.

Life is eternal

Life is more than biology. Before we came to this earth, we lived in the presence of God. His heaven was our home. Each of us is His spirit offspring, and He is our Heavenly Father (see Abraham 3:23–25; Job 38:4–7; Jeremiah 1:5). Because of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we know that birth is divinely appointed and an essential step in our eternal journey. In the words of the Lord's prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley: "*The fact of all life is that it is eternal. That's the great salient truth. We have come into the world for a purpose under a divine plan and when we conclude this life we will go on to something that will be better, if we live worthy of it*" (priesthood leadership session, Charlotte North Carolina regional conference, 24 Feb. 1996, 5; italics added).

The nature of sin

The nature of sin, however, makes this mortal journey anything but an easy task. Wrote the Apostle Paul:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

"Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

"Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1–5; italics added).

Because of our frailties and vulnerabilities, sin becomes a part of every traveler's journey. It is the consequence of being in the crucible of law, opposition, and agency (see Alma 12:31–34; 42:17–24; 2 Nephi 2:11, 15–16, 25–27). “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Furthermore, no matter how well-intentioned or watchful we are, the journey causes us to suffer temptation. Not even the Savior escaped it, and the temptations He suffered at the outset of His ministry typify those that beset us. Speaking of these temptations—to turn stones into bread, to cast Himself from the temple's pinnacle, and to sell His soul for earth's treasures (see Matthew 4:2–10)—Elder David O. McKay said, “Classify them, and you will find that under one of those three nearly every given temptation that makes you and me spotted . . . comes to us as (1) a temptation of appetite; (2) a yielding to the pride and fashion and vanity of those alienated from the things of God; or (3) a gratifying of the . . . desire for the riches of the world, or power among men” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1911, 59).

The gift of conscience and repentance

When temptation besets us, we experience pain of conscience. A sensitive conscience is the evidence of a healthy spirit. The pain or guilt we feel is the spirit's reaction to temptation, imperfection, or sin. Conscience is the companion of every traveler (see Moroni 7:16–19); it can also make the trip very uncomfortable, since “all have sinned” and “the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (Romans 3:23; D&C 1:31). Thanks be to God for this supernal gift, for it can lead us to repentance and peace of conscience (see Mosiah 4:1–3).

Heavenly Father knew the grave dangers we would face on our journey through life, but He remains resolute in His desire to have each and every one of

His children return home. Therefore, He gave us time—time to work out our mistakes, time to overcome our sins, time to prepare for reunion. “There was a space granted unto man in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God” (Alma 12:24).

Atonement makes our return possible

But Heavenly Father knew that even if we exerted every ounce of energy, we could not make it home without divine help. Therefore, He promised, “We will provide a Savior for you!” (see 1 Nephi 10:4; 13:40; 2 Nephi 25:23; Moses 1:6).

In fulfillment of this promise, Jesus Christ came during the meridian of time, the Only Begotten Son of God, the Eternal Father, in the flesh. He walked the paths and byways of mortality so He could “know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12; see also v. 11; Ether 12:27; D&C 20:22; 62:1). There is not one vexation, anxiety, or suffering unfamiliar to Him. Though He is without sin, yet knows He each and every one of our griefs that He might be able to help us (see Isaiah 53:3–6).

Christ bridged the gulf between the mortal and immortal. The grave no longer holds its captives; justice can be satisfied through mercy; the wondrous Atonement, infinite and eternal in scope, is in place (see Alma 34:8–10, 14–16). Christ is the resurrected Lord, our Savior and Redeemer. Therefore, do not wait any longer (see Alma 13:27; 34:33–35).

Have faith in Christ, trust Him, come unto Him, follow Him (see 3 Nephi 27:13–16; Moroni 10:32–33). Make a mental list of those things you know you ought not to be doing. Stop doing today at least one such thing, and replace it with what you ought to do. Pray to Heavenly Father for forgiveness and for the strength to complete this journey. As you overcome one obstacle and move on to

another, I promise that step by step the way will unfold before you until, as the wearied traveler, you are back where you belong.

A man finds his way back to the Church

Thomas (that is not his real name) was one who had lost his way. We became acquainted at a special fireside attended by members one doesn't normally see on Sunday. He was then 35 years old and had not been active in the Church for some 20 years. The day before, Thomas's father had invited him to attend the fireside. Thomas said, "I'll think about it." I quote now from a letter written by his father:

"Thirty minutes before the fireside, [Thomas] called and asked me to pick him up. I can't explain the anticipation I felt as we walked into the room [to join] you and about 40 others. There was a special feeling and spirit there that touched [Tom's] heart and he went home determined to read again the passages in the Book of Mormon that you had outlined.

"This led to a reading of the whole book and the beginning of his payment of tithing. He began to see his life in a different light. . . . He stopped using drugs and caffeine. He continued to read, not only the Book of Mormon, but also the Doctrine and Covenants. He started to attend sacrament meetings and . . . literally began to be a different person. In fact, we jokingly asked him, 'What have you done with our son?'

"The great blessing to us was when he was interviewed by the bishop . . . to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. This has truly been an answer to prayers which have been offered in his behalf for almost 20 years" (personal letter, 1 Aug. 1997).

This account recalls to our minds the words of another parent: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24).

Prepare now to return to God's presence

Said President Brigham Young: "There is no spirit but what was pure and holy when it came here from the celestial world. Our Father in heaven . . . is the Father of our spirits; and if we could know, understand, and do His will, every soul would be prepared to return back into His presence. And when they get there, they would see that they had formerly lived there for ages, that they had previously been acquainted with every nook and corner, with the palaces, walks, and gardens; and they would embrace their Father, and He would embrace them and say, 'My son, my daughter, I have you again;' and the child would say, 'O my Father, my Father, I am here again'" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:268).

With all the power of which I am capable, I bear witness to the truthfulness of these things. Come in out of the shadows! Step fully into the light of the gospel. Enjoy the sweet fruits of repentance, the peace of conscience, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Let this journey take you back where you belong. Recalling a familiar phrase, I leave with you this testimonial:

"O my Father, thou that dwellest
In the high and glorious place,"
I do yearn to once again be
With Thee, and behold Thy face.
Then shall I, in adoration,
Bow before my Savior dear,
Thank Him for His great Atonement,
Wash His feet with many tears.
And with grateful heart a-swelling,
Seeing I am not alone,
Will feel Thy love and hear Thy greet-
ing—
"Sons and daughters, welcome home!"
[Adapted from Eliza R. Snow, "O My Father," *Hymns*, no. 292]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir and congregation will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following the singing, Elder

Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy will address us. He will be followed by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander, also of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Cree-L Kofford

I wonder if you have any idea how easy you are to love and how much I love you. Just before this session started, some of our grandchildren stopped by our hotel room. They had obviously been talking about Elder Marlin Jensen's talk of this morning. One of them said, "Are you scared, Grandpa?" I lied and said, "Not very." Another one said, "Don't worry, Grandpa, if you mess up, we'll still love you." But then reality came back into the room when someone added, "But, Grandpa, it would be very embarrassing." So I am going to try very hard not to mess up.

"Over this line you may not cross"

On June 26, 1858, what I believe to be the largest standing army in the history of the United States up to that date began its prearranged entry into Salt Lake Valley. They had come to quell a nonexistent rebellion. Almost anyone remotely familiar with the history of the Church can tell you that they marched in relative silence within a few yards of where this building now stands, through a city described by one writer as "deserted," and encamped some distance to the west. What followed is far less well known. In due course the army moved approximately 40 miles south of Salt Lake City to the village of Fairfield, a small farming community in Cedar Valley, home to what is estimated

to have been less than 200 people. Their local spiritual leader was John Carson, my great-grandfather.

Imagine how this small congregation must have felt. After all, how would you like to wake up some morning and find that several thousand soldiers, together with over 3,000 wagons, 10,000 oxen, and 12,000 mules, had moved into your ward? The challenges were immediate. From our oral family history, and subject to all of the romanticizing and inaccuracies of such histories, we learn that Bishop Carson was gravely concerned about the welfare of the people over whom he presided. All of the challenges that attended army encampments of that time descended upon Fairfield almost overnight.

To protect the members of the congregation as much as possible, Bishop Carson met with the commander of the fort, who often dined at his hotel and with whom he developed a good relationship based upon mutual respect. The two leaders surveyed the situation and then by agreement drew a line upon the ground. No army personnel would cross into the civilian community without specific approval of their superiors. And members of the congregation would not cross into the fort without specific approval from Bishop Carson. The line on the ground represented an unspoken command: "Over this line you may not cross."

When we were children, a line on the ground had special significance. Whenever boyhood tempers caused disagreement, the time-honored solution called for a line on the ground. The antagonists stood on opposite sides of the line, attempting to act as intimidating as possible. Someone would say, "Step over the line and you'll be sorry," though they usually didn't say it in those genteel words. In those moments I learned the great value of a line on the ground and the consequences of stepping over it. In the years that have followed, I have come to understand that figurative lines on the ground are placed there by a loving Heavenly Father who seeks to protect us from Lucifer's army.

"Your name is safe in our home"

While each of us may have dozens of lines on the ground in our life today, I would like to discuss just one of them—the line that says, "Keep each person's name safe in your home."

During the early years of my service as a General Authority, I was privileged to be in company with Elder Marion D. Hanks on one occasion when he related the following story. I use it here with his permission:

Oscar Kirkham was one of the great men of the Church and among the Church's most respected Scouters. He served in the First Council of the Seventy and was a significant presence wherever he went. Often in meetings he would rise to a "point of personal privilege" and then, when recognized, would proceed to say something good about someone. Near the end of his life, he spoke briefly at Brigham Young University on the theme "say the good word." On the morning that Elder Kirkham died, Elder Hanks was invited to the Kirkham family home. There he was handed a small, inexpensive notebook in which Elder Kirkham had kept his notes. The last two entries were: "Say

the good word" and "Your name is safe in our home" (see Marion D. Hanks, foreword to *Say the Good Word*, by Oscar A. Kirkham [1958], 4).

What a blessing it would be if all of us could follow that counsel, if each of our names truly could be safe in the home of others. Have you noticed how easy it is to cross over the line and find fault with other people? All too often we seek to be excused from the very behavior we condemn in others. Mercy for me, justice for everyone else is a much too common addiction. When we deal with the name and reputation of another, we deal with something sacred in the sight of the Lord.

Do not speak evil about others

There are those among us who would recoil in horror at the thought of stealing another person's money or property but who don't give a second thought to stealing another person's good name or reputation.

The old adage "Never judge another man until you have walked a mile in his footsteps" is as good advice today as it was the day it was first uttered. Someone once said:

There is so much good in the worst
of us,
And so much bad in the best of us,
That it ill behooves any of us
To find fault with the rest of us.
[In Hazel Felleman, sel., *The Best
Loved Poems of the American People*
(1936), 615]

The principle is not new, nor is it unique to our day and time. The book of Psalms from the Old Testament contains this urgent warning from the Lord: "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off" (Psalm 101:5).

James, a servant of the Lord in the meridian of time, repeated this eternal truth when he said:

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. . . .

"... Who art thou that judgest another?" (James 4:11-12).

And in this latter day, the Lord renewed His long-taught command in a revelation given through the prophet Brigham Young: "Cease to speak evil one of another" (D&C 136:23).

It is most significant to me that this simple commandment is set forth just a few verses from the Lord's words on the penalty for disobedience: "Be diligent in keeping all my commandments, lest judgments come upon you, and your faith fail you, and your enemies triumph over you" (D&C 136:42).

Accountable for our words

To those who doubt the importance of the commandment, may I pose two simple questions: (1) How can you say you love your fellowman when behind his back you seek to diminish his good name and reputation? (2) How can you say you love your God when you cannot even love your neighbor?

Any feeble attempt to justify such conduct only brings more forcibly to mind those explosive words of the Savior found in the book of Matthew:

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? . . .

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:34, 36-37).

Children can remind families to speak only good

I would like to say a few words to the Primary children who may be listening.

Children, I've been trying to teach your moms and dads something very important, but I need your help. I'll make you a deal. If you will promise to listen very carefully, I promise not to talk very long.

Do you remember the story of Bambi, the little deer, and all of his friends in the forest? If you do you will remember that one of Bambi's good friends was a rabbit named Thumper. Thumper was about your age. He was a neat rabbit, but he had one problem. He kept saying bad things about people. One day Bambi was in the forest learning to walk, and he fell down. Thumper just couldn't resist the temptation. "He doesn't walk very good, does he?" Thumper blurted out. His mother felt very bad and said, "What did your father tell you this morning?" And then Thumper, looking down at his feet and kind of shifting his weight, said, "If you can't say somethin' nice, don't say nothin' at all." That's a good piece of advice that all of us need to follow.

What I need you to do, young people, is this. If you hear anyone in your family start to say something bad about someone else, will you please just stamp your foot and say in a loud voice, "If you can't say somethin' nice, don't say nothin' at all." Now, even though that isn't correct English, everyone will understand exactly what you mean. Now, Moms and Dads, that ought to make it a little easier to live the commandment.

I pray that the Lord will bless each of us that we may never cross over the line on the ground and that we may live so that it can be said, "Your name is safe in our home."

On this special Easter Day, I close with my solemn declaration, born of the Spirit, that Jesus Christ is indeed our Savior and our Redeemer and that salvation comes by and through His atoning sacrifice and in no other way. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander

Building eternal keepsakes

Brethren and sisters, every family has keepsakes. Families collect furniture, books, porcelain, and other valuable things, then pass them on to their posterity. Such beautiful keepsakes remind us of loved ones now gone and turn our minds to loved ones unborn. They form a bridge between family past and family future.

Every family has other, more valuable keepsakes. These include genealogies, family stories, historical accounts, and traditions. These eternal keepsakes also form a bridge between past and future and bind generations together in ways that no other keepsake can.

I would like to share a few thoughts about family history, bridges, and eternal keepsakes. Family history builds bridges between the generations of our families, builds bridges to activity in the Church, and builds bridges to the temple.

Family history bridges generations

First, family history builds bridges between the generations of our families. Bridges between generations are not built by accident. Each member of this Church has the personal responsibility to be an eternal architect of this bridge for his or her own family. At one of our family gatherings this past Christmas, I watched my father, who is 89 years old, and our oldest grandchild, Ashlin, who is four and a half. They enjoyed being together. This was a bittersweet moment of realization for me. Though Ashlin will retain pleasant but fleeting memories of my father, he will have no memory of my mother, who passed away before his birth. Not one of my children has any recollection of my grandparents. If I want my children and grandchildren to know those who still live in my memory, then I must build the bridge between

them. I alone am the link to the generations that stand on either side of me. It is my responsibility to knit their hearts together through love and respect, even though they may never have known each other personally. My grandchildren will have no knowledge of their family's history if I do nothing to preserve it for them. That which I do not in some way record will be lost at my death, and that which I do not pass on to my posterity, they will never have. The work of gathering and sharing eternal family keepsakes is a personal responsibility. It cannot be passed off or given to another.

A life that is not documented is a life that within a generation or two will largely be lost to memory. What a tragedy this can be in the history of a family. Knowledge of our ancestors shapes us and instills within us values that give direction and meaning to our lives. Some years ago I met the director of a Russian Orthodox monastery. He showed me volumes of his own extensive family research. He told me that one of the values, perhaps even the main value, of genealogy is the establishment of family tradition and the passing of these traditions on to younger generations. "Knowledge of these traditions and family history," he said, "welds generations together." Further, he told me: "If one knows he comes from honest ancestors, he is duty and honor bound to be honest. One cannot be dishonest without letting each member of his family down."¹

Start recording your history

If you are among the first to have embraced the gospel in your family, build bridges to your posterity by recording the events of your life and writing words of encouragement to them. In 1892 sisters of the Kolob Stake in Springville, Utah, wrote letters to their children and sealed them in a time capsule to be opened March 17, 1942, the centennial

anniversary of the Relief Society. After recording a brief genealogy of her family reaching back to those who first joined the Church, Mariah Catherine Boyer wrote the following to her two children: "Dear children, when you read this, parents and grandparents will be sleeping in the silent tomb. Those hands that toiled so hard in love for you will toil no more, and those eyes that gazed in love and approbation on your innocent brows will see you no more, until we meet in heaven. Dear children, . . . may the bands of a sister and a brother's love entwine your hearts. . . . Do right by your fellowmen, follow the dictates of your conscience, ask God to give you power to resist all temptations to do evil, and let it be said of you, 'that the world is better for you having lived in it.' Keep the commandments of God. May your paths in life be strewn with flowers, and may you at all times do right. May you never taste adversity. May the Spirit and blessings of God attend you at all times is the prayer of your mother. I will enclose the photographs of our family. Goodbye my dear children, until we meet."² These tender and beautiful words have now bridged six generations of a faithful family.

Importance of knowing your ancestors

Family history and temple work have a great power, which lies in their scriptural and divine promise that the hearts of the fathers will turn to the children and those of the children will turn to their fathers.³ Woodrow Wilson stated: "A nation which does not remember what it was yesterday, does not know what it is today, nor what it is trying to do. We are trying to do a futile thing if we do not know where we came from or what we have been about."⁴ Well might this be said of families also: *A family* "which does not remember what it was yesterday, does not know what it is today, nor what it is trying to do. We are trying to do a futile thing if we do not know

where we came from or what we have been about."

Family history strengthens all members

Second, family history builds bridges to activity in the Church. Family history work solidifies converts and strengthens all members of the Church. Family history research and the preparation of names for the temple can be most valuable in the retention of new members. Faith and confidence grow as family members are included in the saving ordinances of the gospel. During a recent stake conference, I met John and Carmen Day, who were recently baptized. They told me that they had already prepared family names and were planning to enter the temple as soon as they could. Is retention a question here? A new member of the Church can be introduced to family history and temple work very quickly by missionaries, friends, neighbors, and priesthood and auxiliary leaders. Participation in temple ordinances is, after all, at the center of our gospel experience. No official call is required to participate in family history and the accompanying gospel ordinances.

Recently I read an article in the *Improvement Era* of August 1940. I quote: "A year ago last April Conference, Dr. John A. Widtsoe of the Council of the Twelve asked the mission presidents of the Church what single phase of the Gospel was most responsible in their respective missions for making new friends, new interests, new converts. President Frank Evans of the Eastern States Mission looked into the subject and concluded that genealogy, and its attendant Gospel ordinances and beliefs, was the greatest factor in his mission."⁵

A major factor in activation, retention

A more recent Church study reveals that early involvement in finding and preparing family names for the temple and, where possible, participating in vicar-

ious baptisms for them are major factors in the retention of new members. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have encouraged a much broader use of family history and the Family History Centers™ in the retention of new converts and the activation of those who have fallen out of regular Church activity. Priesthood leaders, missionaries, and Family History Center directors all play important roles in the expanded use of these centers.

Family history work ties to temple work

Third, family history builds bridges to the temple. Family history work leads us to the temple. Family history and temple work are one work. The words *family history* should probably never be said without attaching the word *temple* to them. Family history research should be the primary source of names for temple ordinances, and temple ordinances are the primary reason for family history research. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: "All of our vast family history endeavor is directed to temple work. There is no other purpose for it."⁶

Family history research provides the emotional bridge between the generations. Temple ordinances provide the priesthood bridge. Temple ordinances are the priesthood ratification of the connection that we have already established in our hearts. Mother Teresa said that "loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty."⁷ The thought that this poverty of loneliness—this being unwanted and separated from loved ones—

could extend beyond this life is truly sad. The promise of family history and temple work is eternal connection born of both love and priesthood ordinances.

Brethren and sisters, family history and temple work are the eternal family keepsakes that build bridges. They build bridges between the generations of our families, bridges to activity in the Church, and bridges to the temple. It is my desire that each of us will recognize the great keepsakes we have received from those who preceded us and our own personal responsibility to pass them on to future generations. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Dennis B. Neuenschwander, personal journal, 14 Aug. 1975.
2. Mariah Catherine Boyer, letter to her two children, Irena B. Mendenhall and Richard Lovell Mendenhall Jr.
3. See Malachi 4:5–6.
4. Quoted in *The Rebirth of America* (1986), 12.
5. *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1940, 495.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115–16; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 88.
7. Quoted in *Church News*, 20 June 1998, 2.

President Monson

Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Seventy.

We shall now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Brothers and sisters, this has been an inspirational two days, and I hope that my remarks will also add to the instruction and the spirit of this general conference.

Joy of temple marriage

Occasionally I have the privilege of officiating in the temple when two worthy young people are married and sealed in

the house of the Lord. These are always special times for family and friends. The feeling at such times is a sweet and satisfying mix of earthly happiness and eternal joy seen in the tear-filled eyes of mothers who have prayed for this day with all of their hearts. You see it in the eyes of fathers who, for the first time in months, are thinking about something besides how to pay for all of the expenses. But mostly you see it in the eyes of a virtuous bride and groom who have lived true to the teachings of the gospel, shunning the temptations of the world. There is a special, undeniable feeling available to those who have remained clean and pure and chaste.

Morality standards are absolute

Too many of our young men and women are succumbing to the pressures imposed by a world saturated with evil messages and immoral behavior. Lucifer is waging a vicious war for the souls of young and old alike, and the casualty count is climbing. The standards of the world have shifted like the sands of a windblown desert. That which was once unheard of or unacceptable is now commonplace. The world's perspective has been so dramatically altered that those who choose to adhere to traditional standards of morality are viewed as strange, almost as though they must justify their desire to keep the commandments of God.

But one thing is certain: the commandments have not changed. Let there be no mistake about that. Right is still right. Wrong is still wrong, no matter how cleverly cloaked in respectability or political correctness. We believe in chastity before marriage and fidelity ever after. That standard is an absolute standard of truth. It is neither subject to public opinion polls nor dependent upon situation or circumstance. There is no need to debate it or other gospel standards.

Building fortresses of faith in the home

But there is a desperate need for parents, leaders, and teachers to help our youth learn to understand, love, value, and live the standards of the gospel. Parents and youth must stand together in defense against a clever and devious adversary. We must be just as dedicated, effective, and determined in our efforts to live the gospel as he is in his efforts to destroy it—and us.

The challenge before us is great. At risk are the immortal souls of those we love. May I suggest four ways we can build a fortress of faith in our homes and particularly help prepare our youth to be clean and chaste and pure, completely worthy to enter the temple.

Teach children the gospel

The first is gospel information. The most important, life-changing information that I know of is the knowledge that we are truly children of God our Eternal Father. This is not only doctrinally correct, it is spiritually vital. Said the Savior in His powerful intercessory prayer, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). To know Heavenly Father and to understand our relationship to Him as our Father and our God is to find meaning in this life and hope in the life to come. Our families need to know He is real, that we are in fact His sons and His daughters and heirs to all that He has, now and forever. Secure in that knowledge, family members will be less likely to look for devilish diversions and more likely to look to God and live (see Numbers 21:8).

Live by covenant, not convenience

Somehow we need to instill in our hearts the powerful testimony of the gospel

of Jesus Christ like unto that of our pioneer forefathers. Remember when Nauvoo fell in September of 1846 and the unbearable conditions of the Saints in the poor camps. When word reached Winter Quarters, Brigham Young immediately called the brethren together. After explaining the situation and reminding them of the covenant made in the Nauvoo Temple that no one who wanted to come, no matter how poor, would be left behind, he gave them this remarkable challenge:

"Now is the time for labor," he said. "*Let the fire of the covenant which you made in the House of the Lord, burn in your hearts, like flame unquenchable*" (To the High Council at Council Point, 27 Sept. 1846, Brigham Young Papers, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1; italics added). Within a few days, in spite of near-destitute conditions at Winter Quarters, many wagons were rolling eastward to rescue the Saints in the poor camps along the Mississippi River.

We often hear of the suffering and the sacrifice those early Saints endured, and we ask ourselves, How did they do it? What was it that gave them such strength? Part of the answer lies in President Young's powerful words. Those early Latter-day Saints had made covenants with God, and those covenants burned like unquenchable fire in their hearts.

Sometimes we are tempted to let our lives be governed more by convenience than by covenant. It is not always convenient to live gospel standards and stand up for truth and testify of the Restoration. It usually is not convenient to share the gospel with others. It isn't always convenient to respond to a calling in the Church, especially one that stretches our abilities. Opportunities to serve others in meaningful ways, as we have covenanted to do, rarely come at convenient times. But there is no spiritual power in living by convenience. The power comes as we keep our covenants. As we look at the lives of these

early Saints, we see that their covenants were the primary force in their lives. Their example and testimony were powerful enough to influence generation after generation of their children.

Teach children about morality

As our children grow, they need information taught by parents more directly and plainly about what is and is not appropriate. Parents need to teach children to avoid any pornographic photographs or stories. Children and youth need to know from parents that pornography of any kind is a tool of the devil; and if anyone flirts with it, it has the power to addict, dull, and even destroy the human spirit. They need to be taught not to use vulgar language and never to use the Lord's name in vain. Crude jokes overheard should never be repeated. Teach family members not to listen to music that celebrates the sensual. Talk to them plainly about sex and the teaching of the gospel regarding chastity. Let this information come from parents in the home in an appropriate way. All family members need to know the rules and be fortified spiritually so they can keep them. And when mistakes are made, the wondrous Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ must be understood and accepted so that through the complete and sometimes difficult process of repentance, forgiveness and continued hope for the future can be obtained. We must never give up our individual and family quest for eternal life.

Unfortunately, far too many parents in today's world have abdicated the responsibility to teach these values and other Church doctrines to their families, believing that others will do it: the peer group, the school, Church leaders and teachers, or even the media. Every day our children are learning, filling their minds and hearts with experiences and perceptions that deeply influence personal value systems.

Fortify each other against wickedness

Brothers and sisters, we need to instruct one another and instill deeper faith in our hearts to fortify ourselves with the courage to keep the commandments in a world of ever-increasing wickedness. We need to become so deeply converted to the gospel of Christ that the fire of the covenant will burn in our hearts like flame unquenchable. And with that kind of faith we will do what is necessary to remain true and worthy.

Communicate openly with children

Second is communication. Nothing is more important to the relationship between family members than open, honest communication. This is particularly true for parents trying to teach gospel principles and standards to their children. The ability to counsel with our youth—and perhaps more importantly, to really listen to their concerns—is the foundation upon which successful relationships are built. Often what we see in the eyes and what we feel in the heart will communicate far more than what we hear or say. A word to you children: Never be disrespectful to your parents. You must also learn to listen, especially to the counsel of your mom and dad and to the promptings of the Spirit. We need to watch for and capture the special teaching moments that constantly occur within our family relationships, and we need to resolve now to hold family home evening every Monday night.

There are powerful moments of communication through regular family prayer and through family scripture study. The scriptures will help define family values and goals, and talking together about them will assist family members to learn to become individually secure, spiritually strong, and self-reliant. This requires time, and so we need to counsel together about how much television, how many movies, videos, video games, time on the Internet, or out-of-the-home activities should be allowed.

Parents and leaders should intervene

Third is intervention. It is the parents' duty to intervene when they see wrong choices being made. That doesn't mean parents take from children the precious gift of agency. Because agency is a God-given gift, ultimately the choice of what they will do, how they will behave, and what they will believe will always be theirs. But as parents we need to make sure they understand appropriate behavior and the consequences to them if they pursue their wrongful course. Remember, there is no such thing as unlawful censorship in the home. Movies, magazines, television, videos, the Internet, and other media are there as guests and should only be welcomed when they are appropriate for family enjoyment. Make your home a haven of peace and righteousness. Don't allow evil influences to contaminate your own special spiritual environment. Be kind, thoughtful, gentle, and considerate in what you say and how you treat each other. Then family goals based on gospel standards will make it easier to make good decisions.

The same principle applies to you bishops, teachers, and other leaders in the Church as you work to assist families. You don't have to stand idly by as those over whom you have stewardship make poor moral choices. When one of our youth stands at a moral crossroad in life, almost always there is someone—a parent, a leader, a teacher—who could make a difference by intervening with love and kindness.

Be a good example to children

Fourth is example. Just as it is difficult for a weary sailor to find his way across uncharted seas without the aid of a compass, it is almost impossible for children and youth to find their way through the seas of life without the guiding light of a good example. We cannot expect them to avoid those things that

are inappropriate if they see their parents compromising principles and failing to live the gospel.

As parents, teachers, and leaders, it is our solemn duty to set a powerful, personal example of righteous strength, courage, sacrifice, unselfish service, and self-control. These are the traits that will help our youth hold on to the iron rod of the gospel and remain on the straight and narrow path.

Living the gospel helps avoid mistakes

I wish I could tell you that focusing on information, communication, intervention, and example would always result in a perfect family with perfect children who never stray from gospel standards. That is, unfortunately, not the case. But families that know, teach, and live gospel principles and standards are more likely to spare themselves the pain of serious mistakes. When long-established patterns of positive communication and faithful example prevail, it is much easier to counsel together about personal problems and to work through the necessary changes that will bless every family member.

Listen to King Benjamin's significant counsel:

"I cannot tell you all the things whereby [you] may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

"But this much I can tell you, that if [you] do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not" (Mosiah 4:29-30).

My brothers and sisters, may God bless every one of us that the fire of our covenants may burn in our hearts like a

flame unquenchable. May we be prepared spiritually to renew our sacred covenants each week as we partake of the sacrament. That we will honor the Lord and we will be anxious to do our part in these most exciting and great days, to build up His Church by strengthening our families is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, the combined choir from Ricks College, the combined men's choir from BYU, and the Tabernacle Choir, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and here in the Tabernacle.

We also express appreciation to local and national press representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker.

At the conclusion of President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Come, Follow Me." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren and sisters, these have been two glorious days. The inspiration and power of the Holy Ghost have rested upon us. We rejoice together. As we conclude this conference, we have every reason to thank the Lord for His blessings.

The music has been wonderful. We have been lifted and edified by the choirs and choruses which have sung for us. The prayers have drawn us nearer to the Lord, and those who have spoken to us have done so by the power of the Holy Ghost.

20th century has been the worst and best

Now the curtains are gradually closing on this notable and exceptional century. In one respect it has been a shameful period in the history of the world. It has been the worst of all centuries, with more of war, more of man's inhumanity to man, more of conflict and trouble than any other century in the history of the world. It has been the bloodiest of all seasons. It has been a time when the adversary of truth has brought his evil influence of destruction and misery and pain to millions upon millions, as witness what is going on in Yugoslavia. The Father of us all must weep as He looks down upon His quarrelsome children.

But in a larger sense this has been the best of all centuries. In the long history of the earth there has been nothing like it. The life expectancy of man has been extended by more than 25 years. Think of it. It is a miracle. The fruits of science have been manifest everywhere. By and large, we live longer, we live better. This is an age of greater understanding and knowledge. We live in a world of great diversity. As we learn more of one another, our appreciation grows. This has been an age of enlightenment. The miracles of modern medicine, of travel, of communication are almost beyond belief. All of this has opened new opportunities for us which we must grasp and use for the advancement of the Lord's work.

And above all of these marvelous gifts is the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ with all of the wonderful authority and blessings that have come therewith. This is verily the dispensation of the fullness of times, bringing with it that which will never again be taken from the earth.

I believe that Peter was speaking of us when he said, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

"Do a little better"

Now, brethren and sisters, let us return to our homes with resolution in our hearts to do a little better than we have done in the past. We can all be a little kinder, a little more generous, a little more thoughtful of one another. We can be a little more tolerant and friendly to those not of our faith, going out of our way to show our respect for them. We cannot afford to be arrogant or self-righteous. It is our obligation to reach out in helpfulness, not only to our own but to all others as well. Their interest in and respect for this Church will increase as we do so.

I am deeply grateful that as a Church we are extending humanitarian aid when there is sore distress. We have done a great deal and have blessed the lives of many people who are not of our faith but who also are children of our Father. We will continue to do so for as long as we have the means. To all who have contributed to this effort we express our thanks.

Strengthen, safeguard families

Let us continually work to strengthen our families. Let husbands and wives cultivate a spirit of absolute loyalty one to another. Let us not take one another for granted, but let us constantly work to nurture a spirit of love and respect for

each other. We must guard against fault-finding, anger, and disrespect one for another.

Parents, safeguard your families. Bring up your children in light and truth as the Lord has commanded. Shower them with love, but do not spoil them. Share your testimony with them. Read the scriptures together. Guide and protect them. You have no greater blessing and no greater responsibility than those whom the Lord has placed in your care. Pray together. There is no substitute for family prayer when all kneel together before the Lord.

Be honest, pray for direction

Let us be a people of honesty and integrity, doing the right thing at all times and in all circumstances.

Great are our blessings. Tremendous is our responsibility. Let us get on our knees and plead with the Lord for direction. Then let us stand on our feet, square up our shoulders, and march forward without fear to enlarge among people everywhere the righteousness of the Lord.

Plans to rebuild the Nauvoo Temple

In closing now, I feel impressed to announce that among all of the temples we are constructing, we plan to rebuild the Nauvoo Temple. A member of the Church and his family have provided a very substantial contribution to make this possible. We are grateful to him. It will be a while before it happens, but the architects have begun their work. This temple will not be busy much of the time; it will be somewhat isolated. But during the summer months, we anticipate it will be very busy. And the new building will stand as a memorial to those who built the first such structure there on the banks of the Mississippi.

I repeat what I have said before. I love you. I leave my blessing and my testimony of this great and wonderful latter-day work. God be with you till we meet six months from now, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Come, Follow Me."
Elder Richard J. Maynes offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, directed by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Linda Margetts was the organist.

A combined choir from Ricks College provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Kevin Brower and Clyde Luke directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A combined men's choir from Brigham Young University provided music for the general priesthood session. Mack Wilberg and Ronald Staheli directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

B

Ballard, Elder M. Russell 111

Joy of temple marriage; Morality standards are absolute; Building fortresses of faith in the home; Teach children the gospel; Live by covenant, not convenience; Teach children about morality; Fortify each other against wickedness; Communicate openly with children; Parents and leaders should intervene; Be a good example to children; Living the gospel helps avoid mistakes

C

Christensen, Elder Joe J. 8

Overcome greed and selfishness; Materialism consuming our thoughts; Wants are not needs; Avoid spoiling children; Live modestly and avoid debt; Give generously to others

Church Audit Committee Report for 1998 25

Church Statistical Report for 1998 26

D

Dew, Sister Sheri L. 83

Christ offers salvation to all; Example of losing the way; The Savior is the only chance; The Lord knows the way, is the way; Activate the power of the Atonement; Being happy when life is hard; Jesus Christ is the only answer

E

Eyring, Elder Henry B. 94

Preaching the gospel is a powerful force; The gospel opens eyes, hearts; Prepare to teach by the Spirit; Teach simple, basic doctrine; Teach children the doctrine; Your teaching will be remembered; A young woman preaches the gospel; Gospel teaching influences generations

F

Faust, President James E. (Saturday morning session) 19

People have looked to our day; The two greatest historical events; Secular knowledge helps the Lord's work; Prepare spiritually for the future; Fear the breakdown of morals, not Y2K; Face the future with the Savior; Technology aids mission of the Church; Deeper, daily worship necessary; Follow Church leaders, love others; Greater knowledge, blessings in future

Faust, President James E. (priesthood session) 59

Lack of restraint leads to destruction; Example of President McKay's horse; Earth obeys God's commands; Earning trust leads to more freedom; Pharaoh trusts Joseph; Obedience brings blessings; A man obeys promptings; Obedience brings freedom and liberty

G**General Authorities Present 1****General Priesthood Session 50****H****Haight, Elder David B. 86**

Love and service bring rewards; Showing love for the Savior; Need for couple missionaries; Examples of missionary service

Hales, Elder Robert D. 39

The Spirit strengthens families; Teaching the gospel strengthens families; Ideas for strengthening families; Home should be a safe place; Teach children to pray, read the scriptures, listen to worthy music; Hold family home evening, councils; Share the gospel, support Church leaders, participate as a family; Teach children to be good friends, prepare for the future; Share heritage, family traditions; Teach the importance of obeying the commandments, receiving ordinances; Be aware of community, school, and Church activities; Follow the Lord's example of love; Children who stray will return; Single adults, extended family can lend strength; No perfect families; Set house, family in order

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session) 2

Gathering for conference; Work of the Church moves forward; Strengthen and value each member

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) 67

Priesthood is tremendous brotherhood; Priesthood is the backbone of Church; Realize the importance of priesthood; Rise above the evils of the world; Do what is right; Gratitude for bishops; Church organization effective in crisis; Requirements of bishops; Example of a bishop's influence; Role of bishops; Blessing for bishops

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) 89

Gratitude for the members; Gratitude for Jesus Christ; No one escapes death; Through Jesus Christ all live; Jesus as a young boy; Jesus' early ministry; Jesus' teachings; Betrayal and crucifixion; Events of the Resurrection; Appearances following the Resurrection; Millions have believed in Christ; Book of Mormon is a witness; Joseph Smith's witness of God; Testimony of Jesus Christ

- Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session) 116**
 20th century has been the worst and best; "Do a little better"; Strengthen, safeguard families; Be honest, pray for direction; Plans to rebuild the Nauvoo Temple

- Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. 15**
 Gratitude to God the Father; Jesus' relationship with His Father; Strengthen relationships with children; Absence of fathers damages children; Most fathers are wonderful; Follow God's example of fatherhood; Influence of a father's love; Scriptural examples of a father's impact

J

- Jensen, Elder Marlin K. 80**
 Friendship is a fundamental need; Friendship starts at home; Church organization fosters friendship; Friendship needed to serve, teach; Reach out to others; Sincere friendship at core of fellowship; Be a friend

K

- Kofford, Elder Cree-L 106**
 "Over this line you may not cross"; "Your name is safe in our home"; Do not speak evil about others; Accountable for our words; Children can remind families to speak only good

M

- Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 27**
 Selfishness is self-destruction; Signs of selfishness; Meekness cures selfishness; Selfishness accelerates cultural decline; Selfishness: cause of all cardinal sins; Selfishness distorts perception; Selfish people use others; Watch for societal selfishness; Examples of unselfish leaders; A young girl's unselfish prayer

- McMullin, Bishop Keith B. 103**
 Life is a homeward journey; Select the path carefully; Life is eternal; The nature of sin; The gift of conscience and repentance; Atonement makes our return possible; A man finds his way back to the Church; Prepare now to return to God's presence

- Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 63**
 Safeguarding life's foundations; Living and dead water; Too few young men becoming elders; Some young men learn about tithing; Assign priesthood duties; Example of priests blessing sacrament; Leaders, families are a major influence; Impact goes far beyond the young man; Rescue

adult converts too; Choose instructors prayerfully; Example of an effective teacher; Seek divine help; Pursue the right path; "Do you work for God?"

Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session) 72

Jesus taught in parables; Example of a blind man; Different kinds of blindness; Jesus heals a blind man; Peter denies Christ, receives new birth; "Put on the new man"; All have the Light of Christ; Example of seeing Christ in others; Must have light to give light; Joseph Smith's First Vision; A blind man seeks a blessing for sight; Temples reflect the Light of Christ; Trust the true light

Music, Summary of Conference 117

N

Nelson, Elder Russell M. 50

A young man's sin dishonors his mother; Honor motherhood; A mother's letter saves her child; Honor your sisters; Honor your wife; The family is ordained of God; Fathers preside over the family in love; Express love to your wife, mother, sisters

Neuenschwander, Elder Dennis B. 109

Building eternal keepsakes; Family history bridges generations; Start recording your history; Importance of knowing your ancestors; Family history strengthens all members; A major factor in activation, retention; Family history work ties to temple work

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H. 45

The law of witnesses; Book of Mormon witnesses; Testimony of the Three Witnesses; Three Witnesses never denied testimony; Martin Harris as a witness; Martin well-respected in the community; Stolen and lost 116 pages; Selected as one of the Three Witnesses; Finances printing of Book of Mormon; Consecrates his property to Zion; Serves a mission in Pennsylvania; Serves on the first high council; Helps select the Twelve Apostles; Loses confidence in Joseph Smith; Moves to Kirtland, is rebaptized; Moves to Utah, reaffirms his testimony; Dies at age 92; Return and feast at the Lord's table

P

Packer, President Boyd K. 77

A bishop abandons his own work to help; Responsibilities of bishops; Bishops are called and ordained; Right to revelation; Be considerate of a bishop's time; The Church is no bigger than a ward; Parents' responsibilities to family

Perry, Elder L. Tom	4
Sunday School organized; Everyone has a responsibility to teach; Teach as the Savior taught; Study the word of God before teaching; Teach by the Spirit; Example of a teacher's influence	

Priesthood Session, General	50
------------------------------------------	----

R

Roueché, Elder Ned B.	56
Example of reactivation; "The worth of souls is great"	

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	24
-----------------------------------------	----

Saturday Morning Session	2
---------------------------------------	---

Scott, Elder Richard G.	30
Eternal marriage is a blessing; Prepare for temple ordinances; Attributes to look for in a spouse; Counsel with the bishop; Savor each ordinance separately; Be worthy to receive the ordinances; Sealing creates a new family unit; Attend the temple regularly; Study, participate in the ordinances; Keep hope for a temple marriage; Eternal marriage brings joy	

Summary of Conference Music	117
------------------------------------------	-----

Sunday Afternoon Session	94
---------------------------------------	----

Sunday Morning Session	72
-------------------------------------	----

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	24
------------------------------------------------------------	----

T

Thomas, Sister Carol B.	12
Temples bless members' lives; Preparing families to attend the temple; Teach children about the temple; Attending the temple brings blessings; Attend as often as circumstances allow; Emphasize the temple	

Tobler, Elder D. Lee	57
Help families without the priesthood; Impact of priesthood in a home; Priesthood protects homes from evil; Families with priesthood need not fear; Help fathers prepare for the priesthood	

W

- West, Elder Stephen A. 34**
 Modern example of a good Samaritan; Modern example of the widow's mite; Example of giving to others; A young girl's testimony of Jesus; "Be not weary in well-doing"
- Whetten, Elder Robert J. 37**
 Love others as the Savior does; Seek to be filled with charity; Love and serve others; A young girl shows Christlike love; Be full of love; Give "all that you have and are"; Lift one another's burdens
- Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B. 98**
 The Savior's love and compassion; Scope of Church welfare; The Lord's way; A ward helps a man in need; The Church and humanitarian relief; Humanitarian relief after a hurricane; Examples of Church members serving; Welfare and the member; Follow the Savior's example of giving
- Wood, Elder Ray H. 54**
 Disobedience of one affects all; Sin causes loss of Spirit; Priesthood works only in righteousness; Magnify, be worthy of the priesthood; Priesthood mantle not to be neglected; Jesus Christ is the example

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-ninth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 2 and 3, 1999

Official Report
of the
One Hundred Sixty-ninth
Semiannual General Conference

of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah
October 2 and 3, 1999

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Report of the 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 2, 1999, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 2 and 3, 1999. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 2, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. For the first time, these proceedings were broadcast live over the Internet by LDSWorld.com.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry,¹ Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin,

Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: L. Aldin Porter, Harold G. Hillam, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, and Ben B. Banks

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Carl B. Pratt, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorím, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Eran A. Call, Val R. Christensen, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Stephen B. Oveson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Lynn G. Robbins, Ned B. Roueché, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Richard E. Turley Sr., Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A.

¹Elder David B. Haight was excused.

West, Robert J. Whetten, Lance B. Wickman, Richard H. Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, and Robert S. Wood

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 2, 1999, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined Salt Lake and Orem Institutes Choir, with Douglas Brenchley conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ. To begin this session, the choir sang "Glory to God on High." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

With that stirring music, my brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder David B. Haight.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the over-

flow locations in the nearby Assembly Hall and Joseph Smith Memorial Building. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Tabernacle.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are with us.

The music for this session will be provided by a combined Salt Lake and Orem Institutes Choir, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Glory to God on High" and will now favor us with "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Andrew W. Peterson of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Andrew W. Peterson offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Welcome to conference

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this great world conference of the Church. We are grateful for

your presence and for the efforts you have made to be here. We are grateful for the association of our brothers and sisters assembled in thousands of halls across the world.

The Church grows ever larger. It touches more and more lives for good. It is spreading over the earth in a wonderful way.

New temples dedicated

I take the opportunity this morning to advise you briefly of the progress we are making toward the goal of 100 working temples in the year 2000.

Since the first of this year we have dedicated temples in Anchorage, Alaska; Colonia Juárez, Mexico; Madrid, Spain; Bogotá, Colombia; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Spokane, Washington; Columbus, Ohio; and Bismarck, North Dakota—eight in all. Between now and the end of the year, we will dedicate temples in Columbia, South Carolina; Detroit, Michigan; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Regina, Saskatchewan; Billings, Montana; Edmonton, Alberta; and Raleigh, North Carolina—seven more. At the conclusion of 1999, we anticipate that there will be 68 operating temples.

It has been a wonderful experience to participate in these dedicatory services. Most satisfying of all has been the enthusiasm of the people. The spirit of temple work rests upon them. They are so grateful to have a house of the Lord nearer their homes. Some of them have traveled so very far in the past. Many of them still do. As we have gathered in these sacred services, while consecrating these hallowed buildings, we have seen many with tears in their eyes.

Boys and girls in large numbers have attended these services. They have been reminded that these temples are not only for their parents but also for them. When 12 years of age, they may enter the house of the Lord and stand as proxies in baptisms for those beyond the veil of death. What a great and unselfish service this is. What a wonderful thing for our youth to be involved in this totally selfless act in behalf of others who are powerless to help themselves.

Family history work is increasing

Going hand in hand with this increased temple activity is an increase in our family history work. The computer in its various ramifications is accelerating the work, and people are taking advantage of the new techniques being offered to them. How can one escape the conclusion that the Lord is in all of this? As computer facilities improve, the number of temples grows to accommodate the accelerated family history work.

Temples represent ultimate in worship

Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of nonmembers have attended the open houses associated with these new temples. They have done so with reverence and respect. In many cases the temples are, without question, the finest buildings in the cities in which they are located. People marvel at their beauty. But among many things, they are most impressed with pictures of the Savior they see in these holy houses. They will no longer regard us as a non-Christian people. They must know that the central figure in all of our worship is the Lord Jesus Christ.

This building of so many temples has been and is a tremendous undertaking. You cannot believe what is involved in it unless you are closely associated with the process. Every one of these buildings, large or small, is constructed in the best manner of which we know, using the very best of materials. Their cost is much more than that of a chapel. This is because they are built to higher standards. I express appreciation to the very many dedicated men and women who are working on this tremendous project.

Every ordinance which is given in the Salt Lake Temple, the largest in the Church, is also given in every other temple, including these smaller structures. The fact is that they are not so

small. They are commodious, and they are beautiful. They represent the ultimate in our worship and the ultimate in blessings offered.

Dedication of 42 temples planned

We plan to break ground later this month for the Nauvoo Temple. Many people are excited and many are contributing to this historic undertaking.

We shall go on with the work of dedication next year. It will be a very busy season. We anticipate the dedication of perhaps as many as 42 more. When we finish the year 2000, if present plans materialize, we will have not only the 100 which we have striven for, but more beyond that.

We shall not stop then. We may not build at the same pace, but we shall go on for as long as the Lord wills that it be done.

A glorious season in God's work

Brethren and sisters, it is a glorious season in this work. God, our Eternal Father, is blessing His cause, His kingdom, and His people. The resources of the Church, including the facilities for temple work, are increasing.

In view of the fact that we do not build a temple until there are sufficient people in the area, until there are sufficient tithe payers, and until there is sufficient faith, the very construction of these sacred buildings becomes an indicator of the increase of faith and obedience to the principles of the gospel.

May we enjoy the blessings of the Lord as we go forward in this great work, which affects not only the living but the great multitude of the dead of all generations. For this I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Thy Holy House."

President Hinckley

We thank Brother Andrew Peterson for his beautiful prayer. We regard his very presence here as a miracle and as a manifestation of the healing power of the Lord.

The choir has just sung "Thy Holy House." We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

As his prophetic words have just demonstrated, we are so blessed to have President Hinckley!

Lessons from Laman and Lemuel

Brothers and sisters, on very thin pages, thick with meaning, are some almost hidden scriptures. Hence we are urged to *search, feast, and ponder* (see John 5:39; Alma 14:1; Alma 33:2; Moroni 10:3; 2 Nephi 9:51). Especially, however, we should also do more of what

Nephi did, namely "liken all scriptures unto [ourselves]" (1 Nephi 19:23).

Illustratively, words which we should so "liken" occur twice with regard to Laman and Lemuel, mistakenly regarded by some as merely "stick figures." Consider, therefore, how the applications of these next words go far beyond those two: "And thus Laman and Lemuel . . . did murmur . . . because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them" (1 Nephi 2:12; see also Mosiah 10:14).

Failing to understand the “dealings” of the Lord with His children—meaning His relations with and treatment of His children—is very fundamental. Murmuring is but one of the symptoms, and not the only consequence either; in fact, brothers and sisters, this failure affects everything else!

To misread something so crucial constitutes a failure to know God, who then ends up being wrongly seen as unreachable, uninvolved, uncaring, and unable—a disabled and diminished Deity, really, about whose seeming limitations, ironically, some then quickly complain.

Failure to believe in God

Early on, Laman rejected the role he should have played and, instead, wanted to be “top dog in the manger,” resenting all the while Nephi’s spiritual leadership. Lemuel was not only Laman’s dutiful satellite, but he was also his enabler by allowing himself to be “stirred up” by Laman (see 1 Nephi 16:37–38). If, instead, Laman had been fully isolated, certain outcomes could have been very different. We have enablers in our society too. They allow themselves to be stirred up against that which is good. They are not entitled to a free pass any more than Lemuel. Like him, their comparative visibility is low, but their hypocrisy is high!

Exhortations given to Laman and Lemuel “were hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord; and they being hard in their hearts, therefore they did not look unto the Lord as they ought” (1 Nephi 15:3).

This failure to believe in a revealing God was especially basic. Some moderns who wish to distance themselves from God try placing His pavilion firmly in the past. By believing in such a disabled God, people can do pretty much as they please. It is then not many steps further to saying there is no God, and therefore no law and no sin! (see 2 Nephi 2:13; see also Alma 30:28).

Like Laman and Lemuel, many today would consign God only to the past; He thereby ceases to be the constant God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow (see 2 Nephi 27:23). Actually, God has the past, present, and future ever before Him, constituting an “eternal ‘now’” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 220; see also D&C 130:7).

In short, Laman and Lemuel’s own lack of character kept them from understanding the perfect character of God! No wonder the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 343).

Failure to recognize God’s love

Laman and Lemuel did not realize either that a loving God will inevitably be a tutoring Father, who wants His children to be truly happy and to come home. Not understanding God’s “dealings” sufficiently, Laman and Lemuel missed the most important attribute of God’s character—His love! Thus their murmuring was a symptom of a pathetic pathology.

Laman and Lemuel likewise didn’t understand that the “dealings” of God included using prophets to warn people. The Lord had so called Lehi, but Laman and Lemuel were apparently embarrassed by their father’s unpopular role and by his stern challenge to Jerusalem’s then prevailing mentality.

Spiritually numbed, Laman and Lemuel felt that the people of Jerusalem were undeserving of prophetic criticisms leveled (see 1 Nephi 2:13). Yet a pervasive spiritual decline was actually under way, occurring, as often happens, “in the space of not many years” (Helaman 4:26). A parallel and trampling decline is being missed by so many today too. Ironically, those engaged in such a lemming-like march to the sea are often proud of their own individualism! Advice is seen

as an insult, and counsel as a contraction of their agency.

Failure to recognize God's tutoring

Fundamental, too, was Laman and Lemuel's not understanding that a tutoring God may require difficult things of His children. The role of adversity is noted in this stern but inspired insight: "Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith" (Mosiah 23:21). Their sad expectation of ease was evident in their bristling over getting the plates from Laban, enduring the harsh wilderness, building a ship, and crossing a vast ocean (see 1 Nephi 3-4; 17-18). Dulled and desensitized, Laman and Lemuel simply didn't share Nephi's confidence that the Lord would never command His children to do difficult things, except the Lord first prepares the way (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

Their enormous errors led to almost comical inconsistencies, such as Laman and Lemuel's believing that God could handle mighty Pharaoh and great Egypt's army at the Red Sea all right, but not a local Laban! How many in our time inconsistently subordinate themselves to, and curry favor with, mortal intimidators?

Failure of faith

In the final division as between the Lamanites and the Nephites, note the spiritual boundary which preceded the geographical boundary: "I, Nephi, did take my family . . . and all those who would go with me . . . who believed in the warnings and the revelations of God; wherefore, they did hearken unto my words" (2 Nephi 5:6).

Laman and Lemuel did not partake of the tree of life, which is the love of God (see 1 Nephi 11:25). The love of God for His children is most profoundly expressed in His gift of Jesus as our Redeemer: "God so loved the world, that he

gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). To partake of the love of God is to partake of Jesus' Atonement and the emancipations and joys which it can bring. Clearly, however, Laman and Lemuel did not have such faith—especially in a Christ yet to come! (see Jarom 1:11).

In contrast, Nephi "had a great knowledge of the goodness . . . of God"; hence, Nephi's firm declaration: "I know that [God] loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 1:1; 11:17). If we have a love of God and know His goodness, we will trust Him, even when we are puzzled or perplexed.

Thus Laman and Lemuel did not understand the relationship of mortals with God, and, worse still, they did not really want to understand. They sought to keep their distance from God. Furthermore, being intellectually lazy, they did not count their blessings, when gratitude could have lessened the distance. But it was never inventory time for Laman and Lemuel.

Failure to care about spiritual things

Laman and Lemuel also displayed little lasting spiritual curiosity. Once, true, they asked straightforward questions about the meaning of a vision of the tree, the river, and the rod of iron. Yet their questions were really more like trying to connect doctrinal dots rather than connecting themselves with God and His purposes for them. They certainly did not "liken" the answers to themselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23).

Their contrition never lasted very long, such as in the interval between the appearance of an angel and when Laman and Lemuel resumed murmuring (see 1 Nephi 3:31). Under duress, once they even superficially acknowledged, "We know . . . the Lord is with thee, [Nephi,]" but they soon became exceedingly rude in their behavior on the ship (1 Nephi 17:55; see also 1 Nephi 18:8-9). Their

periodic violence indicated their resentments weren't merely abstract, intellectual differences.

Failure to love and respond to love

Laman and Lemuel were intimidated by Laban's power, but their fear of power merely showed the power of fear. Since "perfect love casteth out all fear," their limited capacity to love was thereby very evident (Moroni 8:16; see also 1 John 4:18). Though unprincipled, most sadly they were unloving!

Hence, encrusted Laman and Lemuel seldom responded to the tenderness of others. They were strangers to empathy, that eternal attribute. When Lehi exhorted them with all the feeling of a tender or trembling parent, the effects were usually more resentment, evoking cruel responses to parents and siblings (see 1 Nephi 8:37). When Nephi displayed sorrow over their behavior, Laman and Lemuel were "glad" that he was sorry (see 1 Nephi 17:19). Admonitions were bad enough, but to have them come from Nephi!

Failure to be grateful

Easily riled and quick to complain, they could scarcely remember their last rescue long enough to meet their next difficulty. Instead, lacking gospel perspective, the situational cares of the day—like worry over a broken bow, of all things—dominated the things of eternity. Ours, too, is a day of every-man-for-himself situational ethics, as if the Ten Commandments came from a focus group!

Upon arriving at both lands of Bountiful, did Laman and Lemuel really think that such good navigating was mere hap-
penstance? Perhaps Nephi had merely "guessed right" (see Helaman 16:16). Their ingratitude for the Liahona raises the question: What did Laman and Lemuel really think of that remarkable instrument? Was it just a convenient gadget

or merely standard equipment on every ship?

Ironically, many like Laman and Lemuel who are the first to demand signs are then the first to discount them. Some demand more miracles even while consuming a daily menu of manna and forgetting its remarkable Source.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, preferred to periodic miracles is having the Holy Ghost as a "constant companion" (D&C 121:46). Ever to be remembered, however, is that the Holy Ghost, while a Comforter, is not an intruder!

Failure to understand God's purposes

Laman and Lemuel's rejection of the prophets and the scriptures meant there could be no useful likening or rehearsals of remembrance and no freshening of personal revelation to them for their time. They simply did not understand that God's ways are higher than man's ways (see Isaiah 55:9). They enjoyed intellectual "slumming" in their portable equivalent of the prideful "great and spacious building" (1 Nephi 8:26, 31).

Hence Laman and Lemuel became rebels instead of leaders, resentful instead of righteous—all because of their failure to understand either the character or the purposes of God and His dealings with His children.

Failure to partake of the fruit

As to their spiritual significance, Laman and Lemuel were sad ciphers. True, we could know more facts about them, but it would not change the "bottom line." If, in some respects, they seem to be undeveloped characters, it is because theirs was a haunting emptiness, which could have been filled by the "love of God" (1 Nephi 11:25). In vision, there was the forlorn scene when Lehi cast his eyes anxiously about, searching for Laman and Lemuel that "perhaps [he] might see them." Finally Lehi saw them,

"but they would not . . . partake of the fruit" (1 Nephi 8:17-18; see also 1 Nephi 8:35; 2 Nephi 5:20). Of all self-inflicted punishments, this eight-word epitaph describes the most awful and consequential!

Partake of God's love

Mercifully, brothers and sisters, the rich Restoration gives us added ways to understand the dealings of God with His children, including with each of us personally. We can partake of His love by applying Jesus' glorious Atonement in order to become more like Him. By lik-

ening precious scriptures to ourselves we will hasten that precious process! May we so do, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Ben B. Banks, a newly called member of the Presidency of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Sister Sharon G. Larsen, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

Elder Ben B. Banks

A lost lamb in New Zealand

Several years ago my wife, Susan, and I had the opportunity to tour the New Zealand Christchurch Mission with President and Sister Melvin Tagg. President Tagg suggested that as part of the mission tour we include a preparation day and take a bus trip to see the beautiful Milford Sound. As part of the trip we stopped at several beautiful scenic sites along the way. At one of those stops, as we walked back to the bus, I became curious about a group of passengers standing in a circle on the road taking photographs. As I peered over the people, I saw in the circle a frightened little baby lamb on wobbly legs. It appeared to be no more than a few hours old. I have seen a lot of sheep in my life, since my father-in-law was in the sheep business. Consequently, I had no interest in taking a photograph of a solitary lamb, so I boarded the bus and waited.

After all the passengers finally boarded the bus, the driver picked up the frightened little lamb in his arms, held it tenderly against his chest, and brought it on the bus. He sat down, closed the

door, picked up his microphone, and said, "Undoubtedly a band of sheep has gone through here this morning, and this little lamb has strayed. Perhaps if we take it with us, we might find the band of sheep farther up the road and return this baby lamb to its mother."

We drove through several kilometers of beautiful forests and finally came to a beautiful meadow of tall, flowing grass. Sure enough, there in the meadow was a band of sheep feeding. The bus driver stopped the bus and excused himself. We all thought he would put the lamb down on the side of the road and come back, but he didn't. With the lamb in his arms, he carefully and quietly walked out through the grass toward the band of sheep. When he got as close as he could without disturbing them, he gently put the lamb down and then remained in the field to make sure the baby lamb returned to the fold.

As he returned to the bus, he once again picked up his microphone and said, "Oh, can't you hear that mother sheep saying, 'Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you for bringing my lost lamb back home to me!'"

Parable of the lost sheep

As I think of this wonderful teaching moment provided by the bus driver, my thoughts turn to the parable the Lord gave us of the lost sheep:

"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

"And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

"And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

"And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:1-7).

Reach out to the lost sheep

Our prophet today, President Gordon B. Hinckley, likewise shares with us his concern about lost sheep:

"There are so many young people who wander aimlessly and walk the tragic trail of drugs, gangs, immorality, and the whole brood of ills that accompany these things. There are widows who long for friendly voices and that spirit of anxious concern which speaks of love. There are those who were once warm in the faith, but whose faith has grown cold. Many of them wish to come back but do not know quite how to do it. They need friendly hands reaching out to them. With a little effort, many of them can be brought back to feast again at the table of the Lord.

"My brethren and sisters, I would hope, I would pray, that each of us . . . would resolve to seek those who need help, who are in desperate and difficult circumstances, and lift them in the spirit of love into the embrace of the Church, where strong hands and loving hearts will warm them, comfort them, sustain them, and put them on the way of happy and productive lives" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 118; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 86).

Reasons people stray from the faith

In light of our prophet's concern, might we ask ourselves, "Why is it that some who were once warm in the faith have grown cold in the faith?"

If we are to succeed in the prophetic mandate to perfect the Saints, we must also succeed in our efforts to strengthen those who have grown cold in their faith. To begin this endeavor, it would be well for us to know the feelings and reasons why they do not attend meetings and participate in the fellowship of the Saints.

Most active members believe that less-active members behave differently because they don't believe the Church's doctrine. A study by the Church's Research Information Division does not support this assumption. It shows that almost all less-active members interviewed believe that God exists, that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that the Church is true.

As part of another study, a group of active members who previously had been less active were asked why they did not attend church. The most common reasons given were:

- Feelings of unworthiness.
- Personal or family problems.
- Parents or spouse were less active.
- Teenage rebelliousness or laziness.
- Conflicts with work schedules.
- Church too far away, lacked transportation.

They were then asked what had influenced them to return to activity in the Church. The most common answers were:

- Faced with crisis in life.
- Overcame personal problems.
- The example of a spouse, girlfriend, or boyfriend.
- Influence of family members.
- Wanted the gospel influence for family.
- Fellowshiping from ward members, moved to a new ward where people cared about them. (See Research Information Division comparison, Sept. 1999.)

Help the lost sheep return to the fold

I believe that every active member of the Church knows a lost sheep who needs the attention and love of a caring shepherd.

President Hinckley has told us what every new convert needs to remain active in the Church: a friend, a responsibility, and continued nourishing by the good word of God. The lost sheep need the exact same care and concern to help them back to the fold.

I am acquainted with a family who lost a son on a camping trip. When initial efforts failed to find him, the call for help went out, and hundreds responded to the call until the boy was safely back in the arms of his mother and father. I plead this morning that we will all have that same kind of genuine care and love to do all we can to bring back those precious sons and daughters who are lost to Church activity.

The challenge before us is great. It will require us to exercise increased faith, energy, and commitment if we are to reach these brothers and sisters. But we must do it. The Lord is counting on us to do it.

We must remember that change occurs slowly. We all need to have patience,

offer fellowship and friendship, learn to listen and love, and be careful not to judge.

In every ward and branch there are good, honest men and women. Many don't know how to come back to church. There are good fathers and mothers among them. Many have one thing in common: they are not the spiritual leaders in their homes. When men and women of faith visit these individuals and become their friends and love them and teach them the gospel, I believe they and their families will come back.

Children often follow parents who stray

For the next few minutes I would like to talk to those who have wandered away from the fold. I am hopeful this morning that perhaps a few of you who are not fully active in the Church may be listening to this session of conference. You have in many instances formed new associations and no longer keep Church standards. Many of your children tread in your paths and follow your example. Children are not only largely dependent on their parents for physical and emotional support but for spiritual support as well.

Twas a sheep not a lamb that strayed
away

In the parable Jesus told,
A grown-up sheep that strayed away
From the ninety and nine in the fold.

And why for the sheep should we
seek

And earnestly hope and pray?
Because there is danger when sheep
go wrong;
They lead the lambs astray.

Lambs will follow the sheep, you
know,
Wherever the sheep may stray.
When sheep go wrong, it won't take
long
Til the lambs are as wrong as they.

And so with the sheep we earnestly
plead

For the sake of the lambs today,
For when sheep are lost, what a terrible cost

The lambs will have to pay!

["The Echo," C. C. Miller, quoted in
Hugh B. Brown, *The Abundant Life*
(1965), 166-67]

The Lord said, "My sheep hear my voice" (John 10:27). Likewise, your children respond to your voice. No one can effectively take your place as father and mother. The story is told of "the six-year-old who got lost from his mother in a large supermarket [and] began to call frantically, 'Martha, Martha.' When the mother was found and they were reunited, she said, 'Honey, you should not call me Martha; I am "Mother" to you,' to which the little fellow rejoined, 'Yes, I know, but the store was full of mothers and I wanted mine'" (Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 117).

What a blessing it would be to your family if you would harmonize your life with the gospel. The decision to change your life and return to activity and come unto Christ is the most important decision you could make in this life.

Each soul is precious

In conclusion, a final word to those who shepherd the flock. The Savior Him-

self in a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith tells us in very personal terms how valuable each soul is:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

"For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

"And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

"And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!

"Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people.

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!" (D&C 18:10-15).

The Good Shepherd willingly gave His life for His sheep, for you and me—yes, for all of us, that we might live eternally with our Father in Heaven. I pray that we will all follow the admonition our Savior Jesus Christ gave to Peter three times: "Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Sister Sharon G. Larsen

Importance of using agency wisely

As we left our Father in Heaven's presence and entered this world, we brought with us a priceless, sacred, pre-mortal, and eternal gift. It is this gift, the gift of agency, about which I wish to speak.

Agency is the power to think, choose, and act for ourselves. It comes with end-

less opportunities, accompanied by responsibility and consequences. It is a blessing and a burden. Using this gift of agency wisely is critical today because never in the world's history have God's children been so blessed or so blatantly confronted with so many choices.

Life was simpler years ago in my hometown on the Canadian prairie. Our

phone number was one digit—3. We had one black-and-white movie that came from the larger town of Cardston every Thursday night. Mail came Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—unless it snowed hard.

There was one main road. Three miles west was our farm, and 20 miles east on that same road was the Cardston Alberta Temple. There weren't many other roads to choose or places to go.

Today there are infinite telephone numbers, movies of all kinds and colors, e-mail at our fingertips 24 hours a day, and many roads that relentlessly call for our judgment. Our environment is flooded with choices. But our purpose for being here on earth has never changed.

Agency is necessary for our growth

The Lord told Abraham that He sent us to earth to see if we would do what He asked us to do (see Abraham 3:25). Choice becomes inescapable. The world's two opposing forces seek our commitment. On the one hand, there is the reality of Satan, and on the other, the more powerful love of the Savior.

Lehi teaches us that if there were no opposition, there would be no righteousness nor wickedness, neither good nor bad. We can't act for ourselves if there is no choice (see 2 Nephi 2:11, 16). To become a committed follower of Christ, we must have the option to reject Him. So Satan is permitted to exercise his power, and yielding our will to God can sometimes become difficult. Yet it is in this exercise of acting for ourselves that we grow.

C. S. Lewis said: "Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. . . . You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later." Lewis goes on, "Christ, because He was the only man who never

yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means" (*Mere Christianity* [1960], 109–10).

Choices have consequences

I remember asking my parents if I could do certain things. Their response never varied: "You have been taught. You know how we feel about that, but you will have to decide for yourself." Yet deciding for oneself dictates consequences, which are not always what we want. We want the freedom without consequences. And so, too often, we try to stand neutral, undecided, and uncommitted. It is in this atmosphere that we become vulnerable to the influence of Satan.

King Ahab and his people in northern Israel tell us about neutrality and indecision. The Lord's hand was stayed because the people would not decide whom to worship—Jehovah or Baal. Baal is another name for Satan. The Lord sent Elijah the prophet with this clear message: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." The scriptures say, "The people answered him not a word" (1 Kings 18:21). They didn't want the responsibility of making a commitment. You remember the story: Elijah challenged them to a test to see who is God. They would each pray to their god to see which would burn up the offering on the altar. When the priests called mightily to their idol, they were left unheard and unsupported.

In stark contrast, one lone prophet of the true and living God was not only heard, he was magnified in his efforts. When Elijah petitioned his God, the fire of the Lord came down and consumed everything—the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust—and it licked up the water in the trench. Following this exhibition, the people said, "The Lord, he is the God" (1 Kings 18:39), and then the

scriptures say the priests of Baal were killed. There were no unbelievers still alive in northern Israel that day! Choices would not be a dilemma if good were rewarded as quickly and spectacularly as was Elijah or if wrongdoing meant immediate death. But it is not that simple when our work is to increase our faith.

Choose which way to face

Our faith and commitment are tested when the world offers tempting and enticing alternatives that can turn our faces from the Lord's kingdom. Some would like to live in that eternal city and still keep a "summer home" in Babylon. If we are not consciously and deliberately choosing the kingdom of God, we will in fact be moving backward as the kingdom of God moves forward "boldly, nobly, and independent" (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:540). Choosing which way we face will determine our blessings or our burdens. The Psalmist invites us to cast our burdens on the Lord, and He will sustain us (see Psalm 55:22), while Mormon warns, "The devil will not support his children" (Alma 30:60).

A young man I love with all my heart said to me: "No one can tell me what to do. I am in charge of my own life." He has the mistaken idea that to be independent and free, he must oppose God's will. Where, then, will his strength come?

Commandments are evidence that God cares

Brother James E. Talmage says of Jesus: He "was all that a boy should be, for His development was unretarded by the dragging weight of sin; He loved and obeyed the truth and therefore was free" (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 112).

Making right choices frees us and blesses us, even in choosing what may appear trivial in our lives. A friend thought the Lord was too involved in his life. He said, "I can't take all those absolutes in

the Church that tell me I must do this, I can't do that." My friend did not see that those absolutes are evidence of our Father's vigilant care.

Isn't it incredible? There are six billion people on this planet, and Heavenly Father cares what I watch for entertainment, and He cares what I eat and drink. He cares how I dress and how I earn and spend my money. He cares what I do and don't do. Heavenly Father cares about my happiness.

Our Father's caring comes in so many ways, and we have only to listen and live for it. Someone has said, "If [we] have not chosen the Kingdom of God [first], it will make in the end no difference what [we] have chosen instead" (William Law, 18th-century clergyman).

Gifts to help us use our agency wisely

Because our purpose here on earth has not changed, nor will it ever, our Father steadily and regularly supplies additional gifts to make our world safe and strengthen our wise use of agency. Think about the gift of prayer—opportunities to be heard and understood. Think about the gift of the Holy Ghost, who will show us all the things we should do (see 2 Nephi 32:5). Think about sacred covenants we have made, the scriptures, priesthood and patriarchal blessings. Think about the ultimate gift of the Atonement and its reminder in the sacrament, which blankets us with love and hope and grace. These gifts help us use our agency wisely so we can return back to our heavenly home, where "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Only one main road

Today there are many roads, but like my hometown, there is only one main road, the strait and narrow.

Acknowledging our tendency to wander in strange roads (see 1 Nephi 8:32), we plead to the Lord through this hymn:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it;
Seal it for thy courts above.
[“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” *Hymns* (1948), 70]

I close with the prayer of Nephi speaking for you and for me: “O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road” (2 Nephi 4:32), in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Ben B. Banks of the Presidency of the Seventy has spoken to us, followed by Sister Sharon G. Larsen, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

The choir and congregation will now sing “High on the Mountain Top.” Following the singing, Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy will speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Neil L. Andersen, also of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang “High on the Mountain Top.”

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone

The Church will never waver on sin

Alexander Solzhenitsyn referred to short-sighted concessions: “A process of giving up and giving up and giving up and hoping and hoping and hoping that perhaps at some point the wolf will have had enough.”

My wonderful young friends, let me promise you, the wolf will never have enough.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said: “Where the spirit invades the heart, there can be no rest. For even in the dark of night, one link of the chain still holds, one light that will not go out.”

Doesn't it make you deeply grateful to belong to a church with apostles and prophets at the head—knowing that one link will always hold, one light will never go out? As the world moves deeper and deeper into sin, this wonderful Church stands like a giant granite boulder.

Aren't you proud that the Church teaches us the truth? We don't have to wonder about earrings for boys and men, tattoos, spiked hair, the four-letter

words, and obscene gestures. We have prophets who model the standards. They teach that the Ten Commandments are not outdated. The word of the Lord has thundered down through the generations: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exodus 20:7). Profaning God's name is a great offense to the Spirit, and to do so is Satan's great ploy to mock our God.

Jehovah also declared, “Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15). Stealing is an affront to God. This commandment is one of only ten. Cheating, lying, bearing false witness are all types of stealing.

Beloved youth, aren't you thankful to God that the apostles and prophets never waver on sin? No matter how strong the winds of public opinion may blow, the Church is immovable. “God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.”¹

Those who espouse perverse principles and deviant behavior are living in sin. Laws, consensus, consenting adults

that teach contrary to the gospel are wrong even if the majority accepts them. Sin is sin, and that is God's truth. The Apostle Paul declared, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Evils of pornography

Pornography is evil. I love the story told at the funeral of Henry Eyring's father. When he was a young man coming across the border from the Mexican colonies to the United States, the customs man said, "Son, do you have any pornography in your suitcase or trunks?" He responded, "No sir, we don't even own a pornograph." It's wonderful to be that pure and naive. We know pornography is addictive and destructive. It has companions it travels with: drinking, smoking, and drugs. It uses some types of music, dancing, the Internet, and television. Those who produce it are godless and have no conscience. They know the consequences, but they don't care. Like those who peddle drugs, they will never be around to pick up the pieces when you're all broken up. But we will—your parents, bishops, and leaders.

Good friends are a safeguard

Be careful who you make your close friends. Two men were talking, and one said, "Hey, Joe, I passed your house the other day." And Joe said, "Thanks." Be grateful if you are not included in the wrong groups. There will always be a strong warning come to you beforehand.

Rudyard Kipling said:

Now this is the Law of the Jungle—
as old and as true as the sky;
And the Wolf that shall keep it may
prosper, but the Wolf that shall
break it must die.

As the creeper that girdles the tree-
trunk the Law runneth forward
and back—

For the strength of the Pack is the
Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf
is the Pack.²

Your friends are a safeguard.

Importance of teaching youth

A word to adults and parents: Elder Bruce R. McConkie's father counseled that when we violate any commandment, however small, our youth may choose to violate a commandment later on in life perhaps 10 times or 100 times worse and justify it on the basis of the small commandment we broke.³

One of the most important influences on the religiosity of our youth is the spontaneous religious discussions in our homes. When we discuss the things we love most—not because they are scheduled, such as family home evening, prayer, or scripture study, but because they are so precious to us—they have a profound influence on our children.

Grady Bogue, college professor, said: "Rightly done, teaching is a precious work. It is, however, the one human endeavor most damaging in consequence when done without care or competence. To carry a student in harm's way because of either ignorance or arrogance—because we do not know or do not care—is an act far worse than a bungled surgery. Our mistakes will not bleed. Instead, they carry hidden scars whose mean and tragic consequence may not be seen until years have passed and remedy is painful and impossible."⁴

Obedience is a privilege

Youth, do not feel oppressed by obedience. Obedience is a wonderful and a great privilege. In Abraham 4:18 it states, "And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed." What if the elements had not obeyed? They would have been damned or held back. So it is with us. Obedience to God is truly the only way to really

be free and exercise our agency. Satan teaches the opposite and, with each wrong choice, binds us with chains. I promise you, obedience is a wonderful privilege.

The joy of helping a parent

When I was a boy, my mother had to go to work at Garfield Smelter and work like a man to help support the seven children. She worked the graveyard shift as much as she could, I'm sure to be with us during the day. I don't know when the poor woman slept. One Saturday morning, she got off work about 7:00 or 8:00 A.M. She went to bed for a couple of hours and then got up. She had invited all her relatives to dinner. There must have been 35 or 40. She decorated the tables and arranged the chairs and put all the dishes and silverware out. She cooked and baked all day long. The dirty pots and pans and dishes stacked up.

Everyone came to dinner, and after dinner all the dirty dishes were brought into the kitchen. The food was cleared and stacked on the table and cupboards; then the kitchen door was closed and the family began to visit. It was about 8:00 P.M.

I remember standing all alone in the kitchen. In my young mind, I thought, "My mother worked all night; she has worked all day to get this dinner. When everyone leaves, she will have to do the dishes and put the food away. It will take two or three hours, and that's not fair." Then I thought, "I will do them."

I washed the dishes, did the silverware, the glassware. We didn't have an electric dishwasher; ours was a manual dishwasher, and that night I was manual. I used a half-dozen dish towels. I was drenched from head to foot. I put the food away, cleaned off the table and drainboards, then got down on my hands and knees and scrubbed the floor. When I was finished, I thought the kitchen was immaculate. It took about three hours.

Then I heard the chairs shuffling, and everyone left. The front door closed, and I heard my mother coming to the kitchen. I was pleased and thought she would be. The door swung open, and even at the age of 11, I recognized that she was startled. She looked around the kitchen, looked at me, and then there was a look I didn't recognize at the time. I do now. It was something like, "Thanks. I am tired. I think you understand, and I love you." She came over and hugged me. There was a light in her eye and a warmth in my heart. I learned it is a wonderful feeling to turn on the lights in our parents' eyes.

Yearning for a Thanksgiving prayer

Another time—it was the Sunday before Thanksgiving, about 1943—I went to priesthood meeting. There was a large framed board. It had the pictures of all the young men serving in the military. Priests who had been at the sacrament table a few months earlier were now in the war. Each week it would be updated. Those who were killed in action had a gold star by their picture; those who had been wounded, a red star; and those missing in action, a white star. Every week, as a 12-year-old deacon, I checked to see who had been killed or wounded.

In quorum meeting that morning, the member of the bishopric said, "This Thursday is Thanksgiving. We ought to all have family prayer in our homes." Then he said, "Let's put on the blackboard the things we are grateful for." We did, and he said, "Include these things in your Thanksgiving prayer." I got sick to my stomach, as we never had a prayer or blessing.

That night at 6:30 we went to sacrament meeting. At the end of the meeting, the bishop stood up and was very tender. He told about the young men from our ward who had been killed and wounded. He talked about our liberty, our free-

dom, our flag, and this great country, and our blessings. Then he said, "I'd hope every single family would kneel and have family prayer on Thanksgiving Day and thank God for His blessings."

My heart ached. I thought, "How can we have family prayer?" I wanted to be obedient. I hardly slept all Sunday night. I wanted to have a prayer for Thanksgiving. I even thought I would say it if someone asked me, but I was too shy to volunteer. I worried all day Monday, and all day Tuesday, and Wednesday at school.

Dad did not come home on Wednesday until early in the morning. Thursday we all got up. There were five boys and two sisters. We skipped breakfast so we would have a real appetite for Thanksgiving dinner. To work up an appetite, we went to a nearby field and dug a hole six feet deep and six feet wide. We made a trench to it as a hideout. I remember with every shovelful of dirt, I thought, "Please, Heavenly Father, let us have a prayer."

Finally at 2:30, my mother called us to come and eat. We cleaned up and sat at the table. Somehow Mom had managed to have a turkey with all the trimmings. She put all the food on the table, including the turkey. I thought my heart would burst. Time was running out. I looked at my father, then my mother. I thought, "Please, now, someone, anyone, please can't we have a prayer." I was almost panicky; then all of a sudden everyone started to eat. I had worked hard all morning and afternoon to work up an appetite, but I wasn't hungry. I didn't want to eat. I wanted to pray more than anything else in this world, and it was too late.

Beloved youth, be grateful for parents who have prayer and read the scriptures. Prize family home evening. Be grateful for those who teach and train you.

Stand for truth; carry the torch

My young friends, there is so much that is wonderful and worthwhile in this grand world. I love President Hinckley's constant reference to the love and confidence, the greatness that he feels in you, our beloved youth.

Prepare to go to the temple. A wonderful verse describes it:

Enter this door as if the floor . . .
were gold;
And every wall of jewels all of wealth
untold;
As if a choir in robes of fire were
singing here;
Nor shout nor rush but hush . . . for
God is here.⁵

President Joseph F. Smith taught: "After we have done all we could do for the cause of truth, and withstood the evil that men have brought upon us, and we have been overwhelmed by their wrongs, it is still our duty to stand. We cannot give up; we must not lie down. Great causes are not won in a single generation."⁶

Young men and young women, raise the standard; carry the torch for your generation. We have absolute confidence you will.

I thank God for the one link that still holds, the one light that will not go out. Remember how blessed you are to have prayer in your homes. And always try to put lights in your mothers' eyes. That's the least we can all do for them.

We love you, our beloved youth, and pray God to bless each one of you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. *Rudyard Kipling's Verse* (1935), 559.
3. Conversation with Brit McConkie.
4. "A Friend of Mine: Notes on the Gift of Teaching," *Vital Speeches*, 15 July 1988, 615.

5. Poem by Orson F. Whitney; quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, "The Things of

Eternity—Stand We in Jeopardy?" *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 7.

6. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 119.

Elder Neil L. Andersen

Serve the Lord; follow the prophet

I express my love to you this morning. I speak to the devoted and testimony-filled members of the Church spread across the nations of the earth. The very fact that on this beautiful Saturday morning you are here in the Tabernacle, or watching this conference in some other darkened room in the middle of the day, speaks of your discipleship. You are serious about what you believe, and it shows in your life.

One admonition that has been a strength to me is the powerful declaration of the Prophet Joshua, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

The words of Joshua ring with such relevance today, and yet how we demonstrate our decision to serve the Lord seems to change with each generation. Thirty-five hundred years ago as Joshua spoke, it meant leaving behind false gods, going to battle against the Canaanites, and following with sharp attention the words of the prophet. We can almost hear the whining of the skeptics as Joshua announced his battle plans for taking the city of Jericho. First, he said, they would quietly, without any speaking, circle the city one time for each of six days. Then on the seventh day they would compass the city seven times. Following, the priests would blow the trumpets, and at that time all the people would shout with a great shout. Then, Joshua assured them, the walls would come down. (See Joshua 6.) When the walls came down, the skeptics were quiet.

In our world today, one thing has not changed since Joshua spoke: Those who choose to serve the Lord will always listen attentively and specifically to the prophet. In modern Israel, serving the Lord means carefully following the prophets.

Spiritual mole crickets

The challenges that face us and our families as disciples of Christ are somewhat different than those of Joshua's Israelites. Let me illustrate with an experience. Our family lived for many years in the state of Florida. Because Florida has a high concentration of sand, lawns there are planted with a large broadleaf grass we call Saint Augustine. A formidable enemy of a Florida lawn is a small, brown insect called a mole cricket.

One evening as my neighbor and I stood on the front steps, he noticed a little bug crossing my sidewalk. "You better spray your lawn," he warned. "There goes a mole cricket." I had sprayed the lawn with insecticide not too many weeks previously, and I hardly felt that I had the time or money to do it again so soon.

In the light of the next morning, I examined my lawn closely. It was lush and beautifully green. I looked down into the grass to see if I could see any of the little bugs. I could see none. I remember thinking, "Well, maybe that little mole cricket was just passing through my yard on the way to my neighbor's yard."

I watched my lawn for more than a week, looking for signs of invaders, but none was evident. I congratulated myself

that I had not overreacted to my neighbor's warning.

The story, however, has a sad ending. I came out the front door one morning, about 10 days after the conversation with my neighbor. Shockingly, as if it had happened overnight, brown spots covered my lawn. I ran to the garden store, bought the insecticide, and sprayed immediately, but it was too late. The lawn was ruined, and to return it to its former state required a new crop of sod, long hours of work, and large expense.

My neighbor's warning was central to my lawn's welfare. He saw things I could not see. He knew something I did not know. He knew that mole crickets live underground and are active only at night, making my daytime examinations ineffective. He knew that mole crickets do not eat the leaves of the grass but rather find nourishment in the roots. He knew that these little inch-long creatures could eat a lot of roots before I would ever see the effect above the ground. I paid a dear price for my smug independence.

We live in a wonderful day. The blessings of our generation are lush and beautifully green. With faith in the Savior and obedience to the commandments, our lives can be full of satisfaction and joy.

Yet in these days of much beauty, our challenges in choosing to serve the Lord are more subtle than those of former days, but without question they are as spiritually pervasive. There are spiritual mole crickets that burrow under our protective walls and invade our delicate roots. Many of these insects of wickedness appear small, at times almost invisible. Yet if we do not combat them, they will do damage and attempt to destroy that which is most precious to us.

Prophets' counsel about the family

The warnings of the prophets and apostles lead them ever and always to speak of the home and family. Let me demonstrate the warning voice of the

prophets. On February 11 of this year, the First Presidency, with the support of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, sent to every member of the Church a letter of counsel concerning our families. Let me read you just two sentences from this letter:

"We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform" ("Policies, Announcements, and Appointments," *Ensign*, June 1999, 80).

What is our reaction to this prophetic counsel? What has been my response and your response to this First Presidency letter of nearly eight months ago?

Prayer, scriptures, family home evening

As a parent of teenagers in a busy world, I can confirm that it takes giving these issues our highest priority to see them effectively work in our family. We have just heard the beautiful story of Elder Featherstone and family prayer. With the influences of evil that surround our children, can we even imagine sending them out in the morning without kneeling and humbly asking together for the Lord's protection? Or closing the day without kneeling together and acknowledging our accountability before Him and our thankfulness for His blessings? Brothers and sisters, we need to have family prayer.

Certainly there are times when getting the family together to read the scriptures does not stack up as a spiritual experience worthy of a journal entry. But we must not be deterred. There are special times when the spirit of a son or daughter is just right and the power of these great scriptures goes down into their heart like fire. As we honor our

Heavenly Father in our homes, He will honor our efforts.

We all know the struggle necessary to retain family home evening. There are thieves among us who would steal our Monday nights. But the promises of the Lord made to families who hold family home evening, that were spoken by the First Presidency 84 years ago and reiterated by our prophets today, have never been revoked and are there for us:

"If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messengers of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965-75], 4:339).

Who within the sound of my voice would be willing to sell these promises to those who would confiscate our Monday nights? Not one of us.

For you and me, the disciples of Christ, these moments of building faith in the lives of our children must be strengthened. We will at times fall short as parents. I know I do. But we must begin again. The Lord sees our righteous efforts and will open the blessings of heaven as we give our families our highest priority. My brothers and sisters, there are spiritual mole crickets at work on our roots, and we must be even more serious in our family stewardship.

Always heed the prophets' warnings

As we participate in this conference, let us listen attentively to our dear President Hinckley, his counselors, and the apostles who address us.

Let us not follow the pattern I showed in dealing with my Florida mole crickets. Let us never ignore the warnings. Let us never be smug in our independence.

Let us always be listening and learning in humility and faith, anxious to repent should it be necessary.

This is the kingdom of God upon the earth. You and I are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God. He lives. He directs this work. President Hinckley is His Prophet, and with him are 14 others who hold the apostolic keys. They are watchmen on the tower, messengers of the warning voice, prophets, seers, and revelators.

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

"And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey" (Joshua 24:24).

That these words may be written in our hearts is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Our Savior's Love."

President Hinckley

Elders Vaughn J. Featherstone and Neil L. Andersen of the Seventy have just spoken to us. The choir then sang "Our Savior's Love."

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television and radio stations, cable systems, and Internet services for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We also acknowledge the broadcast of these proceedings over the Internet by LDSWorld.com.

We express our appreciation to this wonderful chorus which has sung for us—the Salt Lake and Orem Institutes. Their music has been beautiful, and Brother Brenchley, we thank you ever so much.

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

The search for our best selves

During a time long past, and in a place far away, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, taught the multitudes and His disciples "the way, the truth, and the life."¹ He provided counsel with His holy words. He lived an example for us with His exemplary life. On occasion the Lord would ask another this question: "What manner of persons ought ye to be?"²

During His ministry on the American continent, the Lord added significant words when He answered the same question: "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."³

In His earthly ministry, the Master outlined how we should live, how we should teach, how we should serve, and what we should do so that we could become our best selves.

One such lesson comes from the book of John in the Holy Bible:

"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

"And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see."

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"⁴

In our mortal journey, the advice of the Apostle Paul provides heavenly guidance:

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Then came the concluding charge: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."⁵

In the search for our best selves, several questions will guide our thinking: "Am I what I want to be? Am I closer to the Savior today than I was yesterday? Will I be closer yet tomorrow? Do I have the courage to change for the better?"

Return to the family

It is time to choose an oft-forgotten path, the path we might call "The Family Way," so that our children and grandchildren might indeed grow to their full potential. There is a national—even an international—tide running. It carries the unspoken message, "Return to your roots, to your families, to lessons learned, to lives lived, to examples shown, even family values." Often it is just a matter of coming home—coming home to attics not recently examined, to diaries seldom read, to photo albums almost forgotten.

The Scottish poet James Barrie wrote, "God gave us memories, that we might have June roses in the December of our lives."⁶ What memories do we have of Mother? Father? Grandparents? Family? Friends?

Lessons learned from fathers

What lessons have we learned from our fathers? Years ago a father asked Elder ElRay L. Christiansen what name he could suggest for his newly acquired boat. Brother Christiansen suggested, "Why not call it *The Sabbath Breaker*?" I'm confident the would-be sailor pondered whether his pride and joy would be a Sabbath breaker or a Sabbath keeper. Whatever his decision, it no doubt left a lasting impression upon his children.

Yet another father taught a son a never-to-be-forgotten lesson in obedience and, by example, to honor the Sabbath day. I learned of this at the funeral service of a noble General Authority, H. Verlan Andersen. A tribute was paid to him by one of his sons. It has application wherever we are and whatever we are doing. It is the example of personal experience.

The son of Elder Andersen related that years earlier he had a special school date on a Saturday night. He borrowed from his father the family car. As he obtained the car keys and was heading for the door, his father said, "The car will need more gasoline before tomorrow. Be sure to fill the tank before coming home."

Elder Andersen's son related that the evening activity was wonderful. Friends met, refreshments were served, and all had a good time. In his exuberance, however, he failed to follow his father's instruction to add fuel to the car's tank before returning home.

Sunday morning dawned. Elder Andersen discovered the gas gauge showed empty. The son saw his father walk back into the house and put the car keys on the table. In the Andersen home, the Sabbath day was a day for worship and thanksgiving, and not for purchases.

As the funeral message continued, Elder Andersen's son declared, "I saw my father put on his coat, bid us good-

bye, and then walk the long distance to the chapel, that he might attend an early meeting." Duty called. Truth was not held slave to expedience.

In concluding his funeral message, he said, "No son was ever taught more effectively by his father than I was on that occasion. My father not only knew the truth—he lived it."

Lessons learned from mothers

It is in the home that we form our attitudes, our deeply held beliefs. It is in the home that hope is fostered or destroyed.

Our homes are to be more than sanctuaries; they should also be places where God's Spirit can dwell, where the storm stops at the door, where love reigns and peace dwells.

Not long ago a young mother wrote to me:

"Sometimes I wonder if I make a difference in my children's lives. Especially as a single mother working two jobs to make ends meet, I sometimes come home to confusion, but I never give up hope."

"My children and I were watching a television broadcast of general conference, and you were speaking about prayer. My son made the statement, 'Mother, you've already taught us that.' I said, 'What do you mean?' And he replied: 'Well, you've taught us to pray and showed us how, but the other night I came to your room to ask something and found you on your knees praying to Heavenly Father. If He's important to you, He'll be important to me.'" The letter concluded, "I guess you never know what kind of influence you'll be until a child observes you doing yourself what you have tried to teach him to do." What a magnificent lesson a child learned from his mother.

As a boy I made a startling discovery in Sunday School one Mother's Day which has remained with me all through

the years. Melvin, a sightless brother in the ward, a talented vocalist, would stand and face the congregation as though he were seeing one and all. He would then sing "That Wonderful Mother of Mine." The bright, glowing embers of memory penetrated human hearts. Men reached for their handkerchiefs; women's eyes brimmed with tears.

We deacons would go among the congregation carrying a small geranium in a clay pot for presentation to each mother. Some of the mothers were young, some were middle-aged, and some were barely hanging on to life in their old age. I became aware that the eyes of each mother were kind eyes. The words of each mother were "Thank you." I felt the spirit of the statement "When someone gives another person a flower, the fragrance of the flower lingers on the hands of the giver." I have not forgotten the lesson learned, nor shall I ever forget it.

Example of a family's sacrifice

Some mothers, some fathers, some children, some families are called upon to bear a heavy burden here in mortality. Such a family was the Borgstrom family in northern Utah. The time was World War II. Fierce battles raged in various parts of the world.

Tragically, the Borgstroms lost four of their five sons who were serving in the armed forces. Within a six-month period, all four sons gave their lives—each in a different part of the world.

Following the war, the bodies of the four Borgstrom brothers were brought home to Tremonton, and an appropriate service was conducted, filling the Garland Utah Tabernacle. General Mark Clark attended the service. He later spoke with tenderness these words:

"I flew to Garland the morning of June 26. Met with the family, including among others the mother, father, and two remaining sons, . . . one a lad in his

teens. I had never met a more stoic family group.

"As the four flag-draped coffins were lined up in front of us in the church, and as I sat by these brave parents, I was deeply impressed by their understanding, by their faith, and their pride in these magnificent sons who had made the supreme sacrifice for principles which had been instilled in them by noble parents since childhood.

"During the luncheon period, Mrs. Borgstrom turned to me and said in a low voice, 'Are you going to take my young one?' I answered in a whisper that as long as I remained in command of the army on the West Coast, if her boy were called I would do my best to have him assigned to duty at home.

"In the middle of this whispered conversation with the mother, the father suddenly leaned forward and said to Mrs. Borgstrom: 'Mother, I have overheard your conversation with the general about our youngest. We know that if and when his country needs him, he will go.'

"I could hardly contain my emotions. Here were parents with four sons lying dead from wounds received in battle and yet were ready to make the last sacrifice if their country required it."

It is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that touched home and heart that ever-to-be-remembered day.

Serve others; trust in the Lord

The years have come and the years have gone, but the need for a testimony of the gospel continues paramount. As we move toward the future, we must not neglect the lessons of the past. Our Heavenly Father gave His Son. The Son of God gave His life. We are asked by Them to give our lives, as it were, in Their divine service. Will you? Will I? Will we? There are lessons to be taught; there are kind deeds to be done; there are souls to be saved.

Let us remember the counsel of King Benjamin: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God."⁷ Reach out to rescue those who need your help. Lift such to the higher road and the better way. As we sing in Primary, "Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, help me find the way. Teach me all that I must do to live with him someday."⁸ Real faith is not restricted to childhood, but rather applies to all.

We learn from the Proverbs: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."⁹ When we do, we will come to realize that we have been on His holy errand, that His divine purposes have been fulfilled, and that we have shared in that fulfillment.

A widow's gift touches many

May I illustrate this truth with a personal experience. Many years ago, while serving as a bishop, I felt impressed to call upon Augusta Schneider, a widow from the Alsace-Lorraine area of Europe who spoke very little English, although she was fluent in French and German. For years after that first impression I would visit with her at Christmastime. On one occasion Augusta said, "Bishop, I have something of great value to me which I would like to present to you." She then went to a special place in her modest apartment and retrieved the gift. It was a beautiful piece of felt, perhaps six by eight inches in size, to which she had pinned the medals her husband had been presented for his service as a member of the French forces in World War I. She said, "I would like you to have this personal treasure which is so close to my heart." I protested politely and suggested there must be some member of her extended family to whom the gift should be given. "No," she replied firmly, "the gift is yours, for you have the soul of a Frenchman."

Shortly after presenting this special gift to me, Augusta departed mortality and went home to that God who gave her life. Occasionally I would wonder concerning her declaration that I had "the soul of a Frenchman." I didn't have the slightest idea what that meant. I still don't.

Many years later I had the privilege to accompany President Ezra Taft Benson to the dedication of the Frankfurt Germany Temple, which would serve German-, French-, and Dutch-speaking members. In packing for the trip, I felt impressed to take along the gift of medals, without any thought concerning what I would do with them. I'd had them a number of years.

In a French-speaking dedication session, the temple was filled. The singing and messages presented were beautiful. Gratitude for God's blessings penetrated each heart. I saw from my conducting notes that the session included members from the Alsace-Lorraine area.

During my remarks I observed that the organist had the name of Schneider. I therefore related the account of my association with Augusta Schneider, then stepped to the organ and presented the organist with the medals, along with the charge that since his name was Schneider, he had a responsibility to pursue the Schneider name in his genealogical activities. The Spirit of the Lord confirmed in our hearts that this was a special session. Brother Schneider had a difficult time preparing to play the closing number of the dedicatory service, so moved was he by the Spirit which we felt there in the temple.

I knew that the treasured gift—even the widow's mite, for it was all Augusta Schneider had—was placed in the hand of one who would ensure that many with the souls of Frenchmen would now receive the blessings the holy temples provide, both to the living and for those who have passed beyond mortality.

Personal testimony

I testify that with God, all things are possible. He is our Heavenly Father; His Son is our Redeemer. As we strive to learn His truths and then to live them, our lives and the lives of others will be abundantly blessed.

I declare in all soberness that Gordon B. Hinckley is a true prophet for our time and is guided in the great work going forward under his leadership.

May we ever remember that obedience to God's commandments brings forth the blessings promised.

May each of us qualify to receive them, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 14:6.
2. 2 Peter 3:11.
3. 3 Nephi 27:27.
4. John 1:45-47.
5. Philippians 4:8-9.
6. Paraphrasing James Barrie, in Laurence J. Peter, comp., *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time* (1977), 335.
7. Mosiah 2:17.
8. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
9. Proverbs 3:5-6.

The chorus sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder Carlos H. Amado offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 2, 1999, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The music was provided by the Lehi Primary Choir, with Beverly Wilson conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by the Lehi Primary Choir under the direction of Beverly Wilson, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Faith." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Faith."
Elder Hugh W. Pinnock offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Pinnock. The choir will now sing a medley of "I Will

Be Valiant," "Nephi's Courage," and "I Belong to the Church of Jesus Christ." President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

Following President Faust, President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will speak to us.

The choir sang a medley of "I Will Be Valiant," "Nephi's Courage," and "I Belong to the Church of Jesus Christ."

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers,

and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elders Joe J. Christensen and Andrew W. Peterson and designate them as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. It is also proposed that we release Elder Christensen as a President of the Quorums of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Ben B. Banks as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elders Max W. Craner, César A. Dávila, P. Bruce Mitchell, and J. Kirk Moyes as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain J. Devn Cornish, Manfred H. Schütze, and Johann A. Wondra as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we release Patricia P. Pinegar, Anne G. Wirthlin, and Susan L. Warner as the Primary general presidency. Those who wish to join in a vote of special appreciation and thanks to these wonderful sisters for their great work, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Coleen K. Menlove, Sydney S. Reynolds, and Gayle M. Clegg as the Primary general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those

in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

We now ask the newly called Primary general presidency to take their places on the stand.

President Boyd K. Packer

A fighter pilot saves his crew

I speak to our children and our youth and ask that you tell your parents and grandparents to sit quietly and not disturb us for a few minutes while we talk.

I want to pass to you something I learned from my brother which has been like a shield and a protection to me. I have spoken of it before, but not in the detail that I will today.

I graduated from flight training and received my silver wings two days before my 20th birthday. Later I was stationed at Langley Field, Virginia, as copilot on a selected B-24 bomber crew trained to use a new secret weapon—radar.

My brother, Colonel Leon C. Packer, was stationed at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. A much-decorated B-24 pilot, he became a brigadier general in the Air Force.

While I was at Langley Field, the war in Europe ended, and so we were ordered to the Pacific. I spent a few days with Leon in Washington before shipping out for combat.

He told me of things he had learned under fire. He flew from North Africa on raids over southern Europe; very few of those planes returned.

On April 16, 1943, he was captain of a B-24 bomber returning to England after a raid in Europe. His plane, the *Yard*

Bird, was heavily damaged by flak and dropped out of formation.

Then they were alone and came under heavy attack from fighters.

His one-page account of that experience says: "Number three engine was smoking and the prop ran away. Number four fuel line was shot out. Right aileron cables and stabilizer cables were shot out. Rudders partially locked. Radio shot out. Extremely large holes in the right wing. Flaps shot out. Entire rear part of the fuselage filled with holes. Hydraulic system shot out. Tail turret out."

A history of the Eighth Air Force, published just two years ago, gives a detailed account of that flight written by one of the crew.¹

With one engine on fire, the other three lost power. They were going down. The alarm bell ordered that they bail out. The bombardier, the only one able to get out, parachuted into the English Channel.

The pilots left their seats and made their way toward the bomb bay to bail out. Suddenly Leon heard an engine cough and sputter. He quickly climbed back to his seat and coaxed enough power from the engines to reach the coast of England. Then the engines failed, and they crashed.

The landing gear was shorn off on the brow of a hill; the plane plowed through trees and crumbled. Dirt filled the fuselage.

Amazingly, though some were terribly wounded, all aboard survived. The bombardier was lost, but he probably saved the lives of the other nine. When smoke poured from the engines and a parachute appeared, the fighters stopped their attack.

Hymns give inspiration and protection

That was not the only time Leon had crash-landed.

As we visited, he told me how he was able to hold himself together under fire. He said, "I have a favorite hymn"—and he named it—"and when things got rough I would sing it silently to myself, and there would come a faith and an assurance that kept me on course."

He sent me off to combat with that lesson.

In the spring of 1945 I was able to test that lesson Leon had taught me those months before.

The war in the Pacific ended before we reached the Philippines, and we were ordered to Japan.

One day we flew out of Atsugi airfield near Yokohama in a B-17 bomber bound for Guam to pick up a beacon light.

After nine hours in the air, we let down through the clouds to find ourselves hopelessly lost. Our radio was out. We were, as it turned out, in a typhoon.

Flying just above the ocean, we began a search pattern. In that desperate situation, I remembered the words of my brother. I learned that you can pray and even sing without making a sound.

After some time we pulled up over a line of rocks jutting out of the water. Could they be part of the chain of the Mariana Islands? We followed them. Soon Tinian Island loomed ahead, and we landed with literally seconds of fuel in the tank. As we headed down the runway, the engines one by one stopped.

I learned that both prayer and music can be very silent and very personal.

Now, while that experience was dramatic, *the greater value of Leon's lesson came later in everyday life* when I faced the same temptations you young people and children face now.

As the years passed I found that, while not easy, I could control my thoughts if I made a place for them to go. You can replace thoughts of temptation, anger, disappointment, or fear with better thoughts—with music.

I love the sacred music of the Church. The hymns of the Restoration carry an inspiration and a protection.

I know also some music is spiritually destructive; it's bad and dangerous! Young people, leave it alone!

I know as well why Leon counseled his children, "Remember, the flak is always the heaviest closer to the target."

Cultivate virtuous thoughts

Thoughts are talks we hold with ourselves. Do you see why the scriptures tell us to "let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly" and promise us that if we do, our "confidence [shall] wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon [our] soul[s] as the dews from heaven" and then "the Holy Ghost shall be [our] constant companion."²

"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."³

Young people, the voice of the Spirit is felt rather than heard. You can learn when you are very young how the Holy Ghost works.

The scriptures are full of help on how good can influence your mind and evil control you, if you let it. That struggle will never end. But remember this:

All the water in the world,
 However hard it tried,
 Could never sink the smallest ship
 Unless it [gets] inside.

And all the evil in the world,
 The blackest kind of sin,
 Can never hurt you the least bit
 Unless you let it in.⁴

When you learn to control your thoughts, you will be safe.

One man I know does this: Whenever an unworthy thought tries to enter his mind, he brushes his thumb against his wedding ring. That breaks the circuit and for him becomes an almost automatic way to close out unwanted thoughts and ideas.

Memories of a brother

I can't refrain from telling you one other thing about that visit with my brother in Washington. He was to take a B-25 bomber to Texas to pick up something and return to Washington the next day. I went with him. That was the only time we flew together.

Many years later I was honored by Weber State University, where we both had graduated. He had been a student body officer during his college days. Because I would be in South America, he agreed to attend the banquet and accept the award in my behalf.

In his acceptance speech he told this story—part of which is true. He said that in Texas we were lined up side by side on the runway ready to take off. He radioed to me and said, "See you upstairs—if you think you can make it!"

Then he told them that after I became a General Authority of the Church, once in a while I would check on his behavior and add, "See you upstairs—if you think you can make it!"

Well, Leon made it. He is now where I hope one day to be.

Take hold of your lives

Young Latter-day Saints, shape up! Face up! Take hold of your lives! Take control of your mind, your thoughts! If you have friends that are not a good influence, make changes, even if you face loneliness, even rejection.

If you have already made bad mistakes, there are ways to fix things up, and eventually it will be as though they never happened.

Sometimes guilt controls our minds and takes us prisoner in our thoughts. How foolish to remain in prison when the door stands open. Now, don't tell yourself that sin really doesn't matter. That won't help; repentance will.

Take charge of yourself. How wonderful to be a young Latter-day Saint in this wonderful, challenging time.

Paul told young Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth."⁵

And Louisa May Alcott was only 14 when she wrote:

A little kingdom I possess,
 Where thoughts and feelings dwell,
 And very hard I find the task
 Of governing it well; . . .

I do not ask for any crown
 But that which all may win,
 Nor seek to conquer any world
 Except the one within.⁶

You can do it—you must do it. Our future depends on you, our children and youth.

Well, that's the advice I pass on to you. Now wake up your parents and tell them that you have learned a way to help yourself be perfect. Perhaps you won't be quite perfect, but you can come close enough.

I can give you this encouragement: A teacher, trying to explain what a theory is, asked this question: "If you take a letter half the distance to a mailbox and stop, then start over, going half the re-

maining distance and stop, then repeat the process over and over, theoretically will you ever really get to the mailbox?" One bright student said, "No, but you'll get close enough to mail the letter."

You young people will get close enough to perfection to have a life that is filled with challenges and troubles, with inspiration and happiness and eternal joy.

The spirit of revelation

The Lord promised, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."⁷

"I will tell you in your *mind* and in your *heart*, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

"... This is the spirit of revelation. . . .

"Therefore this is thy gift; apply unto it, and blessed art thou, for it shall deliver you."⁸

May God bless you. Already you sang to us, "I know who I am. I know God's plan." Someday you can bear your testimony to your grandchildren, and they to theirs, and they to another generation, and another.

You look ahead to a long life, to the long, long future before this Church, before the children and youth, before all of us as Latter-day Saints. And I bear witness to you, our youngsters, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. As a grandfather, and as a great-grandfather, I know how much we love you. I tell you how

much we love you, how much you are loved in this Church, and invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you as you face the wonderful life before you as young Latter-day Saints. This I do as a servant of the Lord and in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Gerald Astor, *The Mighty Eighth: The Air War in Europe Told by the Men Who Fought It* (1997).
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46.
3. John 14:26.
4. Author unknown, "All the Water in the World," in *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People*, ed. Jack M. Lyon and others (1996), 302.
5. 1 Timothy 4:12.
6. "My Little Kingdom," *Louisa May Alcott—Her Girlhood Diary*, ed. Cary Ryan (1993), 8–9.
7. John 14:18.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–4; italics added.
9. "The Church of Jesus Christ," *Children's Songbook*, 77.

President Monson

Thank you, President Packer. Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elders Alexander B. Morrison and Adhemar Damiani of the Seventy.

Elder Alexander B. Morrison

"To this end was I born"

When Jesus was arraigned before Pilate, after a dark, hate-filled night of insult and abuse, the haughty Roman procurator quickly discerned that this was no ordinary mortal. Jesus displayed none of the cringing servility or false

bravado characteristic of those who pled for their lives before the power of imperial Rome. He stood quietly before the proud Roman, unbowed, majestic, His demeanor mild yet regal. "Art thou a king then?" Pilate inquired (John 18:37).

Jesus, the King of Kings, whose Father would have provided for the ask-

ing "more than twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53), whose glory and majesty transcended anything Pilate—or any mortal man—could even comprehend, answered simply: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37).

Pilate, a weak and vacillating man, devoid of integrity and not overly burdened by principles, retorted cynically, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Then, though he found no fault in Jesus and knew of a certainty that He was no political firebrand nor threat to Roman power and authority, Pilate yielded to the bloodlust of the crowd and delivered Christ to His crucifiers.

Jesus came to earth to ransom us

"For this cause came I into the world." What *was* that cause? Why did Jesus, the Lord God Omnipotent who sits at the right hand of the Father, creator of worlds without number, lawgiver and judge, condescend to come to earth to be born in a manger, live out most of His mortal existence in obscurity, trudge the dusty roads of Judea proclaiming a message which was violently opposed by many, and finally, betrayed by one of His closest associates, die between two malefactors on Golgotha's somber hill? Nephi, who gloried "in . . . Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell" (2 Nephi 33:6), understood Christ's motivation: "He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him" (2 Nephi 26:24).

It was love for all of God's children that led Jesus, unique in His sinless perfection, to offer Himself as ransom for the sins of others. In the words of the beloved hymn, "Jesus died on Calvary, That all thru him might ransomed be" ("Tis Sweet to Sing the Matchless Love,"

Hymns, no. 177). This, then, was the consummate cause which brought Jesus to earth to "suffer, bleed, and die for man." He came as "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19) to atone for our sins, that He, being raised on the cross, might draw all men unto Him (see 3 Nephi 27:14). In Paul's felicitous phrase, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

The symbol of His triumph over death is the empty tomb. He whom "God raised up the third day" (Acts 10:40) loosed the "bands of . . . temporal death, that *all* shall be raised" (Alma 11:42; italics added) and "gained the victory over the grave" (Mormon 7:5). In Him "the sting of death is swallowed up" (Mosiah 16:8).

The gift of eternal life

Jesus came to bring not only immortality but also eternal life to our Father's children. Though Christ's Atonement provides a universal resurrection to all, regardless of merit, the gift of eternal life—life with the Father and Son in Their perfected presence—is reserved for the faithful, for those who show their love for Christ by their willingness to follow His commandments and to make and keep holy covenants. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," Jesus reminded us, "he it is that loveth me" (John 14:21). As the prophets throughout the ages have declared, it is only as we make and keep holy covenants—those sacred celestial agreements between God and man—that we may become "partakers of the divine nature" and escape "the corruption that is in the world" (2 Peter 1:4).

Jesus calls us to follow His example

Jesus came to earth, first and foremost, as the atoning Savior, who died that all might find "peace in this world,

and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23). Yet He came for another cause as well—to serve as the example to all of man's divine potential, the standard against whom all must measure their lives. He who proclaimed His divinity to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (see John 4) calls us to become "even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27), to become perfect "even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect" (3 Nephi 12:48). From the depths of that ineffable perfection He calls upon us to care for the sick, the poor, the afflicted; to pray for and show compassion toward all of God's children, for "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). With Him there are no barriers of race or gender or language. As Nephi explained, "He denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God" (2 Nephi 26:33).

To those among us who wonder who is our neighbor, He spoke of the good Samaritan; of the shepherd who left the ninety and nine to seek after the one that was lost; and of the man who made a "great supper," to which were invited "the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" (Luke 14:16, 21).

Give generously

Jesus, the Master Teacher, repeatedly taught eternal truths drawn from common experiences of life. One such lesson deals with the need to be generous in our giving—to give with the spirit of sacrifice and devout intent to bless those less fortunate than ourselves. Luke records that as Jesus sat in the temple, He observed those who cast their contributions into the treasure chests therein. Some deposited their gifts with devoutness and sincerity of purpose, but others, though they gave great sums of silver and gold, did so ostentatiously, primarily to be seen of men.

Among the long lines of contributors was a poor widow who cast into the treasure chest all that she had, two small bronze coins known as mites. Taken together they amounted to less than half a cent in American money. Noting the disparity between what she gave and the much greater contributions of some others, Jesus proclaimed, "Of a truth . . . this poor widow hath cast in more than they all." Though the rich had given from their abundance, "she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had" (Luke 21:1–4). Jesus knew it is not the amount we give that matters. In the arithmetic of heaven, value is determined not by quantity but by quality. It is the intent of the willing heart and mind that is acceptable to God (see 2 Corinthians 8:12).

Become as little children

Jesus had a special love for children. In both the Old World and the New, He called them to come unto Him (see Luke 18:16; 3 Nephi 17:21–24). The Nephite record bears tender testimony of Christ's gentle love for little ones:

"He took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

"And when he had done this he wept" (3 Nephi 17:21–22).

Jesus knew that little children are pure and without sin. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children," He said, "ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). King Benjamin, the great Nephite prophet, explained what it means to become as a little child: "submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him" (Mosiah 3:19).

Help the less fortunate

In a world where we are confronted each day with so much calloused indif-

ference toward the less fortunate, Jesus spoke of the need to give meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, shelter to the stranger, clothes to the naked, and to visit the sick and those in prison.

In one of the most onerous tests of Christian discipleship, He called upon all to "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). He reminded us that inasmuch as we provide acts of charity to others, even unto those considered by some to be "the least," "ye have done it unto me" (see Matthew 25:35-45). He taught not only of our obligations to help each other temporally but also of the powerful, eternal, spiritual implications of doing so. Indeed, all of His commandments, in the final analysis, are spiritual and not temporal only. Thus, the scriptures advise that "for the sake of retaining a remission of [our] sins from day to day, that [we] may walk guiltless before God, . . . [we] should impart of [our] substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath" (Mosiah 4:26).

Express true discipleship

In the final analysis, then, we show our devotion to Christ, and best express our discipleship, by the way in which we live and serve Him. The symbol of Jesus and His place in our hearts must be a life given fully to His service, to loving and caring, to an unstinting commitment to Christ and His cause, to a spiritual rebirth that produces a "mighty change" in our hearts and prepares us to receive "his image in [our] countenances" (Alma 5:13-14). To take His name upon us means a willingness to do whatever He requires of us.

Someone has said that the price of a Christian life is the same today as always: it is simply to give all that we have,

holding back nothing, to "give away all [our] sins to know [Him]" (Alma 22:18). When we fall short of that standard by reason of sloth, indifference, or wickedness; when we are evil or envious, selfish, sensual, or shallow; we, in a sense at least, crucify Him afresh. And when we try consistently to be our very best, when we care for and serve others, when we overcome selfishness with love, when we place the welfare of others above our own, when we bear each other's burdens and "mourn with those that mourn," when we "comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and . . . stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:8-9), then we honor Him and draw from His power and become more and more like Him, growing "brighter and brighter," if we persist, "until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24).

Testimony of Christ

Voice cannot tell nor tongue proclaim the fulness of Christ's ineffable example. In the words of John the Beloved, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25).

I finish where I began, with Christ's majestic words to Pilate: "For this cause came I into the world." How grateful we all should be that He came, two millennia ago, to atone for our sins and set the example for our lives. We proclaim that truth of truths in boldness to all the world. I testify to you that He will return again as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with healing in His wings, to set His people free (see "Come, O Thou King of Kings," *Hymns*, no. 59). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Adhemar Damiani

Choose to serve the Lord

When Joshua's life was coming to a close, he gathered the tribes of Israel and recalled the mercy and blessings which God had bestowed upon them. Because of the kind of life they were living, Joshua admonished them and said:

"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."¹

Put away worldly gods

In our day we are being admonished in the same manner through apostles and prophets. We are to fear the Lord, serve the Lord, put away worldly gods, and choose whom we will serve.

Fearing the Lord means to be reverent and to love Him and to keep His commandments.

We show that we serve the Lord by the way in which we live the commandments received from Him, by the work we do to help establish the kingdom of God on earth, and by the way we act toward our neighbor.

Putting away worldly gods means keeping impure thoughts out of our minds, shedding all hateful feelings from our hearts, and ridding our lives of everything which may prevent the Holy Ghost from being always with us.

For some, putting away worldly gods may mean giving up a small habit. For others, it may mean giving up serious sins they are committing. For others still, it may mean forgetting sad events which happened earlier in their lives. Whatever the situation, in each one of us there is the power to change our life, the power

to transform the bad feelings we have in our hearts. The Lord Jesus Christ will give us this power and will help us. All He asks from us is that we have faith in Him, follow His example, and obey His commandments.

When we love God, serve the Lord sincerely, and give up the things of this world, we become true followers of Christ.

Serving the Lord is not always easy

Many times in our lives, as it happened to the people of Israel, we stop and wonder, Was it worthwhile serving the Lord? Jesus said:

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."²

Serving Christ is not in itself a way to escape the hard reality of life.

As the Bible says, "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean."³

The rain, the floods, and the winds beat not only upon the house which had been built upon the sand, but also upon the other, which had been built upon the rock.

Both the person who serves the Lord and the one who disdains Him live in a world ruled by the same laws of nature.

Many are the things that come upon him who is a saint as well as upon him who is a sinner—disease, death, catastrophes, accidents, and so forth.

Neither prosperity nor poverty indicates whether a person is living a Christian life.

Physical suffering is not evidence of wickedness, nor is it punishment for sin.

The rewards of serving the Lord

What, then, are the rewards of serving the Lord?

The gospel of Jesus Christ does not promise that we will be free from tribulation. But it does strengthen our spirit so that we can accept adversity and face it when it comes.

The house founded upon a rock does not fall with strong winds or rain.

The person whose life is founded upon the gospel of Jesus Christ is able to:

- Face adversity with hope.
- Withstand offense with forgiveness.
- Face death with serenity.

The person who chooses to follow the Lord and who keeps His commandments:

- In his weaknesses, he knows where the source of his strength is.
- In his strength, he remains humble.
- In his poverty, he knows what his riches are.
- In his prosperity, he remembers his brethren with tenderness.

A person who can live this way, without fear or hate but with love, is a happy person.

The fruits obtained from serving the Lord are essentially spiritual.

Jesus taught that every tree brings forth fruit according to its species: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."⁴

Jesus promised eternal life to His followers: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."⁵

Building our lives on the rock of Christ

In this life, we are building our eternal dwelling.

Are we building upon the rock which is the gospel of Jesus Christ, or are we building upon the sand which lies in the falsehoods of this world?

Each moment we must choose whom we will serve, for we have been placed upon this earth to be proven and tested.⁶

We cannot choose to serve God and the world at the same time.⁷

If we want to follow the Lord, we should keep His commandments and follow our prophet and his teachings: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."⁸

I bear my witness that I know these principles are true. My family and I have been very blessed for following the advice of the apostles and prophets and for choosing to serve the Lord. We are guided today by a prophet of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Joshua 24:14–15.
2. Matthew 7:24–27.
3. Ecclesiastes 9:2.
4. Matthew 7:18.
5. Luke 18:29–30.
6. See Abraham 3:25.
7. See Matthew 6:24.
8. Joshua 24:15.

President Monson

Elders Alexander B. Morrison and Adhemar Damiani of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Let Us All Press On." Following the singing, Elders Stephen B. Oveson

and David R. Stone of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "Let Us All Press On."

Elder Stephen B. Oveson

A grandfather's legacy of faith

My brothers and sisters, how grateful I am to be here with you in this historic Tabernacle today. Seventy-four years ago, my grandfather Lars Peter Oveson stood at this pulpit and bore his testimony as an invited stake president from Emery County, Utah.

Although he died when I was just a boy, my grandfather has always been one of my heroes. I have studied his journal, which recounts over and over again his willingness to answer the calls that came to him throughout his lifetime. He and his parents converted to the gospel in Denmark, immigrated to this country, and came across the plains to join the Saints in Utah. One of the calls that came to him required leaving his new, young wife for six months to work on the building of the St. George Temple. He left her and their young family again to serve a two-year mission in his native Denmark.

Later the calls of bishop and stake president necessitated their relocating and rebuilding their home and farm on three different occasions. Through all of these upheavals, he remained grateful, cheerful, and faithful to the principles of the gospel, leaving a great legacy of faith to those of us who bear his name.

Parents' legacy of faith

This legacy was passed to me by my father, Merrill M. Oveson, the youngest

in the family of 13 children. He and my mother, Mal Berg Oveson, also from a faithful lineage, were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple, boarded a train, and went to Oregon to further my father's education. They remained for more than 40 years, during many of which they lived in a very small farming community where we were the only members of the Church.

I have often thought how easy it would have been for my parents simply to change their faith and join their many friends in the community's Christian church. This action would have simplified life for them, especially during the World War II years, when rationing of gasoline and tires made it impossible for them to travel the 40 miles to the nearest organized branch of the LDS Church. Instead, they received authorization to have a home Sunday School, which they faithfully held weekly during all those years. There we shared the sacrament as a family. There my brother and sisters and I learned the principles of the gospel and listened to Bible and Book of Mormon stories literally at the feet of our parents.

My father, another one of my heroes, passed away several years ago, but my mother, now in her 96th year, still attends her ward faithfully every week and is an inspiration to all who know her.

My wife has a similar legacy in her background. How grateful we are for this. We know that we have been entrusted with this current calling partly

because of the faithful actions of those who have gone before us. The question is, What are we doing to ensure that this legacy is being passed to our beloved children and to our grandchildren?

Pass a heritage of faith to your children

Whether we descend from generations in the Church or are the first link in the generational chain, we have a responsibility to convey to our posterity a heritage of faith, manifest through our daily actions. Those who are newly converted members have a particularly great opportunity to become the pioneers for their ancestors *and* for their posterity. In order to fulfill this obligation, all of us need to ask ourselves some pointed questions:

- Are we building lives of honesty and integrity?
- Are we following the counsel of our prophets, past and present?
- Are we covenant keepers?
- Do we hold our family home evenings and study the scriptures, trying to live the precepts we gain from them?
- Do we obey the Word of Wisdom?
- Are we generous in our tithes and offerings?
- Do we fast and pray regularly and with sincere hearts?
- Do we listen for the answers to our prayers and try to follow the promptings of the Spirit?
- Are we good neighbors and loyal friends?
- Do we help to build the kingdom by honoring the priesthood, magnifying our callings, and sharing the gospel with others?
- Are we slow to anger and quick to forgive?
- Can we honestly say that we not only repent of our mistakes but learn from them?

- Are we putting the Savior and His gospel first in our lives? Or, as someone once said, "If we were accused in a court of law of being Latter-day Saints, would there be enough evidence to convict us?"

Brothers and sisters, if we aren't comfortable with the answers to these kinds of questions, we need to begin today to build a more exemplary life so that those dearest to us will "see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Set your sights on eternal values

I must confess that whenever my life has failed to measure up to the standards of my forebears, it is because I have allowed worldly priorities to take precedence over my spiritual ones. But I have learned that it is possible to redirect our goals and to put our sights on eternal values.

My wife and I have watched many converts to the Church make the necessary changes to become gospel-centered souls. We have seen hundreds of young full-time missionaries in Buenos Aires, Argentina, make the sacrifices to become truly consecrated servants of the Lord. All it takes is desire, obedience, dedication, and endurance. The Lord will do the rest!

Legacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ

We are His children. He loves us and knows each one of us by name. He wants us to return to His presence and live with Him eternally. This is the great legacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of the atoning sacrifice of our Savior, we have an assurance of life hereafter and the possibility of inheriting all that the Father has. With this knowledge and legacy, we must "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20).

We must follow the lead of our beloved prophet, President Hinckley, who recently told the students at Ricks College: "To you I say with all of the energy of which I am capable, do not become a weak link in the chain of your generations. You come to the world with a marvelous inheritance. You come of great men and women. . . . Never let them down. Never do anything which would weaken the chain of which you are a fundamental part" (*Scroll*, 14 Sept. 1999, 20). To me that means that we must do all in our power to ensure that we instill within our loved ones the great legacy of an abiding testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As my grandfather so eloquently stated 74 years ago: "I rejoice to bear my testimony to the truthfulness of this work of the Lord to the world, for I know it is true; I know it is for the uplift and the advancement of the children of God, and I pray that the Lord will help . . . us that we may remain faithful and true, that we may be found valiant workers in the cause of righteousness and help to build up his kingdom upon the earth" (Lars Oveson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1925, 127). To these truths I add my own witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder David R. Stone

A hurricane in the Dominican Republic

One Sunday morning more than a year ago, we awoke to a beautiful day in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. The Caribbean sun was shining, and the sky was clear. A gentle breeze was blowing, barely ruffling the leaves on the trees; it was warm and peaceful and still. But far out to sea, beyond the reach of our physical senses that day, the deadly destroyer was coming our way, implacable and irresistible. The Hurricane Center, with responsibility to track and predict the path of Hurricane Georges, was constantly updating the information available on the Internet. In the peaceful, placid quiet of that morning, by virtue of those seeing eyes in the sky, I saw the predicted path of the storm, aimed like an arrow at the heart of Santo Domingo.

Within 48 hours the storm struck the island with intense and insensate fury, leaving in its path destruction, desolation, and death. The raw, elemental power of nature was astonishing. From

the relative safety of our house, we saw trees doubled over by the force of the wind, which alternately shrieked and howled and roared; the punishing power of that wind drove rain into the house around the window frames, and the surging three-foot river of water in the street outside, brought about by the intense rain, finally crested and began to subside when it was within an inch of coming into our house.

Around the area where we lived, most of the trees were either uprooted or split by the fierce winds. Trees, branches, power lines, and telephone poles were down all over town. Streets were blocked, traffic was difficult, and power was cut off for more than a week. Although the damage was great, it would have been much greater but for the warnings from those who track and predict and counsel people to be prepared. Virtually all of those who were adequately prepared came through the hurricane relatively unscathed. I am grateful to those men and women who devote time and attention to track and monitor those storms.

Their timely warnings and counsel save lives and protect people. Those who disregard the warnings pay the price of willful failure to listen to those guardians whose calling it is to watch and warn and save.

The devastation of spiritual hurricanes

Great as the damage and destruction and death from these awesome phenomena of physical force can be, there is even more desolation caused in people's lives by spiritual hurricanes. These furious forces often cause far more devastating damage than physical cyclones because they destroy our souls and rob us of our eternal perspective and promise. When the physical storm has passed, we can begin to put our lives and houses back in order. But some spiritual hurricanes sweep us into chaos, and we are encompassed and imprisoned by the shackles of powerful and ruinous influences whose consequences we can only dimly perceive at the time. Like those swirling cyclones, spiritual hurricanes can be virtually unnoticed until they are almost upon us, but they also can strike with intense and insensate fury.

We place ourselves in the path of these spiritual hurricanes when we indulge in anger, alcohol, and abuse; lust and licentiousness; promiscuity and pornography; drugs, pride, greed, violence, envy, and lies—the list is long. Perhaps, for a time, life seems to go on as before, and in that dormant period there is no hint of the terrible retribution to come, and then we are suddenly in the grip of their satanic power, and they lay waste our lives, bringing anguish and agony, depression, despair, and desolation. Too many times they also bring sadness, sorrow, suffering, and heartache to our loved ones. In the aftermath of their destructive path, it is often more difficult to restore a spiritually shattered soul than it is to rebuild a ruined city. There are whirling winds of malevolence,

malice, and evil on the move in society today, and they will not spare those who wander into their path.

Prophets warn us of coming dangers

But we also have our spiritual hurricane guardians, those whose calling it is to watch and warn, helping us avoid spiritual damage, destruction, and even death. Our watchmen on the tower are known to us as apostles and prophets. They are our spiritual eyes in the sky, and they know, through inspiration and insight and pure intelligence, the course these storms may take. They continue to raise their voices in warning to tell us of the tragic consequences of willful and wanton violations of the Lord's commandments. To intentionally ignore their warnings is to court misery, sorrow, and ruin. To follow them is to follow the chosen servants of the Lord into spiritual pastures of peace and plenty.

From this pulpit they have counseled us about the cyclones in our society and civilization. They have warned us about evil in its many forms and guises and called us, again and again, to return to the ways of the Lord. There are times when we may not wish to hear what they say. There are times when we may refuse to believe that the hurricane will come; but in its own time, come it will, for those who sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind (see Hosea 8:7). The Lord knew this, and there is perhaps no more poignant moment in scripture than when the Lord, looking over Jerusalem, speaks with longing and love and sorrow, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often I would have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not" (Luke 13:34).

Peace, safety in following the prophets

There is peace and tranquillity, there is solace and safety in His gospel.

If we will but listen to those whose calling it is to watch and warn, if we will give heed to the words of the Master Himself, then our spiritual house will stand firm, and we can let the rain descend and the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon our house, because we are founded upon that rock (see Matthew 7:24–25).

The Lord has said, “And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days” (D&C 1:4). He also said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

I bear witness that there is a God in heaven, the framer of heaven and earth and all things that in them are. I bear

witness that He has a plan for us, His children. I bear witness that in fulfillment of that plan His Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth to take upon Him the sins of the world and make it possible for us to be freed from the terrible consequences of sin and evil. He is our Savior and Redeemer, and, as it was for Jerusalem, His arms are outstretched toward us. He will be our shield and our protector, and we will have peace in the midst of storm and refuge from the raging wind.

May we ever listen to those whose calling it is to watch and warn, to see and save. May we walk in the ways of the Lord and be preserved in paths of peace, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Warning about procrastination

All of us have faced deadlines. Fear can grip us when we realize that there may not be enough time left to finish what we promised we would do. The thought comes, “Why didn’t I start earlier?”

The Lord knew we would be tempted to procrastinate the most important preparation we could ever make in this life. More than once He warned us about delay. He taught the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom did not fill their lamps for the coming of the bridegroom. He also gave the parable of the servants who were faithless because they believed their Lord would delay His coming. The results of delay were tragic.

For the five unprepared virgins, it was this:

“Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

“But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not” (Matthew 25:11–12).

For the faithless servants who delayed their preparation, it was this:

“The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

“And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:50–51).

The temptation to delay repentance

The temptation to delay repentance comes not only at the end of the world as suggested by those scriptures. That temptation seems to have been nearly constant since the beginning of time and goes on throughout our lives. In youth we may have thought: “There will be time enough to worry about spiritual things just before my mission or before marriage. Spiritual things are for older people.” Then, in the early years of marriage, the pressures of life, of jobs, of bills, of finding a moment for rest and

recreation seem to crowd us so closely that delay in meeting obligations to God and family again seems reasonable. It is easy to think, "Perhaps there will be more time for that in the middle years." But the compression of time does not ease in the years that follow. There is so much to do, and time seems to shrink. The 55th birthday and the 65th and the 75th don't seem to be a decade apart.

With aging comes physical and emotional challenge. We cannot seem to get as much done in an hour as we did in youth. And it is harder to be patient with others, and they seem more demanding. It is tempting then to excuse ourselves yet again from rising to the standards required by our early covenants, now so long neglected.

Not all of us fall into that trap of inaction. But enough people do that we each have at least one person we love and often more—a child, a parent, a friend—someone for whom we feel responsibility, for whom we ache with concern. They have been taught the gospel. They have made covenants. And yet they go on in disobedience or neglect, despite the emptiness we know that brings them. The choice to repent or to remain a prisoner of sin is their own. Yet knowing something of how the trap of inaction and resistance was built in their minds and hearts may help us hear more easily the answer to our fervent prayer: "Please, Heavenly Father, what can I do to help?"

Satan tempts us to procrastinate

That temptation to delay comes from our enemy, Lucifer. He knows that we can never be truly happy unless we have hope in this life and then realization, in the next, of eternal life. It is the greatest of all the gifts of God. It is to live in families forever with our Heavenly Father and with Jesus Christ and to have eternal increase. Satan wants us to be miser-

able as he is. And he knows that we can have that true happiness only if we are washed clean through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by deep and continuing repentance, and the making and keeping of sacred covenants offered only through God's authorized servants. The scriptures confirm the hazard:

"Wherefore, if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; and no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever" (1 Nephi 10:21).

And so Satan tempts with procrastination throughout our days of probation. Any choice to delay repentance gives him the chance to steal happiness from one of the spirit children of our Heavenly Father.

We have all been tempted with that delay. We know from our own experience that President Spencer W. Kimball was right when he wrote, "One of the most serious human defects in all ages is procrastination," and then he defined it: "an unwillingness to accept personal responsibilities *now*" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 48; italics in original). And so Satan works on both our desire to think we have no cause to repent and our desire to push anything unpleasant into the future. He has tempted you and me, and those we love, with thoughts like this: "God is so loving; surely He won't hold me personally responsible for mistakes which are simply the result of being human." And then, if that fails, there is the thought that will almost surely come: "Well, I may be responsible to repent, but this is not a good time to start. If I wait, later will be better."

We all need to repent

There are some truths which expose those lies intended to tempt us to pro-

crastinate repentance. Let's start with the deception, which is so attractive, that we have no need to repent.

The truth is that we all need repentance. If we are capable of reason and past the age of eight, we all need the cleansing that comes through applying the full effects of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. When that is clear, we cannot be tricked into delay by the subtle question: "Have I crossed the line of serious sin, or can I put off even thinking about repentance?" The question that really matters is this: "How can I learn to sense even the beginning of sin and so repent early?"

We are not helpless victims

A second truth about our accountability is to know that we are not the helpless victims of our circumstances. The world tries to tell us that the opposite is true: imperfections in our parents or our faulty genetic inheritance is presented to us as absolving us of personal responsibility. But difficult as circumstances may be, they do not relieve us of accountability for our actions or our inactions. Nephi was right. God gives no commandments to the children of men save He prepares a way for them to obey. However difficult our circumstances, we can repent.

We are personally accountable

Similarly, the world might be willing to excuse our bad behavior because those around us behave badly. It is not true that the behavior of others removes our responsibility for our own. God's standards for our behavior are unchanged whether or not others choose to rise to them.

That becomes especially difficult when others hurt us and we feel justified in our anger. It is a lie that our anger justifies our impulse to hurt or ignore our

antagonists. We are to forgive to be forgiven. To wait for them to repent before we forgive and repent is to allow them to choose for us a delay which could cost us happiness here and hereafter.

Finally, we are personally accountable because the Lord has given us ample warning. We receive the Spirit of Christ at birth to tell us right from wrong and to allow us to experience the connection between sin and unhappiness. From the beginning of time He has sent prophets to speak against sin and to invite faith and repentance. He has restored the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Gordon B. Hinckley is His living prophet, holding all the keys of the priesthood which allow those who live now to repent and to choose to gain eternal life. We are made accountable this day as the Holy Ghost confirms that these words are true.

Even the acceptance of personal responsibility may not overcome the temptation to believe that now is not the time to repent. "Now" can seem so difficult, and "later" appear so much easier. The truth is that today is always a better day to repent than any tomorrow. First, sin has its debilitating effects on us. The very faith we need to repent is weakened by delay. The choice to continue in sin diminishes our faith and lessens our right to claim the Holy Ghost as our companion and comforter.

Delay results in lost opportunities

And second, even should we be forgiven at some later time, the Lord cannot restore the good effects our repentance today might have had on those we love and are to serve. That is particularly poignant for the parents of young children. In those tender years there are chances for shaping and lifting spirits which may never come again. But even the grandfather who may have missed chances with his own children might, by

choosing to repent today, do for grandchildren what he once could have done for their parents.

Earnest prayer essential to repentance

When responsibility is accepted and the urgency to repent is felt, the question may come, "Where do I start?" Each life is unique. But for all, repentance will surely include passing through the portal of humble prayer. Our Father in Heaven can allow us to feel fully the conviction of our sins. He knows the depths of our remorse. He can then direct what we must do to qualify for forgiveness. For serious sin, we will need to confess to a judge in Israel and accept his guidance. Prayer alone will in that case not be enough. But for all of us, whatever the gravity of our sins, prayer will open the door to repentance and forgiveness. Without earnest prayer, repentance and cleansing are not possible. When the door is opened by prayer, there is possibility for peace.

One of the questions we must ask of our Heavenly Father in private prayer is this: "What have I done today, or not done, which displeases Thee? If I can only know, I will repent with all my heart without delay." That humble prayer will be answered. And the answers will surely include the assurance that asking today was better than waiting to ask tomorrow.

"This life is the time"

I testify that the words of a servant of God, spoken long ago, are true:

"And now, my brethren, I would that, after ye have received so many witnesses, seeing that the holy scriptures testify of these things, ye come forth and bring fruit unto repentance.

"Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore,

if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

"For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

"And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.

"Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:30-34).

It is never too late or too hard to repent

There is another temptation to be resisted. It is to yield to the despairing thought that it is too hard and too late to repent. I knew a man once who could have thought that and given up. When he was 12 he was ordained a deacon. Some of his friends tempted him to begin to smoke. He began to feel uncomfortable in church. He left his little town, not finishing high school, to begin a life following construction jobs across the United States. He was a heavy-equipment operator. He married. They had children. The marriage ended in a bitter divorce. He lost his children. He lost an eye in an accident. He lived alone in boardinghouses. He lost everything he owned except what he could carry in a trunk.

One night, as he prepared to move yet again, he decided to lighten the load of that trunk. Beneath the junk of years, he found a book. He never knew how it got there. It was the Book of Mormon. He read it through, and the Spirit told him it was true. He knew then that all those years ago he had walked away from the true Church of Jesus Christ and from the happiness which could have been his.

Later, he was my more-than-70-year-old district missionary companion. I asked the people we were teaching, as I testified of the power of the Savior's Atonement, to look at him. He had been washed clean and given a new heart, and I knew they would see that in his face. I told the people that what they saw was evidence that the Atonement of Jesus Christ could wash away *all* the corrosive effects of sin.

That was the only time he ever rebuked me. He told me in the darkness outside the trailer where we had been teaching that I should have told the people that while God was able to give him a new heart, He had not been able to give him back his wife and his children and what he might have done for them. But he had not looked back in sorrow and regret for what might have been. He moved forward, lifted by faith, to what yet might be.

One day he told me that in a dream the night before, the sight in his blind eye was restored. He realized that the dream was a glimpse of a future day, walking among loving people in the light of a glorious resurrection. Tears of joy ran down the deeply lined face of that towering, raw-boned man. He spoke to me quietly, with a radiant smile. I don't remember what he said he saw, but I remember that his face shone with happy anticipation as he described the view. With the Lord's help and the miracle of that book in the bottom of a trunk, it had not for him been too late nor the way too hard.

"Please, do not delay"

I testify that God the Father lives. I know that. And He loves us. His Only Begotten Son lives. Because He was resurrected, we too will live again. We will see then those we have loved and who have loved us. We can through faith and obedience have family associations forever. Those in our families who love us, on both sides of the veil, would say as we consider whether to humble our hearts and repent, "Please, do not delay." That is the Savior's invitation and His plea. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elders Stephen B. Oveson and David R. Stone of the Seventy have just spoken to us, followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow thereafter.

We express gratitude to these wonderful children from the Lehi Primary Choir for the beautiful music they provided this afternoon. They will now sing "Come, Follow Me," after which Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following Elder Holland's remarks, the choir will sing "I Feel My Savior's Love." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Come, Follow Me."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

The promise of “good things to come”

On those days when we have special need of heaven's help, we would do well to remember one of the titles given to the Savior in the epistle to the Hebrews. Speaking of Jesus' “more excellent ministry” and why He is “the mediator of a better covenant” filled with “better promises,” this author—presumably the Apostle Paul—tells us that through His mediation and Atonement, Christ became “an high priest of good things to come.”¹

Every one of us has times when we need to know things will get better. The Book of Mormon speaks of this as “hope for a better world.”² For emotional health and spiritual stamina, everyone needs to be able to look forward to some respite, to something pleasant and renewing and hopeful, whether that blessing be near at hand or still some distance ahead. It is enough just to know we can get there, that however measured or far away, there is the promise of “good things to come.”

My declaration is that this is precisely what the gospel of Jesus Christ offers us, especially in times of need. There *is* help. There *is* happiness. There really *is* light at the end of the tunnel. It is the Light of the World, the Bright and Morning Star, the “light that is endless, that can never be darkened.”³ It is the very Son of God Himself. In loving praise far beyond Romeo's reach, we say, “What light through yonder window breaks?” It is the return of hope, and Jesus is the Sun.⁴ To any who may be struggling to see that light and find that hope, I say: Hold on. Keep trying. God loves you. Things will improve. Christ comes to you in His “more excellent ministry” with a future of “better promises.” He is your “high priest of good things to come.”

Cling to faith and hope

I think of newly called missionaries leaving family and friends to face, on occasion, some rejection and some discouragement and, at least in the beginning, a moment or two of homesickness and perhaps a little fear.

I think of young mothers and fathers who are faithfully having their families while still in school—or just newly out—trying to make ends meet even as they hope for a brighter financial future someday. At the same time, I think of other parents who would give any earthly possession they own to have a wayward child return.

I think of single parents who face all of this but face it alone, having confronted death or divorce, alienation or abandonment, or some other misfortune they had not foreseen in happier days and certainly had not wanted.

I think of those who want to be married and aren't, those who desire to have children and cannot, those who have acquaintances but very few friends, those who are grieving over the death of a loved one or are themselves ill with disease. I think of those who suffer from sin—their own or someone else's—who need to know there is a way back and that happiness can be restored. I think of the disconsolate and downtrodden who feel life has passed them by, or now wish that it would pass them by. To all of these and so many more, I say: Cling to your faith. Hold on to your hope. “Pray always, and be believing.”⁵ Indeed, as Paul wrote of Abraham, he “against [all] hope believed in hope” and “staggered not . . . through unbelief.” He was “strong in faith” and was “fully persuaded that, what [God] had promised, he was able . . . to perform.”⁶

Even if you cannot always see that silver lining on your clouds, God can, for

He is the very source of the light you seek. He does love you, and He knows your fears. He hears your prayers. He is your Heavenly Father, and surely He matches with His own the tears His children shed.

Christ understands, calms life's storms

In spite of this counsel, I know some of you do truly feel at sea, in the most frightening sense of that term. Out in troubled waters, you may even now be crying with the poet:

It darkens. I have lost the ford.
There is a change on all things
made.
The rocks have evil faces, Lord,
And I am [sore] afraid.⁷

No, it is not without a recognition of life's tempests but fully and directly because of them that I testify of God's love and the Savior's power to calm the storm. Always remember in that biblical story that He was out there on the water also, that He faced the worst of it right along with the newest and youngest and most fearful. Only one who has fought against those ominous waves is justified in telling us—as well as the sea—to “be still.”⁸ Only one who has taken the full brunt of such adversity could ever be justified in telling us in such times to “be of good cheer.”⁹ Such counsel is not a jaunty pep talk about the power of positive thinking, though positive thinking is much needed in the world. No, Christ knows better than all others that the trials of life can be very deep, and we are not shallow people if we struggle with them. But even as the Lord avoids sugary rhetoric, He rebukes faithlessness and He deplors pessimism. He expects us to believe!

Christ's example of faith

No one's eyes were more penetrating than His, and much of what He saw

pierced His heart. Surely His ears heard every cry of distress, every sound of want and despair. To a degree far more than we will ever understand, He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”¹⁰ Indeed, to the layman in the streets of Judea, Christ's career must have seemed a failure, a tragedy, a good man totally overwhelmed by the evils surrounding Him and the misdeeds of others. He was misunderstood or misrepresented, even hated from the beginning. No matter what He said or did, His statements were twisted, His actions suspected, His motives impugned. In the entire history of the world no one has ever loved so purely or served so selflessly—and been treated so diabolically for His effort. Yet nothing could break His faith in His Father's plan or His Father's promises. Even in those darkest hours at Gethsemane and Calvary, He pressed on, continuing to trust in the very God whom He momentarily feared had forsaken Him.

Focus on promises of the future

Because Christ's eyes were unfailingly fixed on the future, He could endure all that was required of Him, suffer as no man can suffer except it be “unto death,”¹¹ as King Benjamin said, look upon the wreckage of individual lives and the promises of ancient Israel lying in ruins around Him, and still say then and now, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”¹² How could He do this? How could He believe it? *Because He knows that for the faithful, things will be made right soon enough. He is a King; He speaks for the crown; He knows what can be promised.* He knows that “the Lord . . . will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. . . . For the needy shall not alway[s] be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.”¹³ He knows that “the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” He knows that

"the Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."¹⁴

A young family's journey

Forgive me for a personal conclusion, which does not represent the terrible burdens so many of you carry, but it *is* meant to be encouraging. Thirty years ago last month, a little family set out to cross the United States to attend graduate school—no money, an old car, every earthly possession they owned packed into less than half the space of the smallest U-Haul trailer available. Bidding their apprehensive parents farewell, they drove exactly 34 miles up the highway, at which point their beleaguered car erupted.

Pulling off the freeway onto a frontage road, the young father surveyed the steam, matched it with his own, then left his trusting wife and two innocent children—the youngest just three months old—to wait in the car while he walked the three miles or so to the southern Utah metropolis of Kanarraville, population then, I suppose, 65. Some water was secured at the edge of town, and a very kind citizen offered a drive back to the stranded family. The car was attended to and slowly—*very* slowly—driven back to St. George for inspection—U-Haul trailer and all.

After more than two hours of checking and rechecking, no immediate problem could be detected, so once again the journey was begun. In exactly the same amount of elapsed time at exactly the same location on that highway with exactly the same pyrotechnics from under the hood, the car exploded again. It could not have been 15 feet from the earlier collapse, probably not 5 feet from it! Obviously the most precise laws of automotive physics were at work.

Now feeling more foolish than angry, the chagrined young father once more left his trusting loved ones and started the long walk for help once again. This time

the man providing the water said, "Either you or that fellow who looks just like you ought to get a new radiator for that car." For the second time a kind neighbor offered a lift back to the same automobile and its anxious little occupants. He didn't know whether to laugh or to cry at the plight of this young family.

"How far have you come?" he said. "Thirty-four miles," I answered. "How much farther do you have to go?" "Twenty-six hundred miles," I said. "Well, *you* might make that trip, and *your wife* and those two little kiddies might make that trip, but *none of you* are going to make it in *that* car." He proved to be prophetic on all counts.

Help and happiness lie ahead

Just two weeks ago this weekend, I drove by that exact spot where the freeway turnoff leads to a frontage road, just three miles or so west of Kanarraville, Utah. That same beautiful and loyal wife, my dearest friend and greatest supporter for all these years, was curled up asleep in the seat beside me. The two children in the story, and the little brother who later joined them, have long since grown up and served missions, married perfectly, and are now raising children of their own. The automobile we were driving this time was modest but very pleasant and very safe. In fact, except for me and my lovely Pat situated so peacefully at my side, nothing of that moment two weeks ago was even remotely like the distressing circumstances of three decades earlier.

Yet in my mind's eye, for just an instant, I thought perhaps I saw on that side road an old car with a devoted young wife and two little children making the best of a bad situation there. Just ahead of them I imagined that I saw a young fellow walking toward Kanarraville, with plenty of distance still ahead of him. His shoulders seemed to be slumping a little, the weight of a young father's fear evi-

dent in his pace. In the scriptural phrase, his hands did seem to “hang down.”¹⁵ In that imaginary instant, I couldn’t help calling out to him: “Don’t give up, boy. Don’t you quit. You keep walking. You keep trying. There is help and happiness ahead—a lot of it—30 years of it now, and still counting. You keep your chin up. It will be all right in the end. Trust God and believe in good things to come.”

Blessings will come

I testify that God lives, that He is our Eternal Father, that He loves each of us with a love divine. I testify that Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son in the flesh and, having triumphed in this world, is an heir of eternity, a joint-heir with God, and now stands on the right hand of His Father. I testify that this is Their true Church and that They sustain us in our hour of need—and always will, even if we cannot recognize that intervention. Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don’t come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, *they come*. Of that I personally attest. I thank my Father in Heaven for His goodness past, present, and future, and I do so in the name of His Be-

loved Son and most generous high priest, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Hebrews 8:6; 9:11.
2. Ether 12:4.
3. See John 8:12; Revelation 22:16; Mosiah 16:9.
4. See William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, act 2, scene 2, lines 2–3.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
6. Romans 4:18, 20–21.
7. Joseph Hilaire Belloc, “The Prophet Lost in the Hills at Evening,” in Lord David Cecil, ed., *The Oxford Book of Christian Verse* (1940), 520.
8. Mark 4:39; see also Doctrine and Covenants 101:16.
9. John 16:33; Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
10. Mosiah 14:3; Isaiah 53:3.
11. Mosiah 3:7.
12. John 14:27.
13. Psalm 9:9, 18; italics added.
14. Psalm 34:18, 22.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.

The chorus sang “I Feel My Savior’s Love.”

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 2, 1999. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men’s choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the BYU Men’s Choir. Barlow Bradford and Ronald Staheli directed the choir. John Longhurst was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the men of the Tabernacle Choir and BYU Men's Choir, under the direction of Barlow Bradford and Ronald Staheli, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "I Love the Lord." Following the singing, the invocation will be given by Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I Love the Lord."

Elder Marlin K. Jensen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Jensen. This wonderful men's choir will now sing "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings." We shall then be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir sang "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Growing into priesthood responsibilities

I am very humbled by this great responsibility to address this body of brethren who hold the priesthood of God. I pray sincerely for the Spirit of the Lord to attend us so that what I have to say will sink deep into your hearts.

I love speaking to the brethren of the priesthood, particularly to the young men of our Church who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. Believe it or not, it doesn't seem all that long ago since I was a young man. When I was a deacon, the ominous signs of the Great Depression began to appear. Tens of thousands lost their jobs. Money was scarce. Families had to do without. Some young people did not ask their mothers, "What's for dinner?" because they knew all too well that their cupboards held very little.

My parents were hardworking. They made every penny stretch as far as pos-

sible. That was probably the major reason everything they gave me was always two or three sizes too large.

I was 12 years old when I received my first pair of ice skates, so large that I had to stuff a third of the toe space with cotton.

When I took them out of the box, I looked up and said, "Mother, I can't skate with these."

"Be grateful for what you have, Joseph," she'd say. And then the phrase I had become so accustomed to hearing, "Don't worry; you'll grow into them."

A year later, what I wanted more than anything else was football shoulder pads and a helmet. On Christmas morning I opened my packages, and there they were—shoulder pads and a helmet, except they were sized to fit Goliath, who, by the way, was six cubits or about nine feet tall.

"Mother, they're too big," I said.

"Be grateful for what you have, Joseph," she said again. "Don't worry; you'll grow into them."

Prior to high school I played a lot of neighborhood football. When I put on the new equipment, the shoulder pads hung so far over my shoulders that about the only things they protected were my elbows.

Even though I stuffed cotton and newspaper in the helmet, it jostled every time I took a step. When I ran, it would turn and turn until the only way I could see where I was going would be to look out through the ear hole.

One time I rambled for a long gain at full speed right into a tree. Each time I was tackled, the helmet would spin 180 degrees and I'd get up looking like my head had spun with it. Then I would have to repack the cotton and newspaper as best I could, put it back on, and head back to the huddle.

My father was truly a great man. I remember one day putting my feet in my father's shoes. I was amazed at the size. Would I ever be big enough to fill his shoes? Could I ever grow into the man my father was? I wondered.

I think back on those days with some tenderness. Curiously enough, I also look back with tenderness to my dear mother's encouraging words, "Don't worry, Joseph; you'll grow into them."

In a similar way, we all need to learn how to "grow into" our responsibilities as priesthood bearers.

Becoming men of the Lord

First, I want to tell you young men that the Lord has His eye upon you. He loves you. He knows you. He knows your triumphs and your trials, your successes and your heartaches.

He knows that at times you may look at the challenges you may face and may think they're too big to handle. He is, however, willing and ready to help you

as you grow into the men you are to become.

You may think at times the duties you have as Aaronic Priesthood bearers are insignificant or unimportant, but I assure you they are not.

Everything you do in the Aaronic Priesthood has a spiritual purpose and is important to the Lord. Whenever you exercise the priesthood, you are on the Lord's errand, doing the Lord's business. You go as His servant bearing His authority to act in His name.

I remember when my father, who was also my bishop, laid his hands upon my head to confer upon me the Aaronic Priesthood. I felt something special that day. In the coming weeks that feeling returned as I passed the emblems of the sacrament to the members of our ward, and I looked up to them as my ideals. It came to my mind that I was doing the very thing the Savior had done at the Last Supper.

I would like to share with you five principles that, if lived and incorporated into your lives while you are young, will ensure happiness and peace throughout your lives, no matter what trials and temptations come your way. These principles are revealed by the Lord as counsel to all of us who are striving to grow into the kind of men He would have us be.

Place Heavenly Father first

First, place Heavenly Father first in your life. Remember the words of Alma to his son Helaman: "O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God."¹ The Savior reminded us of that priority when He taught that the first and greatest commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."²

It is essential that you know and understand that our Heavenly Father loves

you like a son, because He is the Father of your spirit. That makes you His literal son, spiritually begotten of Him.

As such, you have inherited the potential to become like Him. His greatest desire is that you grow in this life line upon line, becoming more like Him so that one day you can return to His presence. Remember, it is God's work and glory to bring to pass your immortality and eternal life.³

God's love is complete and without limit for you and for all mankind.⁴ He is perfectly just⁵ and merciful.⁶ He is perfectly kind⁷ and understands your circumstances and condition. He knows you better than you know yourself.

Because your Heavenly Father is perfect, you can have complete faith in Him. You can trust Him. You can keep His commandments by continually striving to do so.

"Does that mean all of God's commandments?" you might ask. Yes! All of them!

Joseph Smith said, "[God] never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed, and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of his law and ordinances."⁸

God's commandments are not given to limit or punish us. They are exercises that create character and sanctify souls. If we disregard them, we become spiritually flabby and weak and without defense. If we keep them, we can become spiritual giants, strong and bold in righteousness.

Do you take the time each day to review your day's events with your Heavenly Father? Do you express to Him the desires of your heart and your gratitude for the blessings He pours out upon you?

Day-to-day obedience to God's commandments is indispensable, and it pro-

TECTS us during mortality and prepares us for the tremendous adventure that awaits us on the other side of the veil.

Come unto Christ

Second, come unto Christ and follow Him as your Savior and Redeemer. We can come unto Christ as we learn to love Him and as we study the scriptures diligently. How do we show our love for the Savior? He gave us the answer: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."⁹

Every one of you can read something in the scriptures each day. You should spend some time pondering and studying the scriptures. It is better to read and ponder even one verse than none at all. I challenge each young man to read something in the scriptures every day for the rest of your lives. Few things you do will bring you greater dividends.

Learn of your Savior. Jesus Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane more than you can comprehend. Willingly and lovingly, He took upon Himself not only our sins but the pains, sicknesses, and sufferings of all mankind.¹⁰ He suffered similarly on the cross, where He gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins if we will repent. And then in His ultimate triumph, He was resurrected and broke the bands of death, making the Resurrection available to all.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ has given the Savior the power to help you grow into the young man He knows you can be. It is through repentance that the Atonement becomes operative in your life.

The more you understand the Atonement and what it means, the less likely you will be to fall prey to temptations of the adversary. No other doctrine will bring greater results in improving behavior and strengthening character than the doctrine of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It is central to God's plan and is preeminent in the restored gospel.

My sincere testimony as a special witness is that I know Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, and our Lord and Savior.

Seek the companionship of the Spirit

Third, nurture the companionship of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost is one of the most precious gifts you can receive in mortality. The Holy Ghost can become your guiding light. The Holy Ghost "will show unto you all things what ye should do."¹¹ The Holy Ghost can be helpful to you in any righteous endeavor in which you are involved, including in school and among your friends.

However, the principal mission of the Holy Ghost is to testify of our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. If you are careful in keeping the commandments, the Holy Ghost will help you learn more about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. He will enlighten your mind as you ponder and study the scriptures each day.

The promptings of the Holy Ghost may come to you in a still, small voice. You cannot grow into the man you must become unless you first rise above the things of the world that clamor for your attention. For example, some of the world's music is degrading, vulgar, and inappropriate and will drown out the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Bringing into your body substances forbidden by the Lord in the Word of Wisdom will prevent you from feeling and recognizing the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

The failure to live a clean and chaste life deadens the promptings of the Spirit. Take your thoughts to higher levels than the vulgar and immoral. Avoid objectionable television shows and movies, evil Internet sites, and all forms of entertainment that portray or encourage immoral-

ity and violence. Shun pornography like a deadly, contagious sin and disease. You cannot afford to become addicted to its bondage and slavery. It will drive the Holy Ghost and His influence from your life.

Love, learn more about Joseph Smith

Fourth, love and revere Joseph Smith as the great prophet of the Restoration. Since my youth I have always been impressed by the fact that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, would answer the heartfelt prayers of a 14-year-old boy who was searching for the truth. Just as He answered Joseph Smith's prayer, our Heavenly Father will answer your prayers in His own time and in His own way.

As you learn more about the Prophet Joseph, you will learn that through him the fulness of the everlasting gospel was restored, including the keys of the priesthood. In addition, you will learn of the greatness of his spirit, the compassion he felt for those who suffered, and his grasp of the mysteries of heaven and the workings of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, among men.

The more I know of the Prophet Joseph, the more I love him, the more I yearn to follow his example, the more I appreciate what our Father in Heaven and His Son have done in restoring this gospel that is destined to fill the earth in these, the latter days.

Follow the living prophet

Fifth, love, follow, and be loyal to God's living prophet. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the successor and guardian of those priesthood keys that were first restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith. In mortality, only one man at a time holds and exercises all of the priesthood keys; today that man is President Gordon B. Hinckley.

Follow the teachings of our modern-day prophet. He is inspired of the Lord to teach us those things that are necessary for us to live happily and righteously.

A generation chosen, blessed by the Lord

My wonderful young brothers in the gospel, I love you and have great respect for you! You have been told often, and I will say it again: You are a chosen generation. You have been raised up by the Lord to carry His Church and kingdom into the 21st century. You have been chosen by the Lord to come forth on the earth when wickedness and evil are very powerful. But you are up to the challenge.

"I have every reason to regard you," said President Gordon B. Hinckley, "as the greatest generation we've ever had in this Church—notwithstanding all of the temptations which you face."¹²

That does not mean you will not face your share of heartache, challenges, and trial. Since the days when I first stuffed cotton into my ice skates and put on oversized shoulder pads and helmet, my life has been filled with experiences and challenges that seemed at the time too big for me. Even today I can't help but feel, every now and again, that the size of the mantle I have been asked to wear is perhaps too large.

But every day I try to put Heavenly Father first in my life, I try to come unto Christ and follow Him as my Savior and

Redeemer, I nurture the companionship of the Holy Ghost, love and revere the Prophet Joseph, and listen to and follow God's prophet today. As I do those things, I am confident the Lord will bless me.

Even after all these years, I can still hear the voice of my mother: "Be grateful for what you have, Joseph. Don't worry; you'll grow into it."

It is my prayer that we may all grow into the priesthood and be the kind of men our Heavenly Father wants us to be, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Alma 37:35.
2. Matthew 22:37.
3. See Moses 1:39.
4. See John 3:16.
5. See 2 Nephi 9:17; Mosiah 29:12.
6. See Deuteronomy 4:31; Alma 42:15.
7. See Isaiah 54:8; 3 Nephi 22:8.
8. *History of the Church*, 5:135.
9. John 14:15.
10. See Alma 7:11–12.
11. 2 Nephi 32:5.
12. *Church News*, 4 Sept. 1999, 3.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Wirthlin. Our next speaker will be Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric, and he will be followed by Elder H. Bruce Stucki of the Seventy.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

True manhood must be earned

A few months ago I received a letter from a family friend whom we had not seen for many years. Her letter was an expression of hopelessness and a plea for

help. After struggling to raise her children as a single mother, she was now remarried. Her nonmember husband was a rough outdoorsman who attempted to express his manhood through drinking, foul language, tough talk, and question-

able behavior. Her great concern was that her husband's example was teaching her son that these indeed were the traits of manhood. Her plea to me: Is there some way, even though separated by great distances, that I might speak to her son, whom we shall call Ben, about the characteristics of true manhood? In answer to that plea, tonight I shall attempt to respond. Thus I address my remarks to a faraway friend and to all the "Bens" in the Church attempting to measure up as a man.

So, Ben, let's talk. We all seek acceptance and recognition as we enter the adult world. Adulthood comes to us one way or another if we live long enough. True manhood, however, comes only if and when we earn it.

Jesus is the ideal of manhood

Satan is known as the great deceiver. His religion, his philosophy, and his work are based on deception and lies. His objective is to thwart the work of the Lord by misleading us and eventually making us "miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). He would have us believe that he is the man and that his ways bring us to manhood.

By contrast, Jesus voluntarily submitted Himself to the will of the Father. As a result He was betrayed, accused, beaten, and judged. His sacrifice was not mandatory. It was borne out of courage, duty, and love, and it led Him to the bitter cup that caused Him to bleed from every pore. After Pilate had witnessed the enormous suffering and humiliation of Jesus and even argued for His release, he finally succumbed to the demands of the Jews. As he turned Him over for crucifixion, he did so with the simple but defining words, "Behold the man!" (John 19:5). Yes, Jesus is the man. He possesses all characteristics of the true, ideal man. His ways, not Satan's ways, lead to man-

hood. Anyone who believes otherwise is already tangling himself up in the everlasting chains of Satan's deception (see 2 Nephi 28:19).

True men choose the ways of God

Ben, every young man must choose between good and evil and between the ways of God and the ways of Satan. When a young man begins to smoke to prove he is a man, whose man is he becoming? When a young man begins drinking, takes drugs, participates in immorality, is boisterous or unruly, whose man is he becoming? It has been said that many a boy begins smoking as a teenager to prove he is a man, and he tries to quit at age 30 for the same reason. There is no manhood in succumbing to Satan. There is no manhood in being defeated by his principles.

So, Ben, with this background, let me give you my criteria for true manhood. Because of time constraints, I limit myself to only two criteria of what could be many:

1. A true man is strong enough to withstand the wiles of Satan.

2. A true man is humble enough to submit himself to the redemptive powers of the Savior.

I suppose it is natural for us to equate strength, machoism, and maybe even boisterous and aggressive behavior with manhood. However, the attributes of true manhood are not necessarily physical. Let me attempt to explain.

True men reject Satan's temptations

The Apostle Paul warned, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood [which is not the real test of manhood], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness" (Ephesians 6:12). Real courage includes standing against the evil one, even when we stand alone, often feeling the disdain and the

ridicule of others. This is courage. This is strength. This is manhood, and it can be tough.

I know a young man who was thrilled to be selected for an all-star basketball team to play in a tournament in another state. The first evening at the hotel, the other roommates decided to watch pornographic movies. This boy left the room and walked the city by himself well into the night until the movies were over. I am sure it was embarrassing, lonely, and challenging. But that is courage; that is manhood in its truest sense. And I say, "Behold a man!"—an 18-year-old boy turned man. I know hundreds of young men who have withstood ridicule and embarrassment to turn down drugs, alcohol, and sex in order to turn to serve one another, provide a righteous example, or defend the principles of righteousness. All young men must face the wiles of Satan. It is impossible to escape this fight. But it is always possible to come out victorious. Yes, a true man is strong enough to withstand the wiles of Satan.

True men submit themselves to Christ

Ben, some burdens that we are called to bear are so heavy that we can conquer them only through humility, submissiveness, and contrition. That sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it—gaining strength and power through humility, submissiveness, and contrition. But that is one of the great ironies of life—we can receive power beyond our natural ability by submitting our will to the Father.

We all fall victim to the tempter to some degree. Sometimes we even get entangled in serious transgression—transgression that has eternal consequences. Those who have committed serious transgression must follow the carefully planned path of repentance provided by the Savior and often directed by a bishop or stake president. This becomes the true test of

manhood, and not all are man enough to meet this challenge.

A young man repents, serves a mission

Some months ago I was given the assignment to interview a young man, 21 years old, to determine if his repentance was sufficient for him to serve a mission. My heart ached as I read of the serious problems and transgressions in his past. I wondered if it would be possible that one with such a background could ever prepare himself to worthily serve a mission. At the appointed time for my interview I saw a handsome young man approaching me. He was immaculately groomed and had a wonderful countenance about him. He looked like a returned missionary, and I wondered who he was. As he approached he extended his hand and, to my surprise, introduced himself as the young man I was to interview.

During the interview I simply asked, "Why am I visiting with you tonight?" Then he laid out the sordid details of his past. After reviewing and confessing again his transgression, he began talking to me about the Atonement and the years of painful repentance that brought him to this very interview. He expressed his love for the Savior and then explained that Christ's Atonement was sufficient to rescue even a boy like him. At the conclusion of the interview, I placed my hand on his shoulder and said, "When I get back to Church headquarters, my recommendation will be that you be permitted to serve a mission." And then I said, "I ask only one thing of you—just one. If you are privileged to serve, I want you to be the best missionary in the entire Church. That is all."

About four months later I was speaking at a missionary devotional at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. After the devotional I was standing in

front of the podium greeting missionaries when I noticed a familiar face approaching me. My first thought was that I was about to be embarrassed because I was supposed to know this young man. I could not remember where I had met him, and I knew the first question that he was going to ask me. Sure enough, he extended his hand and asked, "Do you remember me?" Apologetically and somewhat embarrassingly, I answered, "I am sorry. I know I should know you, but I just do not remember." He then said: "Well, let me tell you who I am. I am the best missionary in the MTC." I could not withhold the tear that slowly trickled down my cheek as I thought: "Here is a man. He met his Gethsemane. He paid the painful price of repentance. He has humbled himself and submitted himself to the redemptive power of the Savior. He has met the challenges. He has measured up to true manhood." And I say, "Behold a man," a man humble enough to submit himself to the redemptive powers of the Savior.

The measure of a man is in his soul

Ben, you can describe a man in inches, pounds, complexion, or physique. But you measure a man by character, compassion, integrity, tenderness, and principle. Simply stated, the measures of a man are embedded in his heart and soul, not in his physical attributes (see 1 Samuel 16:7). But they can be viewed in conduct and demeanor. The qualities of manhood are so often evident in this

thing we call countenance. When Alma queried, "Have ye received his image [meaning the Savior—the true man] in your countenances?" (Alma 5:14), he, my friend, was talking about the attributes of true manhood.

Yes, Ben, Satan has his man and God has His man, and Satan has his characteristics of manhood and God has His. Satan would present his characteristics as the true measurement of manhood and God's criteria as weak and wimpy. But one must understand that Satan's criteria will almost always be the easiest and the wimpiest. Satan's way takes no courage, no character, no personal strength, and it proves no manhood at all.

A true man does not need Satan to lead him down the easy path with his everlasting chains of destruction. A true man is strong enough to withstand the wiles of Satan and humble enough to submit himself to the redemptive powers of the Savior.

Moses, in a moment of both motivation and rebuke, charged the Israelites, "Who is on the Lord's side?" (Exodus 32:26). What he was really asking was, "Whose man are you, anyway?" Our Father in Heaven is called "Man of Holiness" (Moses 6:57; 7:35). That is a title we reserve with reverence for the Supreme Being. It is not a title we take upon ourselves, Ben. But every priesthood bearer should seek to be known simply as a man of God. That, my dear friend, is manhood. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder H. Bruce Stucki

The story of a sparrow

I would like to tell you about a little bird that was lying on the parking lot pavement. During the night it had been

blown from its nest by the high winds in the storm. Apparently hatched just a few days earlier, it had few feathers, but enough to identify it as just a common sparrow.

As it lay there awaiting whatever fate would come, a young woman walking to her car in the parking lot saw the little sparrow and picked it up. Feeling sympathy for the helpless little bird, she took it home to care for it. She prepared a nest in a basket with soft tissues, which were changed often to keep a clean and comfortable bed for the little bird.

She fed it often each day, watching it gain strength, and within a few days it opened its eyes and could see for the first time. It saw the girl who fed it and the family who lived in the home. It heard and became accustomed to the sounds around it, and it was not afraid.

As the days passed, it was able to hop about, and it was taken from the basket and put into a clean birdcage.

It trusted the girl and the family, and when it wanted food it would chirp and flutter its growing wings rapidly, and when the cage door was opened it would hop out onto the girl's hand and sit there patiently while she fed it.

It would sit on her hand as she walked through the house and even when she went outside. To help it become accustomed to the outside world where it soon would have to live, she would take it out on the lawn, where she and her sister would sit under the tree and visit while the bird would look and observe all around it.

It came time for the girl and her sister to go to girls' camp, so the bird went with them and spent the week on Cedar Mountain with the girls. It was there that it tried to fly for the first time, flying from the girl's hand to the low branches in a nearby tree.

It was glad to come back to the familiar hand and security of the girl's love, and although it was learning to fly, it did not leave. When girls' camp was over, the bird came home with the girls and continued its flying lessons.

The girl, realizing the bird must soon join its own kind, took it out on the front

lawn and encouraged it to fly away. It flew across the lawn to a small pine tree, where it perched and looked around. The girl left it there, assuming it would now join the other birds, and she returned into the home.

It wasn't long before a chirping could be heard outside in front of the home, and when the girl went out to see what the bird was chirping about, it flew out of the tree and landed back on her hand, and she fed it.

For the first few nights the bird would come back to the house and want to come in with the family for the night. Soon, however, it began to stay out with newly found friends living in the trees close by the home. When the girl would go outside and whistle, it would respond and return and land on her hand, and my daughter, Trinilee, would feed it.

That little bird and my daughter taught me a great lesson in faith and trust. Although it was just a fraction of the size of its human friend and could be in great danger for its life amongst humans, it trusted her and had faith it would not be harmed and would be fed by her—and it responded to her beckoning call.

Trust and have faith in the Lord

Have you ever wondered about our faith, brethren? Do we have that kind of trust and faith in the Lord? Do we respond to His beckoning call to serve and be fed at His hand?

We should strive to be in His presence and to respond to His call, yet many of us lack the faith and the trust to come unto the Lord when He calls. He is calling us today to be faithful and to trust Him, that He might feed us.

"And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me" (Moroni 7:33).

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

A call for more missionaries

There is an urgent and important work to be done in all nations and among all people. There are many wonderful young men and women, senior sisters, and couples who have been called to serve and who have responded and are faithfully serving a mission for the Lord.

There is a great need for many more missionaries, including couples, as President Hinckley in his February 21, 1998, satellite broadcast said: "With concerted effort, with recognition of the duty that falls upon each of us as members of the Church, and with sincere prayer to the Lord for help, we could double the number" of convert baptisms.

"For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul" (D&C 4:4).

There is not a work of greater importance or of greater joy and reward that we could do at this time.

The Savior, speaking through the Prophet Joseph Smith, said to John Whitmer: "And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father. Amen" (D&C 15:6).

Do more to bring souls to Christ

Brethren, I believe our Heavenly Father and I trust Him, and when He reveals to us, speaking through our living

prophet today, that we need to do more, and more of us need to become involved in the work of bringing souls unto Christ, then we need to step forward and say, "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

From a favorite hymn, I quote:

Come, all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood;

Go spread the gospel wide and gather in his people.

[*"Come, All Ye Sons of God," Hymns, no. 322*]

And after their baptism, we need to walk the path to exaltation with them, steadying them until they have a solid foundation and testimony to carry them on through time and into life eternal.

I truly love my Heavenly Father and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am grateful for the many blessings and opportunities They have given me. I pray with all my heart and soul that I can measure up to the plans They have for me, whatever those plans may be.

I pray we will all show an equal amount of faith and trust in the Lord that the little sparrow demonstrated in my daughter, and respond to the call of the Lord.

I pray that we will indeed all do it together, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have listened to Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric and Elder H. Bruce Stucki of the Seventy.

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following his remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Now Let Us Rejoice."

President James E. Faust

Planting seeds and preparing soil

My dear brethren, the responsibility of addressing this vast army of priesthood holders has weighed heavily upon me. I seek the blessing of the Lord and your prayers in doing so.

I am grateful that I was taught as a child how to plant seeds. Through the miracle of life, we planted the seeds and produced delicious fresh peas, corn, carrots, turnips, onions, and potatoes from our own garden. I clearly remember a most meaningful experience when my grandfather showed us how to sow alfalfa seeds by hand. He had plowed and harrowed the ground to prepare the seedbed. Then he took a handful of seeds, and with a wide swing of his arm he artfully scattered them as he paced across the field in geometric patterns. Although birds ate some of the alfalfa seed, the crop grew, and the stand was rich and plentiful for many years.

This experience helped me later, as a missionary, to understand the Savior's parable of the sower, which is actually a parable about different kinds of soil. He taught that "some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

"Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth. . . .

"And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

"But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold."¹

In this parable the seed is the same, but it lands on four different kinds of soil. The Savior also explained the meaning of the parable. The seed that "fell by the way side" represents those who hear the word of God but do not under-

stand it and fall into the clutches of Satan. The second seed, which "fell upon stony places," describes those who joyfully hear the word and thrive as long as all goes well. But when trials come and they feel peer pressure because of their beliefs, they are offended and do not endure. The third seed, which "fell among thorns," represents those who hear the word, but worldliness and riches are more important to them, and they fall away from the truth. The last seed, however, which "fell into good ground," represents those who hear the word, understand it, live it, and reap great eternal rewards.²

Some seeds fall by the wayside

The Book of Mormon provides several examples of seeds that fell by the wayside. One of them is in the account of the Zoramites. Alma records that the Zoramites "had had the word of God preached unto them.

"But they had fallen into great errors, for they would not observe to keep the commandments of God."³

Alma headed a mission to reclaim them. In his teaching, Alma compared the word unto a seed and reasoned with them:

"Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding."⁴

The account reveals that many of the poor among the Zoramites were converted and joined the righteous people

of Ammon in the land of Jershon after Alma and his companions replanted the seed.

Some seeds fall on stony places

Some seeds fell upon stony places in the early days of the Church when the Prophet Joseph Smith issued calls to several converts to serve as missionaries. One of them was Simonds Ryder, who was ordained an elder on June 6, 1831, by Joseph Smith. After reading the revelation that pertained to him and finding that his name had been spelled "Rider" instead of "Ryder," he became offended, apparently unaware that Joseph Smith often dictated revelations to his scribes. His disillusionment over the misspelling of his name led not only to his apostasy but ultimately to his infamy in helping to tar and feather the Prophet Joseph.⁵ Like the seed that fell upon stony places, Simonds Ryder joyfully received the word at first but quickly became offended over a trivial matter and lost his place in the kingdom of God.

Some seeds are choked by thorns

Sometimes thorns choke the seedbed, as was the case with the rich young man who asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. He stated that he had kept all the Ten Commandments from his youth and asked, "What lack I yet?" Recognizing the young man's attachment to his riches, Jesus taught him about a higher law of the gospel: "Sell [all] that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Matthew records, "When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."⁶ The seed had been planted in this young man, but because of his riches, it had fallen among the thorns and became choked.

Some seeds fall on good ground

Today, as we travel throughout the world, we see that many seeds have fallen into good ground. We meet wonderful, stalwart members of the Church who are faithful and dedicated. Some of us who have sown seeds as missionaries may have felt that those seeds fell on hard ground. It is not always possible to know the consequences of one single contact. For years William R. Wagstaff, who served in the North Central States Mission from 1928 to 1930, felt disappointed he had not baptized more people. In the summer of 1929 he and his companion visited a farm family about 180 miles west of Winnipeg.

"Brother Wagstaff remembered giving a copy of the Book of Mormon to the mother and discussing the gospel with her during numerous visits through that and the following summer.

"He recalled that during each visit 'she'd take off her apron and we'd sit down and discuss the gospel. She'd read and have lots of questions.'

"But at the close of his mission, she still had not been baptized, and he lost touch with her."

Brother Wagstaff went home, married, and raised a family. Then in October 1969 he and his wife attended his missionary reunion.

"A lady approached him and asked, 'Aren't you Elder Wagstaff?'

"... She introduced herself as the woman he had taught on the farm outside Winnipeg. In her hand was a worn copy of the Book of Mormon—the one he had given her 40 years earlier.

"She showed me the book,' he related. 'I turned over the front and there was my name and address.'

"She then told Brother Wagstaff about 60 members of her family were members of the Church, including a branch president."⁷

Elder Wagstaff planted the seed during his mission but went home while it was still in the ground. Forty years later he learned of the rich harvest that eventually had come to pass and that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."⁸

Each of us needs to nourish our seeds of faith so that they continue to take root. President Hinckley has strongly urged us to help the new members prepare their souls so that the seeds of faith planted by the missionaries can grow and develop.

The ground seems to be hardening

Yet at the same time, the ground seems to be hardening, and many are less receptive to things of the Spirit. The miracles of modern technology have brought efficiency into our lives in ways not dreamed of a generation ago, yet with this new technology has come a deluge of new challenges to our morals and our values. Some tend to rely more on technology than on theology.

I hasten to add that scientific knowledge, the marvels of communication, and the wonders of modern medicine have come from the Lord to enhance His work throughout the world. As an example, the Church's FamilySearch® web site has more than seven million hits a day. But Satan, of course, is aware of this great progress in technology and likewise takes advantage of it for his purposes, which are to destroy and despoil. He delights in the pornography on the Internet and the sleaze in many of our movies and television shows. He has even engineered some of his own satanic messages into some of our modern music. For the seeds of faith to sprout in our lives, we must avoid Satan's grasp.

Preparing our own seedbeds of faith

We also need to prepare our own seedbeds of faith. To do this we need to plow the soil through daily humble

prayer, asking for strength and forgiveness. We need to harrow the soil by overcoming our feelings of pride. We need to prepare the seedbed by keeping the commandments to the best of our ability. We need to be honest with the Lord in the payment of our tithing and our other offerings. We need to be worthy and able to call forth the great powers of the priesthood to bless ourselves, our families, and others for whom we have responsibility. There is no better place for the spiritual seeds of our faith to be nurtured than within the hallowed sanctuaries of our temples and in our homes.

You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood should strive very diligently to acquire a skill and as much education as possible. You deacons and teachers do not yet have to determine your ultimate careers, but you do need to lay the groundwork in preparation to meet life's challenges and ultimately to provide for your future wives and families. In a way, young men who do not awaken early to their God-given talents and possibilities are not fully honoring their priesthood. I know that in some parts of the world this is a most difficult challenge, but opportunities for you young men will be enhanced if you will learn well a basic skill. It would benefit you young men if you would also learn another language. If you fail to prepare in your youth, it will be too late to begin preparation when you reach adulthood.

As I have associated with a few of our young people, I have wondered why the seeds have fallen into hard ground. It often seems that not enough effort has been made to prepare the ground to receive the seeds of faith, as my grandfather did with his alfalfa field.

Invest in your future

I believe that many bright and special and valiant spirits have been saved for this challenging time. I'm thinking about one bright little boy called Timmy.

Timmy had only two pennies in his pocket when he approached the farmer and pointed to a tomato hanging lustily from a vine.

"Give you two cents for it," the boy offered.

"That kind brings a nickel," the farmer told him.

"This one?" Timmy asked, pointing to a smaller, greener, and less tempting specimen. The farmer nodded agreement. "OK," said Timmy, and sealed the deal by placing his two pennies in the farmer's hand. "I'll pick it up in about a week."⁹

You young men could learn from Timmy, who invested two cents in a tomato that would be worth five cents in the future. If you are willing to invest now, you young men will have opportunities to accomplish as much as any generation that has ever lived. For too many, however, the seed of faith falls among thorns, and the seed becomes unfruitful.¹⁰

Salvation is a priesthood responsibility

You, my brethren who hold the holy priesthood of God, may wonder why we are anxious that the seeds of faith be nurtured in you. We particularly want you young men to have a strong testimony, with solid roots, because only then will it be an unerring compass for you, enabling you to withstand the strong winds of adversity which blow. We believe the salvation of the world has been placed upon the priesthood of this Church. This responsibility rests squarely upon us. We cannot shirk it. As President Gordon B. Hinckley said:

"If the world is going to be saved, we have to do it. There is no escaping from that. No other people in the history of the world have received the kind of mandate that we have received. We are responsible for all who have lived upon the

earth. That involves our family history and temple work. We are responsible for all who now live upon the earth, and that involves our missionary work. And we are going to be responsible for all who will yet live upon the earth."¹¹

Now, brethren, because we hold these precious powers, I believe we are going to be held accountable in our efforts to accomplish this overwhelming responsibility. We cannot be ashamed of the doctrine because it is not popular or socially acceptable. We must not apologize for what has been revealed through our prophets in our time. It is the word of the Lord to the world. There is always a price to be paid if we are to have a witness of this holy work. There is always a trial of our faith.¹²

Alma said that when we feel the seed of faith growing, it will enlarge our souls, enlighten our understanding, and be delicious to our taste. May God bless you to have the experience that these words describe, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Matthew 13:4-8.
2. See Matthew 13:19-23.
3. Alma 31:8-9.
4. Alma 32:28.
5. See Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838* (1983), 93-94; and Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* (1983), 286.
6. Matthew 19:20-22.
7. Julie A. Dockstader, "Missionary Moments: A Lot of Rejoicing," *Church News*, 4 May 1991, 16.
8. Galatians 6:7.
9. In Jacob M. Braude, comp., *Braude's Treasury of Wit and Humor* (1964), 175.
10. See Matthew 13:22.

11. Mission presidents' seminar, 25 June 1999; quoted in "Church Is Really Doing Well," *Church News*, 3 July 1999, 3.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 105:19.

The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Faust, for what you've said, and thanks to this great choir again.

We shall now hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

Learn your duty

Brethren of the priesthood, assembled here and worldwide, I am humbled by the responsibility which is mine to address a few remarks to you. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to attend me as I do so.

Some of you are deacons; others are teachers or priests—all offices in the Aaronic Priesthood. Many of you are elders, seventies, or high priests. Much is expected of each of us.

In a proclamation of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles issued on April 6, 1980, this declaration of testimony and truth was set forth:

"We solemnly affirm that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in fact a restoration of the Church established by the Son of God, when in mortality he organized his work upon the earth; that it carries his sacred name, even the name of Jesus Christ; that it is built upon a foundation of Apostles and prophets, he being the chief cornerstone; that its priesthood, in both the Aaronic and Melchizedek orders, was restored under the hands of those who held it anciently: John the Baptist, in the case of the Aaronic; and Peter, James, and John in the case of the Melchizedek."¹

On October 6, 1889, President George Q. Cannon expressed this plea:

"I want to see the power of the Priesthood strengthened. . . . I want to see this strength and power diffused through the entire body of the Priesthood, reaching from the head down to the least and most humble deacon in the Church. Every man should seek for and enjoy the revelations of God, the light of heaven shining in his soul and giving unto him knowledge concerning his duties, concerning that portion of the work of God that devolves upon him in his Priesthood."²

The Lord Himself summed up our responsibility when He, in the revelation on the priesthood, urged, "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."³

Brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, whether deacon, teacher, or priest, learn your duty. Brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, learn your duty.

Priesthood is a great blessing

Some years ago, as our youngest son, Clark, was approaching his 12th birthday, he and I were leaving the Church Administration Building when President Harold B. Lee greeted us. I mentioned to President Lee that Clark would soon be 12, whereupon President Lee asked him, "What happens to you, Clark, when you turn 12?" This was one of those times when a father prays that a son will be in-

spired to give a proper response. Without hesitation Clark said to President Lee, "I will be ordained a deacon."

The answer was the one President Lee had sought. He then counseled our son, "Remember, it is a great blessing to hold the priesthood."

I hope with all my heart and soul that every young man who receives the priesthood will honor that priesthood and be true to the trust which is conveyed when it is conferred.

Do your duty; hidden blessings await

Forty-four years ago I heard William J. Critchlow Jr., then president of the South Ogden Stake, speak to the brethren in the general priesthood session of conference, and retell a story concerning trust, honor, and duty. May I share the story with you. Its simple lesson applies to us today, as it did then.

"Rupert stood by the side of the road watching an unusual number of people hurry past. At length he recognized a friend. 'Where are all of you going in such a hurry?' he asked.

"The friend paused. 'Haven't you heard?' he said.

"I've heard nothing,' Rupert answered.

"Well,' continued [the] friend, 'the King has lost his royal emerald. Yesterday he attended a wedding of the nobility and wore the emerald on the slender golden chain around his neck. In some way the emerald became loosened from the chain. Everyone is searching, for the King has offered a reward . . . to the one who finds it. Come, we must hurry.'

"But I cannot go without asking Grandmother,' faltered Rupert.

"Then I cannot wait. I want to find the emerald,' replied his friend.

"Rupert hurried back to the cabin at the edge of the woods to seek his grandmother's permission. 'If I could find it, we could leave this hut with its dampness

and buy a piece of land up on the hillside,' he pleaded with Grandmother.

"But his grandmother shook her head. 'What would the sheep do?' she asked. 'Already they are restless in the pen, waiting to be taken to the pasture—and please do not forget to take them to water when the sun shines high in the heavens.'

"Sorrowfully, Rupert took the sheep to the pasture, and at noon he led them to the brook in the woods. There he sat on a large stone by the stream. 'If I could only have had a chance to look for the King's emerald,' he thought. Turning his head to gaze down at the sandy bottom of the brook, suddenly he stared into the water. What was it? It could not be! He leaped into the water, and his gripping fingers held something that was green, with a slender bit of gold chain. 'The King's emerald!' he shouted. 'It must have been flung from the chain when the King [astride his horse, galloped across the bridge spanning the stream, and the current carried] it here.'

"With shining eyes Rupert ran to his grandmother's hut to tell her of his great find. 'Bless you, my boy,' she said, 'but you never would have found it if you had not been doing your duty, herding the sheep.' And Rupert knew that this was the truth."⁴

The lesson to be learned from this story is found in the familiar couplet: "Do your duty; that is best. Leave unto the Lord the rest."

Replace doubts with faith

Should there be anyone who feels he is too weak to change the onward and downward course of his life, or should there be those who fail to resolve to do better because of that greatest of fears—the fear of failure—there is no more comforting assurance to be had than these words of the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for all men that humble them-

selves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”⁵

Miracles are everywhere to be found when priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes.

Priesthood is a commission to serve

The priesthood is not really so much a gift as it is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others.

Brethren, let us who have responsibility with the Aaronic Priesthood young men not only provide them opportunities to learn but also set before them examples worthy of emulation.

For those of us who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, our privilege to magnify our callings is ever present. We are shepherds watching over Israel. The hungry sheep look up, ready to be fed the bread of life. Are we prepared to feed the flock of God? It is imperative that we recognize the worth of a human soul, that we never give up on one of His precious sons.

A young man prays in the Sacred Grove

May I share with you a letter from a young man which reflects the spirit of love and which helped to make firm a testimony of the gospel:

“Dear President Monson:

“Thank you for speaking to us at the National Scouting Jamboree held at Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia. On the tour that we took we saw a lot of famous places like Niagara Falls, the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell, and many other places. The one I enjoyed the most was the Sacred Grove. Our parents had written us all letters to read by ourselves while in the grove. After I had finished the letter my

parents had written to me, I knelt in prayer. I asked if the Church was really true and if Joseph Smith really did see a vision and is a true prophet of God, and also if President Hinckley is a true prophet of God. Right after I was done praying I felt this feeling of the Spirit that these things were indeed true. I had prayed before about the same things but never received such a powerful answer. There was no way that I could deny that this Church is true or that President Hinckley is a prophet of God.

“I feel so blessed to be a member of this Church. Thanks again for attending the Jamboree.

“Sincerely,

“Chad D. Olson

“P.S. We gave our tour guide and our bus driver a copy of the Book of Mormon with our testimonies in it. They are the greatest! I want to be a missionary.”

Like Joseph Smith, this young man had retired to a sacred grove and prayed for answers to questions phrased by his inquiring mind. Once more a prayer was answered and a confirmation of the truth was gained.

Those who are wandering

There are many less-active members who wander in the wilderness of wonder or who struggle in the swamp of sin. One such member wrote to me:

“I’m afraid to be alone. The gospel has never left my heart, even though it has left my life. I ask for your prayers. I would be happy to even eat the crumbs that fall from the table of the lowliest member of the Church, because he has more than I have now. I used to think position and responsibility were important in the Church, but now I know I was wrong all the time. It was membership, priesthood power, fatherhood, and service. I know where the Church is, but sometimes I think I need someone else to show me the way, encourage me, take

away my fear, and bear testimony to me. I thought the Church was lost, when really it was only me."

Magnify your calling

The call of duty can come quietly as we who hold the priesthood respond to the assignments we receive. President George Albert Smith, that modest yet effective leader, declared, "It is your duty first of all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of [your] holy Priesthood to magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows in such a way that the people will be glad to follow you."⁶

What does it mean to magnify a calling? It means to build it up in dignity and importance, to make it honorable and commendable in the eyes of all men, to enlarge and strengthen it to let the light of heaven shine through it to the view of other men. And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it. An elder magnifies the ordained calling of an elder by learning what his duties as an elder are and then by doing them. As with an elder, so with a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a bishop, and each who holds office in the priesthood.

Be willing to serve

As we remember, Paul, who was known as Saul, was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians there. As he journeyed close to the city of Damascus, a bright light shone round about him, and he fell to the earth, stunned, and he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And Saul asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the voice said, "I am Jesus."

A penitent Saul asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" With the Lord's answer, Saul the persecutor became Paul the proselytizer and began his great missionary endeavors.⁷

Brethren, it is in *doing*—not just *dreaming*—that lives are blessed, others are guided, and souls are saved. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," added James.⁸

May all of us assembled tonight in this priesthood meeting make a renewed effort to qualify for the Lord's guidance in our lives. There are many out there who plead and pray for help. There are those who are discouraged, those who are beset by poor health and challenges of life which leave them in despair.

I've always believed in the truth of the words, "God's sweetest blessings always go by hands that serve him here below."⁹ Let us have ready hands, clean hands, and willing hands that we may participate in providing what our Heavenly Father would have others receive from Him.

Always be on the Lord's errand

I conclude with an example in my own life. Once I had a treasured friend who seemed to experience more of life's troubles and frustrations than he could bear. Finally he lay in the hospital, terminally ill. I knew not that he was there.

Sister Monson and I had gone to that same hospital to visit another person who was very ill. As we exited the hospital and proceeded to where our car was parked, I felt the distinct impression to return and make inquiry concerning whether Hyrum Adams might be a patient there. Long years before, I had learned never to postpone a prompting from the Lord. It was late, but a check with the desk clerk confirmed that indeed Hyrum was a patient.

We proceeded to his room, knocked on the door, and opened it. We were not prepared for the sight that awaited us. Balloon bouquets were everywhere. Prominently displayed on the wall was a poster with the words "Happy Birthday" written on it. Hyrum was sitting up in his hospital bed, his family members

by his side. When he saw us, he said, "Why, Brother Monson, how in the world did you know that this is my birthday?" I smiled but I left the question unanswered.

Those in the room who held the Melchizedek Priesthood surrounded this, their father and my friend, and a priesthood blessing was given.

After tears were shed, smiles of gratitude exchanged, and tender hugs received and given, I leaned over to Hyrum and spoke softly to him, "Hyrum, remember the words of the Lord, for they will sustain you. He promised, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.'"¹⁰

May each of us ever be on the Lord's errand and thereby be entitled to the Lord's help, I pray humbly. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 75; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 52.
2. *Deseret Weekly*, 2 Nov. 1889, 598.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1955, 86; paraphrasing, capitalization, and punctuation altered.

5. Ether 12:27.

6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 14.

7. Acts 9:3-6.

8. James 1:22.

9. Whitney Montgomery, "Revelation," in *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People*, ed. Jack M. Lyon and others (1996), 283.

10. John 14:18.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We remind all of you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will go from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. tomorrow, and the Sunday morning session will immediately follow. So it's important that we be in our places by 9:15 at the latest.

We express our deep appreciation to the men of the Tabernacle Choir and the BYU Men's Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Claudio R. M. Costa of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren, I commend you, wherever you may be. As usual, the Tabernacle is filled to capacity this evening. Next spring we shall be able to accommodate all of you who wish to sit together in these great Saturday evening priesthood gatherings, and what a blessing that will be.

Why we do some of the things we do

As we conclude this meeting, I wish to speak for a few minutes on the subject of "why we do some of the things we do."

Now, I recognize that this is a rather strange-sounding title, but this is the only meeting where we can discuss Church procedures and Church business. I pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Church is an ecclesiastical organization. It is an eleemosynary society. It is concerned primarily with worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our great mission is to testify of His living reality. We should not be involved with anything not in harmony with this major objective. We should be involved with whatever is in harmony with this objective.

Why does the Church sponsor BYU?

We do many things which on the surface do not appear to be associated with this overriding pattern. I'm going to speak of two or three of these. Among these is the operation of Brigham Young University. People ask why we sponsor such a large and costly institution that is basically concerned with secular education. The question is appropriate. This sponsorship has a doctrinal root.

The Lord has decreed in revelation:

"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

"Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—

"That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you" (D&C 88:78–80).

It is apparent that we are obligated not only to learn of ecclesiastical matters but also of secular matters. There is a tradition in the Church that deals with these things. There was the School of the Prophets in Kirtland. The Seventies Hall in Nauvoo was used for educational purposes. A university was projected in Nauvoo.

When the Saints arrived in these western valleys, academies were established for the training of the young. The University of Utah was chartered in 1850 by our pioneer forebears. Brigham Young University came along later, out-

lasting most of the Church academies. It has grown until its present enrollment numbers more than 27,000. That is a large number of students, but it is a very small fraction of the young people of the Church worthy of a university education. We can accommodate only a relatively few. If we cannot give to all, why should we give to any? The answer is that if we cannot give to all, let us give to as many as we can. The number who can be accommodated on campus is finite, but the influence of the university is infinite. Tremendous efforts are being made to enlarge and extend that influence.

How fortunate are those who have the opportunity to attend. I almost become angry when I hear of complaining among the students or the faculty. I am grateful to be able to say that with very few exceptions those who come to learn and those who teach are appreciative and mindful of the great blessing that is theirs.

Moreover, the university has brought much favorable notice to the Church. Its sponsoring organization, the Church, is widely recognized. It has become known for standards and ideals which have been written about and talked about and which have let the world know of those things in which we believe. Its academic programs and its athletic programs have both brought honor to the university and the Church. And as generations of students move through its halls and on to graduation and then out across the world, they will bring honor to their alma mater and its sponsor, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Continued support of Church schools

We shall continue to support BYU and its Hawaii campus. We shall continue to support Ricks College. We are not likely to build other university campuses. We wish that we might build enough to accommodate all who desire

to attend. But this is out of the question. They are so terribly expensive. But we shall keep these as flagships testifying to the great and earnest commitment of this Church to education, both ecclesiastical and secular, and while doing so prove to the world that excellent secular learning can be gained in an environment of religious faith.

Backing up these institutions will be our other schools, our institutes of religion, scattered far and wide, and the great seminary system of the Church.

It is hoped that through these our youth, wherever they may be, may experience some of the good to be had at BYU.

Why is the Church in business?

Now, the next question: "Why is the Church in business?"

We have a few business interests. Not many. Most of these were begun in very early days when the Church was the only organization that could provide the capital that was needed to start certain business interests designed to serve the people in this remote area. We have divested ourselves long since of some of these where it was felt there was no longer a need. Included in these divestitures, for instance, was the old Consolidated Wagon and Machine Company, which did well in the days of wagons and horse-drawn farm machinery. The company outlived its usefulness.

The Church sold the banks which it once held. As good banking services developed in the community, there was no longer any need for Church-owned banks.

Some of these business interests directly serve the needs of the Church. For instance, our business is communication. We must speak with people across the world. We must speak at home to let our stand be known, and abroad to acquaint others with our work. And so we own a

newspaper, the *Deseret News*, the oldest business institution in Utah.

We likewise own television and radio stations. These provide a voice in the communities which they serve. I may add that we are sometimes embarrassed by network television presentations. Our people do the best they can to minimize the impact of these.

We have a real estate arm designed primarily to ensure the viability and the attractiveness of properties surrounding Temple Square. The core of many cities has deteriorated terribly. This cannot be said of Salt Lake City, although you may disagree as you try to get to the Tabernacle these days. We have tried to see that this part of the community is kept attractive and viable. With the beautiful grounds of Temple Square and the adjoining block to the east, we maintain gardens the equal of any in the world. This area will become even more attractive when the facility now being constructed on Main Street is completed and the large Conference Center to the north is finished.

Profits support worthy causes

Are these businesses operated for profit? Of course they are. They operate in a competitive world. They pay taxes. They are important citizens of this community. And they produce a profit, and from that profit comes the money which is used by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Foundation to help with charitable and worthwhile causes in this community and abroad and, more particularly, to assist in the great humanitarian efforts of the Church.

These businesses contribute one-tenth of their profit to the Foundation. The Foundation cannot give to itself or to other Church entities, but it can use its resources to assist other causes, which it does so generously. Millions of dollars have been so distributed. Thousands upon

thousands have been fed. They have been supplied with medicine. They have been supplied with clothing and shelter in times of great emergency and terrible distress. How grateful I feel for the beneficence of this great Foundation, which derives its resources from the business interests of the Church.

Why is the Church involved in legislative matters?

I have time to discuss one other question: "Why does the Church become involved in issues that come before the legislature and the electorate?"

I hasten to add that we deal only with those legislative matters which are of a strictly moral nature or which directly affect the welfare of the Church. We have opposed gambling and liquor and will continue to do so. We regard it as not only our right but our duty to oppose those forces which we feel undermine the moral fiber of society. Much of our effort, a very great deal of it, is in association with others whose interests are similar. We have worked with Jewish groups, Catholics, Muslims, Protestants, and those of no particular religious affiliation, in coalitions formed to advocate positions on vital moral issues. Such is currently the case in California, where Latter-day Saints are working as part of a coalition to safeguard traditional marriage from forces in our society which are attempting to redefine that sacred institution. God-sanctioned marriage between a man and a woman has been the basis of civilization for thousands of years. There is no justification to redefine what marriage is. Such is not our right, and those who try will find themselves answerable to God.

Defending the sanctity of marriage

Some portray legalization of so-called same-sex marriage as a civil right. This

is not a matter of civil rights; it is a matter of morality. Others question our constitutional right as a church to raise our voice on an issue that is of critical importance to the future of the family. We believe that defending this sacred institution by working to preserve traditional marriage lies clearly within our religious and constitutional prerogatives. Indeed, we are compelled by our doctrine to speak out.

Nevertheless, and I emphasize this, I wish to say that our opposition to attempts to legalize same-sex marriage should never be interpreted as justification for hatred, intolerance, or abuse of those who profess homosexual tendencies, either individually or as a group. As I said from this pulpit one year ago, our hearts reach out to those who refer to themselves as gays and lesbians. We love and honor them as sons and daughters of God. They are welcome in the Church. It is expected, however, that they follow the same God-given rules of conduct that apply to everyone else, whether single or married.

I commend those of our membership who have voluntarily joined with other like-minded people to defend the sanctity of traditional marriage. As part of a coalition that embraces those of other faiths, you are giving substantially of your means. The money being raised in California has been donated to the coalition by individual members of the Church. You are contributing your time and talents in a cause that in some quarters may not be politically correct but which nevertheless lies at the heart of the Lord's eternal plan for His children, just as those of many other churches are doing. This is a united effort.

I think that is all I need to say on that and the other matters on which I have commented. I have tried to explain why we do some of the things that we do. I hope I have been helpful.

Love for the priesthood

Now in conclusion I wish to say that I love the priesthood of this Church. It is a vital, living thing. It is the very heart and strength of this work. It is the power and authority by which God, our Eternal Father, accomplishes His work on the earth. It is the authority by which men speak in His name. It is the authority by which they govern His Church.

I love the boys who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. Every young man who does so, walking in obedience to the commandments of the Lord, may expect to have the guidance of the Holy Spirit in his life. That Spirit will bless him in his studies and other pursuits and will lead him in efforts that will bless him and bless the lives of others all about him.

Live worthy of the priesthood

Boys, I endorse and repeat what has been said here this night; live worthy of the priesthood you hold. Never do anything that will make you unworthy. Observe the Word of Wisdom. It is not difficult, and it will bring you promised blessings. Avoid drugs. They will utterly destroy you. They will take from you control and discipline over your minds and bodies. They will enslave you and place a vicious and deadly grip upon you that will be almost impossible to break.

Stay away from pornography. It too will destroy you. It will cloud your minds with evil and destroy your capacity to appreciate the good and the beautiful.

Avoid alcohol as you would a loathsome disease. Beer will do to you what hard liquor will do. Each contains alcohol in varying amounts.

Shun immorality. It will blight your life if you indulge in it. It will destroy

your self-respect. It will rob you of pleasant opportunities and make you unworthy of the companionship of lovely young women.

As you look forward and plan your lives, include a mission. You have an obligation to do so. It may be a difficult experience, but it will enrich and give balance to your life, and it will bless the lives of others in a way beyond your power to comprehend.

So much depends upon you, my very dear young friends.

May God bless you as you go forward with your lives, walking in obedience to His commandments.

This, I remind every man and boy in this vast audience tonight, is the Church and kingdom of the Almighty God. As our history has amply demonstrated, it is not a cause of ease nor a work without effort, even sacrifice. We shall go on pursuing the path which the Lord has marked out before us. We shall try to be strong and faint not as we pursue those programs and practices which have been established and maintained through generations of time.

Brethren, what a tremendous organization we are all a part of. We shall go forward and never flag or be deterred in our efforts to build this kingdom and establish righteousness in the earth. May God grant us wisdom, strength, and resolution, I humbly pray in the name of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 3, 1999. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Hail to the Brightness of Zion's Glad Morning." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this fourth general session of the 169th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under

the direction of Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We take occasion to express special appreciation to Brother Ottley, who has served as the director of the Tabernacle Choir for 25 years, and who will retire in December, and also to his beloved wife JoAnn, who has worked with him as music trainer for the choir. What a magnificent service they have given as they have led this great institution through all of these years.

We also express our gratitude to Brother Robert Bowden, who retired in September after 25 years of service as musical director of the Mormon Youth Chorus and Symphony.

The choir opened this session by singing "Hail to the Brightness of Zion's Glad Morning." They now will favor us with "Sabbath Day." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Sabbath Day."

Elder John H. Groberg offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

Our first speaker will be President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President James E. Faust

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, I come to this pulpit grateful for the inspiration and dedication of those who built this sacred, holy, historic Tabernacle. I pay tribute to President Brigham Young, who was the guiding genius in building this unique edifice and its marvelous organ. At the same time, I

rejoice that under the inspired leadership of President Hinckley, we are building a magnificent house of worship to accommodate the needs of an ever-growing Church. This new building is an expression of hope for the Church in the coming century.

Hope is the anchor of our souls

This morning "I would speak unto you," as Mormon said, "concerning hope."¹ There are tremendous sources of hope beyond our own ability, learning, strength, and capacity. Among them is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Through the marvelous blessing of this member of the Godhead, we can come to "know the truth of all things."²

Hope is the anchor of our souls. I know of no one who is not in need of hope—young or old, strong or weak, rich or poor. In the Book of Mormon we are exhorted, "Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might *with surety hope* for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God."³

Nephi admonished those of his day, "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men . . . , feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life."⁴

Everybody in this life has challenges and difficulties. That is part of our mortal test. The reason for some of these trials cannot be readily understood except on the basis of faith and hope because there is often a larger purpose which we do not always understand. Peace comes through hope.

Hope for an injured missionary

Few activities are safer than serving a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Missionaries are literally in the hands of the Lord. We wish that all of them could be kept totally out of harm's way all of the time, but that is not realistic. Missionaries, their families, and leaders trust fully in

the Lord's watch care, and when a rare tragedy strikes, they are sustained by the Spirit of Him whom they serve.

Last summer I visited Elder Orin Voorheis at his parents' home in Pleasant Grove, Utah. He is a big, handsome, splendid young man who served in the Argentina Buenos Aires South Mission. One night, about 11 months into his mission, some armed robbers accosted Elder Voorheis and his companion. In a senseless act of violence, one of them shot Elder Voorheis in the head. For days he hovered between life and death, unable to speak, hear, move, or even breathe on his own. Through the faith and prayers of a host of people over a long period of time, he eventually was taken off life support and brought back to the United States.

After months of extensive hospitalization and therapy, Elder Voorheis became stronger, but he was still paralyzed and unable to speak. Progress was slow. His parents decided to bring their son home and care for him in the loving atmosphere of their own family. However, their modest home lacked the space or equipment to give the needed therapy. Many kind neighbors, friends, and benefactors pitched in to build an addition to the home and provide physical therapy equipment.

Elder Voorheis is still almost completely paralyzed and unable to speak, but he has a wonderful spirit and can respond to questions with hand movements. He still wears his missionary badge. His parents do not ask, "Why did this happen to our noble son, who was serving at the call of the Master?" No one has a certain answer except perhaps in circumstances where higher purposes are served. We must walk in faith. We recall the Savior's reply to the question, "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" The Savior answered that no one was at fault but that the works of God might be manifest in

him.⁵ Rather than harbor bitterness, the members of the Voorheis family bow their heads and say to the Lord, "Thy will be done. We have been grateful for him every day of his life, and with the help of others we will willingly bear the burden of caring for him."

My purpose in visiting Elder Voorheis was to join his father, his bishop, his home teacher, and others in giving him a blessing of hope. Some may ask, "Is there hope for Elder Voorheis in this life?" I believe there is great hope for everyone! Sometimes we ask God for miracles, and they often happen but not always in the manner we expect. The quality of Elder Voorheis's life is less than desirable, but the influence of his life on others is incalculable and everlasting both here and in Argentina. Indeed, after his accident the Kilómetro 26 Branch, where he served in Argentina, grew rapidly and quickly qualified for the construction of a chapel.

Hope is trust in God's promises. It is faith that if we act now, the desired blessings will be fulfilled in the future. Abraham "against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations." Contrary to human reason, he trusted God, "fully persuaded" that God would fulfill His promises of giving Abraham and Sarah a child in their old age.⁶

A young mother maintains hope

A few years ago, Sister Joyce Audrey Evans, a young mother in Belfast, Northern Ireland, was having trouble with a pregnancy. She went to the hospital, where one of the nurses told her she would probably lose the baby. Sister Evans replied, "But I can't give up. . . . You have to give me hope." Sister Evans later recalled, "I couldn't give up hope until all reason for hope was gone. It was something I owed to my unborn child."

Three days later she had a miscarriage. She wrote:

"For one long moment, I felt nothing. Then a profound feeling of peace flowed through me. With the peace came understanding. I knew now why I couldn't give up hope in spite of all the circumstances: you either live in hope or you live in despair. Without hope, you cannot endure to the end. I had looked for an answer to prayers and was not disappointed; I was healed in body and rewarded with a spirit of peace. Never before had I felt so close to my Heavenly Father; never before had I felt such peace. . . .

"The miracle of peace was not the only blessing to come from this experience. Some weeks later, I fell to thinking about the child I had lost. The Spirit brought to my mind the words from Genesis 4:25: 'And she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed. . . .'

"A few months later I became pregnant again. When my son was born, he was declared to be 'perfect.'" He was named Evan Seth.⁷

Sources of hope

Peace in this life is based upon faith and testimony. We can all find hope from our personal prayers and gain comfort from the scriptures. Priesthood blessings lift us and sustain us. Hope also comes from direct personal revelation, to which we are entitled if we are worthy. We also have the security of living in a time when a prophet who holds and exercises all of the keys of God's kingdom is on the earth.

Samuel Smiles wrote: "Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey toward it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us." . . . Hope sweetens the memory of experiences well loved. It tempers our troubles to our growth and our strength. It befriends us in dark hours, excites us in bright ones. It lends promise to the

future and purpose to the past. It turns discouragement to determination.”⁸

The unailing source of our hope is that we are sons and daughters of God and that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, saved us from death. How can we know that Jesus truly is our Savior and Redeemer? In human terms His reality is almost undefinable, but His presence can be known unequivocally by the Spirit if we continually seek to live under the shadow of His influence. In the Book of Mormon we read the account of Aaron expounding the gospel to Lamoni’s father. He told him, “If thou wilt bow down before God . . . and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.”⁹ The old king followed this to the letter and received a witness of the truth that Aaron had imparted. As a result, he and all his household were converted and came to know the Lord.

Our greatest hope comes from the knowledge that the Savior broke the bands of death. His victory came through His excruciating pain, suffering, and agony. He atoned for our sins if we repent. In the Garden of Gethsemane came the anguished cry, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”¹⁰ Luke described the intensity of the agony: “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”¹¹

Peter anchored his hope in Christ

All of us can find hope in Peter’s experience during the events leading to the Crucifixion. Perhaps the Lord was speaking to all of us when He said to Peter:

“Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

Peter responded, “Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.”

Then the Savior told him, “Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before . . . thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.”¹²

As Peter watched the events unfold, he was identified as a disciple of Christ. A maid said, “This man was also with him,” and Peter answered that he knew Him not. Two others identified Peter as His disciple. Peter again denied knowing the Savior. And while he was speaking, a cock crowed.

“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

“And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”¹³

This experience strengthened Peter to the point that he would never fail again and was known as the rock. His hope became firmly anchored to an eternal Rock, even our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.¹⁴ As the chief Apostle, he carried the work forward faithfully and valiantly.

As Peter gained hope after a moment of weakness, you, I, and everyone can enjoy the hope that comes from the knowledge that God truly lives. Such hope springs from the belief that if we have faith, somehow He will help us through our challenges—if not in this life, then surely in the life to come. As Paul said to the Corinthians, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”¹⁵ In the eternal scheme of things, wrongs will be righted. In the perfect justice of the Lord, all who live worthily will be compensated for blessings not enjoyed here.

Never a greater reason for hope

In my opinion, there has never been in the history of this Church a reason for so much hope for the future of the Church and its members worldwide. I believe and testify that we are moving to a higher level of faith and activity than there ever has been. I pray that each of us will be found holding up our end of the line in this great army of righteousness. Each of us will come before the Holy One of Israel and account for our personal righteousness. We are told that "he employeth no servant there."¹⁶

There has come with my apostolic calling a sure witness of the life and ministry of the Savior. I declare with Job, "I know that my redeemer liveth."¹⁷ My witness of this "is in heaven."¹⁸ Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of all mankind. Joseph Smith was the inspired Prophet who restored the saving keys, authority, and organization delegated to him under the direction of God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Of this I testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moroni 7:40.
2. Moroni 10:5.
3. Ether 12:4; italics added.
4. 2 Nephi 31:20.

5. See John 9:2–3.
6. See Romans 4:18–21.
7. "To Live in Hope," *Ensign*, Sept. 1995, 70.
8. In Stan and Sharon Miller, comps., *Especially for Mormons*, 5 vols. (1971–87), 2:113.
9. Alma 22:16.
10. Matthew 26:39.
11. Luke 22:44.
12. Luke 22:31–34.
13. See Luke 22:56–62.
14. See Helaman 5:12.
15. 1 Corinthians 15:19.
16. 2 Nephi 9:41.
17. Job 19:25.
18. Job 16:19.

The choir sang "Did You Think to Pray?"

President Hinckley

"So, when life gets dark and dreary, don't forget to pray."

President James E. Faust has just spoken to us, followed by that wonderful hymn from the Tabernacle Choir. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve will now address us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

False prophets will abound

Toward the end of the Savior's earthly ministry, His disciples came to Him with several questions concerning the future: "Tell us . . . what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3).

Jesus responded:

"Take heed that no man deceive you.

"For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. . . .

" . . . And there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

"All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:3–8).

The Apostle Paul warned of these days:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

"And they shall turn away their ears from the truth" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Paul also taught that the Lord "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets . . .

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, . . .

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:11-14).

Brothers and sisters, the exact time of the Second Coming is known only to the Father (see Matthew 24:36). There are, however, signs that scriptural prophecy relating to that tumultuous day is being fulfilled. Jesus cautioned several times that prior to His Second Coming, "many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:11). As Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our duty to be watchmen on the tower, warning Church members to beware of false prophets and false teachers who lie in wait to ensnare and destroy faith and testimony. Today we warn you that there are false prophets and false teachers arising; and if we are not careful, even those who are among the faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will fall victim to their deception.

Look to the appointed channel

President Joseph F. Smith gave wise and clear counsel that applies to us today:

"We can accept nothing as authoritative but that which comes directly through

the appointed channel, the constituted organizations of the Priesthood, which is the channel that God has appointed through which to make known His mind and will to the world. . . . And the moment that individuals look to any other source, that moment they throw themselves open to the seductive influences of Satan, and render themselves liable to become servants of the devil; they lose sight of the true order through which the blessings of the Priesthood are to be enjoyed; they step outside of the pale of the kingdom of God, and are on dangerous ground. Whenever you see a man rise up claiming to have received direct revelation from the Lord to the Church, independent of the order and channel of the Priesthood, you may set him down as an imposter" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 41-42).

When we think of false prophets and false teachers, we tend to think of those who espouse an obviously false doctrine or presume to have authority to teach the true gospel of Christ according to their own interpretation. We often assume that such individuals are associated with small radical groups on the fringes of society. However, I reiterate: there are false prophets and false teachers who have or at least claim to have membership in the Church. There are those who, without authority, claim Church endorsement to their products and practices. Beware of such.

Sustain God's chosen prophet

Yesterday members of the Church sustained the First Presidency and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators, with Gordon B. Hinckley also being sustained as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He, and only he, holds and exercises in their fulness all of the keys of God's kingdom on earth. How grateful we all are to know and to sustain President Hinckley.

In plainness and power President Hinckley teaches the eternal plan of salvation, rebukes sin, calls all people to repent and accept Christ and His gospel. The doctrines of eternal salvation are not unclear or uncertain, but rather they are consistent with revealed truths, both ancient and modern.

President Spencer W. Kimball reminded us that the prophets "constantly cry out against that which is intolerable in the sight of the Lord; against pollution of mind, body, and our surroundings; against vulgarity, stealing, lying, pride, and blasphemy; against fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and all other abuses of the sacred power to create; against murder and all that is like unto it; against all manner of desecration." He continued: "That such things should be found even among the Saints to some degree is scarcely believable. . . . Sadly, however, we find that to be shown the way is not necessarily to walk in it" ("The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign*, June 1976, 4).

Reject teachings that oppose the Church

Therefore, let us beware of false prophets and false teachers, both men and women, who are self-appointed declarers of the doctrines of the Church and who seek to spread their false gospel and attract followers by sponsoring symposia, books, and journals whose contents challenge fundamental doctrines of the Church. Beware of those who speak and publish in opposition to God's true prophets and who actively proselyte others with reckless disregard for the eternal well-being of those whom they seduce. Like Nehor and Koriher in the Book of Mormon, they rely on sophistry to deceive and entice others to their views. They "set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion" (2 Nephi 26:29).

Of such President Joseph F. Smith warned when he spoke of the "proud self-vaunting ones, who read by the lamps of their own conceit; who interpret by rules of their own contriving; who have become a law unto themselves, and so pose as the sole judges of their own doings" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 381).

Examples of false teachings

Now let me give you a few examples of the false teachings of those who read by the lamps of their own conceit, who, though "ever learning," are "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

False prophets and false teachers are those who declare that the Prophet Joseph Smith was a duplicitous deceiver; they challenge the First Vision as an authentic experience. They declare that the Book of Mormon and other canonical works are not ancient records of scripture. They also attempt to redefine the nature of the Godhead, and they deny that God has given and continues to give revelation today to His ordained and sustained prophets.

False prophets and false teachers are those who arrogantly attempt to fashion new interpretations of the scriptures to demonstrate that these sacred texts should not be read as God's words to His children but merely as the utterances of uninspired men, limited by their own prejudices and cultural biases. They argue, therefore, that the scriptures require new interpretation and that they are uniquely qualified to offer that interpretation.

Perhaps most damningly, they deny Christ's Resurrection and Atonement, arguing that no God can save us. They reject the need for a Savior. In short, these detractors attempt to reinterpret the doctrines of the Church to fit their own preconceived views, and in the process deny Christ and His messianic role.

False prophets and false teachers are also those who attempt to change the God-given and scripturally based doctrines that protect the sanctity of marriage, the divine nature of the family, and the essential doctrine of personal morality. They advocate a redefinition of morality to justify fornication, adultery, and homosexual relationships. Some openly champion the legalization of so-called same-gender marriages. To justify their rejection of God's immutable laws that protect the family, these false prophets and false teachers even attack the inspired proclamation on the family issued to the world in 1995 by the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles.

Choose to stand with the prophets

Regardless of which particular false doctrines they teach, false prophets and false teachers are an inevitable part of the last days. "False prophets," said the Prophet Joseph Smith, "always arise to oppose the true prophets" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 365).

However, in the Lord's Church there is no such thing as a "loyal opposition." One is either for the kingdom of God and stands in defense of God's prophets and apostles, or one stands opposed. And as Lehi of old counseled his sons, so this counsel is true for us today:

"And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

"Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or

to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

"And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit" (2 Nephi 2:26-28).

Be a believing, behaving member

Brothers and sisters, let us be anxiously engaged in good causes. Let us love God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Let us sustain and live by the revelations of the restored gospel. Let us love our fellow beings and fill our hearts and souls with the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then we will sing with Isaiah:

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: . . .

"Therefore with joy shall [I] draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:2-3).

We also know from Paul's inspired words to the Galatian Saints that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

"Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. . . .

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23, 25).

As members of the Church, each of us needs to model what it truly means to be a believing and behaving Latter-day Saint. Our example will have a powerful effect on others, making the restored gospel become much more relevant, meaningful, convincing, and desirable to them. Let us, each one, radiate to others the joy, confidence, love, and warmth of being part of the true Church of Christ.

Our discipleship is not something to be endured with long face and heavy heart. Nor is it something to be jealously clutched to our bosoms and not shared

with others. As we come to understand the love of the Father and the Son for us, our spirits will soar, and we will "come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy" (D&C 45:71).

Let us reach out in friendship and love to our neighbors, including those of other faiths, thus helping to build better family-to-family relationships and greater harmony in our neighborhoods. Remember, too often our behavior is a bigger deterrent to others than is our doctrine. In the spirit of love for all men, women, and children, help them to understand and to feel accepted and appreciated.

Be faithful in the gospel

Let us remember that it is our duty to be faithful to the restored truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It takes faith—real faith, total and unreserved—to accept and strive to live prophetic counsel. Lucifer, the adversary of truth, does not want us to feel or exhibit that kind of faith. He encourages disobedience, planting defiance in the hearts of the unwary. If he is successful, they will turn away from the light into the darkness of the world. Our safety, our peace lies in working as hard as we can to live as the Father and Son would have us live,

in fleeing from false prophets and false teachers, and in being anxiously engaged in good causes.

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. The restored gospel is true, and there is great joy in being anxiously engaged in this true and holy work. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Thanks for the Sabbath School."

President Hinckley

That hymn takes me back to my boyhood.

Elder M. Russell Ballard has spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "Thanks for the Sabbath School."

The choir and congregation will now join together in singing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy will speak to us. He will be followed by Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, who was released yesterday afternoon as general president of the Primary.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder L. Aldin Porter

God has a plan for us

Some months ago, following a session of stake conference, a lovely young lady in her late teens spoke with me, expressing concern over some aspects of the proclamation on the family. Her attitude was not one of rejection but of

a sincere desire to understand. I have given her concern a great deal of thought.

The God of creation spoke to Moses in an effort to help him understand the destiny of this world: "And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and

by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten" (Moses 1:33).

Note the Lord's words: "I . . . created them for mine own purpose." The Lord had a purpose in establishing worlds, and in just a few verses He explained what it was: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

It is clear that the Lord had a plan laid out for the accomplishment of His purposes. In the scriptures we read of the many names of the plan: "the great plan of happiness," "the plan of redemption," "the merciful plan of the great Creator," "the plan of salvation," "the plan of justice," and "the great plan of the Eternal God."

Each name emphasizes one aspect or another of the plan. But in reality there is only one plan, called by many names, through which God means to "bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."

God has given us a "flight plan"

Think of an airplane leaving the airport with the complete journey mapped out. The pilots and crew know where they are going, and they won't get off course and fail to reach their destination once in 50,000 times, unless weather or mechanical troubles interfere. Now, imagine another airplane with a captain and crew but no flight plan. The engines are started, and the plane moves down the runway. Yet as it begins to climb, the crew doesn't know whether to turn east or to turn west. If you are on that airplane, you will have almost no chance of arriving at your destination. It is clear to each of us that an airplane crew needs a flight plan.

So it is with our lives. One cannot make wise long-range decisions unless one understands that there is purpose here and recognizes that he must understand at least some aspects of the merciful plan of the great Creator.

Commandments and the Atonement

The Lord has given us instructions and commandments to help us fulfill the destiny which He envisions for us. Commandments are best understood after one knows something of the plan. Alma taught this principle when he said:

"God gave unto them commandments, *after having made known unto them the plan of redemption*, that they should not do evil, the penalty thereof being a second death, which was an everlasting death as to things pertaining unto righteousness; for on such the plan of redemption could have no power, for the works of justice could not be destroyed, according to the supreme goodness of God" (Alma 12:32; italics added).

A very important part of the plan is the right of personal choice. The Lord calls it moral agency. We may choose as we desire, but we may not avoid the consequences of our choices. Think on that. We are permitted to make our choices in life, but we ought not then call the plan unfair because we must accept the results of our choices.

The center of the plan is the Lord Jesus Christ. Reject or ignore Him, and the great plan of happiness cannot function in your behalf. His life was dedicated in His premortal existence, through mortality, and even on into the eternal worlds to establishing the Father's plan to our blessing and benefit. The cost to the Master was monumental. Think of the pain of Gethsemane and of His suffering on Calvary. This should give us some concept of the enormous importance of the plan of redemption.

Pride, pursuing the vain things of the world, unchastity, misunderstanding gender roles, greed, and a disregard for the sacredness of human life are just a few of the obstacles in mortality. They can hinder us or prevent us from reaching our destination. The plan allows for repentance, but it does not allow for acceptance of self-destructive behavior.

"For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

"Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven" (D&C 1:31-32).

God's plan consoles us, brings joy

Understanding the plan can give us great consolation in the severe tests that come to humankind. Further, that understanding will strengthen our faith. One of the most difficult tests is separation from loved ones through death. The plan is a great comfort if we understand the following words of scripture:

"For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord" (2 Nephi 9:6).

We are literally sons and daughters of God. That reality should permeate every fiber of our beings. Knowing this one truth will greatly influence the decisions of life that can bring us either great joy or bitter regret.

Secular philosophies lack eternal depth

Many who design the philosophies of men know little or nothing of the purposes of God. Their secular concepts are often woefully inadequate for eternal purposes. If, for instance, one believes that man's existence on earth is an accident of nature, one's judgment will be flawed. These modern-day philosophers do not know of the premortal life of mankind, nor are they aware of the eternal destiny of man. How could they possibly build principles that will endure the tests of centuries?

President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the proclamation on the family, saying: "With so much of sophistry that

is passed off as truth, with so much of deception concerning standards and values, with so much of allurements and enticement to take on the slow stain of the world, we have felt to warn and forewarn. In furtherance of this we of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles now issue a proclamation to the Church and to the world as a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices relative to the family which the prophets, seers, and revelators of this church have repeatedly stated throughout its history" ("Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100).

Choose to follow the prophets

Some complain that when the prophets speak with clarity and firmness, they are taking our agency away. We are still free to choose. But we must accept the consequences of those decisions. The prophets do not take away our agency. They simply warn us of what the consequences of our choices will be. How foolish it is to fault the prophets for their warnings.

Develop faith in the prophets and their admonitions. Seek the confirmation of the Spirit that they are inspired. Then when they speak and you respond positively to their counsel, you will find comfort, peace, and even joy.

The proclamation on the family

Alma, an ancient prophet, felt very strong feelings of concern for his fellowmen when he said, "Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth" (Alma 29:2).

When we understand the great plan of the Eternal God, the proclamation on the family brings peace and certainty.

The very work bears witness of itself, for the Spirit of God attends it.

The message of the proclamation will comfort parents who may be questioning their roles in the home. It will bring security to children as they are raised by parents who love them and un-

derstand their divine destiny. And it will bring lasting happiness to the young woman who spoke to me as she understands and fulfills the role designed for her by an all-wise and loving Father in Heaven. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Sister Patricia P. Pinegar

Trusting in the Lord after a son's death

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Brothers and sisters, I love the Lord and trust in Him with all of my heart. I know He lives and loves each of us. I know our Father in Heaven has a perfect plan for us. As we follow this plan and the example of our Savior, we can find peace in this troubled world, our hearts can be filled with hope, and we will receive the direction we need.

While we were serving a mission in England, our 17-year-old son, Cory, was killed in a car accident. We were able to come home to Utah for his funeral, and then we immediately returned to England to finish our mission. It was a very tender time for our entire family.

One day, shortly after returning to England, I was walking down the street and an acquaintance who had heard of the death of our son said to me: "Well, what do you think of your God now? You are serving a full-time mission for Him, and He has taken your son." I was both shocked and hurt. I felt so sorry for this person who did not understand Heavenly Father's plan.

The difficult experience of my son's death helped me identify and rejoice in the blessings of peace, hope, and direction—blessings that all who truly accept and live the gospel of Jesus Christ may enjoy. I can bear witness to the words of Elder Richard G. Scott: "Please learn that as you wrestle with a challenge and feel sadness because of it, you can simultaneously have peace and rejoicing" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17).

What are some specific things we can do to have these blessings of peace, hope, and direction in our lives? May I share with you three things that have helped me.

Trust in God's plan

First, we must have complete trust in our Father's plan of happiness and our Savior's part in that plan. Trusting in His plan gave me peace during the time following our son's death. I knew where our son was, and I knew Heavenly Father loved him. I had a perfect hope that because of the Savior's Atonement Cory lived and we would be together again as an eternal family. I also had direction. I knew what I needed to do and what our family needed to do to be together forever.

Commandments tether us to God

The second thing that has helped me receive these blessings is the principle of courageous obedience. I am so grateful for God's gift of laws and commandments. Peace, hope, and direction are outcomes of striving to live the teachings of Jesus and obeying His laws and commandments. The scriptures teach, "Great peace have they which love thy law" (Psalm 119:165). They also teach that "he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

While Brother Pinegar served as president of the Provo Missionary Training Center, as you can imagine, we often talked to the missionaries about the feelings of happiness and peace that accompany courageous obedience to true principles. We talked of the influence of the Holy Ghost that comes to those who are obedient. We encouraged the missionaries to make obedience their quest. I enjoyed telling them the story of the little boy who went to the park with his father to fly a kite.

The boy was very young. It was his first experience with kite flying. His father helped him, and after several attempts the kite was in the air. The boy ran and let out more string, and soon the kite was flying high. The little boy was so excited; the kite was beautiful. Eventually there was no more string left to allow the kite to go higher. The boy said to his father, "Daddy, let's cut the string and let the kite go; I want to see it go higher and higher."

His father said, "Son, the kite won't go higher if we cut the string."

"Yes, it will," responded the little boy. "The string is holding the kite down; I can feel it." The father handed a pocket-knife to his son. The boy cut the string. In a matter of seconds the kite was out of control. It darted here and there and finally landed in a broken heap. That was

difficult for the boy to understand. He felt certain the string was holding the kite down.

The commandments and laws of God are like the kite string. They lead us and guide us upward. Obedience to these laws gives us peace, hope, and direction.

Heed the promptings of the Spirit

The third thing we can do to receive these blessings of peace, hope, and direction is to learn to respond to the promptings of the Holy Ghost and acknowledge to the Lord our gratitude for this great gift.

I helped take care of Grandma Pinegar a few Sundays ago. Grandma is 99 and very frail. She is blind and quite deaf, and recently it has become difficult for her to talk in more than a whisper. Her little body is so bent over that there is not much room in her lungs for air.

I leaned close to her and asked, "Grandma, tell me how the gospel has blessed your life." She whispered softly and shared her gratitude for the promptings and guidance she had received from the Holy Ghost.

When her second child, James, was 18 months old, he and his older brother were playing outside and she was watching them from the window. Suddenly she couldn't see him and ran from the house, calling and searching frantically. There was water in the irrigation ditch that shouldn't have been there, and she searched along the edge of the ditch and could see nothing. She ran for the hired hands to come and help and ran back to where the ditch went through a long culvert. Running to the other end of the culvert, she saw two little shoes, and pulled on them. When she had her son in her arms, she was prompted to clasp her hands together and place them under his stomach and carry him in front of her in this way, using her knee to hold some of his weight. She ran toward the

road, crying for help. The promptings she received to carry him in such an unnatural manner saved his life.

Center homes and Primaries on Christ

Brothers and sisters, I am personally grateful for the promptings we received as a Primary presidency. During the general conference when we were sustained, President Gordon B. Hinckley described some of the terrible atrocities that have been inflicted on children throughout the world. We read in newspapers and periodicals of the evil influences that are invading our homes.

As a new and very concerned Primary presidency, we prayed and searched the scriptures and were led to a verse in Isaiah that describes conditions during the Millennium: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:9). That was exactly what we wanted to have happen. We didn't want any child to be hurt or destroyed, but we didn't want to wait for the Millennium. We wanted that to happen right now. If our Primaries were full of the knowledge of the Lord, if our homes were full of the knowledge of the Lord, there would be peace and righteousness and the children would not be hurt in any way. We prayed to know how we could help that happen and were led to 2 Nephi 25:26. Our homes and our Primaries will be full of the knowledge of the Lord when "we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ."

We are so grateful for the peace and hope these scriptures gave us and for the direction we received through the Holy Ghost to encourage Primary leaders to have Christ-centered Primaries.

Brothers and sisters, let us rejoice in the blessings of peace, hope, and direction, blessings that so many of our Father's children do not enjoy. When we experience these great blessings in our

own lives, let us help others experience them also, especially the children. To paraphrase the words of the Savior, "And when thou art converted, strengthen [your children]" (Luke 22:32).

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord"

The scriptural theme for Primary is "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (3 Nephi 22:13). The world is not a safe place. It is not a place where children will feel peace, hope, and direction unless they are taught to love and follow the Savior. Please help them know that these great blessings can be theirs, and show them what they need to do to receive these blessings.

I am so very grateful for the opportunity I have had to serve in Primary. I love my counselors, Sister Anne Wirthlin and Sister Susan Warner. We have been one in our desire to serve and bless the children of the Church. We believe that Christ-centered Primaries can help parents as they teach their children the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the only knowledge that will give our children peace, hope, and direction. I am grateful to our faithful, dedicated board members and capable office staff and thank our priesthood leaders, who have taught and inspired us. I am grateful for the new Primary presidency sustained at this conference. I offer them my love and support. My most sincere thanks and love go to my precious family and especially to my sweetheart for his unfailing love and support.

I acknowledge the goodness and kindness of my Savior in every part of my life. The blessings of peace, hope, and direction that I have identified are only three of the many ways my life is blessed because of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As expressed in the words of a Primary song,

I feel my Savior's love
 And know that he will bless me.
 I offer him my heart;
 My shepherd he will be.
 He knows I will follow him,
 Give all my life to him.
 I feel my Savior's love,
 The love he freely gives me.
 ["I Feel My Savior's Love," *Children's Songbook*, 74-75]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Take Time to Be Holy."

President Hinckley

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy has spoken to us, followed by Sister Patricia P. Pinegar. The choir then sang "Take Time to Be Holy."

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve will now speak to us, following which it will be my pleasure to address you.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire." The benediction will then be given by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Seventy.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Valuing the Book of Mormon

Not long after my call to serve as one of the Twelve Apostles, I was summoned to the office of the President of our Quorum, President Ezra Taft Benson. He expressed deep concern that members of the Church did not fully appreciate the value of the Book of Mormon. With emotion in his voice, he read to me from the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—

"Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation."¹

By that time, President Benson had completely captured my attention. He then concluded his admonition:

"And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon."²

I shall never forget that lesson. Since then, President Howard W. Hunter, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and many other leaders of the Church have continued to extol the Book of Mormon to people throughout the world.

The Book of Mormon's primary purpose

I would like to add my testimony of the divinity of this book. I have read it many times. I have also read much that has been written about it. Some authors have focused upon its stories, its people, or its vignettes of history. Others have been intrigued by its language structure or its records of weapons, geography, animal life, techniques of building, or systems of weights and measures.

Interesting as these matters may be, study of the Book of Mormon is most rewarding when one focuses on its *primary* purpose—to testify of Jesus Christ. By comparison, all other issues are incidental.

The Book of Mormon's contents

When you read the Book of Mormon, concentrate on the principal figure in the book—from its first chapter to the last—the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God.³ And look for a second undergirding theme: God will keep His covenants with the remnants of the house of Israel.⁴

The Book of Mormon is a crucial component of that covenant.⁵ It is holy scripture that encompasses sacred writings from the small and large plates of Nephi, the plates of Mormon, the plates of Ether, and the plates of brass, which contained “the five books of Moses, . . . a record of the Jews . . . ; and . . . prophecies of the holy prophets.”⁶

When Mormon abridged these records, he noted that he could not write a “hundredth part” of their proceedings.⁷ Thus, *historical* aspects of the book assume *secondary* significance.

The Holy Bible has 66 individual books; the Book of Mormon contains 15. Its first book of Nephi—written some six centuries *before* the birth of Jesus—records that the prophet Lehi⁸ received a vision of the tree of life.⁹ His son Nephi prayed to know its meaning. In answer, he was given a remarkable vision. He beheld a virgin bearing a Child in her arms. He envisioned the Redeemer of the world, His earthly ministry, and His Crucifixion. He saw 12 others who would follow the Holy One. And he foresaw the ongoing opposition to the work of God and of His Apostles.¹⁰

Book of Mormon prophets testified of Christ

Other great prophets of the Book of Mormon—in their own way and time—testified of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Among them were the brother of Jared,¹¹ Zenock, Neum, and Zenos.¹² Testimonies of Jesus Christ that *pre-dated* His birth in Bethlehem were also

recorded from King Benjamin, Abinadi, Alma the Elder, Alma the Younger, Amulek, the sons of Mosiah, Captain Moroni, the brothers Nephi and Lehi, and Samuel the Lamanite.¹³ In a seemingly endless sequence of prophetic proclamations—testimonies of “all the holy prophets”¹⁴ for “a great many thousand years before his coming”¹⁵—the Book of Mormon makes the solemn declaration that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

Authors were devoted to God

Most books contained in libraries of the world were authored for contemporary readers. And they were generally written for profit, with royalties accruing from successful sales.

Not so with the Book of Mormon. It was written *anciently for our day*. It reveals the endless Lordship of Jesus Christ in accounts of two ancient American dispensations,¹⁶ preserved for the benefit of us who live in this dispensation of the fulness of times. Certainly no royalties came to its authors. In fact, they paid dearly for their privilege of participation. What motivated them? Their devotion to God! The book's four major writers—Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, and Moroni¹⁷—were all eyewitnesses of the Lord, as was its martyred translator, the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Their writings centered upon the Lord, His mission, and His ministry. Jacob, for example, repeatedly referred to the Atonement and Resurrection of Christ. “Beloved brethren,” wrote Jacob, “be reconciled unto [God] through the atonement of Christ, his Only Begotten Son, and ye may obtain a resurrection . . . and be presented as the first-fruits of Christ unto God. . . .

“And now, . . . why not speak of the atonement of Christ, and attain to a perfect knowledge of him,” and a “knowledge of a resurrection and the world to come?”¹⁸

Jacob's advice is priceless and timeless.

Contains the fulness of the gospel

The Savior declared that the Book of Mormon contains "the fulness of [His] everlasting gospel."¹⁹ How did He define the *gospel*? The resurrected Lord taught, "This is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me."²⁰

Then He amplified that one-sentence definition: "My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me."²¹

This unique mortal mission of the Lord—the *gospel* as He defined it—we know as the Atonement. The *fulness* of the gospel, therefore, connotes a fuller comprehension of the Atonement.²² This we do not obtain from the Bible alone. The word *atonement*, in any of its forms, is mentioned only once in the King James Version of the New Testament.²³ In the Book of Mormon, it appears 39 times!²⁴ The Book of Mormon also contains more references to the Resurrection than does the Bible.²⁵

The Savior referred to the Book of Mormon as His "new covenant" with the house of Israel.²⁶ It is a tangible sign of Christ's culminating covenant with mankind.²⁷ The divine teachings of this book, as a third testament, clarify doctrine and unify the Old Testament with the New Testament. Scriptural covenants,²⁸ testaments,²⁹ and witnesses³⁰ since the beginning of time relate to the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the central act of all human history.

The Book of Mormon is the most important religious text to be revealed from God to man "since the writings of the New Testament were compiled nearly two millennia ago."³¹ Joseph Smith de-

clared the Book of Mormon to be "the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion."³² It is the only book that the Lord Himself has testified to be true.³³

The Lord's ministry in the Americas

The crowning event of this sacred record is the personal ministry of the resurrected Lord to people of ancient America. To them He made this revelatory announcement:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. . . .

". . . The scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled. . . .

"I am the light and the life of the world. . . .

". . . Whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost. . . .

". . . I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

"Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. . . . I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me . . . , and be saved."³⁴

After that supernal introduction, the Master reinforced His identity by allowing the multitudes to thrust their hands into His side and feel the prints of the nails in His hands and in His feet. Then they knew that the very God of Israel stood in their presence—He who had been slain for the sins of the world.³⁵

He instructed the people. He taught them to pray, to repent, to be baptized, to partake of the sacrament, to know of His doctrine, to understand the importance of sacred ordinances and covenants, and to endure to the end.³⁶

Translation of the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon is a gift from God to all humankind, and He has “commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance.”³⁷ He invites all “to come unto him and partake of his goodness,” and He denies “none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female.”³⁸

This appeal to all people must involve many languages and the work of skilled translators. The King James Version of the Bible, for example, was produced by 50 English scholars who accomplished their work in seven years, translating at the rate of *one* page per day.³⁹ Expert translators today do well if they can also translate scripture at the rate of one page per day.

In contrast, Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon at the rate of about 10 pages per day, completing the task in about 85 days!⁴⁰ (Many of us feel good if we can read the book in that time.)

Such a pace is even more remarkable considering the circumstances under which the Prophet labored. In that same period, while enduring constant distractions and incessant hostility, Joseph Smith moved more than 100 miles from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to Fayette, New York.⁴¹ He applied for a copyright.⁴² He received revelations comprising 12 sections of the Doctrine and Covenants.⁴³ Heavenly beings restored the holy priesthood. Yet he completed the translation in less than three months.

The First Presidency provided opportunity for the Twelve Apostles to see portions of the original manuscript and the printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon. Words cannot describe the deep emotions we felt as we examined these precious documents and observed that marks of editing were remarkably rare.

Personal testimony and blessings

Each individual who prayerfully studies the Book of Mormon can also receive a testimony of its divinity.⁴⁴ In addition, this book can help with personal problems in a very real way. Do you want to get rid of a bad habit? Do you want to improve relationships in your family? Do you want to increase your spiritual capacity? Read the Book of Mormon! It will bring you closer to the Lord and His loving power.⁴⁵ He who fed a multitude with five loaves and two fishes⁴⁶—He who helped the blind to see and the lame to walk⁴⁷—can also bless you! He has promised that those who live by the precepts of this book “shall receive a crown of eternal life.”⁴⁸

The Book of Mormon is true! I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 84:54–55.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:57.
3. The Book of Mormon has been organized into 6,607 verses, of which 3,925 refer to Jesus Christ, employing more than 100 titles. Thus, some form of Christ's name is used on an average of one reference for every 1.7 verses (see Susan Easton Black, *Finding Christ through the Book of Mormon* [1987], 16–18).
4. See 3 Nephi 16:11–12; 29:3; Mormon 5:20; 8:21; 9:37.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:57–58.
6. 1 Nephi 5:11–13; see also “A Brief Explanation about the Book of Mormon.”
7. Words of Mormon 1:5. This explanation was repeated five more times (see Jacob 3:13; Helaman 3:14; 3 Nephi 5:8; 26:6; Ether 15:33). Jacob, who received the plates from his brother Nephi, provided additional insight, noting that he “should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people,”

but that he was to touch upon sacred or great things “as much as it were possible, for Christ’s sake, and for the sake of our people” (Jacob 1:2, 4).

8. Lehi, father of Nephi and Jacob, was also an eyewitness of the Lord (see 2 Nephi 1:15).
9. See 1 Nephi 8:10–35.
10. See 1 Nephi 11:14–36.
11. See Ether 3:14.
12. See 1 Nephi 19:10.
13. Many others could be listed, such as Enos, Jarom, Amaron, Amaleki, and more.
14. Jacob 4:4.
15. Helaman 8:18.
16. Jaredite and Lehite.
17. Because Isaiah is quoted so extensively, he deserves mention as one of the major contributors to the Book of Mormon. A useful footnote to 2 Nephi 12:2 in the current English edition of the LDS scriptures indicates that some 433 verses of Isaiah—roughly a third of the entire book—are quoted in the Book of Mormon. In the English language edition, more than half (about 233 verses) differ in some detail from their biblical counterpart, “while about 200 verses have the same wording as KJV.” One scholar of Isaiah documents that no less than 391 of the verses refer to the attributes, appearance, majesty, and mission of Jesus Christ (see Monte S. Nyman, “*Great Are the Words of Isaiah*” [1980], 7, 283–87).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (*Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* [1997], 78–94) has classified the teachings of Isaiah as recorded in the Book of Mormon into five topical categories:

- (1) Christ’s Birth and Mortal Ministry (see 1 Nephi 11:13, 15, 18, 20; 2 Nephi 17:14–15; Alma 7:10).
- (2) Christ Visits the Spirits in Prison (see 1 Nephi 21:6–9).
- (3) Christ Shows Kindness to and Preserves Zion in the Last Days (see

1 Nephi 21:13–16; 2 Nephi 7:1–2; 3 Nephi 22:8—quoting from Isaiah 54:8).

(4) The Millennial Christ (see 2 Nephi 12:2–5; 21:1–12; 30:9).

(5) The Crucifixion and Atonement (see Mosiah 14:1–12).

18. Jacob 4:11–12.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 27:5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:9; Joseph Smith—History 1:34.
20. 3 Nephi 27:13. The full text of His sermon also includes *ordinances* and *covenants* as integral aspects of the gospel.
21. 3 Nephi 27:14.
22. Not all divine doctrines are included in the Book of Mormon. Temple work as we know it today has been revealed as part of the restoration of all things and is taught in the Doctrine and Covenants and in later revelations to living prophets.
23. See Romans 5:11.
24. *Atonement*: 28 times; *atone*, *atoning*, or *atoned*: 8 times; plus *atoneth*: 3 times; equals 39 times. Within several verses, *atonement* appears more than once (see 2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:9; 42:23).
25. The word *resurrection* appears 41 times in the King James Version of the Bible; it appears 81 times in the Book of Mormon (see also *Christ and the New Covenant*, 238).
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:57.
27. See 3 Nephi 21:1; 29:chapter heading.
28. *Covenant* comes from the Latin *convenire*, which means “to come with” or “to agree.”
29. *Testament* comes from the Latin *testis*, which means “witness.” *Testament* is also related to the Latin roots *tres* and *stare*, which mean “three” and “to stand.”
30. *Witness* comes from the Old English *wit*, which means “knowledge.” A witness is defined as one who has special knowledge.
31. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 9–10.
32. *History of the Church*, 4:461.
33. See Doctrine and Covenants 17:6.

34. 3 Nephi 9:15–16, 18, 20–22.
35. See 3 Nephi 11:14.
36. See 3 Nephi 15:9.
37. 2 Nephi 26:27.
38. 2 Nephi 26:33.
39. See *Christ and the New Covenant*, 349.
40. From 7 April to 30 June 1829. After subtracting time spent for other contemporary tasks, working time available was closer to 55 days. The present edition of the Book of Mormon contains 531 pages. Assuming 55 days for the work of translation, the rate is calculated as 9.7 present-day pages per day.
41. See John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, “Book of Mormon Translation by Joseph Smith,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. [1992], 1:211.
42. See “A Chronology of Church History,” Appendix 2, in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1652, date of 11 June 1829.
43. Sections 6–9 and 11–18.
44. See Moroni 10:4–5.
45. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that “a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its [the Book of Mormon’s] precepts, than by any other book” (*History of the Church*, 4:461).
46. See Matthew 14:19–20; Mark 6:41–42; Luke 9:16–17.
47. See Matthew 11:5; Luke 7:21–22.
48. Doctrine and Covenants 20:14.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

The Savior’s place in a new millennium

What an exciting and wonderful thing it is to step across the threshold of the centuries. This will be our experience before long. Even more exciting is our opportunity to bridge the millennium that is drawing to a close and greet a new thousand years. I am overwhelmed with a grand and solemn sense of history as I contemplate this period.

It is only two millennia since the Savior walked the earth. It is a wonderful acknowledgment of His place in history that the calendar now in use throughout most of the world places His birth as the meridian of time. All that went before is reckoned back from that date. All that has happened since is measured forward from that date.

Every time anyone uses a date, he knowingly or unknowingly acknowledges the coming to earth of the Son of God. His birth, as it has been popularly determined, marks the center point of the

ages, the meridian of time recognized throughout the earth. As we use these dates we pay no attention to it. But if we pause to think, we must recognize that He is the one sublime figure in all the history of the world on which our measurement of time is based.

Prophecies of the Savior’s birth

In the centuries before He came to earth there was prophecy of His coming. Isaiah declared, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

King Benjamin, more than a century before the Savior’s birth, said this to his people:

“For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and

is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. . . .

"And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary" (Mosiah 3:5, 8).

It is small wonder that angels sang at His birth and Wise Men traveled far to pay Him homage.

He was the one perfect man to walk the earth. He fulfilled the law of Moses and brought a new canon of love to the world.

His mother was mortal, and from her came an inheritance of the flesh. His Father was immortal, the Great God of the Universe, through whom came His divine nature.

An unparalleled act of mercy

The magnificent expression of His love came in His death, when He gave His life as a sacrifice for all men. That Atonement, wrought in unspeakable pain, became the greatest event of history, an act of grace for which men gave nothing but which brought the assurance of the Resurrection to all who have or would walk the earth.

No other act in all of human history compares with it. Nothing that has ever happened can match it. Totally unselfish and with unbounded love for all mankind, it became an unparalleled act of mercy for the whole human race.

Then with the Resurrection that first Easter morn came the triumphal declaration of immortality. Well was Paul able to declare, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Co-

rinthians 15:22). He not only granted the blessing of the Resurrection to all, but opened the way to eternal life to those who observe His teachings and commandments.

He was and is the great central figure of human history, the zenith of the times and seasons of all men.

The darkness of the Apostasy

Before His death, He had ordained His Apostles. They carried on for a period. His Church was set in place.

The centuries rolled on. A cloud of darkness settled over the earth. Isaiah described it: "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isaiah 60:2).

It was a season of plunder and suffering, marked by long and bloody conflict. Charlemagne was crowned emperor of the Romans in the year 800.

It was an age of hopelessness, a time of masters and serfs.

The first thousand years passed, and the second millennium dawned. Its earlier centuries were a continuation of the former. It was a time fraught with fear and suffering. The great and deadly plague of the 14th century began in Asia. It spread to Europe and on up to England. Everywhere it went there was sudden death. Boccaccio said of its victims, "At noon [they] dined with their relatives and friends, and at night they supped with their ancestors in the next world!"¹ It struck terror into the hearts of people. In five years it took the lives of 25 million, one-third the population of Europe.

Events preceding the Restoration

Periodically it reappeared with its dark and ghoulish hand striking indiscriminately. But this was also a season of growing enlightenment. As the years continued their relentless march, the sunlight of a new day began to break over

the earth. It was the Renaissance, a magnificent flowering of art, architecture, and literature.

Reformers worked to change the church, notably such men as Luther, Melancthon, Hus, Zwingli, and Tyndale. These were men of great courage, some of whom suffered cruel deaths because of their beliefs. Protestantism was born with its cry for reformation. When that reformation was not realized, the reformers organized churches of their own. They did so without priesthood authority. Their one desire was to find a niche in which they might worship God as they felt He should be worshiped.

While this great ferment was stirring across the Christian world, political forces were also at work. Then came the American Revolutionary War, resulting in the birth of a nation whose constitution declared that government should not reach its grasping hand into matters of religion. A new day had dawned, a glorious day. Here there was no longer a state church. No one faith was favored above another.

Prophecies of the Restoration

After centuries of darkness and pain and struggle, the time was ripe for the restoration of the gospel. Ancient prophets had spoken of this long-awaited day.

All of the history of the past had pointed to this season. The centuries with all of their suffering and all their hope had come and gone. The Almighty Judge of the nations, the Living God, determined that the times of which the prophets had spoken had arrived. Daniel had foreseen a stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands and which became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (see Daniel 2:34-35).

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people,

but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44).

Isaiah and Micah had spoken long before when with prophetic vision they saw our time:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2-3; see also Micah 4:2).

Paul had written of the whole procession of time, the parade of the centuries, saying, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

He had further said of this day, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Ephesians 1:10).

Peter foresaw the whole grand panorama of the centuries when he declared with prophetic vision:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

"Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21).

All of these and others pointed to this glorious season, this most wonderful season in all the annals of human history,

when there should come a day of restitution of true doctrine and true practice.

The dawning of the Restoration

That glorious day dawned in the year 1820, when a boy, earnest and with faith, walked into a grove of trees and lifted his voice in prayer, seeking that wisdom which he felt he so much needed.

There came in response a glorious manifestation. God the Eternal Father and the risen Lord Jesus Christ appeared and spoke with him. The curtains which had been closed for much of two millennia were parted to usher in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

There followed the restoration of the holy priesthood, first the Aaronic and then the Melchizedek, under the hands of those who had held it anciently. Another testament, speaking as a voice from the dust, came forth as a second witness to the reality and the divinity of the Son of God, the great Redeemer of the world.

Keys of divine authority were restored, including those keys which were necessary to bind together families for time and eternity in a covenant which death could not destroy.

The stone was small in the beginning. It was hardly noticeable. But it has grown steadily and is rolling forth to fill the earth.

The greatest of all ages

My brethren and sisters, do you realize what we have? Do you recognize our place in the great drama of human history? This is the focal point of all that has gone before. This is the season of restitution. These are the days of restoration. This is the time when men from over the earth come to the mountain of the Lord's house to seek and learn of His ways and to walk in His paths. This is the summation of all of the centuries of time since the birth of Christ to this present and wonderful day:

The morning breaks, the shadows flee;

Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled!

The dawning of a brighter day . . .

Majestic rises on the world.

["The Morning Breaks," *Hymns*, no. 1]

The centuries have passed. The latter-day work of the Almighty, that of which the ancients spoke, that of which the prophets and apostles prophesied, is come. It is here. For some reason unknown to us, but in the wisdom of God, we have been privileged to come to earth in this glorious age. There has been a great flowering of science. There has been a veritable explosion of learning. This is the greatest of all ages of human endeavor and human accomplishment. And more importantly, it is the season when God has spoken, when His Beloved Son has appeared, when the divine priesthood has been restored, when we hold in our hand another testament of the Son of God. What a glorious and wonderful day this is.

God be thanked for His generous bestowal upon us. We thank Him for this wondrous gospel, whose power and authority reach even beyond the veil of death.

Given what we have and what we know, we ought to be a better people than we are. We ought to be more Christ-like, more forgiving, more helpful and considerate to all around us.

Our place in history

We stand on the summit of the ages, awed by a great and solemn sense of history. This is the last and final dispensation toward which all in the past has pointed. I bear testimony and witness of the reality and truth of these things. I pray that every one of us may sense the awesome wonder of it all as we look forward shortly to the passing of a century and the death of a millennium.

Let the old year go. Let the new year come. Let another century pass. Let a new one take its place. Say good-bye to a millennium. Greet the beginning of another thousand years.

And so we shall go forward on a continuing path of growth and progress and enlargement, touching for good the lives of people everywhere for as long as the earth shall last.

At some stage in all of this onward rolling, Jesus Christ will appear to reign in splendor upon the earth. No one knows when that will be. Not even the angels in heaven will know of the time of His return. But it will be a welcome day.

Come, O thou King of Kings!
We've waited long for thee,
With healing in thy wings,
To set thy people free.

Come, thou desire of nations, come;
Let Israel now be gathered home.
[“Come, O Thou King of Kings,”
Hymns, no. 59]

May God bless us with a sense of our place in history and, having been given that sense, with our need to stand tall and walk with resolution in a manner becoming the Saints of the Most High, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio*, trans. Richard Aldington (1930), 7.

The choir sang “Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire.”

Elder Merrill J. Bateman offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 3, 1999. This session was conducted by President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Mack Wilberg conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Jerold Ottley and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” Following the singing, the invocation will then be offered by Elder

Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

Elder Earl C. Tingey offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "Lead, Kindly Light." Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light."

Elder L. Tom Perry

Remembering past events and blessings

I am sure I will always remember being the first speaker in the last session of this historic general conference. It not only is the last session of this conference; it is the last session of this decade. It is the last session which will bear the date of the 1900s. This session ought to be worthy of a special journal entry. Historic events especially catch our attention as we remember the past and anticipate the future. During the last few weeks of this year, the airwaves will be flooded with highlights of the major events of the 20th century. Forecasters will be attempting to direct our attention to the possibilities of the 21st century. As believers who have embraced the gospel of our Lord and Savior, this should also be a special time of remembering His blessings to His believing children and the promises of even greater blessings in the future.

The Israelites' year of jubilee

The Lord, through all periods of time, has reminded His children of their duty to Him. I have always been interested in the way the Lord instructed and tended Israel during the 40 years they wandered in the wilderness. In the book of Leviticus, so named because it relates to the duties and teachings of the Le-

vites, instructions are given for the year of jubilee and its observance. I believe there is a message for us in how Israel celebrated that special year. We read from the 25th chapter of Leviticus:

"And the Lord spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying,

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the Lord.

"Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;

"But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. . . .

"And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.

"Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.

"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family" (Leviticus 25:1-4, 8-10).

Jubilee was a time to rest and renew

The laws connected with the jubilee year embraced three points. First, the people were to rest the land so it could be rejuvenated and more productive for future years. Today in our busy, multifaceted lives, the year of jubilee offers an excellent time to evaluate our direction and determine whether our priorities are in order. Have we placed the opportunity for eternal blessings ahead of worldly ambitions? Are there parts of our lives that we could rest for a season in an effort to renew our souls so we can be more productive, especially in the ways that matter most to the Lord?

Determining our priorities

A century ago we entered the age of the great industrial revolution. The creative minds of men were developing all sorts of new devices to make our lives easier. Just consider the last time you remodeled any part of your house, and see how many additional electrical outlets you added to each room. Then think about where you have added extension cords with four to six more outlets to provide power for new electrical devices. Despite all those new laborsaving devices, I would guess your life is more, not less, complicated than ever.

As we enter the 21st century, we are in the midst of an information revolution, the so-called information age, with all of its new challenges and opportunities. Now we are being flooded with information. For many, television is robbing them of valuable family time. The Internet is a new source of information that offers tremendous opportunities as well as another potential—becoming addicted. Unfortunately, with the blessings of the new information age also come challenges, as evil influences have a new medium of transmission and new ways of infiltrating our minds. Worldly influ-

ences enter our homes in new shapes and forms to challenge our resolve to use our time wisely and for the Lord's purposes.

Perhaps we could take a page out of the law of ancient Israel and call "time-out." Let us make a list of those basic activities that add value to eternal man and woman and determine in our year of jubilee that we will discontinue those activities that are of little value and worth that might even jeopardize our eternal welfare. Let us place higher priority on family prayer, family scripture study, and family home evenings and eliminate those activities that fill our lives with worldliness and evil.

Since September of 1995 we have been promoting a leadership training emphasis that encourages us to reestablish the preeminence of the home and the family as the basic organizational unit of the Church, encouraging each family member to set aside family time as its first priority. Could our year of jubilee be a time of reviewing past performances and casting aside those things that impede our eternal progress? Then could we rededicate ourselves to those things that will bring us eternal joy?

Preserve our heritage

The second law connected with the jubilee year was the reversion of property to its original owners or his heirs. If we had this practice today, on January first I could go north to Perry, Utah, and ask of the occupants of the land that my great-grandfather owned to leave so my family could again take possession. What an interesting arrangement, designed to preserve land for each succeeding generation to enjoy as their inheritance. Of course, such practices of land ownership do not exist today—so the people of Perry, Utah, need not worry—but the practice of preserving other forms of inheritance, like our heritage, should be encouraged.

Have we preserved for our children the great stories of how the gospel was brought to and accepted by those early members of our families? Their study and acceptance of the gospel has opened for us the great opportunity of receiving eternal blessings.

A young man's conversion

At the age of 17, my grandfather left Denmark to find a new life in America. He worked his way to Mendon, Utah, where his uncle lived. He was employed by his uncle to help him with his farming. After some period of time, he came to his uncle and said: "You Mormons are a funny people. I have worked with you for many months, and not once have you tried to tell me anything about your religion or invited me to attend church with you."

His uncle asked him if he would like to know something about it, and he answered affirmatively. So his uncle told him about the Prophet Joseph Smith and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon to read. After doing some reading in the book, my grandfather gave it back to his uncle and said, "I don't see anything in that book that has much value to me."

The next day he was out plowing the field, and his thoughts turned to the story his uncle had told him about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He thought in his mind that no young man with limited education could have produced such a book. Maybe he should give it a second look. He asked his uncle if he could borrow the book again. This time he could not put it down. The Spirit burned within him that this book was true. He asked for baptism and remained active throughout his entire life.

These conversion experiences of our family members, who show us great com-

mitment and faith throughout their lives, give us so much of what we enjoy today through the fruits of the gospel. Surely a knowledge of that faith and commitment must be passed on from generation to generation to deepen our desire to live with the same conviction they exhibited in their lives. Surely their testimonies add conviction and strength to our testimonies.

Helaman preserved his heritage

Helaman had a special way of transferring his heritage to his sons: he named his sons after his noble ancestors to help his sons remember them and their works. The scriptures record:

"Behold, my sons, I desire that ye should remember to keep the commandments of God; and I would that ye should declare unto the people these words. Behold, I have given unto you the names of our first parents who came out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I have done that when you remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works; and when ye remember their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good" (Helaman 5:6).

Free yourself from spiritual bondage

Finally, during the year of jubilee, all of the Israelites who were in bondage for some reason were granted their freedom. Of course, the practice of slavery has long since been abolished in almost all parts of the world. Nevertheless, if we are not watchful, any one of us can become ensnared, then enslaved, by the evil one.

Individually we have been given our agency. It was a blessing granted to man from the very beginning. The Lord declared to Adam, "And it is given unto them to know good from evil; wherefore they are agents unto themselves, and I

have given unto you another law and commandment" (Moses 6:56).

Given that there must be opposition in all things (see 2 Nephi 2:11), with agency comes the need to choose good from evil. Moreover, agency also opens the possibility for sin; that, in turn, creates the need for repentance. President Kimball has said:

"Sin is intensely habit-forming and sometimes moves men to the tragic point of no return. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness, and without forgiveness all the blessings of eternity hang in jeopardy. As the transgressor moves deeper and deeper in his sin, and the error is entrenched more deeply and the will to change is weakened, it becomes increasingly nearer hopeless and he skids down and down until either he does not want to climb back up or he has lost the power to do so" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 83).

He then counseled us:

"*Substitute habits, change environment.* Change comes by substituting new habits for old. You mold your character and future by thoughts and actions.

"You can change by changing your environment. Let go of lower things, and reach for higher. Surround yourself with the best in books, music, art, and people" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 172).

As we approach a new century, certainly it is a time to examine what our patterns have been in the past. Could this be a time of reinforcing those practices that lead to our good and betterment? Could it be a time of disregarding those habits and activities which ensnare and enslave us in the traps of the adversary and retard our eternal progress?

Our religion should lift us

Harry Emerson Fosdick once wrote: "Some Christians carry their religion on their backs. It is a packet of beliefs and practices which they must bear. At times it grows heavy and they would willingly lay it down, but that would mean a break with old traditions, so they shoulder it again. But real Christians do not carry their religion, their religion carries them. It is not weight; it is wings. It lifts them up, it sees them over hard places, it makes the universe seem friendly, life purposeful, hope real, sacrifice worthwhile. It sets them free from fear, futility, discouragement, and sin—the great enslavers of men's souls. You can know a real Christian, when you see him, by his buoyancy" (*Twelve Tests of Character* [1923], 87–88).

I hope it is clearly evident when the world looks at us that we are known for our buoyancy—that we live, believe, and practice real Christian ideas and doctrine. May God bless us that we may look forward to a new century with faith, testimony, confidence, and determination to better prepare ourselves for the eternal life we are all seeking. May the new year begin with the sound of trumpets and joyful shouts as we make the most of this coming year of jubilee is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Richard H. Winkel of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

The influence of a teacher

A national author wrote a book about his greatest teacher. At the heart of this college teacher's powerful impact on his student was the student's conviction that this teacher really cared for him and wanted him to learn and do what would help him find happiness. The author concluded his tribute with this question: "Have you ever really had a teacher? One who saw you as a raw but precious thing, a jewel that, with wisdom, could be polished to a proud shine? If you are lucky enough to find your way to such teachers, you will always find your way back."¹

Everyone is a teacher

Every member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is, or will be, a teacher. Each of us has a vital interest in the content and effectiveness of gospel teaching. We want everyone to have great gospel teachers, and we want those teachers to help all of us find our way back, not just to them but to our Heavenly Father.

Our concern with gospel teaching is not limited to those who are called to teach in the priesthood quorums, in the Primary, Relief Society, Sunday School, Young Women, and in other assignments. In the Lord's great plan of salvation there are no more important teachers than parents, who teach their children constantly by example and by precept. Each of us teaches those around us by example. Even children teach one another. Every missionary is a teacher. And every leader is a teacher. As President Hinckley taught many years ago, "Effective teaching is the very essence of leadership in the Church."²

Gospel teaching is universal and important. Truly, "no greater responsibility can rest upon any [one of us] than to be a

teacher of God's children."³ Our Savior's occupation was that of a teacher. He was the Master Teacher, and He invites each of us to follow Him in that great service.⁴

Revitalizing gospel teaching

Several years ago the First Presidency challenged the Quorum of the Twelve to revitalize teaching in the Church. The Twelve, assisted by the Seventy, accepted that challenge. Now, after years of preparation, engaging the efforts of superb gospel teachers, scholars, writers, and others, the First Presidency has just sent a letter launching a Churchwide effort "to revitalize and improve teaching in the Church."⁵ This letter states, "This renewed emphasis is intended to improve gospel teaching in homes and in Church meetings and help nourish members with the good word of God."

We have just published a 10-page booklet, *Improving Gospel Teaching: A Leader's Guide*. Copies are being distributed to all unit leaders and to every quorum and auxiliary officer in the Church. As it explains, our concern with "gospel teaching in the Church" includes parents' everyday teachings in the home as well as the work of teachers in the quorums and auxiliaries.

This important effort to "revitalize and improve teaching in the Church" includes three elements. At the outset, it emphasizes leaders' vital responsibilities to work to improve gospel teaching in their organizations. We want all leaders to encourage and help the teachers and learners over whom they preside.

Next, the effort initiates quarterly teacher improvement meetings for teachers of three different groups—children, youth, and adults—to "instruct and edify each other" (D&C 43:8) on principles, methods, and skills that will improve gospel teaching and learning.

Finally, a 12-lesson course on "Teaching the Gospel" will be taught at least once each year, generally during Sunday School. Its course material will be drawn from a new abbreviated and improved edition of *Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching*. This book is being distributed to all wards and branches in the Church.

We have also reissued the *Teaching Guidebook* for use in the home and for smaller and developing units that cannot staff the entire Church program.

Increasing the quality of teaching

Some may wonder why we are making such an extensive effort to improve gospel teaching. Those who wonder must be blessed with superior teachers, and we have many of those in the Church. Others will understand why such an effort is needed and will pray for its success.

For many years I have sought to learn more about the nature and quality of teaching in the various quorums and auxiliaries of the Church. I have done this by dropping in unannounced on classes in various wards in different parts of the Church. By now I have visited hundreds of classes. I apologize if any of my visits has terrorized a teacher. My impression is that almost all of the teachers I have observed in these surprise visits have appreciated having a visitor who was there to learn and there to show appreciation for their efforts and concern for their students.

For the most part, what I have seen in these visits has been gratifying and reassuring. I have seen inspired teachers whose love for the gospel and their students was so evident that the effect of their teaching was positively electric. I have also seen thoughtful and respectful students, receptive to the message and hungry to learn.

Notwithstanding the great examples I have observed, I am convinced that in the Church as a whole—as with each of us individually—we can always do better. The challenge of progress is inherent in our Father in Heaven's plan for His children. And in our sacred callings of gospel teaching, no effort is too good for the work of the Lord and the growth of His children.

There are many different ways to teach, but all good teaching is based on certain fundamental principles. Without pretending to be exhaustive, I wish to identify and comment on six fundamental principles of gospel teaching.

Love God and those you teach

The *first* is love. It has two manifestations. When we are called to teach, we should accept our calling and teach because of our love for God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. In addition, a gospel teacher should always teach with love for the students. We are taught that we should pray "with all the energy of heart . . . [to] be filled with this love" (Moroni 7:48). Love of God and love of His children is the highest reason for service. Those who teach out of love will be magnified as instruments in the hands of Him whom they serve.

Focus on the students' needs

Second, a gospel teacher, like the Master we serve, will concentrate entirely on those being taught. His or her total concentration will be on the needs of the sheep—the good of the students. A gospel teacher does not focus on himself or herself. One who understands that principle will not look upon his or her calling as "giving or presenting a lesson," because that definition views teaching from the standpoint of the teacher, not the student.

Focusing on the needs of the students, a gospel teacher will never obscure their view of the Master by standing in the way or by shadowing the lesson with self-promotion or self-interest. This means that a gospel teacher must never indulge in priestcrafts, which are "that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world" (2 Nephi 26:29). A gospel teacher does not preach "to become popular" (Alma 1:3) or "for the sake of riches and honor" (Alma 1:16). He or she follows the marvelous Book of Mormon example in which "the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner" (Alma 1:26). Both will always look to the Master.

Teach from approved gospel materials

Third, a superior teacher of the gospel will teach from the prescribed course material, with greatest emphasis on teaching the doctrine and principles and covenants of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is commanded in modern revelation, where the Lord said:

"Teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel.

"And they shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them, and these shall be their teachings, as they shall be directed by the Spirit" (D&C 42:12-13).

Teachers who are commanded to teach "the principles of [the] gospel" and "the doctrine of the kingdom" (D&C 88:77) should generally forgo teaching specific rules or applications. For example, they would not teach any rules for determining what is a full tithing, and they would not provide a list of *do's* and *don'ts* for keeping the Sabbath day holy. Once a teacher has taught the doctrine and the associated principles from the

scriptures and the living prophets, such specific applications or rules are generally the responsibility of individuals and families.

Well-taught doctrines and principles have a more powerful influence on behavior than rules. When we teach gospel doctrine and principles, we can qualify for the witness and guidance of the Spirit to reinforce our teaching, and we enlist the faith of our students in seeking the guidance of that same Spirit in applying those teachings in their personal lives.

The subject being taught in the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies of the Church during the second and third Sundays of each month is the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*. During the last two years we have studied the teachings of President Brigham Young. For the next two years we will be studying the teachings of President Joseph F. Smith. The books containing these teachings, which are being given to every adult member of the Church as a permanent personal library resource, contain doctrine and principles. They are rich and relevant to the needs of our day, and they are superb for teaching and discussion.

As I have visited in quorums and Relief Societies, I have generally been pleased and impressed at how these *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* are being presented and received. However, I have sometimes observed teachers who gave the designated chapter no more than a casual mention and then presented a lesson and invited discussion on other materials of the teacher's choice. That is not acceptable. A gospel teacher is not called to choose the subject of the lesson but to teach and discuss what has been specified. Gospel teachers should also be scrupulous to avoid hobby topics, personal speculations, and controversial subjects. The Lord's revelations and the directions of His servants are clear on this

point. We should all be mindful of President Spencer W. Kimball's great instruction that a gospel teacher is a "guest":

"He has been given an authoritative position and a stamp of approval is placed upon him, and those whom he teaches are justified in assuming that, having been chosen and sustained in the proper order, he represents the Church and the things which he teaches are approved by the Church. No matter how brilliant he may be and how many new truths he may think he has found, he has no right to go beyond the program of the Church."⁶

Effectively prepare and present lessons

Fourth, a gospel teacher will prepare diligently and strive to use the most effective means of presenting the prescribed lessons. The new Teaching the Gospel course and the new teacher improvement meetings are obviously intended to assist teachers in this effort.

Teach by the Spirit

The *fifth* fundamental principle of gospel teaching I wish to stress is the Lord's command, quoted earlier, that gospel teachers should "teach the principles of my gospel . . . as they shall be directed by the Spirit. . . . And if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" (D&C 42:12-14). It is a gospel teacher's privilege and duty to seek that level of discipleship where his or her teachings will be directed and endorsed by the Spirit rather than being rigidly selected and prearranged for personal convenience or qualifications. The marvelous principles of "Gospel Teaching and Leadership" in the new *Church Handbook of Instructions* include the following:

"Teachers and class members should seek the Spirit during the lesson. A person may teach profound truths, and class members may engage in stimulating discussions, but unless the Spirit is present,

these things will not be powerfully impressed upon the soul. . . .

"When the Spirit is present in gospel teaching, 'the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth [the message] unto the hearts of the children of men' (2 Nephi 33:1)."⁷

President Hinckley stated an important corollary to the command to teach by the Spirit when he issued this challenge:

"We must . . . get our teachers to speak out of their hearts rather than out of their books, to communicate their love for the Lord and this precious work, and somehow it will catch fire in the hearts of those they teach."⁸

That is our objective—to have love of God and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ "catch fire" in the hearts of those we teach.

Teach to help others

That leads to the *sixth* and final principle I will discuss. A gospel teacher is concerned with the results of his or her teaching, and such a teacher will measure the success of teaching and testifying by its impact on the lives of the learners.⁹ A gospel teacher will never be satisfied with just delivering a message or preaching a sermon. A superior gospel teacher wants to assist in the Lord's work to bring eternal life to His children.

President Harold B. Lee said: "The calling of the gospel teacher is one of the noblest in the world. The good teacher can make all the difference in inspiring boys and girls and men and women to change their lives and fulfill their highest destiny. The importance of the teacher has been beautifully described by Daniel Webster when he said, 'If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; but if we work upon immortal minds, if we imbue them with principles and the just fear of God and love of our fellowman, we engrave upon those tablets something that will brighten through all eternity.'"¹⁰

I testify that this is God's work, and that we are His servants with the sacred responsibility of teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, the greatest message of all time. We need more teachers to match that message. I pray that we will all become superior gospel teachers, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie* (1997), 192.
2. "How to Be a Teacher When Your Role as a Leader Requires You to Teach," General Authority Priesthood Board Meeting, 5 Feb. 1969; see also Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 31; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 26.
3. David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals* (1953), 175.
4. See, generally, Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (1975).
5. First Presidency letter, 15 Sept. 1999.
6. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 533.
7. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 300.
8. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 619–20.
9. See Henry B. Eyring, in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 94–95; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 73.
10. *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 461.

Elder Richard H. Winkel

Brothers and sisters, it's so good to be here with you this afternoon. As I began preparing my talk, I pondered the thought that this is the first time I have been asked to speak in the Tabernacle—and that it would also be my last! But it is good to be here with you on this historic occasion in this historic building.

Redwoods intertwine roots for strength

I'd like to change geographic locations now and talk to you about another beautiful place. The north coast of California is home to the world's tallest trees. A walk through a virgin old-growth redwood forest can be one of the most awe-inspiring experiences you'll ever have. These trees sometimes live to be over 2,000 years old and can reach heights of 300 feet and more. The tallest redwood tree ever recorded was 367 feet in height. That is taller than a football field and about one-third again as tall as the Salt Lake Temple. The gigantic redwoods dwarf their other softwood and hardwood

neighbors, thus becoming "the Mount Everest of all living things."

"Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart;

"Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul.

"And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion.

"And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:18–21).

The coastal redwoods are truly lords of their realm and a most exquisite creation of our Father in Heaven. They reign over associated trees because of their overwhelming height and majestic beauty. However, there is another feature of these towering giants that is truly

remarkable and somewhat unknown to most of us. Even though they grow up to heights of 300 feet and can weigh more than one million pounds, these trees have a very shallow root system. Their roots only go down 3 to 6 feet but can spread out several hundred feet. As these roots extend out, they intertwine with their brother and sister redwoods and other trees as well. This intertwining of roots creates a webbing effect. Most engineers would tell you this shallow root system still would be impossible to keep the redwoods intact and protected against strong winds and floods. However, the interconnecting root systems are the secret of their strength and teach us a great lesson.

"No man is an island"

First, let's acknowledge that these magnificent giants simply could not make it alone. Without being connected to other family members and helpful neighbors, they would not survive.

I would like you to contemplate the first two verses of the song adapted from a meditation by John Donne:

No man is an island;
No man stands alone.
Each man's joy is joy to me;
Each man's grief is my own.

We need one another,
So I will defend
Each man as my brother;
Each man as my friend.
["No Man Is an Island"]

Love and support new members

New members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints cannot make it alone. They might appear to be as independently strong as the redwoods, but they need us and we need them. President Hinckley, in a satellite broadcast last February, shared the story of a woman who became a member last year. She wrote:

"My journey into the Church was unique and quite challenging. This past year has been the hardest year that I have ever lived in my life. It has also been the most rewarding. As a new member, I continue to be challenged every day."

"She goes on to say that when she joined the Church she did not feel support from the leadership in her ward. Her bishop seemed indifferent to her as a new member. Rebuffed, as she felt, she turned back to her mission president, who opened opportunities for her.

"She states that 'Church members don't know what it is like to be a new member of the Church. Therefore, it's almost impossible for them to know how to support us'" ("Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 108).

They need our love and support. Whether we know it or not, they are reaching out to us as the roots of the redwood reach toward the Douglas fir, the Western hemlock, the Sitka spruce, and other species as well. We need to reach out to these new members and sustain them in their growth, for truly we are their brothers and sisters. Don't we all do better when we are supported, sustained, and loved by our families and friends? Even trees do better when they grow close together in groves. They grow taller, straighter, stronger, and produce better lumber. When a tree is growing off by itself, it develops many branches. These branches generate knots, which can weaken the tree and downgrade its timber quality.

New members need the chance to serve

You might recall that when Christ organized His Church, He called many to serve: apostles, prophets, patriarchs, bishops, deacons, teachers, priests, and so forth. Many were called to serve in His kingdom. These calls were given to strengthen the members, to organize the Church, and to bless the lives of God's children.

When the Savior called Peter, James, John, and others, did they have experience? No, but He told them He would train them; He would make them fishers of men. Did His apostles and disciples make mistakes? Of course they did, but they were given opportunity, and they learned. So will our new brothers and sisters learn and grow as we befriend them, extend calls to them, and nourish them with the good word of God.

One of the other abundant species under the redwood canopy is a little-known hardwood tree called *Lithocarpus densiflorus*. It is also called tan oak. The tan oak fits into the same general family as the true oaks but is a little different. There are several billion board feet of this species growing among the popular redwoods, and it has many fine qualities, but it is almost completely overlooked and unused. What a waste, what a tragedy when you consider the tan oak's potential. The mind-set of many wood users is, "We're doing just fine with the old standbys; why change?" We cannot overlook the potential of our new members or misjudge their talents. Remember, "he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile" (2 Nephi 26:33).

Personal testimony

I am thankful for the web of friendship that has nurtured me throughout my life, for having been born of goodly

parents, for my brothers, sisters, and extended family. I am especially grateful for the love and support of my wonderful wife, Karen, and also our equally wonderful and loving children. I would like also to say that I feel very fortunate to have had many good friends through the years, both in and out of the Church. I am grateful to have recently been associated with outstanding missionaries in Spain and for the wonderful members of that country. Brothers and sisters, I know we have a kind and wise Heavenly Father and bear testimony of His Son, Jesus Christ, and of His atoning sacrifice, which touches each one of us. I also bear testimony that the Church is led by a great prophet today, even Gordon B. Hinckley. I ask the Lord to bless us all that we might feel more connected and caring of one another, especially as we move into this new era of growth in the Church and into this exciting new millennium, and I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder Richard H. Winkel of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following the singing, Elders Robert S. Wood and William R. Bradford of the Seventy will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Robert S. Wood

What we say reflects who we are

In contrasting the importance of some of the weightier things of the kingdom with the dietary code of ancient Israel, Jesus told His disciples:

"Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

"... Those things which proceed out of the mouth come . . . from the heart; and they defile the man" (Matthew 15:11, 18). Our words and external expressions are not neutral, for they both reflect who we are and shape who we are becoming.

In the latter days the Lord has emphasized again how, in the words of the Book of Mormon, our "outward performances" (Alma 25:15) are defiling or edifying. What we say and how we act will create an atmosphere that is welcoming or hostile to the Holy Ghost. In the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord counseled us to avoid "light speeches" and an "excess of laughter." He associated such expressions with defects of the heart—"lustful desires," "pride," and "light-mindedness"—that finally proceed to "wicked doings" (D&C 88:69, 121). I take "light speeches" to refer to irreverent and demeaning language and "light-mindedness" to what the Lord has called trifling with sacred things (see D&C 6:12).

Words either build or demolish

On the other hand, the Lord has called for "cheerful hearts and countenances" (D&C 59:15). He has asked us to so speak and so act that we edify or build one another. He has also indicated that "that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness" (D&C 50:23). At Winter Quarters, as the Saints were in the midst of an arduous exodus, the Lord commanded, "Let your words tend to edifying one another" (D&C 136:24).

Nephi declared that the fruit of receiving the Holy Ghost and listening to the promptings of the Spirit is that we may "speak with the tongue of angels" (2 Nephi 32:2). Thus we create a spirit of reverence and of revelation.

I recently overheard a conversation among some of our young grandchildren. One of them apparently used the word *stupid*. Eight-year-old Nicholas, recently baptized, commented that perhaps one should not say that, as it was a "bad word." It was evident that there had been some good influence from Mom and Dad. I know there had been similar discussions about other expressions.

Now some might think that these are small matters compared to the far more foul and demeaning expressions all around us. Yet, in small and in great ways, our words are creating an atmosphere in which we build or demolish. I recently commented to a friend from New York City that I thought the atmosphere had improved markedly in the city over the past years and wondered why. He noted that his wife is a municipal judge, and they were enforcing the little things, like ordinances against spitting and jaywalking, and the big things were being affected thereby. So in our daily speech and acts of edification, the Lord said, we invite the spirit of truth and righteousness in which we "may chase darkness from among [us]" (D&C 50:25).

I recall when I was in a freshman English class and the professor was insisting that, to describe a situation, one of the students must substitute a crude expression for one gentler. I was jarred at an expression which I had seldom heard and never in harmonious circumstances. Years later in graduate school I had a conversation with a friend who argued that one should be, as he called

it, direct, even if rude and insensitive to others' feelings.

Unfortunately, the spirit animating these incidents has taken firm hold on society and is found even among the Saints. Over the years there has been an increase in sexual innuendos, raucous humor, violent expressions, and great noise in talk, in music, in gestures. Much of what is around us is crude and rude, with a corruption of moral behavior and sensitivity. Society has not been improved by our "light speeches" and our "light-mindedness." Instead, our expressions have polluted our communities and corrupted our souls.

President Spencer W. Kimball warned of vulgarity of speech and expression and particularly counseled against speaking of sex glibly, which he associated with immodesty. "Lewd talk and jokes," he said, "constitute another danger which lurks seeking as its prey any who will entertain it as the first step to dirtying the mind and thus the soul" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 228).

Purify our speech

What we say and how we present ourselves not only betray our inner person but also mold that person, those around us, and finally our whole society. Every day each of us is implicated in obscuring the light or in chasing away the darkness. We have been called to invite the light and to be a light, to sanctify ourselves and edify others.

In his general epistle, James detailed many of the things necessary to becoming holy. Among these he included the control of language and conversation. Indeed, he said that "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2). Using a seagoing analogy, he noted that as a small helm can drive a great ship, so the tongue might also set our course and fate (see v. 4). Improperly

employed, the tongue "defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature" (v. 6). How can the same mouth issue forth blessings and curses? (see v. 10).

I've been struck by the fact that when Isaiah received his charge from the Lord, he bemoaned that he was "a man of unclean lips" and dwelt "in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). This sin too had to be purged from Isaiah if he was to bear the word of the Lord. Is it any wonder that psalmists and prophets alike have beseeched the Lord to "set a watch" before their lips and to guard the "door" of their lips (Psalm 141:3), to help them "sin not with [their] tongue"? (Psalm 39:1).

"Speak with the tongue of angels"

When we speak and act, we should ask whether our words and expressions are calculated to invite the powers of heaven into our lives and to invite all to come unto Christ. We must treat sacred things with reverence. We need to eliminate from our conversations the immodest and the lewd, the violent and the threatening, the demeaning and the false. As the Apostle Peter wrote, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15). The expression *conversation* refers here not only to speech but also to our entire comportment. As Nephi, he is inviting us to so live that we may "speak with the tongue of angels."

I bear witness that God is indeed holy. He is our Father, we His children. We are His heirs and co-heirs with Jesus Christ of His glory. Christ has borne our sins and conquered death. He has invited us to be as He is and to edify in word and in deed. With John I believe that it is our destiny that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder William R. Bradford

Live a righteous life

We live in a time when many men and women do not prescribe morality to their actions, and so they believe that what they do has only social consequences. In this they deny God, and they also deny that things are either right or they are wrong.

Each of us at one time or another has heard the statement, "Okay, have it your own way," and so it is with the way that many in the world live.

I witness to you that there is a better way. It is to live a life of righteousness.

The word *righteousness* is a most interesting and unique word. It is an umbrella word that spreads out and covers all the attributes of God. A person, then, who is righteous is Godly or Godlike.

The difference between right and wrong

Right and wrong do exist and are opposite of each other. The actions of mankind do have moral consequences. The gospel of Jesus Christ defines for us the difference between what is good and what is bad. That which is good comes from God. Christ has said: "And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good" (Ether 4:12).

Righteousness is a composite of all that is good. It embraces the principles of heavenly power and law by which all things of God are handled and controlled and governed.

In righteousness there is great simplicity. In every case that confronts us in life, there is either a right way or a wrong way to proceed. If we choose the right way, we are sustained in our actions by the principles of righteousness, in the which there is power from the heavens. If we choose the wrong way and act on that choice, there is no such heavenly

promise or power, and we are alone and are destined to fail.

The question arises: How can we know which is right and which is wrong? Just as our Heavenly Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to create this earth and to execute and govern all things pertaining to it, so He sent the Holy Ghost to act in providing the light of the Spirit to men on the earth.

The light of the Spirit is organized as a communication system to transmit concepts of truth into the minds of the children of God. The Holy Ghost, by way of the Spirit, will enlighten our minds and give us clarity of understanding of concepts of truth if we obey the laws which govern the use of the Spirit. This is the way that our Father in Heaven teaches us right from wrong. If we are willing to learn His ways and follow them, we will never have to guess but will always know for sure the difference between right and wrong.

Righteousness solves life's challenges

In righteousness there is the fulfillment of faith and hope. Every blessing that God has promised to His children is predicated upon obedience to His laws and commandments. Obedience to His laws and commandments is what makes us righteous, and that righteousness qualifies us to be worthy of the promised blessings.

Each of us lives with his or her own situation. There may be challenges with health, economy, literacy, singleness, loneliness, oppression, abuse, transgression, and a never-ending list of existing conditions. The solution to all these challenges is righteousness.

Where there is disobedience to God's laws and commandments, in benevolence He has given us the law of repentance. If we act upon this marvelous law, we will be forgiven of our disobedience and be-

come more righteous; thus repentance leads us to righteousness. Many, in fact most, of the challenges that we have in mortality can be solved by repentance. They can all be solved finally by righteousness.

Do all you can to live righteously

There is great joy and happiness in striving to live righteously. In simple terms, the plan of God for His children is that they come to this earth and do all that they can to learn and live in obedience to laws. Then, after all they can do, the redeeming work of the Savior, Jesus Christ, is sufficient to do all that they could not do for themselves.

The ancient prophet Moroni, as he ended his work and closed the abridgment of the record of God's dealings with His people, which is the Book of Mormon, said it this way:

"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:32). Moroni's way of saying do all that you can is to love God with all your might, mind, and strength.

Striving to live righteously is attempting to do all that we can in obedience. With this comes the inner peace and comfort in doing all we can, the plan of God will be accomplished in our behalf. No other feeling in the soul of man can bring the joy and happiness than that of knowing you are doing all you can to become righteous.

There is safety in righteousness

In righteousness there is safety and security. With it we bind up the Lord. He has said:

"For the names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life, and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand. And now, my brethren, what have ye to say against this? I say unto you, if ye speak against it, it matters not, for the word of God must be fulfilled" (Alma 5:58).

In a world where transgression, corruption, and terrorism strike fear into men and women, where can we turn for safety and security? There is no safety and security except in righteousness. There is no place to hide. There are no walls to keep out the adversary and his campaign of opposition. There is no defense against the uncertain and unknown except righteousness. Fear in the hearts and minds of men and women can be turned to peace only by replacing that fear with an understanding of God's plan of happiness and the knowledge that they are doing all they can to become righteous and worthy to qualify for eternal salvation.

As the forces of good and evil polarize more and more, those who have not prescribed a moral consequence to their actions will find their lives in such chaos that their style of life will be unbearable to them. Then the prophecies will be fulfilled which say, "And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men's hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people" (D&C 88:91).

When that day comes, the righteous Saints of God will be the only well-governed people unto whom the world can turn. It will be there and there only that they will find stability and steadfastness. They will come, not knowing the doctrine of the righteous, but it will be as foretold: "For, behold, I say unto you that Zion shall flourish, and the glory of the Lord shall be upon her; And she shall be an ensign unto the people, and there shall come unto her out of every nation under heaven" (D&C 64:41-42).

Righteousness is the only way

Righteousness is the better way. Finally, it is the only way. In righteousness is the power to provide the joy and happiness and the safety and security that men and women have longed for and searched for through all the generations of time.

It seems like such a simple solution, but the reality is that "Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations" (D&C 52:14). There is opposition. Right and wrong do exist. Our actions do have moral consequences. There is no right way to do a wrong thing.

As one called as a witness of Jesus Christ and to declare His gospel, I plead that you will not delay in doing all that you can, that you will strive to come to know His laws and commandments and

work with urgency to obey them. By this you will be in a process that will make you righteous and thus worthy of the promised blessings.

Jesus Christ is at the head of this work. He is a God of righteousness. In His gracious mercy, He has provided us with a righteous prophet, whom if we follow, we will be doing what is right. To the truth of this fact and the words that I have spoken, I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elders Robert S. Wood and William R. Bradford of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Richard G. Scott

The Spirit motivates us to improve

Our hearts have been touched, our imaginations stirred, and our determination fortified to live better lives as a result of the messages of this conference. Many have been motivated, as have I, to improve our lives to make our actions more consistent with our goals and dreams. You may have been prompted to abandon a debilitating part of your current life or to set in order an unwholesome habit that has begun to take root, only to later produce bitter fruit. Likely there are some who have resolved to repent of serious mistakes and return to the refreshing waters of righteousness. These impressions to improve come from the Savior through the Holy Ghost.

I would speak of Him. Since thoughts of the Savior invoke tender feelings, I will quote His own words and the testimony of other prophets.

The gift of the Holy Ghost

That we may be led to make the correct choices, He has said:

"I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart."¹

"And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith."²

"I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.

". . . I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy;

". . . By this shall you know all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive."³

"Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing."⁴

With the gift of the Holy Ghost comes the ability to develop a powerfully sensitive capacity to make the right choices. Cultivate that gift. As the Lord has said, that is accomplished by consistent, righteous living. As you enhance your capacity to sense the direction of that infallible influence, you will avoid disappointment, discouragement, and even tragedy.

Learn the Lord's plan for you

The Lord has placed currents of divine influence in your life that will lead you along the individual plan He would have you fulfill here on earth. Seek through the Spirit to identify it and carefully follow that direction that the Lord has put in your life. Align yourself with it. Choose, willingly, to exercise your agency to follow it. Do not be overcome by concentrating solely on today, its challenges, difficulties, and opportunities. Such pre-occupations must not totally capture your attention so as to consume your life. Oh, how I would encourage you to weave deeply into the fabric of your soul the recognition that your life now is a part of a much bigger plan the Lord has for you. You lived part of it in the premortal existence. You were valiant there and came here because you wanted to grow and enjoy greater happiness. What you decide to do now will affect how well you fulfill that divine, personal plan He has for you.

I do not fully understand how it is done, but this divine current does not take away your moral agency. You can make the decisions you choose to make. Should your choices be wrong, there is a path back—repentance. When its conditions are fully met, the Atonement of the Savior provides a release from the demands of justice for the errors made. He said:

"I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

"Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven."⁵

It is wondrously simple and so incomparably beautiful. As you continue to live righteously, you will always know what to do. Sometimes the discovery of that may require significant effort and trust on your part. Yet you will recognize what to do as you meet the conditions for such divine guidance in your life: obedience to the commandments of the Lord, trust in His plan, and the avoidance of anything that is contrary to it. The more closely you conform your life to the doctrine of the Lord, the more capacity you will have to do what the Spirit inspires you to do.⁶

Power flows from the scriptures

I suggest that you memorize scriptures that touch your heart and fill your soul with understanding. When scriptures are used as the Lord has caused them to be recorded, they have intrinsic power that is not communicated when paraphrased. Sometimes when there is a significant need in my life, I review mentally scriptures that have given me strength. There is great solace, direction, and power that flow from the scriptures, especially the words of the Lord. These three examples will illustrate:

"Therefore, let your hearts be comforted . . . ; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God."⁷

"The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught.

"For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round.

"Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men."⁸

David rejoiced:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."⁹

God knows what is best for us

Sometimes you may feel to complain to the Lord about a challenge that has come into your life through no fault of your own. Jacob taught:

"Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works."¹⁰

God knows what is best for us. Although we may not understand why we experience some things now, in His timetable we will know and be grateful.

He has promised to help us with our burdens: "I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, . . . that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions."¹¹

We are counseled, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."¹² I have been greatly helped by

laying a vexing matter at His feet for a while. When I picked it up again, it was lighter and more manageable.

Follow the Lord's counsel

All doctrine in scripture can benefit us, even though it be given to a specific individual, for God has repeatedly said, "What I say unto one I say unto all."¹³

Emma Smith was told: "Continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride. . . . Keep my commandments continually, and a crown of righteousness thou shalt receive."¹⁴

The Lord then added, "This is my voice unto all."¹⁵

This doctrine is confirmed by Nephi, who recorded, "I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning."¹⁶

In that spirit the Savior said: "Ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally; and that which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving."¹⁷

"Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

"Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven."¹⁸

Joseph Smith's example

Joseph Smith was helped to accomplish tasks that were completely beyond his personal capacity. At times, this came through direct guidance and intervention. Yet often it was the quiet prompting of the Spirit and the accompanying support that came because of his obedience, his faith in the Master, and his unwavering determination to do His will. Why was he so successful? A portion of that answer comes in his personal decla-

ration, "I made this my rule: *When the Lord commands, do it.*"¹⁹

I testify that within your own personal sphere of activity and framework of responsibilities, the Lord will provide that same help. When needed and earned, you can enjoy divine inspiration to know what to do and, when necessary, power or capacity to accomplish it.²⁰ Joseph Smith learned how to perfect the ability to follow the guidance of the Lord by practiced, personal discipline. He did not let his own desires, convenience, or the persuasions of men interfere with that compliance as he grew and was schooled by the Lord in how to do the tasks given him. Let us follow his example.

Be grateful for each blessing

Enrich your life with the beauty around you. There is such an abundance of it: the resplendent breaking dawn welcoming a fresh new day, the abundant arms of a blue spruce adorned with golden medallions from adjacent aspen, shimmering ripples in a mountain lake transformed by the brilliant sun, a hushed stillness of a forest glen bathed in moonlight, the exuberance of a child at play and the love in his mother's eyes.

"Rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks."²¹

"And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more."²²

Express gratitude for each blessing, for "in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments."²³

Follow the prophet; commit to Christ

In a few moments President Hinckley will give the closing conference message. I love him. Because of his humility

and tireless effort, the Lord has magnified his extraordinary natural capacities to bless millions of lives throughout the world. Let us follow his inspired counsel. He has borne witness that he is not the head of this Church. That head is our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ the Redeemer.

He guides it. He has given His life that even in our weakness, we may overcome our mistakes through repentance and obedience to His gospel. Oh, what a favored people we are to have this light, this knowledge, these opportunities for happiness on earth and throughout the eternities. May we commit to share a knowledge of this magnificent work, personally or through missionaries, with our friends and neighbors that they may join this kingdom of God on earth and receive the consummate, eternal blessings available to them.

My dear friend, if there is a need to repent in your life, do it—now.

If you have strayed and become entangled in the web of the world, come back. We love you. We need you. We will help you.

Testimony of the Savior

In closing, may I quote from Alma's testimony as if it were my own, for I have that same conviction:

"I speak in the energy of my soul; . . .

"For I am called to speak after this manner, according to the holy order of God, which is in Christ Jesus; yea, I am commanded to stand and testify . . .

" . . . that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. . . .

" . . . They are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. . . . I have fasted and prayed . . . that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit."²⁴

As one of His Apostles, authorized to bear witness of Him, I solemnly testify

that I know that the Savior lives, that He is a resurrected, glorified personage of perfect love. I witness that He gave His life that we might live with Him eternally. He is our hope, our Mediator, our Redeemer. I know that He lives. I know that He loves you and that He will help you have joy and happiness as you live worthy of that help. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2; see also verse 3.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 42:14.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 11:12–14.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 19:38.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31–32.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 43:15–16.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 101:16.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 3:1–3.
9. Psalm 23.
10. Jacob 4:10.
11. Mosiah 24:14.
12. Psalm 55:22.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 61:18; 82:5; 92:1; 93:49.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 25:14–15.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 25:16.
16. 1 Nephi 19:23.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 46:7.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36–37.
19. *History of the Church*, 2:170.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:15–16.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 98:1; see also 1 Thessalonians 5:16.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 78:19.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.
24. Alma 5:43–46.

President Faust

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference in this historic Tabernacle, we express appreciation to the fine Salt Lake and Orem Institutes Choir, the Lehi Primary Choir, the BYU Men's Choir, and the Tabernacle Choir and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and the ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and here in the Tabernacle.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet services which have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Abide with Me." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Cecil O. Samuelson of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Good-bye to the Tabernacle

My brethren and sisters, as we conclude this great conference, we experience considerable emotion. If present

plans hold, this is the last time we will meet in this Tabernacle for general conference. With few exceptions, a half-dozen perhaps, for 132 years our conferences have been held here.

This Tabernacle was conceived in 1863 and was first used for the October 1867 conference. There was no gallery in the building at that time. This was added for the April conference of 1870.

What a remarkable and wonderful structure this has been. But it has grown too small for our needs. At the time of its building it was a tremendous undertaking, built to accommodate all who wished to attend conference. It replaced the old Tabernacle, which was built to the south of us and which seated about 2,500.

Construction of the Tabernacle

We salute President Brigham Young on his boldness in undertaking the construction of this unique and remarkable building at a time when this was still frontier territory. The concept of the design was original. Its builders knew of nothing else quite like it.

These large sandstone pillars were first constructed to form an oval, 250 feet east to west. On these pillars was placed a great bridgework of timbers. For most of the roof structure they spanned 150 feet. There were no interior supporting pillars. The doomsayers predicted that when the interior scaffolding was removed, the whole roof would come down. The roof structure was nine feet thick. It was formed by a great latticework of timbers pinned together with wooden pegs. Green rawhide was then wrapped around these timbers so that when it dried it tightened the grip on the pegs.

Sheeting was then applied on the roof, and this was covered with shingles. The interior was lathed and then plastered, the hair of cattle being mixed with the plaster to give it strength.

The scaffolding was removed and the roof remained solid. It has so remained for a century and a third, although the shingles were replaced with aluminum some years ago.

Tabernacle has served great purposes

The Tabernacle has served the needs of this Church and community through all of these years. General conferences of the Church have been held here. The voices of prophets have spoken out from this podium. The law and the testimony have been quoted and declared. Numerous other Church meetings have been held here. In this magnificent old structure the funeral services of beloved leaders have been conducted. Presidents of the nation and other distinguished men have spoken from where I now stand.

This has been home to the Tabernacle Choir since the structure was completed. More recently it has been home also to the Mormon Youth Chorus and Symphony. It was the first home of the Utah Symphony. Handel's *Messiah* has been presented here over a period of years. Countless concerts of various kinds, a variety of musical ensembles, and many distinguished soloists have all entertained the public in this great and singular hall.

What a remarkable and useful building it has been. What great purposes it has served. I know of no other structure like it in all the world.

It is true that with electronic means we can broadcast to wherever we wish to be heard. But looking at a television screen is not the same as being in the hall with the speakers and singers.

The new Conference Center

The new hall, which we are erecting on the adjoining block and which we have named the Conference Center, will seat 21,000—with its adjoining theater, 22,000—nearly three and one-half times the capacity of this Tabernacle. I do not know if we will fill it, but I do know that we have spoken to much larger gatherings of Latter-day Saints. For instance, in Santiago, Chile, we spoke to 57,500 in a great football stadium; in Buenos

Aires, Argentina, to 50,000; in Manila in the Philippines, in a great coliseum, we spoke to 35,000 gathered under one roof.

This Tabernacle will continue to be used for a great variety of purposes. It is expected that the choir will go on originating its weekly broadcast here. This building will continue to accommodate various Church gatherings, public gatherings, and serve a variety of purposes.

The new hall will take some getting accustomed to. But it will be more pleasant. It will be air-conditioned. The seating will be more comfortable than these hard wooden pews. My fear is that too many will fall asleep. It is not of the same design as this Tabernacle, but it is also of a unique and wonderful kind. It represents the very latest in architectural and engineering skills. Parking will be improved.

We anticipate that next April we will meet in a new hall as we usher in a new century and a new millennium. The building may not be complete at that time. The organ probably will not be finished. There will be other construction details needing attention. It will likely be dedicated a year from this conference.

It is a very large and a truly magnificent structure, designed and built to the highest seismic codes. It is constructed with reinforced concrete with a granite veneer. That granite is the same stone that was used in the building of the Salt Lake Temple, including the blemishes which you will recognize in both buildings.

Respect for the Tabernacle structure

And so, in terms of general conference, we bid good-bye to an old and wonderful friend. We hope it will be around and that it will be useful for a very long time to come. It is a bold step we are taking. But this boldness is in harmony with the tremendous outreach of the Church across the world.

We have no desire to outdo Brigham Young or his architects—William H. Folsom, Henry Grow, and Truman O. Angell. We wish only to build on the tremendous foundation which President Young laid in pioneering this marvelous work here in the valleys of the West.

As today we close the doors of this Tabernacle and look forward to opening the doors of the new Conference Center next April, we do so with love, with appreciation, with respect, with reverence—really with affection—for this building and for those who have gone before us, who built so well, and whose handiwork has served so long.

A building develops a personality of its own. The Spirit of the Lord has been in this structure. It is sacred unto us. We hope, we anticipate, we pray that the new structure will likewise radiate the same spirit.

Personal testimony

Now I leave with words that have been spoken so often from this great assembly hall—my testimony, my blessing, and my love—with you, my dear associates in this great cause. This work is true. You know that, as do I. It is God's work. You know that also. It is the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the way to happiness, the plan for peace and righteousness.

God our Eternal Father lives. His Son, our Redeemer, the resurrected Savior of the world, lives. They appeared to the boy Joseph Smith to part the curtains in opening a great work of restoration, ushering in the dispensation of the fulness of times. The Book of Mormon is true. It speaks as a voice from the dust in testimony of the divinity of the Lord. The priesthood with its keys, its authority, and all of its blessings is upon the earth.

And we are partakers of these precious gifts. And so, as we might say to an

old friend, good-bye. May the blessings of God rest upon this sacred and wonderful hall. And may we, as those who have come here frequently to partake of the Spirit felt here, live worthy of the title Latter-day Saints is my humble prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Abide with Me."
Elder Cecil O. Samuelson offered
the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

A choir from the Salt Lake and Orem institutes of religion provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Douglas Brenchley conducted the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A Primary choir from Lehi, Utah, provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Beverly Wilson directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

A combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Brigham Young University provided music for the general priesthood session. Barlow Bradford and Ronald Staheli directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley, Craig Jessop, and Mack Wilberg provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

INDEX

A

- Andersen, Elder Neil L.** 18
 Serve the Lord; follow the prophet; Spiritual mole crickets; Prophets' counsel about the family; Prayer, scriptures, family home evening; Always heed the prophets' warnings

B

- Ballard, Elder M. Russell** 76
 False prophets will abound; Look to the appointed channel; Sustain God's chosen prophet; Reject teachings that oppose the Church; Examples of false teachings; Choose to stand with the prophets; Be a believing, behaving member; Be faithful in the gospel

- Banks, Elder Ben B.** 8
 A lost lamb in New Zealand; Parable of the lost sheep; Reach out to the lost sheep; Reasons people stray from the faith; Help the lost sheep return to the fold; Children often follow parents who stray; Each soul is precious

- Bradford, Elder William R.** 109
 Live a righteous life; The difference between right and wrong; Righteousness solves life's challenges; Do all you can to live righteously; There is safety in righteousness; Righteousness is the only way

D

- Damiani, Elder Adhemar** 34
 Choose to serve the Lord; Put away worldly gods; Serving the Lord is not always easy; The rewards of serving the Lord; Building our lives on the rock of Christ

E

- Edgley, Bishop Richard C.** 53
 True manhood must be earned; Jesus is the ideal of manhood; True men choose the ways of God; True men reject Satan's temptations; True men submit themselves to Christ; A young man repents, serves a mission; The measure of a man is in his soul

- Eyring, Elder Henry B.** 40
 Warning about procrastination; The temptation to delay repentance; Satan tempts us to procrastinate; We all need to repent; We are not helpless victims; We are personally accountable; Delay results in lost opportunities; Earnest prayer essential to repentance; "This life is the time"; It is never too late or too hard to repent; "Please, do not delay"

F

Faust, President James E. (priesthood session) 59

Planting seeds and preparing soil; Some seeds fall by the wayside; Some seeds fall on stony places; Some seeds are choked by thorns; Some seeds fall on good ground; The ground seems to be hardening; Preparing our own seedbeds of faith; Invest in your future; Salvation is a priesthood responsibility

Faust, President James E. (Sunday morning session) 72

Hope is the anchor of our souls; Hope for an injured missionary; A young mother maintains hope; Sources of hope; Peter anchored his hope in Christ; Never a greater reason for hope

Featherstone, Elder Vaughn J. 14

The Church will never waver on sin; Evils of pornography; Good friends are a safeguard; Importance of teaching youth; Obedience is a privilege; The joy of helping a parent; Yearning for a Thanksgiving prayer; Stand for truth; carry the torch

G

General Authorities Present 1**General Priesthood Session 48**

H

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session) 2

Welcome to conference; New temples dedicated; Family history work is increasing; Temples represent ultimate in worship; Dedication of 42 temples planned; A glorious season in God's work

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) 67

Why we do some of the things we do; Why does the Church sponsor BYU? Continued support of Church schools; Why is the Church in business? Profits support worthy causes; Why is the Church involved in legislative matters? Defending the sanctity of marriage; Love for the priesthood; Live worthy of the priesthood

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) 91

The Savior's place in a new millennium; Prophecies of the Savior's birth; An unparalleled act of mercy; The darkness of the Apostasy; Events preceding the Restoration; Prophecies of the Restoration; The dawning of the Restoration; The greatest of all ages; Our place in history

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session)	115
Good-bye to the Tabernacle; Construction of the Tabernacle; Tabernacle has served great purposes; The new Conference Center; Respect for the Tabernacle structure; Personal testimony	

Holland, Elder Jeffrey R.	45
The promise of "good things to come"; Cling to faith and hope; Christ understands, calms life's storms; Christ's example of faith; Focus on promises of the future; A young family's journey; Help and happiness lie ahead; Blessings will come	

L

Larsen, Sister Sharon G.	11
Importance of using agency wisely; Agency is necessary for our growth; Choices have consequences; Choose which way to face; Commandments are evidence that God cares; Gifts to help us use our agency wisely; Only one main road	

M

Maxwell, Elder Neal A.	4
Lessons from Laman and Lemuel; Failure to believe in God; Failure to recognize God's love; Failure to recognize God's tutoring; Failure of faith; Failure to care about spiritual things; Failure to love and respond to love; Failure to be grateful; Failure to understand God's purposes; Failure to partake of the fruit; Partake of God's love	

Monson, President Thomas S. (Saturday morning session)	21
The search for our best selves; Return to the family; Lessons learned from fathers; Lessons learned from mothers; Example of a family's sacrifice; Serve others; trust in the Lord; A widow's gift touches many; Personal testimony	

Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session)	63
Learn your duty; Priesthood is a great blessing; Do your duty; hidden blessings await; Replace doubts with faith; Priesthood is a commission to serve; A young man prays in the Sacred Grove; Those who are wandering; Magnify your calling; Be willing to serve; Always be on the Lord's errand	

Morrison, Elder Alexander B.	30
"To this end was I born"; Jesus came to earth to ransom us; The gift of eternal life; Jesus calls us to follow His example; Give generously; Become as little children; Help the less fortunate; Express true discipleship; Testimony of Christ	

Music, Summary of Conference	118
-------------------------------------------	------------

N

- Nelson, Elder Russell M.** 86
 Valuing the Book of Mormon; The Book of Mormon's primary purpose;
 The Book of Mormon's contents; Book of Mormon prophets testified of
 Christ; Authors were devoted to God; Contains the fulness of the gospel;
 The Lord's ministry in the Americas; Translation of the Book of Mormon;
 Personal testimony and blessings

O

- Oaks, Elder Dallin H.** 100
 The influence of a teacher; Everyone is a teacher; Revitalizing gospel
 teaching; Increasing the quality of teaching; Love God and those you
 teach; Focus on the students' needs; Teach from approved gospel materi-
 als; Effectively prepare and present lessons; Teach by the Spirit; Teach
 to help others
- Oveson, Elder Stephen B.** 36
 A grandfather's legacy of faith; Parents' legacy of faith; Pass a heritage
 of faith to your children; Set your sights on eternal values; Legacy of the
 gospel of Jesus Christ

P

- Packer, President Boyd K.** 27
 A fighter pilot saves his crew; Hymns give inspiration and protection;
 Cultivate virtuous thoughts; Memories of a brother; Take hold of your
 lives; The spirit of revelation
- Perry, Elder L. Tom** 96
 Remembering past events and blessings; The Israelites' year of jubilee;
 Jubilee was a time to rest and renew; Determining our priorities; Pre-
 serve our heritage; A young man's conversion; Helaman preserved his
 heritage; Free yourself from spiritual bondage; Our religion should lift us
- Pinegar, Sister Patricia P.** 83
 Trusting in the Lord after a son's death; Trust in God's plan; Command-
 ments tether us to God; Heed the promptings of the Spirit; Center
 homes and Primaries on Christ; "All thy children shall be taught of the
 Lord"
- Porter, Elder L. Aldin** 80
 God has a plan for us; God has given us a "flight plan"; Commandments
 and the Atonement; God's plan consoles us, brings us joy; Secular philos-
 ophies lack eternal depth; Choose to follow the prophets; The proclama-
 tion on the family

Priesthood Session, General	48
------------------------------------------	-----------

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	25
-----------------------------------------	-----------

Saturday Morning Session	2
---------------------------------------	----------

Scott, Elder Richard G.	111
--------------------------------------	------------

The Spirit motivates us to improve; The gift of the Holy Ghost; Learn the Lord's plan for you; Power flows from the scriptures; God knows what is best for us; Follow the Lord's counsel; Joseph Smith's example; Be grateful for each blessing; Follow the prophet; commit to Christ; Testimony of the Savior

Stone, Elder David R.	38
------------------------------------	-----------

A hurricane in the Dominican Republic; The devastation of spiritual hurricanes; Prophets warn us of coming dangers; Peace, safety in following the prophets

Stucki, Elder H. Bruce	56
-------------------------------------	-----------

The story of a sparrow; Trust and have faith in the Lord; A call for more missionaries; Do more to bring souls to Christ

Summary of Conference Music	118
------------------------------------------	------------

Sunday Afternoon Session	95
---------------------------------------	-----------

Sunday Morning Session	72
-------------------------------------	-----------

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	26
------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

W

Winkel, Elder Richard H.	104
---------------------------------------	------------

Redwoods intertwine roots for strength; "No man is an island"; Love and support new members; New members need the chance to serve; Personal testimony

Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	49
----------------------------------------	-----------

Growing into priesthood responsibilities; Becoming men of the Lord; Place Heavenly Father first; Come unto Christ; Seek the companionship of the Spirit; Love, learn more about Joseph Smith; Follow the living prophet; A generation chosen, blessed by the Lord

Wood, Elder Robert S.	107
------------------------------------	------------

What we say reflects who we are; Words either build or demolish; Purify our speech; "Speak with the tongue of angels"

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



4 02990 49000